

# **THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH AND ITS PASTORAL ACTIVITIES**



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**Supervisor: Rev. Fr. Declan Brosnan**

Nairobi - Kenya, 16th February, 2000

# **TANGAZA COLLEGE**

**CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

**THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO  
CHURCH AND ITS PASTORAL ACTIVITIES**

**LONG ESSAY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR  
BACHELOR OF ARTS, RELIGIOUS STUDIES.**

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**NAIROBI – KENYA, 16<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 2000.**

### DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work, achieved through my entire personal reading and critical reflection.

It has not been submitted in part or in whole to any other college or university for academic credit.

All sources of information have been duly acknowledged.

Signed... *Abenezer Haile Yesus Weldegzihabher* .....

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Date... *16<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY, 2011* .....

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## DEDICATION

This essay is dedicated to the Department of Pastoral Theology at Tangaza College. I would like to give thanks to the Head of the Pastoral Department and his colleagues, to mentors and to all friends who worked closely with me in this pastoral undertaking. The truth of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church history shines out in this paper. I hope the pastoral dimension of this Church will help to contribute to pastoral theology.

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assisted me in many ways and made life bearable for me while undergoing my studies.

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## INTRODUCTION

This long essay presents the pastoral activity of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, particularly in Ethiopia. Before I mention the pastoral dimension of the Orthodox Tewahedo Church, I would like to give the meaning of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. The Church is known as the Oriental and non-Chalcedonian Church. "Tewahedo" means "United as one people and one faith" in Ethiopian. So the Church is called the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. In other words, the Church identifies its origin and its foundation of traditional faith. There are many reasons why the Church is called the Non-Chalcedonian Church. However, my long essay presents the background of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and its pastoral dimension inside and outside the Church.

Whenever I reflect on the pastoral activities of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, I always feel like expressing its richness in culture, social life, pastoral activities and its theological view. In Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is greatly valued and respected by the government, as well as by the people of Ethiopia. Hence, the Orthodox Tewahedo Church has been challenging the people of Ethiopia inside and outside the country.

For many foreigners, the Pastoral Activities in the Mission Dimension and its attraction might not be obvious. However, people who have seen its richness in spiritual development and cultural approach have converted their lives to follow the Church's activities in the liturgical celebration and other functions. Therefore, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is one of the sources of social life within and outside Ethiopia, because the Church brings people together.

Many Ethiopians find it very important to go to Church and confess their faith, because they believe that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is the mother Church. So the people of Ethiopia

like to worship God in their Orthodox Church wherever they live. The Church also gives moral support to the people, so that they may continue to live in their faith. The faith that they have is their culture and social life.

This long essay identifies how the life of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, its teaching and its pastoral activities, work in all the world. In truth, the Orthodox Tewahedo Church gives encouragement to the people of Ethiopia in order to keep their culture and faith. Hence, the Church teaches its Christians all the time as its pastoral responsibility inside and outside the country.

So this paper focuses on the history of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and its pastoral activities in Ethiopia. Without fear of exaggeration and without making any contradiction, my long essay will present the origin of the Church's faith and the life of the Church today inside and outside the country.

# CHAPTER ONE: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

## 1.1. A BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH.

Several stories have been told of the historical background of the Christian faith in Ethiopia. However, it is believed that Christianity came to Ethiopia during the Apostolic period through Queen Canduce.

*The Ethiopian people belong to three distinct races: the Hamites, the African aborigines and the Semites. The Semites came to Ethiopia from Arabia by way of the Red Sea. Whether they were Jews or pagans is not known, but according to Ethiopian history the Semite group came from Israel. It is also believed that they are Jewish and their background is conversion from Judaism to Christianity.*<sup>1</sup> Hence, Ethiopian people observe the Jewish culture and religion: for instance, observance of the sabbath, the distinction between clean and unclean, the idea of sexual uncleanness and the custom of circumcision. It seems that historically the people of Ethiopia have borrowed the culture of Israel. Therefore the Jewish observance of the Mosaic Law is practised in many parts of Ethiopia.

### 1.1.1 THE OLD TESTAMENT ACCOUNT OF CHRISTIANITY IN ETHIOPIA..

Many scholars in Ethiopia and other scholars from different countries have said many things about the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, but versions of Ethiopian history have much to say regarding the religion of Ethiopia in pre-Christian times. Looking at the original background, one may say the Ethiopian people belonged to the grandchildren of the Israelites,

<sup>1</sup> Aymro Wondmagegnehu, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, Published by the Ethiopian Orthodox Mission, Addis Ababa, 30 June, 1970, pp. 1-4.

and therefore there was no time when Ethiopia existed without knowing God. The people of Ethiopia preserved this worship of God, which it received by tradition from 2545 – 982 B.C.

*The history of Ethiopia talks a lot about Queen Shiba who was an Ethiopian Queen and gave birth from King Solomon. Queen Shiba lived between 1013 and 982 B.C. She went to Jerusalem to see the wisdom of King Solomon. While she was in Jerusalem, she conceived a child named Menelik from King Solomon.<sup>2</sup>*

Queen Shiba returned to Ethiopia and gave birth to the child. When Menelik grew up, he went to Jerusalem to visit his father, King Solomon. On his return from Jerusalem he brought with him the ark of the covenant. The ark, which was first taken by Menelik the First is still with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. This kind of Christianity testifies to the origin of the Ethiopian faith from the early times. After some time, Christianity became the official religion of Ethiopia in the first half of the fourth century ( 332 AD).

In addition, the Bible repeatedly says that Ethiopia is a believer and people of God (Ps 67: 31 ) Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands to God. In the Bible, it says “ Are you not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel ?” ( Amos 9: 7 ).

### 1.1.2 THE NEW TESTAMENT ACCOUNT OF CHRISTIANITY IN ETHIOPIA

*The Acts of the Apostles, 8: 26 – 40, states that a eunuch of great authority of Queen Garsamot Candace was baptized by Philip. This Gandaram was baptized when he had gone to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover in accordance with Old Testament beliefs. The same person, the Eunuch of great authority of the Ethiopian Queen is the first fruit of the Christian faith outside the Jews.<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>2</sup> Meliake Tadore, *The Church of Ethiopia Past and Present*, Printed by Commercial Printing Enterprise, September, 1997, pp. 9-11.

<sup>3</sup> Archbishop Theophilos, *The Church of Ethiopia: A Panorama of History and Spirituality Life*, Publication of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, 1970, pp. 3-6.

Today, Ethiopian faith, culture, and traditional faith have manifested the real meaning of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The origin of Ethiopian Christianity became popular in all regions of the Ethiopian country. Hence, during the earlier half of the sixth century the Christians of Ethiopia made various expeditions to south Arabia, chosen by the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria. Ethiopia therefore had an expatriate primate who wielded the ecclesiastical power in an alien country acquainted with her language, cultural and spiritual approach. Especially in Yemen and Egypt in very early times the Ethiopian Church was known.

### 1.1.3 THE FOUNDATION OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN ETHIOPIA.

Ethiopia was detached more from the Roman Catholic Church at the beginning of the fourth century. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church believed that the Roman Church was founded from the beginning of the apostolic mission. Therefore the Church had its own position to create a relationship with the Roman Church from the beginning. However, it was the victim of the enormous distance that separated the Church from Rome and even more, of the numerous external difficulties and the internal problems with Muslims.

*When Egypt fell under the domination of the Muslim religion, Ethiopia became more isolate, not only from the Roman Church, but also from the rest of the Christian world with the harsh and difficult alternative either to follow the fortunes of the Roman Church or to suffer within a religious encirclement of Islam with the followers of Mohammed.*<sup>4</sup>

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church was assisted in various ways by the Copts of Alexandria, because the Church of Alexandria was in the greater part of northern Africa. However, as the Muslim movement came over the northern and eastern part of Africa, many African countries

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<sup>4</sup> Dr. Ayala Takla Haymanot, *The Ethiopian Church and Its Christological Doctrine*, Asmara 14, September 1981, pp.23-25.

bowed under the yoke of Islam, but Ethiopia was the first country to stand fast in her Christian faith. So she witnessed to the world that she had managed to conserve all the dogmas of the Church and its Christian faith through the centuries until our time. The Ethiopian Church is one of the few Churches of antiquity, and the only ancient Church in African history that has preserved the Christian faith without interruption from other religions. Hence, it is the only Church in Africa that became an official religion of the state.

The other reason for the Ethiopian Church's separation from the Roman Church was the Council of Chalcedon. In fact, the Ethiopian Church condemned the Council of Chalcedon, Pope Leo, and the Nestorians' concept. In my view, the Ethiopian Church separated from the Roman Catholic Church because of too much influence and support from the Alexandrian Church. The reason was that the Patriarchs of Alexandria succeeded in working together with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

At the same time, the Ethiopian Church got more support from Alexandria when the Ethiopian Church had conflict with the Roman Catholic Church during the time of Pope Leo and the Council of Chalcedon.

Historically, the Patriarchs of Alexandria have always had jurisdiction over the Ethiopian Church, because in actual fact there were some Bishops or Metropolitans who had governed the Ethiopian Church for more than sixteen centuries. Hence, there were thirteen Egyptian Bishops who were appointed to work in Ethiopia by the Patriarch of Alexandria. From that time Ethiopia became very much like an ecclesiastical province depending on Alexandria.

The Alexandrian Church did not want to leave the Ethiopian Church, because Ethiopia was the first Christian country to be founded in Africa. Apart from that, the missionaries of Alexandria had worked for long with the missionary activities of the Ethiopian Orthodox

Church. Hence, there was fear of losing the relationship between the Ethiopian Church and Alexandria. So history assigns to the Alexandrian Churches the conversion of Ethiopia to Christianity. The reason is the reorganization and the setting up of its hierarchy in the year 335 and the holding of the first Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in 325. St Frumentius was the first metropolitan of Ethiopia and was consecrated a bishop by St Athanasius after the Council of Nicaea. For a long period the hierarchical election used to be on the Patriarch of Alexandria. There were 25 Egyptian bishops placed over the Ethiopian Church, due to the Ethiopian Church's relations with the Coptic Churches.

In Ethiopia, the Emperors have always been the head of the Church, and the Church had a place in the State. So the very first theological dispute caused some troubled hearts and minds for some foreign missionaries, because the Emperors wanted to have Ethiopian leaders in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Hence, the Emperors wanted to put their hands on the authority of the Church, so that the Ethiopian Church might get its own hierarchy. Especially, attention might be paid to the very important fact that Ethiopian bishops should be eligible for leadership in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Hence, for the first time, from 1929, the Ethiopian Church has given priority to the consecration of Ethiopian bishops.

*In the same year, 1929, the Emperor Haile Selassie, after long negotiation with John, the Alexandrian Patriarch, succeeded in having five Ethiopian bishops consecrated. However, the Ethiopian Church was still under the Egyptian bishops who had been sent from Alexandria by the Patriarch, because the Ethiopian Church was considered as one of the provinces of the Alexandrian Church.*<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 25-28.

In the period between 1935 – 1940, the Italian government took another step forward regarding the political objective. They expelled the Egyptian, Abuna Cirillos, suspected of favouring Ethiopian objectives politically. So on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1937 an Ethiopian, Abuna Abraham, was named and step by step the Alexandrian Church satisfied to the full the secular aspirations of Ethiopian Christianity. After the liberation and restoration of the empire and with the same ruler's support, the Church succeeded in having five Ethiopian nominees consecrated as Ethiopian bishops to head the Ethiopian Church.

*Finally on January 14, 1951 the Ethiopian Orthodox Church got her own Ethiopian Patriarch, whose name is Patriarch Basilios. Patriarch Basilios was consecrated as Patriarch of Ethiopia and Archbishop of Addis Ababa on June 29, 1959 by Cirillos VI in St. Mark's Cathedral in Cairo. However, this investiture of the first Patriarch of Ethiopia was preceded by many delicate negotiations and was concluded on June 25, 1959 with the signature of certain conventions.*<sup>6</sup>

## **1.2. THE LIFE OF MONKS AND PRIESTS IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH.**

The mission of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is the saving of souls and therefore each and every Christian should participate in the processes of pastoral activities. Especially, monks, nuns and priests have given their lives to work in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The life of monks, nuns and priests has its own special function in the Church. For instance, those

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 35

who are busiest in the field of the apostolate rely constantly on prayer. The other reality is that monks, nuns and priests live the life of poverty, chastity, and obedience to their superiors.

*The Ethiopian Orthodox Church in all its history of Christianity encouraged the institution and spread of Monastic Orders. One of the reasons is that their prayer and labour have high value for the glory of God and for His Kingdom here on earth.*<sup>7</sup>

### 1.2.1 MONASTIC LIFE AND ITS ORIGIN

The religious life in the sense of monasticism owes its origin to the desire of denying oneself of worldly things and seeking the life of poverty in union with God. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church's monks and nuns live in both the desert and in the bush. The idea of living in the bush or in the desert is to avoid pleasure, as well as to avoid temptations. The other possibility of monastic life in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is to establish the Kingdom of God here on earth by giving their lives to God. In fact true discipleship is to follow Jesus in full by denying self-reliance. Hence, monks and nuns have devoted their lives for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

The founder of the Ethiopian monastic life was an Egyptian hermit, Father Antonios, who lived in the fourth century. However, the life of monks and nuns has existed from the beginning of the Christian faith in Ethiopia. The monastic life in Ethiopia is divided into two categories.

1. The communal monastic life is the life of all monks or nuns in different places. They live together in the monastery sharing what they have. In community life no one is allowed to talk at any time. It is not allowed to have private property in the monastic life, because they have given their lives to follow Jesus. So they just live according to the rule of the Orthodox

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<sup>7</sup> Aymro Wondmagegnehu, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, Published by Ethiopian Orthodox Mission, Addis Ababa, 30 June 1970, p. 22.

Church. If monks and nuns live in the same compound, the blocks for the nuns are different from the blocks of the monks. However, in most cases the life of monks is different from the life of nuns. It is strictly forbidden to stay without praying and working. If there is adequate reason because of sickness, he or she should go for clinical treatment.

2. A private monastic life is different from the communal monastic life. The reason is that there are many monks and nuns who live in the deserts and in the bush under the rules recognised by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. However, whether they are living alone or not, the asceticism is the same for both communal and private monastic life. A peculiarity of the monastic life in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is that there are some people who live in caves, found at a distance from the monastery. Some lay people call them hermits, which means hidden persons who live far away from human beings. People who live alone in the caves are seen by the people, if they come out, as having spiritual power.

*The Church of Abyssinia which is the Ethiopian Church and its monasticism was introduced into Ethiopia from Egypt in 480 A.D. Abba Aragaw was the first monk who received monastic rules from the founders of St Pachomius.*<sup>8</sup> However, there were many monasteries in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church; for instance, among the ancient Ethiopian monasteries the monastery of Debra Bizen in Eritrea, Ziquala in Shoa, Debra Libanos in Shoa and the monastery of Ghishon Mariam in Wollo Province are known in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The monks live in little stone cells clustered around a rock on which they put a sign of the cross. If the monks live in the bush, they make a small hut where they can sleep.

## 1.2.2 THE OATH OF CELIBACY

The oath of celibacy takes place in the presence of the Abbot. If the monks or nuns do

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pp. 23-24.

not make the oath before the Abbot their being in the monastery is invalid. Hence, monks and nuns should have vows to live in the monastery. The concept of having the oath is to keep their lives in the presence of God and the Orthodox Church. However, there are some monks and nuns who live either in the bush or in the desert due to their own desire and wish to serve God.

According to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church the oath of celibacy is God's gift to His people and this kind of gift is given to few people. Hence, the Orthodox Church cannot give the oath of celibacy easily. In case a widow wants to join the monastic life, it is not necessary for her to take the vows of celibacy.

### **1.2.3 PRAYER LIFE IN THE MONASTERY**

Prayer life is considered as a part of their lives, and therefore both monks and nuns should respect the time of prayer. They should also give the most time to prayer in their lives. The other rule of prayer is that both monks and nuns should read the breviary and pray in their personal programme. In fact, there are many books of prayers and they are written in the Geez and Amaharic languages. So the monks and nuns have responsibility to pray for the Church as well as for Christians.

### **1.2.4 THE MISSION OF THE MONKS AND NUNS**

The pastoral activities of monks and nuns is dependent on where they live. In the old system of monastic life, it was difficult for the monks and nuns to go out and preach the word of God. However, the modern monastic life has brought another view of the pastoral activities. So nowadays the monks of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church do their pastoral work inside and outside monastic life. The monastic places are not only places of spirituality, but also historical places.

*The monasteries which are found in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are not only places of asceticism, but they are also preserved as places of history and the culture of the country. Hence, the mission of the Church in the monastic life is not only considered to develop missionary activities, but also the progress of the culture of the Church, so that the new generations can have an opportunity to know about the Church's mission and its cultural development.*<sup>9</sup>

### **1.3. THE CHURCH AND ITS MAIN DOCTRINE.**

The Church of Abyssinia was founded by Frumentius and Aedesius. For the first time the Church became a state religion in Aksum. However, to know the doctrine of the Orthodox Church, one should know that the Church borrowed many things from the Church of Alexandria. One of the reasons is that the Ethiopian Church used to follow the doctrine of Alexandria. However, Christianity was kept as the source of Ethiopian faith from the period of Queen Sheba and remained in Abyssinia. In the fifth and sixth centuries the Coptic monks came to Abyssinia and started their mission with Ethiopian monks. Hence, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had its own doctrine which flows from the Alexandrian Holy See of St. Mark. After the separation from the administration of Alexandria, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church came up with new doctrinal aspects for its Christian members. The doctrine of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church stresses doctrinal rules, and these are as follows.

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<sup>9</sup> Melake Tabore, *The Church of Ethiopia Past and Present*, Printed by Commercial Printing Enterprise, 1997, pp. 22-26.

### 1.3.1 THE CHURCH'S FAITH IN THE TRINITY

The Church believes in one God and three Persons. Her followers worship in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has its own position on the Trinity, which has no beginning and will exist forever without end. In all things the three Person are equal and have the same power. For instance, in nature, authority, Lordship, Omnipotence, divinity, saving human nature, creating all things, and in all personal dignity, they are exactly equal.

The Father is the first person and hypostasis of the one God. He is creator of everything. The Father plans everything and gives to His Son and the Son fulfils the processes of God's plan. The Son is the second Person and the only begotten of the Father. He is the saviour of the universe. He is the Son of God. He was born as Man by the will of God in the womb of Holy Mother Mary. The Holy Spirit is the third Person and is the third hypostasis who proceeds from the Father. The Holy Spirit purifies, illuminates, sanctifies, and blesses the intellectual and spiritual beings.

### 1.3.2 INCARNATION

The Oriental Church says that the incarnation of Jesus Christ is a divine plan and is a mystery in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Hence, Jesus Christ has two natures in all His life. In other words, the word incarnation in Jesus' life gives a perfect unity between man and God. According to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the incarnation of Jesus Christ is without separation, confusion and without any change of Jesus' divine and human natures. He did all things with the exception of sin, and at the same time He was God and man.

The purpose of the incarnation is for the sake of the salvation of human beings. God sent His Son into the world to bring unto Him the lost sheep and He did this by reason of His unspeakable love towards human persons.

### **1.3.3 THE SACRAMENTS**

According to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church there are seven sacraments and these are Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, Holy Communion, Anointing of the sick, Matrimony, and Holy Orders. In the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, and Holy Communion are very necessary for every believer. The sacrament of matrimony is very important for every Christian, because the Church believes that the sacrament of matrimony is for the procreation of the human person as well as for the Kingdom of God. However, the Church needs a minister for the sake of spreading the Good News, and therefore according to God's will, one can receive Holy Orders to serve God and the People of God.

The sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Holy Orders cannot be repeated when they are valid and bestowed on one person. Hence, these three sacraments are given to the candidate for once and forever. A sacrament is not a mere symbol or sign of the New Covenant and is not a mere outward ritual, because it is a real channel of God's grace to human nature.

### **1.3.4 APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION**

Christ is the one who gives apostolic authority, and therefore He has chosen the apostles for the mission of salvation. Hence, the authority of the patriarch and bishops are derived from Christ. The authority of the Orthodox Church should be respected by Christians, by the official government, as well as by other religions here on earth.

In the New Testament, it was the apostles who consecrated bishops and deacons for the work of the community. They are elected by the Holy Spirit, because it is God who had chosen His people for the sake of His Kingdom. The Holy Spirit confirms to the community whether the election is true or not. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church applies the same process for the ministry of the Church services by the power of the Holy Spirit. If the Church does not accept any minister for Holy Orders, the consecration of that person is not valid.

### 1.3.5 THE VENERATION OF THE VIRGIN MARY

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church honours the Blessed Virgin Mary who is Mother of God. She is the saint of saints and therefore she is venerated by the grace of God. The Mother of God, Mary, has a very special place in the Ethiopian cult and devotion to her. In fact, Ethiopia is known as the Country of Mary Mother of God, because the people of Ethiopia love Our Lady, Mother of God. The other thing is that there are many miracles which have been performed in the name of Mary.

*Our Lady is commemorated every month and there are more than thirty feasts of Mary in a year. The name of Mary is very popular in Ethiopia. For instance, her name is given to boys and girls. The other thing is that her name is called innumerable in many Churches, because the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is erected in her honour.<sup>10</sup>*

### 1.3.6 THE HONOUR OF SAINTS

The veneration of saints is given honour according to the Church's doctrine. According to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the word "KIDUS" means "Holy", and the word itself came from Geez language. So the Church says that to be called a saint in the Church is to be named a servant of God.

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<sup>10</sup> Aymro Wondmagegnehu, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, Published by Ethiopian Orthodox Mission, Addis Ababa, 30 June 1970, pp. 105-107.

## **1.4. THE ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO RELIGION AND INCULTURATION**

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is one of the ancient Churches to be considered as a traditional religion in Ethiopia. The people of Ethiopia worship God by nature in different ways, because the traditional faith of Ethiopians honours the Supreme Being in all their lives. Therefore, at the same time the Ethiopian Orthodox Church follows the same traditional faith in order to worship God all the time. Hence, culture and faith go together in the lives of the Ethiopian people and have never been separated in the Church. For instance, the liturgical celebration is inculturated by the local language and the Geez rite. The Church buildings, literature and arts make the Church's life colourful. These include the liturgical celebration, Church buildings, Geez language, dress of the clergy, literature and arts of the Church.

### **1.4.1 THE LITURGICAL CELEBRATION**

The Ethiopian liturgical celebration is known as the Rite of Geez. This liturgical celebration has its own forms when the priest celebrates Mass in the Church. The Mass should be celebrated every day by an Ethiopian priest and the Christians should participate at least once a week as well as for the feast of Christmas, the feast of Easter, the feasts of angels, saints and Mary Mother of God.

### **1.4.2 CHURCH MUSIC**

The Church is very proud of composing church music for the service of the Mass and other functions. As is known, African music and dance present a challenge for Africans, and therefore the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has given a lot of contributions to the Coptic Churches and to other religions by composing traditional songs and dances. The function of the music is to

solemnify the feast, making it grand and exultant on festivals of joy, but sometimes the music can be made for the seasons of penance and for services of the dead.

St Yared was a famous monk in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and he composed the music of the Church in Ethiopia. It was he who invented the three modes of chanting in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The three styles of singing are called Geez, Ezel and Ararai. The music of Geez is sung during festivals, on Sundays and normal days. The tune is very different from Ezel music and Ararai. The music of Ezel is sung during the Advent period and it is also different from other styles of singing. The music of Ararai is sung during funeral ceremonies and it is also different from other music styles.

#### 1.4.3 CHURCH BUILDINGS

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has its own church buildings. The forms and architecture of the church buildings are designed by Ethiopian artists, but the model of the church buildings have similarity with the other Coptic Churches. Especially Alexandrian and Egyptian church buildings have similarity with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church keeps its traditional heritage, because it follows the Old Testament tradition as well as its own culture for the development of its faith in the Church.

*The Church building has a three-fold division. The outside part of the three concentric divisions is called the ambulatory which is called "KENE MAHLE,". The word "KENE MAHLE" means "the place where hymns are sung and where the Debtaras or Cantors (singers) stand." The next chamber is the Keddest, the Nave, where Communion is administered to the people. The third part is the innermost one where the Tabot, the Ark rests. In the third part only the priest is allowed to enter and offer the Mass. The Christians are allowed to attend the*

*Mass only in the second part of the Church so that they can celebrate the liturgy with the priest.*<sup>11</sup>

#### 1.4.4 GEEZ LANGUAGE

The official language of the Church is Geez and is used only in the liturgical celebration and other ceremonies. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been using this Geez language from the earliest times. The language was considered as a language for worshipping God. In the early period the Geez language was used in the government, and was taken as the language of the law in Ethiopia.

#### 1.4.5 CHURCH LITERATURE

The literature of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church belongs purely to Ethiopia, because the Orthodox Church in Ethiopia composed it through its scholars. For instance, St Yared was one of the composers of Church music and was an artist throughout his life. Hence, the Ethiopian Church literature is an expression of the country and the nature of the Ethiopian people. So there is no other Church which has the Ethiopian Orthodox Church literature, and the Church is also very proud to have this historical literature. Much of Ethiopian literature has not been published. However, there is much literature existing in manuscripts in Ethiopia. There are four periods of Ethiopic literature.

1. The first is the Aksumite period and is called the period of Holy Scripture. It is the translation of the Rules of Pachomius.
2. The second period is known as that of the Church Hymn and is called “Weddase Maryam” which means “Praises of Mary.”

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 41-54.

3. The third period of literature is called the Golden Age of Ethiopic Literature and is known as the Book of Light.
4. The fourth period of literature is known as the Faith of the Fathers, the superiority of Christians, and contains great theological works.

#### 1.4.6 DRESS OF THE CLERGY

The dress of the clergy is very attractive and made from *Shamma*. Shamma cloth is the distinctive feature of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The priest has a headdress known as Sashe. The headdress is an identification of the clergy and therefore gives them a particular rank as a member of the hierarchy. Bishops wear a big round black cap, black soutane with flowing sleeves, a pectoral cross and a large black scarf and carry a small hand-cross for blessing the Christians.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE CHURCH'S LIFE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP**

### **2.1. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT.**

From the earliest times the unity between the Church and state has been in harmony and their harmonious cooperation was for mutual assistance, both for right justice and for the development of Christianity in Ethiopia. Moreover, most of the emperors were pious and had an intense interest in theology. One of the reasons is that Ethiopia is known as a Christian country, and the traditional faith which was received from Israel became the basic Christian faith in Ethiopia. For instance, Bishops were invited for important meetings at the palace of the emperor. They used to seat themselves before the Emperor of Ethiopia for the national and other feasts. Hence, there is no question as to the participation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the political and national life of Ethiopia.

*For the administration of the country and political movement, the Orthodox Church has its own task to fulfil its responsibility. For instance, when His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie, went to fight for his country from abroad, he was accompanied by the Patriarch Basileos. During the time of war, the Church has always marched to the battle field and helped the*

*Emperor and Ethiopian armies. The Church blessed the armies and was involved fully in politics from the very beginning.<sup>12</sup>*

History can tell still of the martyrdom of many priests, bishops and Christians during the war between Ethiopia and Italy. As a further proof of the strong relationship between the Orthodox Church and state, Abunas Abraham, Petros and many Church leaders gave their lives for their country in solidarity with the Ethiopian government. Haile Selassie was always deeply concerned with the Ethiopian Church to promote its progress inside and outside the country. Whenever the Church prepared for a feast, or some official conference, His Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie, the Emperor of Ethiopia used to participate for any ceremony or feast in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

## **2.2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND CHALCEDONIAN AND NON-CHALCEDONIAN CHURCHES.**

Even though the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is considered as a non-chalcedonian Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has its own rules for its Christians in Ethiopia.

*The Church has a relationship with chalcedonian Churches which is just in some respect a fraternal relationship. However, the Ethiopian Church has no canonical relationship with the*

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid pp. 112 - 114.

*chalcedonian Churches. There is not even a relationship of communion with them. She has only a sense of Christian unity with the chalcedonian Churches.*<sup>13</sup>

During the late nineteenth century, the chalcedonian Orthodox Churches made efforts for the progress of the Ethiopian missionaries in the country. Later the representatives of Greek, Russian, Rumanian, and Yugoslavian Churches visited the Church of Ethiopia several times. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church wanted to bring more solidarity between its Church and the chalcedonian Churches. Especially the Russian Orthodox Church assisted the Ethiopian Orthodox Church by opening funds for schools, hospitals, and for the equipment of Church properties.

Many Ethiopian seminarians who want to become priests in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church have been going for further studies to Russia. The idea is that the Orthodox Churches, whether they are chalcedonian or non-chalcedonian, all want to keep their unity as brotherhood and take a part in the conference for the common Orthodoxy. All in all, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in her relationship with both chalcedonian and non-chalcedonian Churches identifies itself for the oneness of Christianity in Jesus Christ.

*The unity of all the faithful in the world is to bring solidarity in the Spirit of God. The same Spirit unites the Church in one body of Christ as the bond of peace and spreads the Good News to all of the world .*<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid pp. 116 –120.

<sup>14</sup> Ephesians 4: 3.

## 2.2.1 THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND NON-CHALCEDONIAN CHURCHES

In 1964 the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had a meeting for theological consultation. The reason for the meeting was to have an organization for the Oriental Orthodox Churches. These are Armenian, Coptic of Egypt, Syrian, and Indian.

*The relationship among the non-chalcedonian Churches is not only limited to having brotherhood relations, but also the relationship proposed to work hand in hand in the missionary activities; for instance, to have a theological centre together, the pastoral activities by evangelization of the Good News and to bring up civilizations in the country. In other words, they want to keep their solidarity among the non-Chalcedonian Churches and have one faith.*<sup>15</sup>

## 2.3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ETHIOPIA.

I would like to mention the source of Christianity and its foundation from the time of the Apostolic period and towards our time. In fact, both Churches had one source of faith and were united in many pastoral activities. However, Christian unity was lost for a long time, due to some division, because of some doctrinal confusion between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. Nevertheless the two Churches have come to realize that Christ brought one life and one Church that represents the Kingdom of God. So the leaders of the two Churches have planned to solve the problem of division among themselves, which is considered the destruction of the doctrinal aspect. For the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Christian unity is a deep mystery of

<sup>15</sup> Aymro Wondmagegnehu, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, Published by the Ethiopian Orthodox Mission, Addis Ababa, 30 June, 1970, pp. 120-122.

divine reality and human responsibility. So the aim of the Church is to have one faith and reconciliation between human nature and in one God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has brought a new understanding of social work. Hence, the Church's collaboration of pastoral work and communal life became more open both within and outside the Church. It is true that the Churches need the grace of God in order to unite the people of Ethiopia in one Christian faith.

For instance, the Roman Catholic Church bishops and the bishops of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church have proclaimed their hopes for Christian unity in Ethiopia, because they said even Christ wishes Christian unity in all religions.

*It is not an improvization but the culmination of many decades of work and prayer throughout the whole Christian world." The Roman Church in Rome argued that the Holy See has more than once made the first step, since the Catholic Pope and bishops have launched quite solemn and direct appeals for reunion with the Eastern Churches as well as with the protestant Churches.*<sup>16</sup>

When the Ethiopian Orthodox Church tried to have unity with the Catholic Church, the evangelization system of the Jesuit missionaries was unacceptable to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Hence, the Orthodox Church had stopped their relations with the Roman Catholic Church. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church said that conversion was not from one Christian faith to another Christian faith. However, the Ethiopian Church has never tended to fuse with the Catholic missionaries who have come to work in Ethiopia. Later, the Franciscan Capuchins created a new fraternal work with the Orthodox Church in most pastoral works in Ethiopia. Other

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<sup>16</sup> Maximos IV sayegh, *Patriarch of Anthioch and the East of Alexandria and of Jerusalem, The Eastern Churches and Catholic Unity*, New York, 1963, pp. 77 -104.

Catholic missionaries have started to have a relationship with the Orthodox Church and created a mutual sisterhood in their pastoral works. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has begun to respect and work together with the Roman Catholic Church in Ethiopia. The two Churches have come to an agreement to work hand in hand for the benefit of their unity. So the early confusion between the two Churches did not leave enmity for long among the Christians of Orthodox and Catholic Churches in Ethiopia. Although the two Churches have different doctrines, their aim and pastoral goal is the same, and therefore in many liturgical aspects and on the point of their cultures have the same pastoral goals.

### **2.3.1 THE CHURCHES KEEP THEIR CULTURE TOGETHER**

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church's faith and acts are within the sphere of its famous culture of exceptional interest. In the history of art and literature, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic Church have shared many things in common. Hence, they are struggling for the development of their historical manuscripts. They still build the historical arts and most attractive literatures in Ethiopia. For instance, among the ancient Church buildings, arts and literatures are found in Aksumite, in Lalibela, and in Dabre Libanose.

Although these historical places belong to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church also has responsibility to preserve the historical places of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Geez Rite is one of the best in Africa and the two Churches celebrate this Geez Rite during liturgical celebrations. The origin of this Ethiopian Geez Rite goes back to the fourth century and is extremely rich in symbolism and spiritual content.

Culture and its inheritance in Ethiopia have in the first place to be considered as a part of the Ethiopian wealth. So each and every Ethiopian should keep the culture so that our faith can remain one in different religions. Another way of developing the Ethiopian culture is through the

process of evangelization in the local language, so that people can understand and have stronger union between these two Churches.

### 2.3.2 THE LIFE OF CHRISTIANITY IN BOTH ORTHODOX AND CATHOLIC CHURCHES.

Ethiopia as a nation has many outstanding qualities, and its wealth in spiritual approach is seen in both Churches. Above all, the quality of Ethiopian Christianity is seen as a root of the Church evangelization in its evangelical mission. Hence, the Christian heritage is the most prominent, particularly in Ethiopia and its faith became the fidelity to Christian tradition. So the Ethiopian Orthodox Church believes that although doctrine brings differences between the faith of Orthodox and Catholic religions, the faith of the Ethiopian people is one and united as one nation.

*Historically, Ethiopia was the most known Christian country, well known as a Christian country inside and outside the country. Most pages of this history are known as the glory of God in the country as well as in Africa.*<sup>17</sup>

### 2.3.3 THE CHURCHES AND THEIR MISSIONS IN ETHIOPIA

The missionary life brought unity in the Churches of Ethiopia. This mission or apostolate has created a partnership between Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The two Churches have different approaches in their missionary activities. However, the two Churches have learnt how to progress for the work of their mission to the poor, mission to cultural developments, and mission for evangelization.... For instance, the two Churches have come to organize the liturgical rite and keep their historical Churches. One of the things which I

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<sup>17</sup> Dr. Abba Ayala Takahaymanot, *Relations between Catholic and the Ethiopian Orthodox as They should be today*, Published in "Documentation Service" Addis Ababa, Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat, 1979, p. 79.

discovered is that nowadays the Ethiopian Orthodox Church promotes missionary activities by giving priority to ecumenism. The Church also merits the special presence of God among the people of Ethiopia.

As the Gospel of Matthew says, “*Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.*” it may be good for the mission of the Church to work together. Among the important ecumenical matters and means of contact with the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church has contributed a lot in the development of Geez Rite and liturgical celebration.

This Ethiopian Geez Rite began in the Orthodox Church in the early period and the Church takes this Geez Rite as the language of the Church. Later, the Geez rite became more common and popular in the Catholic Church. The Churches are inculturated by the local culture and the same culture became more effective for the spread of the Good News in Ethiopia. Even the African Synod has encouraged the inculturation of the Christian faith in Africa. So the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches have arrived at a fast way of developing missionary activities within a short period by working together for the development of Ethiopian culture. Moreover, the Catholic Church has started absolute friendship with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in order to develop their common ideas and ecumenism.

#### **2.3.4 MUTUAL FRATERNAL WITNESSES**

The evangelization system of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was only the proclamation of the Good News to its Christians in the past years. However, later, the Church has changed the method of its mission to work with the Catholic Church in some pastoral issues. Especially the two Churches have shown their fraternal witnesses by common pastoral activities. For instance, the Catholic Church invites the Orthodox Church during festivals and other occasional days. At the same time the Ethiopian Orthodox Church invites the Catholic Church during occasional

days and other festivals. The collaboration between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church became a more intimate friendship, because the Churches believed that, if the Churches in Ethiopia are one, Ethiopians would worship their God in one faith.

*The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has brought a new concept for the solidarity with the Catholic. Today the Orthodox Church's position is to create a better atmosphere with the Catholic Church so that the people of Ethiopia might live as brothers and sisters in one Almighty God. These pastoral works in both Churches have created a mutual fraternal relationship which has never been before for supporting the Christian faith in Ethiopia.*<sup>18</sup>

One of the greatest interests in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is ecumenism, and it stresses the development of theological, cultural, social and other pastoral activities in Ethiopian. The pastoral activities practised between the two Churches for the spiritual development and social life in towns and villages. The other relation of the Churches is to support one another for funerals, for Tuskars which is Church feasts, weddings, and even the organization of the Mahaber. The Christian social life offers a wonderful atmosphere and occasion for the extension of ecumenism. This sort of dialogue and communion of life is very conducive to ecumenism. In this case, it is also very evident that the unity of Christianity cannot be affected by any enemy.

## **2.4. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND ISLAM IN ETHIOPIA.**

From the seventh to the tenth century the followers of Islam invaded north Africa and the middle of East Africa up to the Indian Ocean. This kind of Islamic movement had reached to the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 79 –80.

Red Sea. Hence, the relationship of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church with Alexandria and the other Christian world was interrupted. *In the ninth century an opponent of the Christian religion rose from Yodit in the Jewish community in Ethiopia. At the beginning of the sixteenth century Ethiopia was engaged in a struggle with Mohammedan invaders.*<sup>19</sup> However, the Christian Churches were established and parishioners were integrated nationwide in Tigray, Amahara, region which is Gojjam, and northern Shoa. At the same time the Islamic religion spread from the Somali coast, eastern Shoa and the southern part of the states of Dewaro and Bale.

To understand why evangelization was so slow in Ethiopia, it is important to remember that the Islamic movement entered Ethiopia by the influence of Arabs. The prophet Mohammed was alive as a refugee running from the private interest to extend his religion in most Arab countries and the eastern part of Africa.

*The Ethiopian monarchs and Church tried to face the Muslims movement and challenge hand in hand whereby they could respect one another. Later the monks, especially those who lived in Dabra Asbo ( Libanos) in Shewa, were organized to go south and west where the Muslims lived. The Ethiopian Church converted many pagans and Muslims during that time.*<sup>20</sup> In other words, Christianity was spread in most of the regions of Ethiopia. So the Ethiopian people lived as one in faith together and learnt how to respect one another.

#### 2.4.1 THE PRESENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND ISLAM.

Although the people of Ethiopia have involved their lives in different religions, for the Orthodox Tewahedo Christians, and even for the Muslim followers, it is difficult to separate

<sup>19</sup> Donald Levine, N., *Greater Ethiopia : The Evolution of a Multiethnic Society*, The University of Chicago Press, 1974, pp. 40 –64.

<sup>20</sup> Abba Paulos Patriarch of Ethiopia, *The Church of Ethiopia : A Panorama Of History And Spiritual Life*, Published in Addis Ababa - Ethiopia, 1970., pp. 11 –15.

their social life due to religion. So Muslims and Christians have the same identity by culture in Ethiopia and at the same time they share the same social life in their daily lives. So the Church advised its Christians to love and live with fellow Muslim followers. One of the aims of the Orthodox Church is to create a good atmosphere and to be an example in its pastoral work. In other words, the Church should live with them and spread the Good News, so that Muslims can listen to the word of God and be converted to Christianity.

The social life of the Ethiopian people brings together all religions to respect one another. The people of Ethiopia have realized that to live in the social life is a way of learning how to love, how to help the needy, and respect one another. The social life of the Ethiopian people became more like one blood relationship among the Ethiopian people. So between the Orthodox Church and Islam religions, there is nothing which prevents them from unity.

## **2.5. AVOIDING ETHNICITY WITHIN CHURCHES AND OTHER RELIGIONS**

In Ethiopia, the Orthodox Church and other religions give priority to the development of unity and social work among different ethnic groups. One of the reasons is that the people of Ethiopia should work together for a better spiritual life and economical purpose, so that the people of Ethiopia can have unity in their spiritual and social lives. This social life brings mutual love among Christians and other religions. It is true that ethnicity is much influenced in different cultures. Hence, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church said that ethnicity is a serious problem inside and outside the Church. So the Church in the name of God should stand against this kind of destruction in Ethiopia.

### 2.5.1 WHAT IS COMMUNAL LIFE IN ETHIOPIA ?

First I would like to thank almighty God, for making us one nation. These favourable conditions create a lot of things to get solidarity. As one nation the Ethiopian people have lived together by hunting, fishing, in agriculture, and having one faith for many years. However, nowadays for most Ethiopians and Eritreans it is sad to be separated into two groups. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been trying to bring these two peoples together. In fact, the Church has one stand and opinion for the development of Christianity between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The general pattern of this first evolutionary transformation was one of increasing ethnicity among a number of homogeneous cultures and it has also been taken as one concept of social life.

A glance at the history of Ethiopia, during reign of the Empire Menelek shows that the social life of Ethiopia was divided into different categories. For instance, the Oromo culture was fragile and the Amahara tribe was durable. The Oromo tribe was inclined to associate with one another as equals and work as farmers all the time. The Amahara tribe was disposed to rule the country and have power in the Churches in most cases. The other power of the Amahara tribe was to belong to the royal family and therefore everything was controlled by only the Amahara tribe. Throughout the kingdom of Ethiopia and for long period the Amahara tribe was involved in politics, religion, culture, and the establishment of the hierachical order of the Church.

The settlement of a vast ecological area took place by people of kindred traditions engaged in a loose network of interrelationship with others. The expansion of the Amahara durable tribe had priority in most regions of Ethiopia. The formation through the spread of

Christianity and Islam belongs to the Galla migrations of vast corridors of ethnic intercourse.

The integration of Galla was with other ethnic groups and with the national centre.

So far, each and every tribe was considered as having its own part for work in politics, religious life and in agricultural development. However, the present Ethiopian Orthodox Church's position is to bring the tribes together as one nation so that people would not be divided by the mentality of tribalism. Besides possessing a substantial number of common cultural elements, the people of greater Ethiopia exhibit a characteristic mode of relating to original intrusive influences. This kind of mode is called creative incorporation, and this kind of tendency was brought about by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church teaching. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church not only teaches the doctrine of the Church, but also has responsibility to teach the Bible. The Ethiopian culture should be kept as a personal dignity of the Ethiopian people. So the Church always teaches the Word of God and the historical faith of the Ethiopian people.

Through these various forms of interaction Ethiopians, diverse in traditions, became acquainted and developed customs for relating to one another. The fact is that the people of Ethiopia are relatively homogeneous in the way of living together, because they share their cultures in the common aboriginal prototype of daily life. Hence, the people of Ethiopia support one another in most ways of living.

## CHAPTER THREE : THE FAITH OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

### 3.1. THE CHURCH'S MISSION AND PASTORAL ACTIVITIES.

Pastoral activities have always been considered as a responsibility in the daily life of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

*However, the Church did not limit itself to the teaching of doctrine and faith to the Ethiopian people, but has also accepted both external and internal missionary activities as an urgent issue. Hence, the propagation of the faith and the foundation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's mission are found in 1963.<sup>21</sup>*

The urgent pastoral idea was to bring fellowship with other religions, as well as developing the system of education in the community. The Church believes that the proclamation of the glory of God is pastorally urgent. In fact, the Church has different dimensions in developing its missionary method in Ethiopia. For instance, there are separate teams for proclaiming the gospel, morality, social teaching and the introduction of Ethiopian culture into the Church.

The people of Ethiopia, "Cush" in Hebrew, had good communications with other countries. That is to say, the Church's missions and its pastoral relations or contacts were with Israel, Egypt, Libya and Persia. This was not only for commercial matters, but also in spiritual matters. The Ethiopian Church had contact with those countries from the beginning for the development of trade and also mostly in relation to its religious heritage as well.

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<sup>21</sup> Aymro Wondmagegnehu, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, Published by the Ethiopian Orthodox Mission, Addis Ababa, 30 June, 1970, p. 112.

Ethiopia was one of the earliest countries to take on pastoral activities by opening monasticism and developing its traditional religion. Moreover, there are also various historical sources and texts in scripture that mention Ethiopia. The origin of faith in the God of Israel was accepted in Ethiopia during the period of Queen Shibus. One of the requirements for the subsequent acceptance of Christianity dates from the period of Queen Sheba. Through her marriage to King Solomon, she brought Israel's religion to her country.

### 3.1.1 FAITH AND WORK IN THE CHURCH

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church believes that for the mission in the Church and outside the Church to succeed one has to believe in God and live in Him. The other procedure will follow step by step in the missionary activities. Mission means to be sent by someone for some task and to fulfil what God wants us to work for His Kingdom. The Bible says that faith and work should go together at the same time.

*In the Letter of James the necessity of both faith and work is illustrated by the examples of Abraham and of Rehab.* <sup>22</sup>

According to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, all good works are the fruit of faith, because without faith we cannot do good works. However, work also comes from faith. For instance, *St Paul says that one who has a true faith does good deeds.* <sup>23</sup>

### 3.1.2 WORSHIP IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

According to traditional sources, after the official acceptance of Christianity as the state religion, the Emperor Ezana was the first Christian ruler of Ethiopia and he built the magnificent Church in Aksum. With reference to Church services, one can distinguish two types of services in the Ethiopian Church. These are the services for respectively indoor and outdoor worship. Since the

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<sup>22</sup> James 2: 14 –26.

<sup>23</sup> 2 Corinthians 13.

Church advises the following of a spiritual life, the pastoral work is not only for ministers of the Church but also includes all the members of the Church. Consequently, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church gives pastoral instruction for its Christians for a better moral life. So each Christian has the responsibility of participating fully in the celebration of the liturgy. The members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church should attend Mass at least once in a week and on feast days. Apart from participating, Christians are obliged to confess by fasting and proclaiming the word of God.

*Fasting is strictly observed by all faithful members of the Church on the approximately 250 fast days in the year. However, the fasting regulations are not compulsory for everyone. Especially children are exempt from fasting until the age of seven. Sick people also may be excused from the law of fasting, because the Ethiopian Orthodox Church takes care of its members by praying for their sicknesses.*<sup>24</sup>

In fact, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has seven official fasting periods. These are namely, every Wednesday and Friday for the 50 days after Easter, the Lenten fast of 55 days; the fast of Nineveh, which commemorates Jonas' preaching, on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of the third week before Lent; the Vigils or Gahad of Christmas and Epiphany; the fast of the Apostles, which has a minimum of 14 days and a maximum 44 days. The fast of prophets has 43 days fasting and the last one is the fasting of 15 days for the Assumption in August.

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<sup>24</sup> Adane Taye, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith, Order of Worship and Ecumenical Relations*, Published Tenssae publishing House, Addis Ababa, July 1996, pp. 72 · 81.

## 3.2. THE OFFICIAL TEACHING OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH.

The Church believes that the Holy Scripture is one of the foundations of the Christian faith and teaches officially the Word of God. However, the Word of God is not contained in the Bible only, but it is also found in the Church's traditional teaching. As far as reading the Bible in the Church is concerned, the ordinances decree that only the ministers should do so. Therefore, ordinary Christians do not read the Bible in the Church. However, the Church advises its Christians to read the Bible and keep the commandment of the Church.

### 3.2.1 THE CHURCH'S TEACHING ON THE HOLY TRINITY

According to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's formulation, the Holy Trinity is one God in three Persons. The Holy Trinity had no beginning and exists for ever and ever. The Divine Persons are one in everything and equal among themselves. They have one nature, one authority, one Lordship, one Godhead, one Divinity and one saving and giving power.

The Father is the first Person in the divine nature. He is the one who sent His only Son, Jesus Christ. The Son is the second Person and the begotten Son of the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who redeemed the world. The Holy Spirit is the third Person, or third hypostasis, who proceeds only from God the Father. St Paul states that the unity of the one divine reality can be revealed in us through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, he greets his community with the words: *“The grace of God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”*

The aim of the Church's teaching on the oneness and unity of the Trinity is to bring the community to one faith in the Trinity. Another aspect of this teaching is the avoidance of confusion and protection of the faithful against false teaching.

### **3.3. THE EVANGELIZATION OF CULTURES AND THE INCULTURATION OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH.**

Inculturation comes from the word “culture”. Culture is a way of living in a certain community whereby people live their lives. I consider that culture is the content of people’s character in the social, cultural and spiritual...life. For instance, Jesus, in His life, accepted the culture of the Jews and He lived with them.

The term inculturation might not be defined as a particular meaning to its word, but it expresses very well one factor of the great mystery of the incarnation of Jesus. In fact, culture and gospel have a different expression and different values as far as people, time and space are concerned. The Word of God is taken seriously according to one’s culture, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has its own culture which identifies its faith and the people of Ethiopia. Hence, the gospel and culture in the concept of spirituality are related to one another. The reason why I say this is that the Church expresses her faith through its culture and the gospel evangelizes by taking the particular culture of Ethiopia. So culture is the channel of spiritual communication by which the gospel can spread throughout the world. The incarnation of Jesus implies the inculturation of the Church. So the Church has come to realise that the development of its culture is very important for it, as well as for the people of Ethiopia.

### 3.3.1 ETHIOPIC OR GEEZ LITERATURE

Geez literature developed from the fifth century and most of the works in the Geez language were produced in religious houses. The Geez language itself originates from Arabic, Syrian and Greek. However, the language itself developed in Ethiopia.

*The Geez language was composed by St Yared. Literarily the Geez language developed well during the Aksumite period in the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. The major achievement of that period was the translation of the Holy Scripture into Geez language.<sup>25</sup>*

### 3.3.2 PAINTING AND MANUSCRIPT ART IN THE CHURCH

Ethiopian presentational art is an exception to this rule. In fact, Ethiopian art has syncretised both oriental and Byzantine artistic models. In the Church, art relies on painting for the decoration of the Church. Consequently, Ethiopian painting is virtually all ecclesiastic.

The imaginative Church artists have beautified and ornamented these paintings with elaborate colour illumination and elegant design. The production of art and other paintings gives colour to the greatest Ethiopian monasteries.

*Ethiopian paintings are characterised by biblical themes and figures. For instance, angels, evangelists, saints, martyrs and other biblical personalities are the subjects of paintings in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.<sup>26</sup>*

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<sup>25</sup> Melakeslame Danashew Kasahune, *The Church of Ethiopia Past and Present*, Printed by Commercial Printing Enterprise, September, 1997, pp. 56 -58.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid pp. 59 – 62.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE PASTORAL WORK OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

### 4.1. THE EVANGELIZATION SYSTEM IN THE CHURCH.

The Church has always relied on the laity to bear witness to the gospel, just as the Apostles were given the task from Jesus Christ. As the Body of Christ, the Church has been given the task of preaching the Good News to all the world. Modern evangelisation emphasises that being involved in the missionary life is to participate in the life of Jesus Christ. So every Christian in the Church should take responsibility for the proclamation of the Good News inside and outside the Church. In other words, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church wants its faithful to witness their faith to others. The general aim of evangelisation is the sanctification of one's fellow people so that Christianity can spread to all corners of Ethiopia.

*In view of the need and urgency of both internal and external missionary activities, all members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church should work for ecumenism. The aim of evangelisation is not only to spread the Good News, but also unity in different Churches.<sup>27</sup>* Hence, the Church is working hand in hand with other religions for ecumenism so that different religions might be one in Christ.

#### 4.1.1 THE CHURCH AND ITS MISSION

The Church is the visible missionary life of Christ in the world. The Spirit is the sanctification of the members of the Church, and therefore the Church always performs its mission in the name of God. Human nature is the reality of visible living things, and has responsibility for the work of Christ in the Church. From the same point of view, the Orthodox

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<sup>27</sup> Donald Attwater, *The Spirit of Eastern Orthodoxy*, Hawthorn Books Publishers, N.Y., 1962, pp. 117-136.

Church reminds its members that Christians are missionaries and should show the real love of God by living in Jesus Christ.

#### **4.1.2 THE CHURCH AND ITS SOCIAL COMMUNICATION**

The Church became more and more active in its missionary life with the rest of the world. One of its aims is to make its faithful informed in all concepts of education. The other concept of the Church is to introduce its faith to other parts of the world. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has started mass media communication for some few years now. Its relation to mass media is to proclaim the Good News to the world, because the new technology gives good opportunities for the Church to spread God's Kingdom.

#### **4.1.3 ETHICS OF WORK WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH**

The social teaching of the Church began a long time ago and has emphasised in different ways the great human significance of work. Work is not only good in the sense that it is useful, but also in the sense that it is something worthy that corresponds to human dignity. This is particularly the work of a human person from the perspective of human need and the theological aspect. The theological aspect of the ethics of work relies on the life of human beings. In fact, human life is a precious gift of God, because human beings have been created in the image and likeness of God. So the Church appeals that the human person should focus on the ethics of work so that human nature can be respected by everyone.

#### **4.2 HUMAN RIGHTS AND DIGNITY IN THE CHURCH.**

Human dignity is the foundation of human rights in all aspects of human life. Human rights are necessary to protect and promote human dignity inside and outside the Church. This human dignity identifies the real human nature and its origin from God's image and likeness.

The ultimate foundation of human rights gives the meaning of human personal identity. The identity of the human person is personal freedom and rationality. The human person is also an image of God. Hence, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has a responsibility to preserve the dignity of the human person spiritually, socially and politically.

To speak of the dignity of the human person is to speak of the worth or value of the concrete existing human being. Dignity identifies the origin of human creation and its freedom. Every human person has the ability of intellectual knowledge to know the creator as well as to create new things by the will of God. Hence, the dignity of the human person is inalienable in the sense that the dignity is given from God, but not from human nature. The human dignity is the norm and standard by which the political, social, and economic structures of life in the world are judged. Human beings exist as finite beings who are called to complete transcendence.

*The greatest threat to human dignity is marginalization, because specifically with human dignity as manifested in and enhanced by work and the theological point of view, the source of the Church's conviction is human reality in the presence of God. The nature of the human person should be treated in all political, social, and spiritual aspects. Human dignity springs from the fact that it is the subject of human works. Hence the Ethiopian Orthodox Church gives priority to human dignity. So the Church has a pastoral communication for the right of human dignity in all aspects inside and outside the country.<sup>28</sup>*

#### 4.2.1 THE PASTORAL TEACHING ON HUMAN DIGNITY

Before the Church communicates with any organisation concerning human rights, its task is to teach the foundation of human dignity in God's image, because one should understand why God created human nature in His image. In fact, it is very clear why He created human nature, and therefore each and every one should know his or her own God for personal dignity. This dignity is something due to the human person so that people might be aware of their likeness to God. In particular, the Church affirms the following fundamental values as essential for human rights ordering of society, political and economic life.

#### 4.2.2 THE DECLARATION OF UNITED NATIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE CHURCH'S REACTION TO IT

In December 1948 the United Nations proclaimed a Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In that connection, I would like to mention some things from the theological point of view. Human rights were given to human beings at the time of creation. God created human nature with dignity, value, uniqueness and responsibility for its own destiny. These rights are given by God to human beings in consequence of the nature of their human unique image.

*The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has agreed on the declaration of human rights. However, the Church has its own positions on human rights and the dignity of a person. Therefore the Church stated some universal issues for human rights. These are the rights to life, liberty and security of a person in the country, in addition to rights of poor people who lack food, clothing, shelter and health care. So the Ethiopian government should provide for the rights of the poor people in the country. Other rights are these; freedom of expression of personal opinion,*

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<sup>28</sup> Interviewed Fr. Estifanose Bharue on 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1999.

*education for the native people and freedom of religion. Furthermore, people have the right to property, work, political participation and a just wage.*<sup>29</sup>

### **4.3. JUSTICE AND PEACE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH.**

It is true that the Church has a very long and rich tradition of teaching on justice and prayer for peace in the country. It is also true, though a regretted fact, that this teaching lacks a corresponding praxis to make it effective. The Church is making many efforts to bring about changes in the Church and in political arena. Its teaching is morally correct in the matters of peace and justice. Justice in the world demands that the right to participation and development has a personal and communal foundation. That foundation is in all aspects based on human dignity and peace for the individual person.

*The Church believes that justice and peace are an integral part of the Christian vocation. Therefore the Christian faith should have a form of charity in all virtues and actions. The ultimate basis of social justice consists in the dignity and basic rights of every person. So justice is founded on the distinction of one person from another as individual characters. However, the Christian approach to justice is love for one another, because Jesus said, " Love one another as I loved you."*<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Interviewed Fr. Estifanose Baharue on 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1999.

<sup>30</sup> Interviewed Fr. Tamer mariam Teklue on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1999.

From the Biblical point of view, justice is the original order of creation that is revealed and realised in the order of this world, namely in the harmonious communion of human beings with God and with one another.

#### **4.4. THE PASTORAL DIFFICULTIES OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH.**

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is very aware that it is going to have many problems on account of pastoral activities. However, Jesus Christ Himself said that anyone who followed Him would carry the cross. Therefore for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church it is not a new issue to suffer in missionary life. One of the reasons is that the Church takes courage from Christ's words to the disciples to go through the whole world and preach the good news.

The Church is very slow in missionary activities due to different factors. In fact, the Church had many difficulties in living as Jesus lived. However, the Church has great admiration for the task that Jesus did for the universal Church. Hence, the Church also makes an effort to work by presenting Jesus as an example for a better spiritual life.

*The Church is facing pastoral difficulties inside and outside the country. According to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, there are some difficulties that prevent the Church from entering quickly into the work of evangelisation.<sup>31</sup>*

##### **4.4.1 THE INFLUENCE OF ARAB COUNTRIES IN ETHIOPIA**

Ethiopia is the nearest country to the neighbouring Arab countries and has become host to many followers of Islam since the time of Mohammed. Although the native Muslims could not attack Christianity in Ethiopia, they have support from outside Arabian countries for the

<sup>31</sup> Interviewed Fr. Estifanos Baharue on 9<sup>th</sup> January, 2000.

propagation of Islam. This purpose of destroying the Christian heritage began already in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

#### **4.4.2 THE AGE OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church became fully the Ethiopian Church a few years ago. Until foreign Patriarchs of Alexandria and Egyptian bishops gave more freedom to the Ethiopian priests and bishops, the Church was ruled strictly from Alexandria. Especially there was a certain limitation for the local priests to go and evangelize and therefore the development of evangelization by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church faced many problems.

#### **4.4.3 LACK OF FUNDS CAN BE THE PROBLEM OF EVANGELIZATION**

It is really a problem for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to raise money for evangelization both inside and outside the country. The Church has faced many problems on account of lack of money. The Church itself is very poor compared with other religions, because its members, like the majority of the members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are poor. Consequently the Church cannot easily develop its missionary projects. Undoubtedly financial difficulties have impeded the Ethiopian Church, but its new method of evangelisation has brought about some challenges for the development of the Church's life. Today the Church has a dynamic missionary life and is establishing itself all over the world.

## CONCLUSION

In concluding the history and pastoral activities of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, I would like to take the opportunity of expressing my admiration to the heads of the Church and the people of Ethiopia, who have kept their original faith until today. Although the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has faced many problems concerning its missionary activities, it has managed to teach the faith of the ancestors to the new generation. In my view, the Ethiopian government should give more support to the Church of Ethiopia in order to spread the culture and faith that began many centuries ago.

It should be noted that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has contributed many things from the political point of view and therefore Ethiopia is one of the outstanding nations in Africa. From the aspect of cultural history the Ethiopian Church has contributed much development for the people of Ethiopia as well as for the country itself.

In spite of the fact that the Church for sixteen hundred years was dependent on the Patriarch of Alexandria, since 1959 the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has managed to get its own Patriarch. The first Patriarch brought new hope for the Church and for the people as well. In the last decade of the 19th century the Emperor Yohannes IV came to realise that the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church had many members. So, after having a local Patriarch in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Church became more active in the development of spiritual, cultural and political perspectives.

Unquestionably, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church today is among the principal non-Chalcedonian Churches. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is not only numbered among the non-Chalcedonian Churches because of its deep-rooted Christian traditions, but also

for its vitality. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has become unique in the Christian world because of its attractive faith, which came originally from Israel, as well as for its unique traditional wealth. For example the Church and monastery buildings and the general life of the people have more attraction for many foreigners.

Today the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church counts approximately sixteen million members. It has 203,268 ecclesiastics, of whom 75,838 are Priests, 67,028, Deacons, 48,269, Defteras and 12,078, Monks. There are 12,596 Church buildings, not including the number of monasteries, which is approaching more than 800 in Ethiopia alone. From the point of view of administration the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has fourteen dioceses, and Church provinces, each headed by an archbishop to control the pastoral activities.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has contributed a great deal to religious instruction in its missionary method and development. The Church is alert in instructing its member for the preparation of clergy, evangelisation and culture. It has a large number of schools throughout the country so that something can be learnt of education, culture and spirituality. For example, the Church has a theological centre, as well as other colleges, and gives many seminars for its Christians. The progress of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has challenged the Church itself and its Christians. I believe that the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church shares its faith with its people and with other foreigners with joy.

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