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(MEANS PASSEVER)



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THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
ORGANIZATION
MARCH OF EVENT
ACTIVITY
AND
ACHIEVEMENT

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H. H. Abuna Merkorios Patriarch of Ethiopia

COVER Picture The Holy Trinity Cathedral Addis Ababa



THE PLACE OF BIBLICAL ETHIOPIA IN THE HISTORY OF THE HOLY LAND

Since it is repeatedly pointed out in history, it has been clear beyond any doubt that the Ethiopian community or denomination was the oldest among the christian denominations which settled in Jerusalem while many other denominations used to come for visiting only on infrequent occasion.

In order to see clearly the background of this event we shall take a brief look at the history of the community relating to the Holy Land.

The first hint as to the presence of Christian Ethiopians in the Holy Land is to be found in the letters from the circle of the Latin Church Father St. Jerome who lived at Bethlehem from 412. His disciples St. Paula and her daughter St. Eustochium wrote to their friends in Rome mentioning among other things, the presence of Ethiopian monks in the Holy Land.

In spite of the fact that there is limitation of written information, the christian world can still distinguish a fairly constant rise of a specific Ethiopian community in the Holy Land beginning from that period and until the Turkish conquest in 1517.

Further more the main source of knowledge about this event throughout the generations until this period are the writings of the European Pilgrims who frequently mention the Ethiopian monks in Jerusalem in their descriptions of their visit to the Holy Land. The earlier writers mostly deal with the piety of the Ethiopians.

The one among the pilgrims to point out where the Ethiopians prayed was P. NICOLO Dapoggibonsi, a Franciscan from Florence who visited the Holy Land in 1347. According to his description, the Ethiopians in Jerusalem in those days used to pray in a chapel called St. Mary of "Golgotha" situated in the church of the Holy Sepulchre, as well as in the chapel of St. Michael.

In the second half of the 15th century the Ethiopians apparently acquired also in that same church, dedicated to the memory of insults and torture our Lord suffered at the hands of the Roman soldiers before His execution. This chapel is described as belonging to the Ethiopians by the German Pilgrim from Nurnberg, Sebald Rieter Sr. who visited the country in 1479. He points out a new property of the Ethiopians in Jerusalem, namely a monastery erected around the cave of David on Mount Zion behind the convent of the Franciscans there.

From 1489 the world have another testimony to affirm that the Ethiopians also possessed privileges in the Tomb of our Lady, near Gethsemani, as well as in the place where our Lady met St. Elizabeth, the Mother of St. John the Baptist at Ein Karem.

The French Franciscan Johan Thénaud who visited the Holy Land during the years 1511-1512 mentions as Ethiopian property the Chapel of the Abraham's Sacrifice, a sanctuary situated next to the chapel of Adam under Golgotha.

The Ethiopian Community in Jerusalem has for several generations engaged the attention of various scholars.

Many of the European pilgrims who met the Ethiopians in Jerusalem have left descriptions of their life, of their property, of their liturgy and their customs.

BIOGRAPHY OF HIS HOLINESS ABUNA MERKORIOS 4th PATRIARCH OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Prior to the christian era the belief that there are historical links between the people of Biblical Ethiopia and the old Israel is firm in Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church stands out as a remarkable example of a church that maintains clear links to the worship which was once performed at the Temple in Jerusalem. This is a tradition which the church has no reason to deny.

The decisive fact in this respect is that the assured Jewish elements have undergone a process of reshaping and reforming consistent with basic christian ideas.

Many priestly families count their genealogies back to the son of Zadok, the high priest who accompanied Menilik as he left Jerusalem with the Ark of covenant in his possession.

It also seems that the division of the church clergy in priest, deacon and debtera is patterned on the Old Testament division between priests and Levites. It is true that the function of the debtera in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is unique and has its most clear parallel in the work of the Levites as this is outlined in 1.Chr. 23:3-5.

The church buildings appear as copies of the Hebrew Temple. Regardless of shape, they are divided into three parts and seem to follow the pattern of the three fold division of the Temple in Jerusalem. The circular church, the most common one, shows this very clearly.

The centre of the Ethiopian Temple was the Tabot, the ark of covenant. It was the Tabot that could assure the holiness of the building.

In general it is historically and traditionally believed that Judaism was practised in Ethiopia before christianity was introduced to. Traditional sources confirm that the so-called Falasha tribe of northern Ethiopia are remnants who were left aside during the introduction of christianity in the country.

In addition the history of the certain Eunuch, the treasurer of the Queen Candace who went to Jerusalem on pilgrimage (Act. 8. 27) gives clear witness to the truth of this belief. John C'risostomos also realizes, in his homily on Pentecost, that the Ethiopians were present in the Holy City on the day of Pentecost.

It is because of all this and other clear evidences that christianity in Ethiopia proved to be the development of Judaism — and the faithful not as gentile but as Jewish christians.

Belonging to times long past, therefore EOC stands to day and is regarded by many as a unique living example of how ancient christian customs have been preserved and respected in the church.

The history continues.

Sources:

- Panorama of history and spiritual life of EOC.
- The History of the Ethiopian community in the Holy Land-by Gerjes Khoury
- The Rights of the Abyssinian E.O.C. in the Holy Places - by H. G. Abuna Philippos

His Grace, Archbishop Merkorios with the former name Zelibanos was born in 1930 E.C. (1938 D.C.) in the vicinity of Aregit Kidane Mehret monastery which is in Gondar diocese Debre Tabour district/ Estie sub-district.

When he was old enough he was sent to school and studied all ecclesiastical subjects at a higher level. Abuna Merkorios became a deacon ordained by the then Gondar diocese's Archbishop Abuna Michael in 1944 E.C. (1952 D.C.).

After graduating in Digua, His Grace returned to his parish and taught Digua in the monastery for 7 Years.

Having a strong spiritual devotion to harmonize monasticism with teaching, His Grace Abuna Merkorios got his monkhood from memhir Hailemariam of Daga Estifanos monastery of Lake Tana the present melake Genet of St. George Church of Bahir - Dar in 1961 E.C. (1969 D.C.).

His Grace Abuna Merkorios later on joined a monastery distinctly known as Gashona in Bahir-Dar district and in accordance to the monastery's tradition, he served the monastery for 2 years.

From there, His Grace came to addis Ababa and served in the Holy Trinity Cathedral and studied the

interpretations of the New Testament and Abushakir.

His Grace also studied his modern education in the Holy Trinity Cathedral school and pursued Further Studies in the then training Centres.

Then, His Grace was assigned as an administrator of Deber - Bisrat St. Gabriel Church. His Grace has exerted there much of his efforts for the construction of the church building and a church hall and for a parish council organization.

His Grace Abuna Merkorios having enough knowledge and having rendered spiritual services conscientiously, the Church, in her 13 bishops election where the Holy Synod, the Clergy and laity were involved, in January (Tir) 13, 1971 E.C. (1979 D.C.) unanimously elected. His Grace as Bishop was assigned to be the bishop of Ogaden district. There, His Grace has accomplished his missionary activity by reconstructing churches that were destroyed by the enemy and building new churches, comforting and evangelizing the people and teaching them about the love they should have for their country Ethiopia because they were disturbed due to the then prevailing war. After that His Grace Abuna Merkorios was assigned to Gondar diocese in 1971 E.C.

(1979) D.C. His Grace had contributed significantly in teaching, comforting and revealing the real contemporary situation to the community by going around the district of Chilga and Debark and was successful in convincing many people to continue their peaceful life. His Grace was appointed as archbishop by His Holiness Abuna Teklehaimanot in 1972 E.C. (1980 D.C.) as a result of his fruitful efforts.

His Grace on his part has been trying his best to bring the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to self-sufficiency. Thus organizing and strengthening of the laity in parish council, being a spiritual activity, His Grace has made possible the establishment and strengthening of parish councils expansion of Sunday schools, safe guarding of antiquities, distributing of spiritual books, church magazines and news papers to the laity and the implementation of the KaleAwadi with which the church is administered.

His Holiness Abuna Merkorios has many new churches built and many dilapidated churches rebuilt in the Gondar diocese.

The opening of spiritual boarding schools and establishment of clergy training centers for training the clergy

in handi-craft was successful accomplished by His Grace.'

His Grace personally has created a conducive foundation for gaining a salary to those traditional school teaching scholars to enable them teach without facing burden and problems as they had no means of living earlier such that they could render and transmit their knowledge to the new generation.

The diocesan workers were also given an opportunity to improve their skill and knowledge, their expenses being covered by the diocese.

In His Holiness' archbishopric period, 43 churches have been constructed, and 185 churches renewed.

His Grace has done his best by requesting aid from a donor and installing a grinding mill that works with kerosene in the great monastery of Bethlehem which is in Gayint district, so that the clergy and Digua students there could be self-reliant.

Generally, His Grace was very successful in putting in to effect the Kale Awadi of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and organizing parish Councils and as a result of this, Gondar diocese was raised to stand 1st in the yearly evaluation made by the National Parish council Organization.

Based on this evaluation, the diocese was the 1st in 1975,



H. H. Worthy of Prizes for his fruitful services when he was a diocesan Archbishop in Gondar

1976, 1977, 1978 (E.C) 1983-1986 D.C and 2nd in 1978 (E. C) 1986 (D.C) and 1st in 1979 E.C. 1987 (D.C). Thus, Gondar diocese stood 1st for 5 times in continuity and was awarded prizes.

As has been globally mentioned previously, His Grace Abuna Merkorios, on top of being a father who has fulfilled his spiritual mission has been elected by the Gondar-Zuria district, Dembia election centre in the 1979 E.C (1987 D.C) a National Shengo member election, because His Grace was famous for his being a strong father.

His Grace, Abuna Merkorios is a father who respects the law and regulation of the church, knows administration conscientious, respectful to guests, considerate and reserved.

Thus, in accordance to the guidelines of the Ethiopian

Orthodox Church Holy Synod criteria for the patriarchal election, among the three candidate, Archbishop Merkorios was elected by majority vote on August 26, 1988 as the 4th patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Requesting donor organizations, His Grace also has tried to his full capacity to establish weavery, Knitting and sewing and to install grinding mills and bakery in certain churches in order to render services to the community in the parishes.

In addition to this, His Grace had built halls around churches that could serve for preaching the Gospel, Sunday schools teaching and community meeting. His Grace has also done what is possible to have wells dug and water pumps installed so that the community is provided with potable water.

ABUNA MERKORIOS ENTHRONED AS PATRIARCH OF ETHIOPIA

His Holiness Abuna Merkorios was enthroned as 4th Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church on the 4th of September 1988 at the Holy Trinity Cathedral, Addis Ababa.

Following his consecration, His Holiness Abuna Merkorios assured the congregation attending the highly colourful ceremony that he will do his level best to fulfill his responsibility with which he has been entrusted.

His Holiness pointed out that he was fully aware of the magnitude of the task which encounters the leader of a Church with history dating back to the millennia with a rich cultural, literary, theological and liturgical tradition.

Abuna Merkorios, formerly Archbishop of Gondar diocese was elected patriarch on August 28 by member of the Holy synod and church representatives coming from the 16 dioceses and Monasteries. Abuna Merkorios is 50 years old and he was elected patriarch in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Holy Synod.

Early in the morning, members of the clergy attired in a special church vestments took their assigned places in the Holy Trinity Cathedral followed by arrival of distinguished guests and me-

members of the diplomatic Corps. Among the guests present, was Dr. Dibekulu Zewde, Minister of Religious Affairs in the Council of Ministers.

The newly elected patriarch was welcomed by Archbishops and clergy carrying golden crosses and the Gospel accompanied by a choir group, singing "Blessed is he who comes in the name of God".

After the liturgical service a brief explanation of the electoral process and the leadership's responsibility of the patriarch was given. Archbishop Abraham, the interim patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church said on behalf of the Holy Synod that the election was conducted democratically.

His Holiness Abuna Merkorios stated that the role of the church should not be limited only to spiritual affairs but has to include various development and social activities,

On the enthronement occasion representatives of sister orthodox churches, different denominations and ecumenical organization's delegations have made speeches of solidarity and friendship and have given different presents to His Holiness.

His Holiness Abuna Merkorios succeeded the late patriarch Abuna Tekle Hai-manot who passed away in June 1988 after 12 years of service as patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.



H. H. during his Enthronement



The above pictorial views show the events of the enthronement of the 4th patriarch.

MESSAGES OF CONGRATULATIONS READ AT THE CEREMONY



In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit one True God, Blessed be His name for ever and ever Amen.

Fraternal and cordial greetings to our dearly Beloved Brother in the Lord, His Holiness Abuna Merkorios, Patriarch of Ethiopia.

Dearly Beloved Brother in Christ, Your Holiness,

We greet Your Holiness with great joy in the occasion of Your Enthronement as chief shepherd and patriarch of our ancient and honoured sister Orthodox Church of Ethiopia. On behalf of our Holy Episcopal Synod of our priests and people, and on our own behalf as Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan, we send to your Holiness and to the bishops, priests and people our most heartfelt felicitations and sincere good wishes on this joyous occasion.

My God grant your Holiness a long and fruitful ministry in the service of your people.

Because of our advanced age and uncertain health, we are ourselves unable to be personally present with Your Holiness on this joyous occasion. Our brother His Grace Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios, Metropolitan of Delhi, and the Secretary for Inter-Church Relations of our Holy

Episcopal Synod will represent us and our church on this occasion, and bring you this message in person.

We hold our beloved sister orthodox Church of Ethiopia in high esteem and in sincere affection. Our two churches have both passed through many great vicissitudes in history, and God has been merciful in preserving us in the true faith throughout the centuries.

May the Holy spirit grant Your Holiness the fullness of His gifts, keep you in His ways strengthen you with His might, and guide you by His wisdom. May the Lord bless all your venerable bishops, priests and people. We wish to express on this occasion our genuine wish and sincere hope that Your Holiness will soon be enabled by God to bless our church and our people with a personal visit in the near future.

Your brother in the Lord Baselius Mar Thoma Mathew I Catholicos of the East.

Your Beatitude,

It is my privilege to express to you, on behalf of Dr. Emilio Castro, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, the profound joy and sincere greetings of the WCC on the occasion of your election and enthronement as patriarch of

the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

We are most grateful to you for the invitation to be present at this important moment in the life of the church.

The WCC has a double reason for rejoicing in this celebration:

Firstly, in commemorating last month the 40th year since the foundation of the WCC at its First Assembly held in Amsterdam in August, 1948, we remembered with gratitude that your church is among the co-founders of the Council. During these 40 years the Ethiopian Orthodox church has brought an important contribution to the work of the Council through distinguished representatives - bishops, theologians, priests, laymen - who acted as members of Central Committee, delegates, advisers, staff. In this way the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has given a direct witness to the Orthodox presence and mission in the history of African christianity.

Secondly, living in the turbulent times of today, the commitment of your church to the ecumenical fellowship is crucial, in order that we can respond together to the need for justice, peace and unity-not only here in Africa, but also all over the world. Humbly, as an ecumenical community, we

have responded to the call of your people seeking solidarity in difficult times. Many people are longing for peace, justice, and freedom in many parts of the world. The Ethiopian Orthodox church possesses rich spiritual resources to be shared with others for the benefit of the human community at large.

The WCC follows with interest and hope the developments in the life of your nation. A holy and popular church like yours can never cease to support a great nation like yours in its process of change and renewal. Because of the history of its origin Ethiopian christianity has a permanent covenant of love, faithfulness, and communion with the Ethiopian people. Her insistence on the continuity of the apostolic and patristic tradition goes together with her pastoral readiness to serve her and the society at large, to prepare ground for immediate common Christian witness, to recognise the local ecumenical realities. We are convinced that out of these challenging experiences and creative development, a new light will shine more powerfully upon the holy identity of the church.

In a church with such a profound Biblical character, the transmission of the divine Gospel and tradition, and its renewal, depends on the personality of the patriarch as shepherd devoted to the service of the people. We wish you a blessed patriar-

chal ministry and mission in the midst of the people of God in your country. We pray that under your leadership, the Ethiopian Orthodox church will continue to enrich and inspire the ecumenical community with her wisdom and spirituality.

As a sign of our communion of faith, hope and love, we invoke the power of God the Holy Trinity upon the church of Ethiopia, upon her new patriarch, upon her synod, clergy, and people in the name of Jesus Christ whose divine grace heals every weakness and supplies whatever is lacking. We pray: Come, Holy Spirit, strengthen and energize his Beatitude, and renew the face of the Holy Ethiopian Orthodox Church and all the Ethiopian people, Amen.

Professor Ion Bria,
Director Wcc/Rcl
September 4, 1988.

Holiness,
Excellencies, Dear Friends,
It is a great honor and a great spiritual joy for the members of our delegation to represent the Bishop of Rome, His Holiness Pope John Paul II on this solemn occasion.

Responding to the invitation given by St. Paul in the letter to the Romans: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, (Rom. 12:15). His Holiness, Pope John Paul II sends us to share the joy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church at the moment in which by the grace of God,

she has received a new patriarch. We bring, in the name of Pope John Paul II and of the whole Catholic Church a message of fraternity and of hope.

Holiness, it is first of all to you that I bring the personal best wishes and assurance of prayers of Pope John Paul II Who unites himself to you in fraternal charity. He asks the Lord to grant you his graces of light and peace on the heavy responsibility that is yours.

The Ethiopian Orthodox and the Catholic Churches are both apostolic Churches.

In the heritage that we have received from the Apostles, the same mission has been entrusted to us to be servants of Justice, of reconciliation, and of peace among men. In virtue of the apostolic succession, we celebrate the same sacraments in a rich and legitimate variety of liturgical expressions. Our Churches are truly sister Churches. In the course of centuries, this fraternity has been disturbed by serious misunderstandings coming from a lack of familiarity of each others' language, from cultural differences, as well as from diverse circumstances. In short, we came to live separately. But in being aware of the depth of the mystery of our communion in Christ, we know that human weaknesses could not destroy it completely. We need to search for ways in which this communion can one day be expressed a new by the

profession of the same faith; but even now we can and we ought to express our communion in love, for the love of Christ impels us (11 Cor. 5:14) in trust and in mutual respect.

This communion in love, does not allow Christians to fall back on themselves. On the contrary, it pushes them to serve their brothers and sisters and to collaborate with all persons of good will in helping the poor and those who suffer. This fact was well expressed in the mission and the composition of the ecumenical delegation of Ethiopian Churches which visited Pope John Paul II in 1986 in support of that which Ethiopian Christians had realized together in alleviating the suffering of their countrymen.

In calling us to serve our brothers and sisters together, Christ allows us to meet each other, to know each other better, and to advance on the way to full communion of faith and of love.

Holiness,

You know that since the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church has been committed fully to the cause of Christian unity.

Pope John Paul II has often repeated that this commitment is irreversible. He knows that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church participates in international ecumenical organizations and collaborates with the other Churches in Ethiopia, inc-

cluding the Catholic Church. He does not forget the gesture of love accomplished by your venerated predecessor, His Holiness Patriarch Tekle Haimanot, who visited Rome in 1981. Soon theologians of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and of other Ancient Eastern Churches will have unofficial theological conversations with the Catholic theologians in the setting of the pro-Oriente Foundation in Vienna. For all that we can already give thanks to God who in this way gives us the hope and the courage necessary for the route that must still be traveled until the day when we will be able again to partake together of the Body and Blood of the Lord.

As this moment when Your Holiness takes up a heavy responsibility in the service of the Church of Christ, I assure you that you will always find in the Bishop of Rome a loving brother, one who desires that for the glory of God and the well-being of humanity, bonds of fraternity and of collaboration between the faithful of the Catholic Church and those of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Holiness,

May God give you a long life for a fruitful patriarchal ministry, rich in graces and blessings for the people He has entrusted to you.

Delegation of pope paul the second Head of the Roman Catholic Church. Alexandria, August 31st, 1988.

His Beatitude the Orthodox Patriarch of Ethiopia
Abba Merkourios
ADDIS ABABA

We embrace in the name of our Lord Your Beatitude and brother in Christ,

Please allow us to extend our deep and brotherly congratulations for thy election. The Almighty with His prosperity has ascended you on the glorious throne of the Holy, Historical, Traditional Church of Ethiopia, and to its Christian African Church. Thou are carrying on thy shoulders, a burden humanly heavy, but light with the Love and Blessings of Christ, The Yoke is Jesus Christ.

Our Humble prayers will accompany them and wish that our Lord will reinforce thy struggle for the well-being and prosperity of the Church and of the people of this Holy country, Ethiopia.

The bonds that bind our Churches as of its early years of the History of Christ, are brotherly and very tight. The Christian city of Alexandria, which is the country of the Great Father saint Athanasios, Patriarch of Alexandria with saint Froumentios are endlessly uniting us with eternity through ages and ages.

And now, we are and will be Brothers in Christ, and the cooperation between us in the name of our Lord and between the Ethiopian and

Greek people, will be further strengthened and pursued.

Our brother, His Eminence Archbishop Petros, will be along with thee by the side and will be always there at your disposal.

Our Lord Jesus Christ binds and unites our Churches and our people. Our Brother His Eminence archbishop of Leoundopoleos, Titos, during the time of the enthronement will be present. Both will be there to carry and convey to thee our Love.

With fraternal greetings and embracement, the Patriarch of Alexandria Parthenios

Your Holiness Abuna Merkorios Patriarch of Ethiopia Addis Ababa

At the occasion of election of your Holiness on the patriarchal See of Ethiopia we want to extend wholeheartedly fraternal congratulations and best wishes for long and fruitful work in the vineyard of our Lord. We trust in deepened relations with church of Vienna and look forward to participation of Abuna Timothios of Kefa and M.T. Teshomna Zerihun at 5th Vienna consultation 18 September. Blessings of the Lord. Yours respectfully,

Fransiskus Cardinal Groer Archbishop, Theodor President, Alfred Stirnemann Secretary General, Ecumenical Foundation Pro Oriente Vienna.

His Holiness Abuna Merkorios Patriarch of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa

On behalf of Polish Orthodox church I send your Holiness our best wishes. We enjoy together with Holy Ethiopian Church and remain. With love in Christ Metropolitan Basil

His Holiness Abuna Merkorios Patriarch of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa

May God strengthen and sustain you to love and care for your people as primate and Patriarch of Ethiopia Edmond L. Browning presiding Bishop Episcopal church His Holiness Abuna Merkorios Patriarch of Ethiopia Addis Ababa

With heartfelt joy we delegate Bishop David Sahagian from France as the representative of Holy See of Etchmiadzin to participate during festivities of enthronement of the newly elect patriarch of Ethiopia beloved sister church on this joyous day

We fervently pray that the Holy Spirit restow the new Patriarch wisdom and strength to lead historical church of Ethiopia towards new spiritual heights. We also pray that the almighty God bless your church and the people of Ethiopia on this joyous occasion and make them successful in their holy aims

With fraternal love we join you in prayer and remain your brother in Christ Vasken first catholicos of all Armenians

Your Holiness Abuna Merkorios Patriarch of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa

Whole heartedly Congratulating your Holiness on worthy election to patriarchal throne we pray our Lord grant you longevity. Wisdom and strength in your new duties as leader of venerable church of Ethiopia. Metropolitan petros of Aksun will represent our church at the enthronement.

With much love in Christ. Seraphin Archbishop of Athens and all Greece.

The Holy Synod of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

The christian peace conference sends warmest congratulation to the Holy synod of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church on this important occasion of the enthronement of the new patriarch. May all the best that God has to give be, his in abundance.

My the prince of peace and the shepherd of all shepherds guide him on the journey towards the reign of God in our time.

We pray that God will richly bless this occasion. May it mark the beginning of a new stage in the life of our church, in which your rich heritage in the christian tradition will contribute to the solution of the tasks you are facing in your country and religious family.

We remember with gratitude the close christian relations that have always ex-

isted between the Ethiopian church and the christian peace conference and assure you that you can continue to count on the prayers and support of our movement as a sign of the unity of the whole christian family.

With the Apostle Paul we can say, we give thanks to God always for you all constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith the labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. (I Thess. 1:2-3).

Bishop Dr. Karoly Toth, president Rev. Dr. Lubomir Mirejovaky Secretary General

Metropolitan Flaret of Kiev and Galicia, chairman of Continuation.

TO THE HOLY SYNOD

We ask you to consider us present there with our brotherly love and prayers conveying the best wishes on behalf of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church the clergy and the faithful. May the Lord bless the new Patriarch of the Ethiopian church and bestow upon

him His numerous gifts and help him in the new mission of great responsibility he is to begin with brotherly love in Christ.

Teoctist Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Warm congratulations from myself and church of Cyprus on your election as patriarch of Ethiopia. Best wishes for personal health and divine strength in your high Holy Task.

Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus.

We received with thanks invitation to attend ceremony for the Enthronement of the new Patriarch Sept. 4. Please convey to the entire church our greetings. We will be with you in spirit. We pray that God will continue to bless the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and that the new Patriarch will find joy as he serves the Lord who called to lead the church. With kind regards.

Jose B. Chipenda
AACC General Secretary

His Holiness Abuna Merkorios Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church,

On the occasion of your enthronement as the New Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, I send you warm Christian greetings.

I pray to God that He guides you with all His blessings as you lead your Church through very difficult times of need and conflict. The Evangelical church in Germany assures you and all christians in your country that we remember the plight of the churches and the people in Ethiopia in our prayers. We want to confirm our belief that we belong together with you in the one body of Christ in this world. As members of His body we are called to sustain each other in the love of God which surpasses all understanding. We trust that we can deepen our mutual relationships specially in the years to come in order to strengthen our common witness to the Gospel and our commitment to help all people in need and distress.

*Yours in the love of Christ Dr. Martin Kruse
Chairman of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany.*

SYNODAL MEETING

In accordance to the rule and regulation the Holy Synod held its first meeting in Oct. and the second in May 1981, E.C. under the chairmanship of His Holiness Abuna Merkorios Patriarch of Ethiopia.

On the first and the second meetings the Holy Synod discussed and decided upon the present and the future fulfillment of the spiritual and social ministry of the Church.

A decision has been made on the synodal meetings of this year to decentralize the diocesan administration of the church following the new administrative restructure of the country. As a result of this decentralization, the number of the dioceses has been made to rise from 16 to 30. The new administrative structure is believed to be more conducive for providing the faithful of the Church with better pastoral care at bishopric level.

those who have been the cause of bloodshed in the area for many years to respond positively to the repeated peace call made to them. In this spiritual peace call made in connection with the problem in Eritrea and Tigray regions, the Holy Synod pointed out that the northern regions are the fount of the history of Ethiopia and of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and urged that a speedy end be put to the bloodshed in that part of the country so that the nation's unity and the welfare of its people are maintained.

The synodal meeting noted that the history of the northern Ethiopia is replete with wars but said what makes today's situation different is that what is taking place is not confrontation against armed foreign aggressors and the defence of the nation's unity and territorial integrity but fratricidal conflict.

afflict areas to help clear up misunderstanding and ensure a united Ethiopia. The Holy Synod noted further more that among native Eritreans who paid immense sacrifice in the defence of the unity of the country under the motto "Ethiopia or Death" were members of the clergy and followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the region.

In this connection the Holy Synod said it will always attach special significance to their struggle. In addition I also urged that the communications media exert vigorous effort in disseminating educational programmes to sensitize the people against the killer disease AIDS and called on the people to follow such programmes closely.

As member of the world council of Churches, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church fully endorses the resolution passed by the former on AIDS

since engaged in the dissemination of educational programmes on the issue, the synodal meeting noted.
M.T.T.Z.



The Holy Synod during its session.

Giving great consideration to the peaceless situation which prevails in northern Ethiopia, the Holy Synod during the meeting, called on

The Holy Synod recalled that the church had participated in the peace process by dispatching renowned fathers from its ranks to the co-

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS THE PATRIARCH

Beloved sons and daughters,

Grace of the Almighty God, the Father, Peace of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Unity of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called remarkable Counsellor, the mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6).

Beloved brothers and sisters, sons and daughters in Christ!

Christmas is the most enthusiastic holy day observed by Christians all over the world. It is a manifestation of the true life into the world. Christmas is the incarnation of Jesus which is characterized by the mystery of redeeming purpose. To fulfil this purpose, the wonderful child, Christ, was born in Bethlehem.

The coming of Jesus Christ into this world has revealed to us the admirable love of God by which He loved human kind. As it is clearly cited in the Gospel of St.

John, God sent His only begotten Son to the world so that whoever believes in Him would not perish, but will have eternal life (Jn. 3:16).



H. H. conveying Christmas Message

Moreover, the Holy Scriptures give their authentic witness to the world that this eternal life can be secured through knowing and believing in Him (Jn. 17:3). The Knowledge of the Incarnate Son of God, with all our hearts will enable us to grow in faith and in turn, will advance us to eternal life in communion with God.

Therefore, the purpose of the incarnation is to deliver justice, peace, freedom, forgiveness and eternal life to human kind through know-

ledge and faith in Christ, the Incarnate Word of God.

This new life is being manifested in the history of the Church all over the world. Hence, we should testify this divine ministry which has been worked out in us, the body of Christ.

When we celebrate Christmas every year, we think He was born in Bethlehem in a very humble condition as St. Paul Said: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that, though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich." 2.Cor. 8:9).

On the other hand, the day of Christmas is a day of manifestation of the glory of God. On this day, the name of God was praised by the heavenly host in words of new praise. Hence we should also praise Him for His infinite goodness to us, saying again with the Angels:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, to those with whom He is pleased.

Wishing you all a blessed Christmas and joyful occasion, with all my prayers,

PATRIARCHAL VISITS TO COUNTRIES ABROAD

Soon after his Enthronement as Patriarch of Ethiopia, His Holiness Abuna Merkorios has advanced his plan to realize His church's deep involvement in the ecumenical movement. As a fulfillment of this plan, then, His Holiness paid his first visit to W. Germony, Geneva, the holy Land Jerusalem and Athens on His way back home.

His visit to Germany and Geneva had come into effect at the invitation of the leaders of the Evangelical Church in Germany. During his visit to Germany, His Holiness was welcome by His Grace Bishop Dr. Martin

For the World organization, Dr. Heinz Peter Chairman of K N H's Board of Directors and by other representatives of churches and church organizations.

The reception was followed by a fruitful discussion focused on the ongoing co-operation and collaboration of the two churches.

Meanwhile His Eminence Bishop Dr. Martin Cruse in his welcome address said that the German Evangelical church gave great consideration to the visit as His Holiness is a leader of a very ancient and historical church in the christian world. He



H.H. held talks with leading bodies of the church in Germany.

Cruse Chairman of the German Evangelical Church Council. Mr. Carl Heinz Neukamm President of the Diakonisches work of the German Evangelical church, Dr. may Representative of the Bread

highlighted also that the German Evangelical church made great efforts to assist the EOC in her development and relief programmes and pledged to proceed with it so long as it is required.

In response, his Holiness made the following speech.

Your Eminence Bishop Dr. Martin Kruse Chairman of the Federation of the Protestant Churches in Germany, Dear Christian brothers and sisters in Germany:

In the name of the Risen Christ our Lord, I warmly and sincerely greet you with fraternal greetings and express my deep gratitude for your brotherly welcome.

It is my great pleasure and honour to be able to present myself among Christian brothers and sisters in Germany and to pay this fraternal visit at your acceptable invitation for which I am very thankful.

The will of God to unite all things in heaven and on earth has been fulfilled since the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to the World Jn. 17:20; Eph.1:10. Consequently, Christianity could familiarize the peoples who are in diaspora all over the world and creat such a living ecumenical brotherhood among christians of different traditions and races.

We fully understand, therefore, that how the German Christians and the people in general, concern themselves to know the life of the people and the church of Ethiopia, and how they give respect to them as brothers and sisters.

There are many evidences to prove the truth of this saying. To highlight some of these evidences: It was by the German Scholars that the Ethiopian studies could be first founded in Europe as it is historically proved.

In the past, Job Ludolf and August Dillmann, and in our present time professor Hayer and the like could be mentioned in the first place for this studies.

All these scholastic studies could help to introduce Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church not only to the people of Germany but also to the rest of European World as well.

In addition, as a fruit of the new ecumenical brotherhood which has been attained through being one family to the one heavenly Father in one faith and hope (Eph. 4:4-7) the christian population of this land has done and is doing its best to share the burden of the Ethiopian Christians and the people in general in all time of hardship and needs.

In times past, when a certain part of our land was stricken by heavy drought, the needs of many drought victims could be met by the people and the Government of Germany as they are among those who responded to the appeal made by the Church and the Government of Ethiopia for immediate aid.

Today in Ethiopia thousands of needy children have

been taken care, and varing development programmes are being implemented by the help of this people and the Government for which we are very thankful.

The other important thing to be mentioned here is the invitation which is repeatedly extended by your church to the head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church for friendly visits in Germany.

Furthermore, it must be recalled with thanks on this occasion, that we have been able to open our own church in Germany for our Church's faithful who live in the country by the help and co-operation of the German Evangelical Church.

All these kind historical events could make us all to recognize your goodness to our people and the Church, to love the people and the Church in Germany and to admire your christian work of service. Our admiration for your church's practical efforts which are being made for the unity of Churches, is also great.

Finally I would like to express on behalf of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and myself, my sincere appreciation of your unreserved material and financial assistance provided for our church until now in various aspects, and my great expectation of its continuity so far as it is required.

"Peace be to the brethren and love with faith from God



the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love undying Eph. 6:23 May God Bless the people of this country.

during his visit to Bread of the World, s office made the following speech. Your Excellency, the President, Staff Members of Bread For the World Organization.

We express our thanks to our Lord that it was His will that we should visit this Christian humanitarian Organization during our visit in West Germany.

We want to express our heartfelt thanks on behalf of our Church for the arrangement made to visit the Head Office of Bread for the World Organization and for the warm welcome given to us.

Although Germany and Ethiopia are geographically located far apart, close relations have developed between them during the recent phase of their history. It is possible to cite the names of many German Scholars who since the last two centuries developed an interest in the ancient past and religious history of Ethiopia that they devoted their whole life time for researches in this field. We are proud and happy to find ourselves among a people which know Ethiopia from the standpoint of its religious history too.

When we talk of Ethiopia we have in mind of the Ethiopia which the prophet

David around 1000 B.C. said "Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands into God" Psalms 67 (68) :31. This establishes the bond of her people's relationship with the Lord. This bond exists and will continue to exist in future.



H.H. Addressing the Staff of WCC in Geneva

Ethiopia has a long history in invoking the Lord by name, in obedience to the laws of God, and in performing his worship.

Many of the old civilizations around the world flourished around river valleys. Our Ethiopian civilization was however not "Water based". It arose from our faith in the Lord as "The Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." Psalms 110:10, proverbs 1:7.

The relations among Christians around the world, were hampered by distances between countries by differences of language, culture and other reasons. The close relations which the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had with the world of Christendom since the very start up to the 7th century was later disrupted due to various reasons. Ethiopia had to survive on its own as an Island of Christianity in that region.

When the World Council of Churches was established forty one years ago, Our Church as a supporter of its aims and ideals became a founding member of this organization. Our church was thus able to strengthen and develop its contacts with the German Churches through

the forum provided by the Council.

In the past few years when millions of compatriots in Ethiopia faced serious difficulties due to the repeated failure of the rains, Our Church mounted a relief, rehabilitation and development programmes in support of the drought-affected people. We have in this connection received wide ranging support and assistance from Bread for the World Christian Organization and the German Government. On this occasion we want to extend our sincere thanks to Bread for the World and the German Government for the assistance given to us.

We have plans to continue on an expanded scale our relief, rehabilitation and development programmes already underway. We feel that we have gathered sufficient experience from our previous work. We realize that the countrywide organizational structure of our Church will facilitate our planned work. We hope that as you have been with us in our past endeavours you will still remain on our side in the future too.

May the Lord render peace to the World.
May He also bless your work.

During his stay in Germany) his Holiness Abuna Merkorios Patriarch of Ethiopia visited various churches, Church Organizations and the like. On the other hand, His Holiness has paid a pastoral visit to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in KoLN where He was welcomed by Rev. Dr. Merawi Tebeje Archpriest of St. Michael Church and by the Ethiopian Faithful in Germany. The Pastoral Visit was brought into its climax with celebration of liturgical service and Patriarchal blessing. At the end of His visit to Germany, a time had come for His Holiness, the 4th Patriarch of Ethiopia to pay a historical visit to the Head Quarter of the World Council of churches in Geneva. The Ethiopian Orthodox church is a founding member of the WCC. So as a Patriarch of this member church, His Holiness was received with brotherly welcome by Dr. Emilio Castro General Secretary of the WCC and by the staff.

during this Visit His Holiness, made the following speech.

"Glory to the Lord in the Heaven who has guided us until this hour.

Dr. Emilio Castro, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Staff Members of the Office of the World Council of Churches, brothers and sisters in Christ,

We praise the Lord who has enabled us to meet on this occasion by singing "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace for men on whom his favour rests" (Luke 2: 14).

We want to express our heartfelt thanks on behalf of our Church for the arrangement made to visit the Head office of the World Council of Churches and for the warm welcome given to us.

Your Excellency, Dr. Emilio Castro,

The main objective of our present visit is to look and observe at close quarters into the multifold activities of the World Council of Churches and to get a better understanding of the system and work style of the Organization.

We all know that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is a founding member of the World Council of Churches.

The Holy Bible testifies (Psalms 67 (68):31) that Ethiopia is a "Land of God, which has been known before and after the birth of Christ for invoking the Lord by name for obedience to the laws of God and for performing his worship.

Following the introduction of Christianity into Ethiopia in the first century during

the era of the Apostles (Acts 8: 26-40), the Church was organized at bishopric level and started to perform the Holy Sacraments from the 4th century onwards.

all members and sectors of the society.

As the scope of these services was extensive and deep and as other aspects of the history of Our Church were



H.H. with the Mayor of the City of Bethlehem and the other Church Officials.

The period from the 4th to the 7th century was one of the golden ages in the history of our church. Up to the 7th century, our Church maintained close relations with the rest of the world of Christendom. For diverse reasons, this close relationship was disrupted in the course of time. However, the World Council of Churches was established around the middle of the 20th century and this international organization provided a suitable forum for promoting good relations among Christians on a world scale.

Since the 4th century when Our Church became organized at bishopric level, it has provided without distinction various services to

inseparably linked with the history of Ethiopia, we often assert with legitimacy that the history of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is the history of Ethiopia.

In the past years due to the repeated failure of the rains in Ethiopia and in other countries of our continent many millions of compatriots faced serious difficulties. Our Church in cooperation with the World Council of churches gave relief assistance to and undertook rehabilitation and development programmes in support of the drought affected people. Our Church has also carried out different development programmes in other directions with the help of the World Council of Churches.

ches. On this occasion, on behalf of our Church and the Holy Synod, we want to extend our profound thanks to the World Council of Churches for the various assistance and support given to us.

Starting from the 1985 drought, the support given to the Ethiopian people during their difficulties by christian brothers and sisters around the world will always be remembered in the annals of Ethiopia's history.

Our Church follows with keen admiration the struggle of the World Council of Churches at the international level for peace, justice, freedom and equality. We would like to state in this regard that Our Church is also making its own contribution on this front at the continental and international level.

Your Excellency, Dr. Emilio Castro,

We have been able to attain good results on the various programmes of Our Church sponsored by the World Council of Churches. We believe that the relief, rehabilitation and development programmes already launched will have to be sustained. We realize that our activities in support of the community will have to be expanded more than before.

We are confident of providing better services to the community based on the experience gathered from the programmes we have already carried out. The countrywide

organizational structure of Our Church and the continued progress shown in our internal communication system will undoubtedly facilitates our planned operations.

Based on the foregoing assessments, we can confidently assure you of showing still better results if wider support is given to us from the international christian family through the World Council of Churches.

To support and to be supported, to serve and to be served, is possible when there is peace in the World. We therefore pray to the Lord that He may render His peace to the World.

May the Lord bless your work.

On this occasion a fruitful discussion was made in relation to the growing ecumenical movement and churches' cooperation as well.

Next to Geneva His Holiness the Patriarch visited the Holy Land Jerusalem and was welcome by church leaders in Jerusalem.

Apart from His visit to the Holy Places, His Holiness met there with the President of the country Haim Herzog, the prime Minister Itzhak Shamir and Minister of Religious Affairs Zevulun Hammer and discussed upon the matter of Deir Sultan Monastery.

When he met with the President, His Holiness made the following speech.

Your Excellency Mr Haim Herzog President of the State of Israel

Your Excellency,

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude for the warm welcome we enjoyed on our arrival in Jerusalem.

May I take this opportunity to express our love for Jerusalem, the Holy Land and wish you and the people of Israel peace and prosperity.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church continues to pray for peace in the Middle East ingeneral and Jerusalem, the Holy Land in particular.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, being one of the most ancient churches, has monks and nuns praying in the monasteries here in Jerusalem. In this respect, history witnesses that Ethiopians were the only one among black Africa to be able to share the benefits of modernization created by the people of Israel through the Old Testament.

Your Excellency

Before relating to the historical ties between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Jerusalem, may I avail myself of this occasion to point out the fact that the buildings in Der el Sultan, aged as they are now, not fit for dwelling, considering the standards of the 20th century and the advancement of the Israeli Society. Unless it is an oversight, I believe the problem would not have been ignored by the

Israeli Government which strongly supports freedom, justice and respect for human rights.

Although the present situation in "Der el Sultan" is difficult, historical facts attest that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has a long lasting religious relationship and contact with the Holy Land. In fact, Jerusalem is a religious center where many christian churches from all over the world are represented with branch churches and monasteries. As your excellency may well know, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has historical, holy places and monasteries here in Jerusa'e.n. Our Ethiopian forefathers who faced various hardships and even sacrificed their lives for the continuity of the relationship and the legitimate rights of the Holy places.

In those days they used to travel on foot withstanding the challenges of the desert and spending months to be in the Holy Land. This is a concrete testimony of our love for the Holy Land and respect for our relationship. Our possessions of religious historical places, has undoubtedly enriched and strengthened our relationship.

Your Excellency:

I believe that you are also aware of the fact that our church has an association known as "Ethiopian Orthodox Believers Memorial Association For Jerusalem" whose membrs travel annually From Ethiopia to the Holy Land in larg groups to worship the Lord during Easterntide.



H.H. with the Israeli Prime Minister, Itzhak Shamir.

It is my conviction that the relationship and the legitimate possession of our monasteries have been kept intact because of the continued support of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Israeli Government as a whole. As a consequence of this support our archbishop in Jerusalem and the community of monks and nuns have benefited very much. Specially we will never forget your sincere support in the prolonged dispute between the Ethiopian Orthodox church and the Coptic Orthodox Church over the Holy Sepulcher - Der el Sultan. This fair cooperation reflects the fact that "Der el Sultan" monastery is a legitimate historical holy place of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. We are confident that your genuine support of this truth will remain with us. I would like therefore, to extend my profound thanks and appreciation for the valuable cooperation given to us in ascertaining the perpetuity of our monasteries in the Holy Land.

Finally I would like to request solemnly Your Excellency and the Government of Israel, to continue supporting our monasteries, and create a conducive situation for solving the problem I have brought to your attention.

Wishing Your Excellency a healthy and long life, peace and prosperity to the people of Israel. We remain with honour to your country in the pursuit of freedom, justice, human rights and peace. May the Almighty God The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob Bless You All.

In response, the Israeli officials expressed their hope that a suitable solution would be found which would satisfy all sides involved since there is a dispute between Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches over the control of Deir Sultan Monastery.

During His stay in Jerusalem His Holiness comforted members of the Ethiopian Monastery in Jerusalem with His Patriarchal blessing and His presence among them.



H. H. during his visits to Church School in Athens.

The Head of the EOC's monastery this time is His Beatitude Archbishop Abuna Athanaios. Before leaving for Athens,

His Holiness the Patriarch held talks with Church leaders in Jerusalem. On His way back home the Patriarch paid a few days visit to

Athens where He was warmly welcome by the Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF EOC TODAY

Since the title of the head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was raised from Metropolitan to Patriarch in 1959, the governing body of the church is the Holy Episcopal Synod, composed of the Patriarch as its chairman.

Today, the Ethiopian Orthodox church has 34 dioceses including Jerusalem, Western Hemisphere, Sudan, Kenya and Djibouti, each headed by an Archbishop.

This time, the church is fully engaged in consolidation and in both internal and external missionary ac-

tivities. As a result, the Holy Synod has felt called to open new dioceses here and abroad and increase the number of the dioceses and the diocesan Archbishops of the church.

The following figure shows the total number of the dioceses and the diocesan Archbishops of the church today,

DIOCESES

Addis Ababa	diocese	Addis Ababa
Northern Shoa	"	Debre Birhan
Southern "	"	Ziway
Eastern "	"	Nazareth
Western "	"	Ghion
Eastern Gojjam	"	Debre Markos
Western "	"	Bahir Dar
Metakel	"	Pawi
Northern Gonder	"	Gonder
Southern "	"	Daber Tabor
Tigray	"	Mekelle
Eritrea	"	Asmara
Southern Wollo	"	Dessie
Northern "	"	Woldeya
Eastern Harargie	"	Harar
Western "	"	Asbe Teferi
Dredawa	"	Dredawa
Godie	"	Godie
Arssi	"	Assela
Bale	"	Gobba
Sidamo	"	Awassa
Negelle Borena	"	Negelle
Kefa	"	Mizan Teferi
Illubabour	"	Jima
Gambela	"	Gambela
Northern Omo	"	Arba Minch
Southern "	"	Jinka
Wollega	"	Lekemt
Assossa	"	Assossa
Asseb	"	Asseb

EOC'S OVERSEAS DIOCESES

EOC's Diocese in the Holy Land Jerusalem,
EOC's Diocese in the Sudan,
EOC's " in the Western Hemisphere,
EOC's Diocese in Djibouti,
EOC's Diocese in Kenya.

DIOCESAN ARCHBISHOPS

H.B. Abuna Mekarios Archbishop of Western Gojjam and Metekel

"	"	Gorgorios	"	"	Shoa
"	"	Nathanael	"	"	Arssi
"	"	Berthelomios	"	"	Sidomo and Negelic Borena
"	"	Elisa	"	"	Southern Gonder
"	"	Samuel	"	"	Eastern Harargie and Godie
"	"	Yesahaq	"	"	EOC in the Western Hemisphere
"	"	Merha Kristos	"	"	Dredawa and Southern Harargie
"	"	Basilios	"	"	Eastern Gojjam
"	"	Peteros	"	"	Southern Wollo
"	"	Zekarias	"	"	N and S Omo
"	"	Salama	"	"	Bale
"	"	Timothios	"	"	Illubabour & Gambela
"	"	Elias	"	"	Djibouti & Kenya
"	"	Garima	"	"	in the Sudan
"	"	Ephrame	"	"	Northern Shoa
"	"	Mathias	"	"	Kafa
"	"	Athanathios	"	"	EOC Monastery in Jerusalem
"	"	Dioskoros	"	"	W. Shoa
"	"	Nicodimos	"	"	Eritrea
"	"	Kerilos	"	"	Northern Wollo
"	"	Kawstos	"	"	Tigray
"	"	Thomas	"	"	Wellega
"	"	Yaecob	"	"	Northern Gonder

In addition there are other key members of the Holy Synod Working at the Patriarchate as leading bodies in the administration, namely:

H.B. Archbishop Abraham Head of Mission and Evangelism Dept,

H.B. Archbishop Zena Markos-Assistant to the Patriarch.

H.B. Archbishop Gabriel Head of EOC's Tinsae Publishing House.

The administration of the church is based on a system of centralization with the Head quarter in Addis Ababa



L.M. Demtse G.M. General Secretary of EOC.

though this centralized church administration is made to be decentralized now. The Head Quarter is known as the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Administration Head Office.

The Central Administrative Head Office has sixteen main departments headed by a general secretary. The pre-

sent general Secretary of the Head office is L.M. Demtse G. Medhin.

It is through this central administration that decision of the Holy Synod is being brought into effect.

Further more, the Holy Synod has adopted a new regulation to organize the faithful of the church in

parish administrative councils at local and national level in order to promote the fulfillment of social and spiritual ministry of the church today. And this new effort, made by the church is producing the required results in the life of the church.
M.T. Teshoma Z.

SOME ASPECTS OF THE REVISED PARISH COUNCIL REGULATION OF 1978

1. The First Parish Council Regulation

It is now more than ten years since the revised Parish Council Regulation of our Church came into force. This Parish Council Regulation is intended to enhance the mission of the Church and to enlarge the scope of its activities.

The Parish Council Regulation establishes the basis of the relationship of clergy and laity and delineates their respective areas of responsibilities.

The first Parish Council regulation was issued by the Head Office of the Patriarchate in 1973.

In 1974 a process of change started in Ethiopia which profoundly affected the economic and administrative foundations of our Church. It became all the more urgent to design a mechanism to meet the conditions of the new situation. It was realized that one of the main obstacles which up to now were hindering the develop-

ment of our Church was the inability to involve adequately the laity in the life and activity of the Church. Furthermore, the administration and control of the property and finance of the Church including the contributions made by the laity on a voluntary and individual basis was defective in many respects.

2. The Revised Parish Council Regulation of 1978

The revised Parish Council Regulation came out in 1978 and although it was conceptually related to the first Parish Council regulation, it was radically different from it in several areas of content.

The 1978 revised Parish Council Regulation heralded the epoch of renewal of the administration of our Church as it introduced a new and suitable administrative set up within the traditional ecclesiastical structure of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

The 1978 Revised Parish Council Regulation established Parish Administrative Councils at the following levels.

- 1) Parish Church Administrative Council
- 2) Woreda Parish Administrative Council
- 3) Awraja Parish Administrative Council
- 4) Diocesan Parish Administrative Council
- 5) Patriarchate Parish Administrative Council.

It is apparent that this hierarchical structure runs parallel with the administrative hierarchy of the state administration. This was done deliberately as it was found convenient in seeking support and collaboration with the different state institutions. In 1989 Ethiopia had been subjected to a new administrative redivision. In this redivision the Woreda unit has been abolished. The implication of this administrative redivision in the Parish Council structure is currently under study.

The various activities of the Parish Councils include to:

1. preach the gospel and proclaim the kingdom of the Lord.
2. establish and strengthen religious schools
3. provide spiritual services to the laity
4. establish Sun day schools
5. strengthen material resources of the church and to guarantee its proper administration.

2.1. Executive Committee of Parish Council

The Parish administrative bodies at different levels meet regularly to elect the members of the leading organs of the Parish Councils and to give directives related to the spiritual and social duties of the Parish Councils.

The executive committee members of the Parish Councils at various levels organize, lead and coordinate the different activities of the Parish Councils. This was possible thanks to the clause in chapter 3 Article 9 section 1, subsection (a) and (b) in the Parish Council Regulation which stipulates that the laity may have possibilities to participate in the life and activity of the Church. Thus in the Parish Administrative Body the chairman is a clergy and the vice chairman is invariably a laity.

The administrative body is elected for three years and in extraordinary cases where weaknesses are detected the general Assembly can be convened to conduct an election to change the entire leadership or a member of the executive committee. The Parish administrative council in certain instances resembles the group of the seven (Stephanos, Philip and the rest (Acts 6:2-6).

As the future of our Church depends on the close collaboration of the clergy and laity, it is imperative that this bond should be closely maintained and the laity should be stimulated to undertake works which would contribute to the development of their Church and the parish community.

THE PARISH COUNCIL ACTIVITIES 1988

In 1988, the Parish Council Department started to implement its Five Year Plan (1988-1992). The main thrust of the Five Year Plan is the establishment of new Parish Councils, consolidation of already established councils and activating of the parish communities in social and development fields. The major achievements are given below in summary.

1. STRENGTHENING OF PARISH COUNCILS

Following the recommendations of the executive committee of the 6th EOC National Church Assembly seminars were held at Woreda level to strengthen parish councils.

Regular campaigns have been held on Sundays and other Holidays during the year among both clergy and laity in the different Cathedrals and Churches in the Addis Ababa diocese about the objectives and tasks of Parish Councils. These campaigns have helped to clarify and solve a number of problems which arose in the organization of Parish Councils in the Addis Ababa diocese.

2. MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

Since five years a series of missions composed of patriarchal messengers, diocesan archbishops and staff have been carried out successively. These missions which lasted for over one month and covered all the dioceses have always been annual peak events in the Parish Council conscientizing and organizing campaigns during the ninth missionary journey seminars were held in 67 centres.

3. PARISH COUNCIL REGULATION FOR DIOCESES OUTSIDE OF ETHIOPIA

A Parish Council regulation for the dioceses outside of Ethiopia has been prepared, based on the revised Parish Council Regulation of 1978. It has already been put into force in a few of the dioceses. This regulation is expected to stimulate the Parish communities in the different dioceses outside of



Ethiopia to participate more closely and effectively in the different facts of the life and activity of their church.

4. THE SEVENTH EOC NATIONAL CHURCH ASSEMBLY

The Seventh EOC National Church Assembly was held between October 17-27, 1988 at the Head Office of the Patriarchate.



H. H. Abuna Markorios, the Patriarch, leading the annual National Parish Council Assembly as a Chairman.

In this Assembly, archbishops, administrators of dioceses, Department Heads of the Patriarchate lay and youth representatives were present as full members of the Assembly.

At the end of the assembly a series of recommendations was passed on concerning:

- Evangelical works
- Traditional Church Education
- Sunday Schools
- Publication and Distribution of Religious Literature
- Preservation of Ecclesiastical relics.
- Welfare Activities

During the 7th EOC National Church Assembly an exhibition of handicrafts and agricultural products of the dioceses was shown. The exhibition was open during the duration of the assembly and was visited by many people.

5. CONCLUSION

By the end of 1988, Parish Councils have been organized in 13,689 Parish Churches. The number of registered parishioners is 15,392, 149. This is about 50% of the estimated 30 million followers of the Ethiopian Ort-

odox Church. There are also at present 5,983 Sunday Schools distributed among the individual Parish Churches in the different dioceses.

The reluctance and at times open hostility which was manifested by some clergymen during the early phase of the Parish Council Programme is now markedly decreasing. Many Parish communities have now been mobilized in development works and the income from these development works holds a good prospect for the self-reliance of many churches and Cathedrals.

Parish Council Department

THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH-DEVELOPMENT AND INTER-CHURCH AID DEPARTMENT'S INVOLVEMENT IN RELIEF, REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been concerned about economic life for ages, as this directly affects the daily life of her people. When EOC intended to be involved in social affairs, there was a need of a structure which could facilitate working situation. So, EOC set up a systematized structure that could enable her act in different sectors of national economy. Thus, DICAD was established under the auspices of the EOC and had exerted much effort to bring progress in different aspects of development within the country.

Development as per DICAD's concept is connected with encouraging and en-

abling the people and the clergy to be self-reliant. On top of this, DICAD helps the people, to identify the means through which they could live a better life. EOC DICAD has purposes which are related with the necessities of life of the people. In order to attain these objectives, DICAD designed the ways that make the work easier. Both the objectives and programmes of DICAD have brought a favourable situation instabilizing the material basis of community.

The most important tasks in DICAD's programme are implementation of relief, rehabilitation and development in different areas of the country.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church being one of the leading historical churches in the world, she has a great number of followers and clergy. The clergymen that number about 250,000 are spread throughout the country and are rendering spiritual services and working with the people to fulfil their physical needs. A century ago, education for clergy had been restricted to traditional and spiritual studies only. Now, a days, after EOC-DICAD has made an agreement with the ecumenical partners, the clergy are being introduced to be of high significance to the clergy for it brought an improvement in church administration, besides stren-

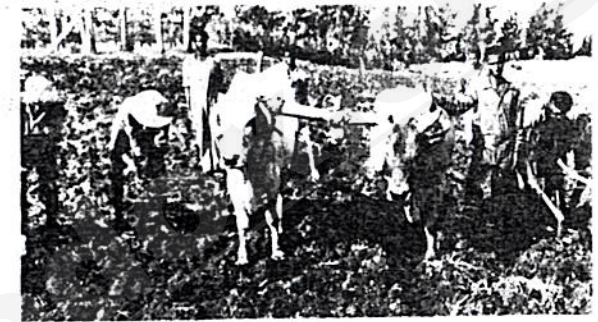
gthening the participation of the church in the nation's development programmes and in the improvement of the life of the clergy.

The clergy Training Centers established, have helped to promote the basic needs of the church, the development of human resources and the spiritual knowledge of the clergy. It is to be recalled that EOC - DICAD is running 6 clergy training centers.

In these centers around 600 clergymen are assigned for training every year. A 7th CTC, is established in Addis Ababa this year and 43 trainees from the parish churches in Addis Ababa were the first batch. The 6 CTCs with the exception of Mekele etc are operating regularly currently.

PARISH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

This is one of the principal programmes of EOC that was launched by DICAD



with the generous fund of christian brothers and sisters and donor agencies.

The PCD projects were initiated for upgrading the life standard of the community as well as supporting the development of the parish churches and the clergymen. The projects that are implemented in different dioceses help the local community by alleviating their problems, thus enabling the churches, monasteries and the community to be self-reliant.

In fact, so far, there are few set-backs encountered and solutions being at hand. EOC is successful upto now and her progress in development is anticipated to proceed at a more satisfactory rate in the future. In the 2nd half of 1988, the execution of the approved projects and the followup of the on-going projects was going on side by side and the outcome, is found to be encouraging and promising with many of the projects. These projects are designed, in such a way that the livelihood of the communities, where these projects are implemented, is improved.

Most of the projects effected were related with agriculture, cottage industry etc. EOC/DICAD had released a total sum of birr 343, 404. 93 in the 2nd half of 1988 for the implementation of various parish community development projects. Moreover, within the first half of 1989, birr 140, 429.67 is released for agricultural, handicraft, dairy, cattle fattening, bakery projects, be-



Handicraft centers of Parish Council.

sides allocating the 10 flour mills that have recently reached DICAD to different dioceses for installation in accordance to the previously made plan.

In line with this PCD projects, EOC/DICAD also runs bilateral projects in collaboration with domestic and external donors in addition to the round table funded projects. Among the many bilateral projects, fishery that is going on in Lake Tana is the most prominent project. It is known that Ethiopia has on abundant marine and inland fishery, though unfortunately this potential was not exploited properly and widely due to our lack of nutritional knowledge.

EOC—DICAD embarked on fishery project at Lake Tana in collaboration with MOA in 1986 with the fund gained from JCCO and URK Holland. Though there was scarcity of information on the characteristics of the lake, there were fishermen and monks from the monasteries in the islands that used to fish using papyrus boats and nets made of nylon thread. The fishery project was launched with the objectives of assessing the fish potential and profile of the lake and training fishermen with improved fishing methods, thereby improving their life and nutritional situation as well as the local community. Thus, on the basis of the objectives 26 people from the monasteries and fishery cooperative have

been trained and provided with fishing materials after completion of training to implement the knowledge and skill acquired immediately.

A net-making workshop being constructed, 12 nuns and girls were trained in net manufacturing and net repairing such that a total of 462 nets were manufactured. Under this project, 197, 936 Kgs. of fish was harvested and supplied to the community in the vicinity. The fishery programme is expanding and 3 people are sent for further training in April to Holland.

Afforestation Programme

It is an apparent fact that the impact of drought in Ethiopia was aggravated due to the intensive deforestation which had taken place over the last 4 decades. It is however urgent that this trend in environmental degradation should be reversed. Having had the tradition of keeping trees around church yards and cemeteries, EOC — DICAD has em-

barked on a wide scheme of afforestation since 1986. This programme is living up to the expectation in putting into effect the plantation of over 6 million seedlings in the rainy season of 1988 that were produced in DICAD's 21 nurseries that are spread throughout the country. In 1988 around 1433.3 hectares of denuded land was planted with different tree species and the number of nurseries increased in 1989 to 27, though 25 of them only are currently operational.

The afforestation programme, in 1989 is very much encouraging and promising for the seedlings of various tree species produced in the 25 nurse nurseries are over 8 million. The plantation is to be accomplished within the month of July and is expected to be as effective as that of last year with a higher percentage of rate.

Food for work programme.

The food for work programme is designed to miti-



Afforestation activities.



Beneficiaries in Relief Centers.

gate the communication problems with the construction of feeder roads and bridges, developing springs and constructing ponds and water wells, contouring, preparation of irrigation systems, soil conservation, etc. Grain and other food commodities being distributed to the beneficiaries as a cost of their labour about 5 food for work programmes mainly of feeder road construction are going on currently. These are in Gondar-Debre-Tabore to Mahdere Mariam in Wello-Ajibar to Tedbabe-Mariam, in Illubabor - Masha to Nono and Sele, in Arssi-Bilalo-Kersa to Zeway and in Harrergerhe - Harrar to Aboker.

Family and Community Development Projects.

The family and community development projects whose fund is channelled to DICAD From WVI — Ethiopia focus on the well-being of chil-

dren, families and communities by providing nutritive food, clothing, school fee, school materials and medical care.

The numbers of direct and indirect beneficiaries of this programme, are more than 40,000 out of which 6693 were children. This programme at the moment comprises 20 projects and 3 seed projects and as a response to the training given to some of

the beneficiaries, agricultural, handicraft and other skills are acquired and are being put into action. Around 500,000 birr was expended for running these projects in the 2nd half of 1988. Similarly, in the first half of 1989 around birr 364,000 was spent for the operation of the projects. Thus, FD — CD projects have had a considerable contribution for the improvement of the life of families and communities, which has already become popular in certain areas.

These projects are widely operating in Shoa, Gojjam, Gondar and Arssi dioceses currently.

Relief Activity

Ethiopia has recorded periods of drought and famine that goes back for centuries. Drought has posed the most serious threat to stable agricultural production on a vast majority of the population.

Though the weather of 1987 seemed promising, at



last manifested itself with severe shortage of rain and locust infestation bringing a drastic change on the yield of the anticipated production in the country. Therefore, EOC—ICAD was widely involved in relief food distribution in certain drought affected areas of the country. There were 16 relief food distribution centres operating under DICAD and in these, centers around 320,000 beneficiaries on the average were assisted for about 10 months.

The food commodities were channelled to DICAD from the JHP - joint relief partnership and the running cost of the relief centers was funded by WCC. EOC - DICAD has also distributed used clothes, blankets, soap, tents etc. in a considerable number of sites for the total mitigation of the life of the beneficiaries. In relation with relief activities, health service has also been going on and medical services, distribution of drugs and nutritional monitoring was done in the relief centers. As a result, a total of 1783 children were vaccinated for measles and tuberculosis in cooperation with Deder hospital in Harrarghe, in Kundi Wello. 3608 patients were treated by a medical team of DICAD basic drugs and first aid materials with an estimated cost of birr 85, 302. 27 were distributed to all relief centers and other sectors on request. Moreover, 25 traditional birth attendants from 15 dioc-

eses were made to participate a refresher seminar for a week.

Relief activity in 1989 has been restricted to the displaced people in Eritrea. Around 30,000 displaced people, 25,000 in Keren and 5,000 in Asmara are getting dry ration of grain, oil and milk starting from February 1989. The relief food distribution is operating smoothly and there is a hope that 5,000 additional displaced people, would get their take-home ration from Asmara relief center. There are about 14 employees in the relief centers that are operating in Eritrea at this time. It is to be recalled that actual relief food distribution in the country has stopped in December 1988.

Rehabilitation Programme

Relief food distribution is a first and essential step in times of emergency, but it is not a lasting solution for the problem. EOC - DICAD has been mainly involved in relief programme initially, but the idea of rehabilitating those beneficiaries who

were under emergency envisaged soon. 50 DICAD launched rehabilitative programmes and Wobera district which is in Harrarghe diocese had run an effective work by distributing 2000 oxen, 2283 quintals of selected seeds of various kind and 16,000 farming tools to 4947 beneficiaries, thus upgrading them to the level of self-reliance as a result of the satisfactory field they harvested in 1988. This rehabilitation programme is still going on with more concentration given to water development in 1989. Protection and development of 15 springs and construction of water wells that number up to 10 is on process. Moreover, 200 plough oxen are bought for distribution to some of the peasants that have no oxen at all up to now, so that they could sustain themselves as immediately as possible.

Furthermore, rehabilitation programme is also going on in Woldia-Northern Wello diocese starting with the purchase of plough oxen and selection of the poorest of

the poor peasants. Thus 200 plough oxen, farming tools and various selected seeds were distributed to peasants at the beginning of the rainy season, so that they become self-reliant immediately.

Similar rehabilitative programmes are operating in Northern Shoa diocese and Welayta Northern Omo diocese, employees being recruited.

The purchase of plough oxen is going on and the distribution of farm tools and selected seeds to the peasants of the rehabilitative areas is already accomplished. EOC - DICAD is also performing spiritual rehabilitation by helping certain christian communities to construct churches in sites

like Gambella in Illubabour diocese and Metekel in Gojam diocese.

Though DICAD has performed various tasks and is gaining success in the endeavours exerted much of the credit of this achievement should go to our ecumenical partners for their unreserved generosity to our church.

EOC-DICAD

REFUGEES' DAY OBSERVED AT EOC PATRIARCHATE

During the last week of June 1989 when "Refugees Week" was observed, a large public gathering was held here at EOC Patriarchate 1989 to commemorate the refugee day.

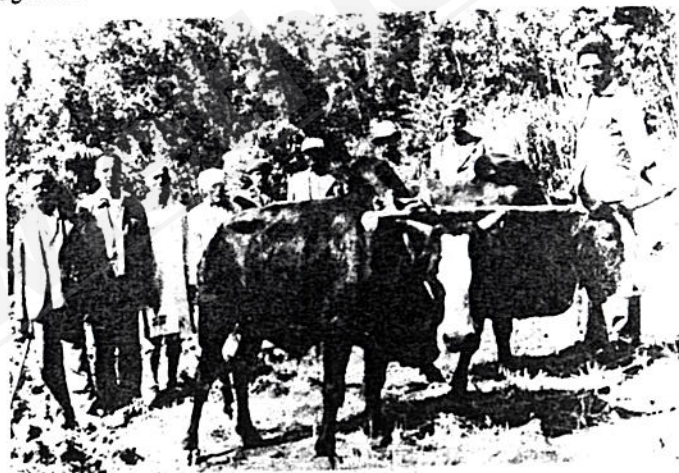
His Holiness Abune Merkorios Patriarch of Ethiopia opened the ceremony with prayers and shortly addressed the gathering. In His speech, the Patriarch noticed that the other bitter life which can be faced by human beings is

the life passed as refugee in a foreign country, where children separated from their parents and parents from their children.

The Patriarch further explained that Ethiopia is known, from the ancient time, for its long-lived history of warm entertainment for any guest (foreigner) appeared in the country. For this reason, the Patriarch said, the country receives, with brotherly love, those who

go in exile due to social injustice prevailing in their respective countries.

Finally, the Holy Patriarch expressed His prayerful wishes for the refugees that they one day may be able to return to their own motherlands as a result of improved conditions. Until then, the Patriarch assured the refugees, that the church's unreserved support will continue further.



H. H. Addressing the National Assembly.



Archbishop Gerima delivering speech to the Assembly.



During the occasion, His Grace Dr. Abuna Garima, Archbishop of EOC in the Sudan and Acting Chief Secretary of DICAD-EOC, has made the following speech.

Your Holiness Abune Merkorios, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church
Your Graces, Representative of O.A.U. Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Regional Liaison Office for Africa.

Representative of the Ministry of Interior, Administrators of Addis Ababa Cathedrals and monasteries

Refugee Brothers and Sisters
In the past consecutive years we have gathered during the same period and at this very same location to observe this day by discussing the situation of African Refugees and the causes and solutions of the problem. Other Organizations observed this day ten days ago and have expressed their positions on and opinions about the problem.

It is clear that in the history of mankind there have been refugees in different countries and at different times. A refugee due to the denial of Freedom of conscience, a refugee due to political conditions, a refugee due to war, a refugee due to famine, a refugee due to calamity. We see the same problem but different reasons.

In our time due to diverse reasons we see an increasing number of refugees. This is very pronounced especially in the Third World. This has been the focus of many comments at various international forums.

In the world there are about 10 million refugees of which 5 million are African refugee brothers and sisters. This has its own reason. The policy of apartheid and other similar situations are the causes behind the large number of refugees in Africa.

Ethiopia has a longstanding tradition of welcoming strangers and refugees. Our Church prays regularly for the sick, for the living and for the dead, for those languishing under brutal regimes and for those disaffected and have been forced to flee.
Your Holiness,

It is not difficult to imagine the state of mental unrest which can occur when one is forced to leave one's own country and surrounding in search of refuge in another country and surrounding. The problem of refugees is thus not only the provision of subsistence and shelter but it encompasses the wider problem of having a peace of mind and of being able to live with mutual respect and harmony with the host society.

The Refugee Counselling Service of Our Church at present assists over 700 refugee brothers and sisters coming primarily from various African Countries with

subsistence allowance, medical care and education. This programme is carried out in cooperation with the World Council of Churches, the All Africa Conference of Churches and with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. A new school from grade 1 - 6 for refugee children has been constructed at Itang, Gambella. It was completed in 1987. There are at present 1,700 refugee children who attend the school.

Your Holiness

At present at the international level there is a general trend towards peace and to the relaxation of tension. State leaders speak about this on many occasions. They are making important decisions to bring peace in our world. The church prays regularly for peace.

A lasting solution to refugees can be found when there is peace in their respective countries and when their rights to live in peace are guaranteed. This is a thing which should happen.

Our Church has acquired useful experience in the past years in refugee services. As long as the problem exists, our church would like to continue this programme on a sustained basis. Thus our Church plans in the coming years to participate and make bigger contribution in this direction. It is our hope that in this endeavour we can continue to count upon the collaboration and assistance



Mrs. Zewditu Lakew, Refugee's Senior Councillor making statement on the occasion.



of all the international christian humanitarian organizations which have been with us up to now.

Your Holiness,

Whatever has been achieved in the field of our refugee services was possible due to the assistance and cooperation of the World Council of Churches, the All Africa Conference of churches, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and our different state institutions. On this occasion we would like to extend our thanks on behalf of Our Church to all these humanitarian organizations.

May the Almighty God Bless Our Work.

Archbishop Garima

EOC/ DICAD

This address was followed by a speech of the representative of the EOC's Head Office .

Your Holiness Abuna Merkorios Patriarch of Ethiopia Imnences
Invited guests

Representatives of the refugee community,

It is my great pleasure and honour to say a few words which help profoundly consider the refugee problem on the occasion of this Refugee day.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has maintained a long stand concern in relation to the refugee problem so far as history is concerned. As known, the world is formed well today as an instrument at the service of the people in need.

Consequently churches, governments, humanitarian organizations and the people of the world in general are manifesting their deep concern for the wellbeing of all humankind as a whole by sharing their national and spiritual resources and by facilitating such sharing, so as to promote social justice, human development and service to refugee and other uprooted people.

Wide ranging and massive responsibilities have been imposed upon numerous countries to which thousands of refugees are overflowing .

Ethiopia has been one of these countries since there is a growing refugee movement in Africa. When this burden is put upon the shoulder of the people and the government of the country, then, the church of Ethiopia could not remain indifferent this work of service.

On sharing this responsibility, a great deal of effort is being invested in the church in responding to the pressing needs for material and spiritual assistance in order to make the required contribution towards the services which should be provided for the refugees.

The church is fulfilling this task through national and international aid, having been an international forwarding agent.

It is on this ground that EOC has committed herself to commemorate this refugee day with deep concern for the refugee problem and with prayerful wishes for their safe return.

On this occasion, EOC expresses her solidarity with all those who struggle against injustice and oppression which is the root cause of the refugee movement and social ministry which is to be provided for the refugee in our land.

Thank you.

MELAKE TABOR
Teshome Zerihun

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has a Refugee Counselling Office co-sponsored by WCC and UN-HCR. Currently, the Church is assisting more than 700 refugees.

THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX SCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE HISTORY OF THE PAST



The educational system in Ethiopia has been profoundly moulded by the past.

Traditional education derives its distinctive character from the unique christian heritage of the country. Ethiopia is after all, the only African country to have preserved Christianity as its religion for over millennium and a half.

Moreover, having its own written language and literature it developed from early days a tradition of ecclesiastical scholarship. The long monastic tradition dates back to the fifth century and the significant role of monasticism in the diffusion of Christian learning during the medieval period has been described in an earlier Chapter.

In the Christian highlands of Ethiopia, the Church constituted the main guardian of traditional culture and provided the only schools in the land for many centuries. Not only did it preserve its ancient tradition with tenacity and convey it to future generations but it also secured remarkable continuity that has lasted to the present day. For the authority of tradition in present day Ethiopia remains compelling and forceful.

The Church School system has been the instrument that has preserved the additional learning of Ethiopia and conveyed it faithfully to succeeding

generations. The priests and Church scholars who are the bearers and propagators of traditional learning have themselves been formed in the Church school system that we propose to examine in some detail for in spite of the inevitable changes taking place in Ethiopia with the steady expansion of modern secular education in the present century, Church schools still play an active part on the Ethiopian educational scene.

The school system, which is one of the oldest in Christendom, originated in the Aksumite Kingdom with the introduction of Christianity about the 4th century. In the course of the centuries the school system has grown and changed in many ways. With the expansion of the kingdom and christianity to the south and south-west Church and monasteries were founded, which became for centuries important centres of learning.

In their present form the church schools evolved during the golden age of the church from 13th to the 16th centuries when the literature of the church had reached its peak.

After the great wars particularly after the 17th century, cultural activities declined.

From that time to the present the church schools have undergone little change.

The schools have in this period confined their educational activity to glorifying the products of past centuries and conveying these to the coming generation.

We shall not discuss here the historical development, but rather the educational activities of the schools as we know them today in the country.

The Church school system has the following divisions:

- 1) Nebab Bet, 2) Qidasse Bet, and higher schools, namely a) Zema Bet, b) Qene Bet, and c) metshaf Bet, which again have different subdivisions.

1) The Nebab Bet

The Nebab Bet, the reading school or the House of reading is the first stage of the traditional schools, where primary instruction is given. We find the Nebab Bet in practically all churches and monasteries, in a number of villages and in the compounds of well-to-do landlords.

It is a one-teacher schools, with instruction given by priest or a layman with Church education. It is difficult to estimate the number of Nebab Bet in the country or to evaluate the school population involved.

This does not include the pupils receiving instruction in the village schools and in private compounds. Normally children start school betw-

een the ages of 5 and 7, when they are traditionally considered ready to learn. Theoretically, both boys and girls and members of all ethnic groups and classes are eligible to enrol in Church schools.

However, in rural districts, parents generally discourage the education of girls, since their function is to be housewives and for this role no formal education is felt to be necessary. Non-Christian families are reluctant to send their children to a Nebab Bet because it is closely integrated with the Church. Therefore, the Nebab Bet and the church schools as a whole cannot be considered to serve the entire population, but only members of the orthodox Christian Church. The prime function of the Nebab Bet is to teach children to read religious books, practically all of which are in Geez.

Instruction in the Nebab Bet consists almost exclusively of reading. Children master the 231 letters of the Geez syllabary, and are drilled in the art of good reading. Traditionally writing is not taught in all schools, since this was not needed in everyday life, unlike reading which is necessary for daily prayers and participating in the church service in urban centres and roadside towns the Nebab Bet has a new function today. It serves as a preparation for modern schools. The modern schools often accept more readily in their primary grades those

children who can already read and write. This limitation of the enrolment is mainly due to the large number of schools, so parents, especially those who do not need the labour of their children, are obliged to send their children to the Nebab Bet as a first step to enrolment in a modern government school.

The instruction in the Nebab Bet is given in three different stages:

- a) Fidel (Alphabet) instruction
- b) Drill in the reading of various religious texts
- c) Reading of the psalms of David

a) Fidel instruction
The first subject of study for the child is the set of Geez letters, known as the fidel. In earlier times the letters were written on a roll of parchment, which the pupil carried with him. When he was studying a particular part of the fidel the student unrolled the parchment and fixed the two ends of the roll on a wooden stick with a piece of cloth or string. Today children use a printed table of letters, which is glued on to a single sheet of cardboard.

The child who is led by his teacher or a monitor, touches with a straw each letter from left to right of the table and names the letter in a loud voice. He repeats this for months. Usually the child learns the whole set of letters in sequence by heart, so that in reality he may not be

able to distinguish one letter from the other. As a next step to help him distinguish individual letters, he is led to pronounce each letter reading from right to left and then from top to bottom. This process is known as Qutir, i.e. learning by counting each letter. The large number of characters (33 in 7 orders) with the differences and irregularities of the related sets are not easily grasped by the beginner. To help the child distinguish the different characteristics of the alphabet another table has been prepared. On such tables the number of the letter and the forms in the seven orders remain the same, but the place of the characters is changed or mixed up, so that the child cannot depend only on his memory and the sequence in which he has memorized the characters. Today the standardized table "Abugida," is much used, however, so that the pupil may learn even this by heart and only comes to distinguish the individual characters well after much practice. When the pupil knows the letters to some extent, he starts to practice reading a text. Generally, the first Epistle of St. John is used for the purpose. The child uses four methods to practice reading this text known as «fidele Hawaria» or the first Epistle of St. John. First he pronounces every letter the word pointing at each letter with a straw (Qutir method).

He repeats this pronunciation exercise on the same text several times. When he is able to distinguish the letters he passes to the next drill known as Geez, i.e. the beginning of reading. Here the student attempts to put the letters together in a chanting form and read them as a word.

The same process is repeated for several days or even months. When the teacher feels that his pupil has mastered this stage, he leads him to "Wurdnebab." Now the child practises reading words, again chanting, but different from the Geez. The pupil learns to take much care over words that must be read together the accents, the pauses and the soft or hard pronunciations of the syllables. This step is important, so the pupil spends more time on it. The final stage known as "qumnebab" is simple, if the above stages are well mastered.

Here, the child practises reading at a very lively pace, but without mistakes.

The four steps are repeatedly drilled on the same text, fidele hawaria. The exercise of reading can be quite difficult for the beginner, particularly because the next is in Geez, a language no longer spoken and therefore far from the experience of the child. With this stage the pupil is introduced to the art of reading Geez, and his fidel lessons are therefore completed. He can then practise reading different religious texts.

READING LESSONS FROM RELIGIOUS BOOKS.

The number and the kind of books the student has to read at this stage is not standardized. All depends on the availability of books. Traditionally, teachers in different areas select any text for reading. The following texts are known to have been used in different areas:

Gabata Hawaria, i.e. selected Epistles of St. Paul, St. James, and St. Peter; the Gospels. Usually the Gospel of John is used as a text for exercise: Arganon: Prayers of St. Mary; Tamara Mariam: the miracles and wonders of St. Mary; Paulos: the Epistles of St. Paul; Tamara Iyesus: the miracles of Jesus; the Acts of the Apostles, etc. Pupils need not understand the texts of these books, but they have to be able to read them well, since these are the books read in the church service, where young boys serve as readers, deacons, and later on as priests. The methods of practising the reading are those described under the fidele Hawaria, namely, Qutir Geez, Wurdnebab and Nebab. When the pupil is able to read a text, he starts a new lesson known in Amharic as yemata Timhirt, i.e. an evening lesson, or yequal Timhirt, i.e. memorization. Every evening he has to memorize the daily prayers. In the evening the pupils come to the house of the teacher, which

is also at the same time the school itself. All stand around the teacher while the lesson is given.

The teacher of an advanced student recites to the pupil sentence by sentence or verse by verse the standard prayer the child has to memorize. The pupil then repeats the sentence till he knows it well. This exercise is repeated for months or even a couple of years, until the boy knows the main prayers by heart. In some cases the Ethiopic catechetical book, the Aemadamestir (Columnae misterii), particularly mistere-sellassie (on the trinity), is taught in Amharic. All other texts are in Geez. Since the pupils do not understand the texts, the memorization drills are very exacting in energy and time. When the teacher is convinced from his daily observation that his pupil has mastered the reading exercises, he lets him start to learn the reading of the psalms.

The pupil now learns to read the psalms, the most important devotional book of Ethiopian Christians. The method he uses is the chanting form and the Wurdnebab reading process. After repeating the entire book of psalms several times using even over a year, using qumnebab, reading method. If the student has already read different books as described above the study of the psalms is not too difficult. In some cases student are made to

memorize the text of the psalms. This is particularly important for those students who plan to continue on to higher learning, since passages from the psalms are used frequently in the hymns and poems of the church. Gradually the pupil masters the art of good reading. The teacher normally does not set a formal examination to judge the work of the pupil.

However, he follows the progress of his student daily, so no special tests are needed. When he is convinced that the pupil has reached the level of knowledge traditionally required at this stage of learning, he indicates that the time has come when he may leave the Nebab Bet. This is considered one of the most important events in the life of the pupil. It is also an occasion of joy for the family, and the parents usually organize a feast to mark the event. A reader of the psalms enjoys certain privilege as one of elite in this village. He may be called up on to read and write letters. At certain ceremonies he may recite, prayers, if no priest available. The girls from traditional families who have attended the school usually, marry before or shortly after they complete the lessons in the house of reading.

2) QIDASSE- BET, THE TRAINING OF THE ALTAR PRIEST

Some of the pupils who complete the Nebab Bet join Qidasse school, one of the schools of the liturgy. A teacher specialized in qidasse or the mass is to be found in practically all the main churches. A teacher specialized in this branch of the liturgy teaches the Gebra Diquana and Gebra Qissina, i.e. the functions of a deacon and of a priest in the liturgy. Children of the clergy, who use church lands, usually enter such schools in order to become deacons or priests in a church. The office of a priest is particularly attractive to tenants or landless peasants, because a priest in his area enjoys privileges. The function of an altar priest is limited to carrying out the rituals of the mass and the sacraments. For this purpose scanty training suffices. A Qidasse teacher normally teaches only the hymns which a deacon or a priest has to use in the liturgy of the church.

The rest, including teaching the traditions and service of the church, is learned through daily experience in the parish itself. Usually a candidate for this training is

attached to a priest or monk to whom he gives certain services, accompanying him on visits to families, festivals and ceremonies in and outside the parish. Through observation or day-today practice and instruction by his priest-master, the boy learns the church activities and functions of a deacon and of a priest. The activities of the priest, therefore, are limited to the rituals, which do not usually demand the understanding of the scriptures, thus relatively further education is expected from young man to be ordained an altar priest.

3/THE HIGHER SCHOOLS OF THE CHURCH.

We have seen that the Qidasse Bet training mainly the altar priests, who are also known as the semonegna (those who serve weekly). These are the only members of the clergy who are allowed to celebrate the mass and administer the sacraments. However, before and after the mass there are reading of the scriptures, ritual dances, and long hymns and poems. To be able to carry out this further service one has to attend a higher school of the church, which should be considered an extension of Nebab and Qidasse Bet.

Continues

Source of history: Panorama of history and Spiritual Life of EOC.

Rev. Jyassu Gabre

EOC Delegates In Canada

(An Exchange of Visit)

Church as it explores its role in today's Ethiopia.

- Then, during the concluding of discussions, between the two groups, a verbal invitation was extended to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church for a return visit by EOC representative to take place at the time of the London Conferences annual meeting in May, 1989. The Canadian group proposed approximately a two weeks visit beginning on or about May 23 and extending around June 6th.

- His Holiness, Patriarch of EOC confirmed the invitation, and selected seven Church men who represent several departments of EOC Patriarchate General Head Office, and sent them to Canada with directives to greet the united church of Canada and all members of EOC community in Canada.

- When the EOC delegation of seven men arrived in Toronto Airport, it was welcomed by Mr. Donald Langford and a group of Ethiopian community led by Archpriest Missale Ingda, who is in charge of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Toronto. On the same day at evening, we were taken to London, subprovincial city in southern Ontario, where the EOC delegation was welcomed by Mr. Marion Suthn, and another group of Ethiopian community there followed

by high tea party discussions and introducing names and professions.

On the following day, it was decided that the members of EOC delegation would be hosted by six individual families in different places. The visit was scheduled to be carried out individually with the host families and sometimes together by grouping system to cover some metropolitan and other parish church facilities, educational institutes (Universities), big farm crops and livestock, gigantic hospitals, (as Viteria Hospital), libraries, Sunday schools, mass medias, Bible societies, YMCA facilities, Orphanage schools boarding centre for refugees old men and women including some misfortunes, cattle breeding and poultry and raising areas, bank of Canadian crops, a big training centre for both clergy and lay persons etc.

- Since Canada is one of the increasingly advanced industrial countries in the entire world, this visit has great memory in all aspects.

- Moreover, it is interesting to understand that most of the Canadian people are very peaceful, polite and friendly. They are proud of their ancestral christian traditions and christian fellowship.

- The EOC delegation is not ashamed of giving its

eyewitnesses that the united church of Canada is indeed a friend in need to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It is essential to continue this exchange of visit in the future:

- It is hopeful that His Holiness, Abune Merkorios, Patriarch of EOC may visit such a peace-loving christian people of great Canada sometime in the future.

We thank God for this new christian fellowship and ecumenical relation created between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the united Church of Canada.