

A Brief Biographical Sketch of the late Patriarch His Holiness Patriarch Abune Theophilos

His Holiness Abune Theophilos was born on April 24, 1910 in the vicinity of the famous monastery of Debre Elias, Gojjam, of a deeply religious family. His father was Ato Wolde Mariam Wube and his mother Woizero Zertihua Adelaḥu. His Holiness received his fundamental education of reading and canticles from Memhir (Master) Merigeta Redahegn and Ghira Geta Sahilu in the place of his birth during his early childhood. He later studied Kine (refined poetry) and Bible interpretation at Debre Elias in theory and practice under the able tutelage of Memhir Gabre Selassie, an outstanding church scholar and qualified as a "Memhir". He has also studied commentary and interpretation of Wudasse Mariam and Kidasse Mariam, songs in praise of the Virgin Mary. His Holiness later came to Addis Ababa in 1920 E.C. (1927/8) and studied the interpretation of both the New Testament and the Fetha Neghest (Law of Kings) under the expert guidance of Memhir Tekle, later known as Nebure Id Takle Haimanot, and still later better known as His Beatitude Abune Yohannes. His Holiness has not only reaped the fruits of spiritual enlightenment but has also won numerous disciples dedicated to the service of the Church through extensive teaching. This is only a cursory review of his fundamental education for there are no religious books that His Holiness has not read and no Biblical interpretation which has not come under his perusal.

His Holiness later received spiritual guidance to make for the Monastery of Tekle Haimanot in Debre Libanos in 1930 E.C. (1937/8) where he was dedicated for life to the Order of Monks in the Church.

When His Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie I, returned to Ethiopia in 1941 after scoring a resounding victory over the forces of fascism, it was His particular wish that the clergy should be well versed not

only in traditional Church education but also in modern religious thoughts. His Holiness Abune Theophilos was one of the twenty Church scholars then chosen to receive modern religious education in the precincts of the palace by special order of His Majesty the Emperor under the able guidance of Professor Betre Tsiddik Kassa until the establishment of the Theological College of the Holy Trinity.

In 1935 E.C. His Holiness was appointed administrator of the Trinity Church (now the Trinity Cathedral) by the gracious command and consent of the Emperor. When the new Trinity Cathedral was inaugurated in 1936 E.C. (1943/4) and when the remains of Princess Zenebe Work and Princess Tsehai as well as those of the fallen patriots were moved into the new Cathedral, His Holiness Abune Theophilos became the administrator of both the new and the old places of worship after being fully decorated by His Majesty the Emperor. In 1938 E.C. His Holiness was named Like Siltanat of the Trinity Cathedral when that title was first created for its administrator and was fully decorated.

Later, through the Grace of God and the efforts of the government, an agreement was reached between the See of Alexandria and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church under which Ethiopian bishops were to be consecrated for the first time. His Holiness Abune Theophilos was one of the five Ethiopian church leaders then elected to be consecrated for the high office and, therefore, left for Egypt on April 19, 1946. However, all the five nominees had to return to Ethiopia because of delays created by various factors and it was not until July 25, 1948 that His Holiness Abune Theophilos was consecrated Bishop of Hararghe along with the rest of the Church leaders by the then Patriarch of Alexandria, His Holiness the late Abune Yossab. On Febru-

ary 18, 1950, the Holy Synod of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church appointed him Deputy Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the appointment was confirmed by His Holiness the Late Abune Bassilios. In accordance with an agreement existing between Ethiopia and Egypt when His Holiness the late Abune Bassilios was consecrated Patriarch of Ethiopia, His Grace Abune Theophilos became the representative of His Holiness Abune Yossab in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. When His Holiness the Late Abune Bassilios be-

came Patriarch of Ethiopia, His Grace Abune Theophilos was named Archbishop of Hararghie. Thus, His Holiness has served the Ethiopian Orthodox Church for a total of 28 years: Three years as Memhir (Master), two as Like Siltanat, 12 as Bishop, and 11 as Archbishop.

His Holiness Abune Theophilos was elected Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church on April 7, 1971, at the age of 61 after serving the ancient religious institution as Deputy Patriarch for a total of 20 years through the Grace of God.

Some of the Prominent Accomplishments of His Holiness Abune Theophilos.

We give the following brief historical outline of the prominent achievements of His Holiness Abune Theophilos both inside and outside his country ever since he dedicated his life to the service of Christ and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church through divine guidance. His Holiness has won numerous disciples for the service of the Church as a religious teacher.

As a leader and administrator of the Theological College, which was opened by special command of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, His Holiness Abune Theophilos has proved to be a source of great spiritual enlightenment for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. As Like Siltanat of the Trinity Cathedral, His Holiness had made tremendous contributions towards the development of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

The Work of the Trinity Cathedral itself began to assume a better form and shape through the consummate efforts of His Holiness. During the negotiations held by the Imperial Ethiopian Government with a view to enabling the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to appoint its own senior Bishops, His Holiness Abune Theophilos played an outstanding role by frequently travelling to Egypt as leader of Ethiopian delegations and participating in the talks.

Through the evangelical mission personally undertaken and accomplished by His Holiness many thousands of people have been baptised and converted to the Christian religion. To cite only a few examples, through a single evangelical journey made to Bale Governorate General in the districts of Dodola, Serofta, Hebeno, Kokossa, and Gatta, 24,000 followers of Awama and other beliefs were baptised after being subjected to his power of religious persuasion and made members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. In 1958 E.C. (1965/6) His Holiness established the Evangelical Mission of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. As a religious leader of the entire Ethiopian people he immediately paid visits to various places and christian institutions in Addis and in the governorates general and established branch offices of the Evangelical Mission with a view to spreading the faith of the fathers, bringing the people closer to the church and determining the number of its followers. In addition His Holiness also established the headquarters of the Youth Branch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church at the Patriarchate and instituted similar associations to operate in collaboration with various churches in the country and thereby

opened an important avenue for the young to grow stronger in spirit by closely following their religious traditions. His Holiness has opened training opportunities to evangelists, priests, and deacons and mobilised their force for the spiritual enlightenment of the people by taking stock of the fact that the Church has to move forward, in accordance with the demands of the modern age. At the same time also, many young men were sent abroad for further studies through his initiative so that they would reap the fruits of a modern religious knowledge and would thereby be in a stronger position to render a more meritorious service to the Church.

His Holiness Abune Theophilos also initiated the establishment of a training centre for priests and deacons and made the task of the renovation of old churches possible.

His Holiness Abune Theophilos has several accomplishments to his credit in the field of meeting the educational and spiritual needs of the Ethiopian people. Among many notable accomplishments in His Archdiocese of Hararghe, the following could be cited.

As the followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church were steadily growing, His Holiness helped in realizing the establishment of 12 new churches by bringing the matter to the attention of His Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie I, and by stimulating self-help on the part of the laity.

His Holiness founded a religious association known as "Kassate Berhan (Revelation of Light) still functioning in Harar and rendering a valuable spiritual service to the Province. Through funds made available through donations from the association, a public library has been opened

which is meeting the constant need for knowledge. A large hall, made available by His Majesty the Emperor when the matter was brought to His attention by His Holiness, is now serving as a vital forum of healthy discussions and spiritual enlightenment for youth. Prominent personalities from various fields are also invited to speak at the hall. Through the funds generously made available to it by His Majesty the Emperor the association has established a printing press whose proceeds are helping to run a primary school for orphans.

Through the gracious consent of His Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie I, His Holiness has established two schools in the city of Harar and in Kulubi which are meeting the temporal and spiritual needs of youth. Special mention must be made of the Teachers Training School for theologians which His Holiness established in Harar more than fifteen years ago. Many of the teachers trained at this school are rendering an invaluable spiritual service to the country.

In accordance with its outward-looking policy of creating an atmosphere of intimate relations with the rest of the world, it has been generally realized that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has to move forward with a confidence based on its rich religious tradition. In conformity with this progressive policy, His Holiness has represented the Ethiopian Orthodox Church at various international conferences to advance the cause of the ecumenical movement.

According to its regulations the World Council of Churches holds its Assembly in which thousands of delegates are represented every six or seven years. When the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches met in Amsterdam in 1948, His Holiness headed the delegation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to the conference.

His Holiness has also attended similar assemblies of the World Council of Churches held in Evanston, U.S.A. in 1956; New Delhi, India, in 1961; and in Uppsala, Sweden in 1957 in the same capacity.

In recognition of the spiritual leadership and eminence of His Holiness, the All-African Conference of Churches elected Abune Theophilos twice in succession to serve as one of its three Presidents.

In 1945, when the International Conference of Sunday Schools was held in Birmingham, Great Britain, and its secretariat established under the name of Christian Education and Sunday School, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was represented at the meeting by His Holiness Abune Theophilos.

He attended the Central Committee meeting of the World Council of Churches held in Chichester, Great Britain, in 1955. When the 1,900th anniversary of the visit of St. Paul to Greece was observed in 1958 E.C. (1955/6) with great pomp, His Holiness represented the Ethiopian Orthodox Church at the ceremony as a guest of the Greek Orthodox Church. While there, he paid an official visit to more than 20 historical monasteries on Mt. Athos and presented gifts specially sent by the Emperor to the Greek Orthodox Church.

In addition, His Holiness has represented the Ethiopian Orthodox Church heading the Ethiopian delegation at the Meeting of the Oriental Orthodox Churches held in Addis Ababa in 1965. His Holiness presided over the second General Assembly of the All-African Conference of Churches held in Abidjan, the Ivory Coast, in Sept. 1969 and at a highly successful Central Committee Meeting of the World Council of Churches held at Africa Hall from January 10th to 21st of that year.

His Holiness Abune Theophilos has helped immensely in the spread of the faith of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church by establishing places of worship in the United States, Trinidad and Tobago, and in Guyana.

These are only a few of the many prominent accomplishments of His Holiness Abune Theophilos before He was enthroned as Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

His Holiness's Election to the Office of Patriarch

His Holiness Abune Theophilos was elected as the second Patriarch of Ethiopia by the Holy Synod of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. This was carried out through the closed session of the Holy Synod beginning on March 25, 1971 in accordance with the rules of election laid down by the Church known as 'The 1971 rules of procedure for the election of the Ethiopian Patriarch.' In accordance with these rules of procedure Archbishops who had stood as candidates for the office of Patriarch on April 7, 1971 were three in number. These were His Holiness Abune Theophilos, who was then the Acting Patriarch of Ethiopia and Archbishop of Harar, His Grace Abune Yacob, Archbishop of Wollega and His Grace Abune Timoteos, Archbishop of Sidamo. A list of the names of these candidates was put on the Altar of St. Mary's Church from April 4 to April 6 where prayers were being conducted for the electoral process. In accordance with the election held on April 7, 1971, His Holiness Abune Theophilos was elected Patriarch with an overwhelming majority - that is by winning 80 per cent of the votes cast. The result of the election was later presented to the Emperor, approved by him and made public to the Ethiopian people.

The Enthronement Ceremony

His Holiness Abune Theophilos was enthroned Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church on May 9, 1971 at the Trinity Cathedral in the august presence of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I. The solemnly glittering ceremony was also attended by members of the Imperial Family, Dignitaries, by religious leaders who had come from different countries, and by thousands of priests and followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Ethiopia has a 1,600-year-old history of christianity behind it. However, in all

these years it was the first time for an Ethiopian Patriarch to be elected in this land of ancient christianity. That was why the programme prepared for the inaugural ceremony of the Patriarch was unique in character as befits one of the first—if not the first—country in the world which had embraced christianity as a state religion around 340 A.D.

In accordance with the programme prepared for the occasion, His Holiness Abune Theophilos was arrayed in gorgeous ecclesiastical robes and accompanied to the Trinity Cathedral at 8:10 a.m. in the morning by colourfully attired Archbishops to the accompaniment of a church choir singing 'Blessed Is He who comes in the Name of the Lord'. Priests and deacons wearing colourful national and church costumes were thronging the space from the gate of the Trinity Cathedral to its entrance to receive His Holiness. As His Holiness arrived at the Cathedral, Church bells were pealing in concert throughout the city. Appropriate religious rites were being conducted as soon as His Holiness reached the Holy of Holies. Special prayers prepared for the occasion were then said. Patriarchs and Archbishops who had come from different countries then took part in the prayer ceremony.

After saying the appropriate prayers, the Archbishops robed His Holiness in befitting ceremonial dress. He was also presented with crown and sceptre—the symbol of religious authority—and blessed by the assembled prelates. This was accompanied by chants of a religious theme repeated three times and conducted by priests and laymen. His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I then decorated His Holiness Abune Theophilos, Patriarch and Supreme Archbishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, with the Great Cordon of King Solomon. His Holiness then read some religious creed. A 17-gun salute was later fired in honour of the enthronement ceremony.

Following the reading of the lesson from the Bible, mass was conducted by His Holiness Abune Theophilos. At the completion of the church ceremony, His Holiness granted permission of leave to foreign ambassadors who were attending the enthronement of the Patriarch. His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I and His Holiness Abune Theophilos then made ceremonial exit from the Cathedral to the accompaniment of religious chants and dances. This was followed by speeches delivered by leaders of religious organizations of sisterly churches expressing their joy at witnessing the election of His Holiness. His Majesty the Emperor and His Holiness also delivered addresses, thus bringing the ceremony to a close around 1:00 p.m. with a blessing given by the new Patriarch. His Majesty the Em-

peror returned to the National Palace (then the Jubilee Palace) and His Holiness the Patriarch to his residence in the precincts of St. Mary's Church, both of them accompanied by a motorcade.

Thousands of people were gathered at the Trinity Cathedral to witness the colourful enthronement ceremony of His Holiness Abune Theophilos on May 9, 1971. The rest of the population were following the ceremonies on the national radio which was broadcasting the proceedings. For those who were looking for signs from heaven, there was a corona with the colours of the rainbow surrounding the sun from 11.00 a.m. to the end of the ceremony to lend a touch of mystery to the enthronement occasion.

Post-Patriarchal Achievements in Brief

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is a long-established religious institution in a land of an ancient history of independence.

However, until May 9, 1971 the Church was not enjoying a religious freedom of an unfettered character. The Ethiopian

Orthodox Church became a wholly independent religious institution through the joint efforts made by the Ethiopian Government and the Church itself through the will of God when His Holiness Abune Theophilos was elected Patriarch and Supreme Archbishop of Ethiopia by Bishops, priests and laymen.

The enthronement of His Holiness as Patriarch was confirmed independently by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The ceremony was attended by the Emperor, members of the Imperial Family, Dignitaries, priests and laymen who were numbering in their thousands. At the same time also, invited guests coming from different parts of the world who had included Patriarchs, Archbishops, and delegates from 16 churches were attending the ceremony. These had all expressed the hope that the wise leadership of His Holiness would open a new era of progress for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. In accordance with the good wishes expressed by the foreign guests, right from the moment of his elevation to the status of a Patriarch, he had opened a wide avenue of progress before the Ethiopian Orthodox Church through various religious activities like evangelical mission and development. Foremost among these is the establishment of the Parish Council.

Parish Council

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church was first established in the fourth century A.D. During these long years, the institution has been rendering a meritorious spiritual service to its followers made up of Emperors, Princes, Dignitaries, members of the Army and laymen. Over the past sixteen centuries, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been acting as the fountain of charity, education, culture, and a repository of various relics of antiquity. However, as the services that it was rendering were growing in diversity, the people at its service were also growing in number. This had created grave problems of finance for the Church. His Holiness Abune Theophilos had not failed to look into these pernicious problems for

the institution led by him. This is how he had come to initiate the establishment of the Parish Council of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Today, through the funds generated by these Parish Councils modest payments are being made every month to priests who are serving the various churches. This has made life more tolerable for priests who are at the service of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. At the same time also, the revenues that are being obtained at various levels of the churches from the district level to the Patriarchate are enabling the religious institution to stand securely on its own two feet. Serving the Church is not, therefore, the modest job that its used to be. It is now an honourable profession. This is all the fruitful result of the efforts made by His Holiness for the progress and development of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Development Projects

In his post-Patriarchal years, His Holiness Abune Theophilos had been paying utmost attention to the question of establishing various development projects. This has been benefitting both the Church and the country. Right from the very beginning, His Holiness Abune Theophilos had been exploring ways and means of supplementing the efforts of the government in combating hunger, ignorance and disease by initiating various development projects. At one time, he had told journalists: 'The Ethiopian Orthodox Church would not be limited in the future only to the field of religion. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church would be also participating in various development projects. It is only right and proper to seek ways and means of ameliorating the living standard of laymen. It is imperative to maintain a strong national economy. We pray that the Almighty would fulfil our wishes.'

In accordance with this general desire, His Holiness had attended the Congress of the World Council of Churches which had met at Upsala, in July 1968. The World Council of Churches was then exploring

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ways and means of participating in various development projects. In accordance with the resolution of the Congress, a national congress was held in January 1970 under the theme of 'The Participation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the Field of Development.' As a result of that congress, the Development Commission of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was established as an autonomous institution under the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in December 1971.

This Commission has been training thousands of priests in the fields of development in various institutes in six arch dioceses since its establishment. By mobilising these trained people in all parts of the country, the Church has not only been changing the life of priests but has been also rendering invaluable service to the drought affected people and those exposed to other types of natural disaster by providing them with material assistance speedily. The evangelical mission of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is thus constantly getting some direction. Such a Christian organisation was established by His Holiness Abune Theophilos. He is thus a great benefactor of the Church.

There is another place where the fruitful outcome of efforts made by His Holiness Abune Theophilos comes into prominence. This is the Handicraft Institute established near the St. Gabriel Church of Gofa. There is an apostolic edict that those who do not work should not eat. In accordance with this divine edict, from ancient times priests have been engaged in various useful activities. These had included the preparation of parchments for manuscripts, the mixing of paints, calligraphy, painting and binding books. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is today still alive with these traditional activities inherited from the past. We must now build the new on our old heritage. We must add carpentry, weaving and metal-works to what we already have in the field of developing

our heritage of handicraft. This would create ample employment opportunities for priests. At the same time also the Ethiopian Orthodox Church too would benefit something concrete from these useful activities. It was because His Holiness Abune Theophilos had realized these things that he had taken concrete measures aimed at establishing a handicraft training institute. These institutes are today the foundation of development in various churches in the country.

Charitable Institutions

A charitable institution is one of the institutions established by His Holiness as soon as he assumed the office of Patriarch. As it may be recalled, severe famine occasioned by drought had manifested itself in Wollo in 1973. This had exposed the lives of millions of people to death through starvation. In co-operation with other humanitarian organizations, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had done everything in its power then to mitigate the effects of the famine by contributing money towards famine relief. The efforts of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was not confined to monetary contributions alone. Through the initiative taken by His Holiness Abune Theophilos, an orphanage was established in the precincts of the Sewasew Berhan St. Paul School. The orphanage was taking care of 50 children who had lost their parents as a result of the famine in Wollo. That institute eventually proved to be the embryo of 36 orphanages now operating in various parts of the country. Through funds made available to it from domestic and foreign sources, some 10,000 children are now being brought up in these charitable institutions. This was achieved through the vision and foresight of His Holiness Abune Theophilos.

Strengthening Foreign Relations

We are living today in a new age of closer international relations when leaders of various Christian churches are exploring ways and means of forging more intimate contacts among their religious institutions. In accord with this noble aim, only six months following His enthronment as Pat-

riarch, that is in October 1971, in accordance with an invitation extended to him by the Patriarchs of Greece, Constantinople and Alexandria, His Holiness paid a two-week-long visit to the concerned countries. During his visit, His Holiness held talks with the Patriarchs on matters pertaining to closer relations between Orthodox Churches, christian unity, world peace, and the establishment of true justice in the world. He had also held talks on the revival of ancient relations between their churches. Towards the beginning of 1973, he had paid a visit to the United States of America in accordance with an invitation extended to him by religious institutions in that great country. His visit had succeeded in securing various types of assistance for Ethiopia in the field of education, development and the preservation of historical relics.

In cooperation with the government also, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was paying host in 1973 to Patriarch Synodas III of Alexandria, President Makarios, Patriarch of Cyprus, and Patriarch Pimen of all Russia. This had greatly strengthened

relations of the Ethiopian Orthodox with its sister Orthodox Churches.

Consecration of Bishops

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been choosing its own Bishops from among its own scholars for a long time now. This has been going on since 1959. Through such acts of modernization, the Church has been regularly developing its mission abroad. It was thus imperative that Bishops should be newly consecrated as the situation demands it. Thus on February 10, 1972, Six 'Episcopos' were chosen as Bishops. These 'Episcopos' were consecrated as Bishops by His Holiness Abune Theophilos on the day mentioned above at the Trinity Cathedral with great pomp and ceremony. Two of the Bishops were sent abroad for service. The remaining four are serving in various parts of the country.

Three Bishops were consecrated for the second time by His Holiness Abune Theophilos in 1975. Those consecrated then were His

Grace Abune Paulos, (now Patriarch designate) His Grace Abune Basilios and His Grace Abune Petros. By taking these consecrations as a pretext, the dictatorial Derg regime was interfering in the church's internal affairs by persecuting and imprisoning His Holiness. The same regime had oals imprisoned the newly-appointed Bishops without trial.

Building Churches

His Holiness Abune Theophilos had built the very modern and big Mekane Heywan St. Gabriel Church in the Gofa area of the city through his own private means. The church was completed on October 28, 1974. As a major achievement during his Patriarchal years, the Church is bound to perpetuate the good name of His Holiness from generation to generation. Following the completion of the church building, His Holiness had allocated a running budget for the new church.

Conclusion

In this brief outline, we have recounted the achievements of His Holiness Abune

Theophilos, the second Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, from his birth to his imprisonment. Truth to tell, between 1942 and 1976, it is difficult to say that there is any field of endeavour in which His Holiness Abune Theophilos was not directly or indirectly involved. In education, in evangelism, in foreign relations, in development and in other fields, His Holiness had left his own indelible marks on everything. This is known both to his friends and enemies.

His Holiness has been sacrificing his entire life for the progress and development of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It is to be recalled that the Giziawi Gubac (provisional congress) which was claiming to stand for the Self - Renewal of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had offered something to this great spiritual father. This was to betray Him to the dictatorial Derg regime. That is precisely how the life of His Holiness came to an abrupt end. Like Jesus Christ His Grace Abune Theophilos was bearing alone the Cross of Calvary which was a great pity indeed.

His Holiness in Prison

What sort of life did His Holiness Abune Theophilos lead in prison? This was one of the questions that we had put to some of his close associates while he was under detention. The questions were put to his associates in prison in different places and at different times. However, the answers to our questions had been similar in character. This proves beyond any shadow of doubt that the account provided to us with regard to the life of His Holiness Abune Theophilos in prison was correct and truthful.

His Holiness Abune Theophilos was first taken to the National Palace—formerly the Jubilee. According to those of his close associates who had known him in prison, accounts of the brief time His Holiness had spent there were also similar in nature.

In the evening of February 17, 1976, His Holiness Abune Theophilos was taken to the National Palace from his residence on the grounds that he was wanted there. As soon as he had reached his destination he was seized and detained. There he was put under solitary confinement in an annex of the National Palace reserved for Commander Eskindir Desta, a grandson of Emperor Haile Selassie.

According to one of our informants who was a close associate of His Holiness, one afternoon some power drew the curtain to one side and shouted to him in a stentorian voice: 'What are you doing here? Why don't you get out? Leave this place and go east.' He immediately obeyed the voice, was robed in his Ethiopian costume and walked out among the palace guards. Although one of the guards had shouted to

him: "Who are you? Whither are you headed for?" he didn't answer a word. According to the accounts provided by his close associates in prison, aside from asking the questions, members of the palace guards didn't trouble him at all.

As soon as he had left the National Palace, his immediate plan was to head for the Asebot Monastery. He had also thought of going to the Greek Embassy. However, since his main plan was to head for the Monastery of Asebot, his initial idea was to go to the St. Gabriel Church of Gofa in Addis Ababa to make preliminary preparations for the great journey.

Because he was proceeding to the St. Gabriel Church of Gofa on foot, he was at first in trouble as a result of losing his way. It was around 9:00 p.m. in the evening when he finally reached his destination. And, as it had been stated in the Bible, the same person whom he had fed and brought up eventually delivered him to his enemies by telling them the address of the fugitive by telephone. It was on Saturday at 11:00 a.m. the following morning. Several troops arrived at the place where he was staying and took him to the Grand Palace after brutal treatment in their hands. He had reached there without shoes on his feet.

Once he was taken to the Grand Palace, his hands and feet were in chains—being, in fact, chained to his bed in solitary confinement. It was only when he was being taken to toilet that his feet and hands were unchained. Four days later, he was freed from his chains and taken to ward 1 of the Grand Palace Prison where high-ranking government officials were being detained.

From the day that he was seized at the St. Gabriel Church of Gofa, he did not eat anything for a total of forty days. Aside from occasionally dipping his fingers in water and wetting his parched lips, he didn't even take liquid food. Some prisoners had, of course, made the allegation that His Holiness was taking orange juice. This was, however, vigorously denied by his close associates and friends who had known him intimately. At the beginning, no doubt, food was being taken to his prison cell

from his residence. However, because he had refused to take food, this was later interrupted. There was also nobody to bring him orange juice.

Those who had known him during those days of physical deprivation, pay ample tribute to his spiritual endurance which was bordering on the miraculous. He was saying his prayers, reading the Bible and conducting spiritual communion with his close friends in prison during those dark days of trial and tribulation to ward off boredom. His Holiness didn't exhibit any signs of physical weakness.

High-ranking officials of the Derg-like Col. Zeleke Beyene and Col. Daniel were visiting him from time to time to persuade him to take food. However, he was not willing to take food. From his detention to Easter, he was on a hunger strike.

However, elderly prisoners like Bitwoded Zewde Gabre-Heiwot, Dejazmatch Haregot Abay and other high-ranking officials of the Haile Selassie Government begged His Holiness on Easter Monday to take food. It was then that His Holiness acceded to the request of the elders and tasted food after forty days of self-imposed fasting.

As it may be recalled, the Derg was giving an allowance of 120.00 Birr a month to the families of prisoners to go towards the feeding of those incarcerated. The Derg had made the same gesture towards His Holiness. However, Abune Theophilos refused to receive the money. His reply was that just as he had begged to finance his education when he was a Church student, he was willing to live through the generosity of the public if people were willing to send him crumbs of bread. With the words: "I don't want your money", he had refused to receive anything from the Derg.

He was asked what it was that he had actually wanted. This is what he had said: "There is nothing I want from you. If there

was something I want, it is for you to detain me in a monastery. If possible, take me to the Asebot Monastery. If this is not possible, take me to any other monastery.' This is what he was telling the high-ranking Derg officials who were occasionally visiting him. However, the brutal Derg regime did not meet his demand.

What is perhaps very horrifying to recount is the torture inflicted upon him by one Major Sime, a man in charge of the palace guards. Nobody knows exactly what the mission of the Major was. However, the acts of cruelty inflicted by that man upon His Holiness proves beyond any grain of doubt that he had some mission to fulfil.

The Major used to summon His Holiness to his presence and say the following words to him: 'Since your name is Abba Meliktu, sign here under that name. It is either you or me who has to continue living in this country.' He used to intimidate His Holiness in these words. However, the moral and spiritual fortitude of His Holiness had enabled him to withstand all these threats and intimidations. He used to address his tormentor in the following words:

'I am Abune Theophilos and not Abba Meliktu. Abba Meliktu was my priestly name before I had become a Bishop. No matter what you do to me, therefore, I would not sign anything under the name of Abba Meliktu.' However, the Major was so inhuman that he took away from Abune Theophilos, in full view of other prisoners, the golden cross that Emperor Haile had presented to him when His Holiness became Patriarch. A picture of the Crucifixion which was hanging in his prison cell was similarly taken away by the Major. It is saddening to note that such cruelties could be committed against a Holy Father. Such callous acts deprive man of his basic rights. It was with that cross that His Holiness was healing the sick, comforting those who had lost hope and conducting other church rituals. Anybody who carries out such a depraved act must be approaching the brink of hell. Although nobody knows

when exactly this had happened, it is said that the major was eventually killed by the same Derg that had made him the instrument of its brutality.

Another aspect of the incarceration of His Holiness concerns his moral and spiritual fortitude. As a spiritual father, His Holiness passed most of his time in prayer and fasting. He shows no signs of being tired. He was praying the whole night. He was always conducting services for the prisoners twice a day, at 7:00 a.m in the morning and at 6:00 a.m in the evening. Unless he was sick, His Holiness was always attending the services. Sometimes he was also comforting the prisoners. Mass was being conducted every Sunday. His Holiness was conducting mass with the assistance of Nebureid Ermias. During the lenten season, however, every thing appropriate to the occasion is done. According to the prisoners, many of the inmates who had the love of religion deep in their hearts were pursuing theological education enabling them to be declared deacons who were officiating during the spiritual ceremonies.

His Holiness had cultivated friendship with some prisoners outside the religious services. For the rest, however, he was always deeply engrossed in his books. Besides being fluent in English, he was also studying Arabic and French. As far as Arabic is concerned, he was being taught the language by Ato Minase, former banker who had studied in Egypt.

From what we have been able to understand from his close friends in prison, His Holiness was a humble and truthful spiritual father. He used to implore the prisoners to forgive him if he had ever wronged them knowingly or unknowingly. He had there by removed the possible fog of any misunderstanding. This is in accordance with the Christian example of forgiveness: 'May God forgive the sins that you had knowingly or unknowingly committed.'

The editors of this article were approaching the prisoners who had closely known His Holiness Abune Theophilos to collect

materials for this brief account of his life in his cell. Following is a brief outline of the life of His Holiness, according to this account.

From the time he was serving as a monk, some people had been always conducting unfavourable propaganda campaign against him. This was aimed at nullifying the contributions that he had made towards the progress and development of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church both at home and abroad. It is to be recalled that His Holiness had done more than most among his peers to make the Ethiopian Orthodox Church self-sufficient and modern in character. Since education always holds the key to progress, he had sent many Ethiopians abroad for further ecclesiastical training. His Holiness had been therefore noting with sadness while he was in prison that some people had depicted him as a sectarian who was driven by favouritism. If all archbishops in particular had shown solidarity with him, things would not have taken the course that they had done. What His Holiness had intended to mean by this was that the Archbishops should have opposed the Derg by showing a sense of solidarity with him.

The tactic adopted by the Derg—according to His Holiness—was to organize his personal enemies under the banner of a 'Church Self-Renewal Commission' for removing him from the patriarchate and thus weakening the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. That was the well-known tactic of divide and rule.

Following the death of Emperor Haile Selassie, His Holiness Abune Theophilos accompanied by two Archbishops, had gone to the Grand Palace and asked Mengistu Haile-Mariam for the body of the sovereign to be made available for prayer and honourable burial. However, after waiting for a reply for some three hours, the request was refused.

As for his own future, according to the accounts provided by the prisoners, His Holiness had realized through a dream that his life was brief. He had even foreseen his

own murder by the Derg from what he had told his intimate friends in prison. He had also prophesied that the Derg itself was to be short-lived regime.

His Holiness's prison life was spiritual in character. He was passing most of his time in prayer. Before he was taken from prison for execution on July 14, 1979 he had known that he was going to be killed. He had therefore made all spiritual preparations for the day through the intermediary of Nebureid Ermias, when His Holiness took the Holy communion. The administration of the eucharist was conducted on Easter Sunday of 1979. He was thus prepared to meet his death in a spirit of Christian fortitude. His Holiness Abune Theophilos was murdered cruelly at the former residence of Prince Asrate Kassa on July 14, 1979.

This was conducted in the following manner. All prisoners were told to be in their cells at 1:00 p.m on July 10, 1979. Tschafe Taezaz Teferra Work and Ato Scifu Mahteme Selassie were immediately taken away on the grounds that they were wanted. However, no prisoner had suspected that they were to be executed. What the prisoners had thought was that perhaps their relatives had died. When asked the following morning what had happened to the two men, the answer given was that they were transferred to a more rigorous security prison.

Again on July 12, 1979, at a similar time, Ato Yohannes Kidane Mariam, Ato Abebe Kcbede, and Ato Assefa Defaye were taken away. They were asked to carry a blanket and some soft paper with them.

It was then that the remaining inmates came to know that the prisoners were being taken away for the purpose of execution. This began to create great panic in prison. Everybody then knew that they were going to die—and therefore began to prepare their confessions.

No prisoner was taken away the following Friday, July 13. On Saturday July 14,

1979 around 11:00 a.m. the prisoners were told to assemble at a designated place. Dejazmatch Kassa Wolde-Mariam, General Samuel and Abune Theophilos were told to leave by carrying a blanket and some soft paper.

His Holiness Abune Theophilos entered his cell and said his prayers. Then he put on his ecclesiastical robes assisted by Ato Abraham Workineh and Ato Amenu. He took hold of his wooden cross and began to comfort the remaining inmates of the

How His Holiness's Grave Was Found

As life in general is dynamic, the history of mankind is characterized by changes of good and bad times. The recent history of Ethiopia clearly confirms this fact. The good time from 1941 to 1974 had given way to the dark age of the Derg. In this dark time quite many brutal acts had been committed openly as well as secretly. Quite many individuals who were precious assets to the country were slaughtered and thrown away under cover of darkness. One of such Ethiopians who fell victim to this merciless time was His Holiness Abune Theophilos, the second Patriarch of Ethiopia.

As witnessed by those prisoners who by chance escaped death, His Holiness was taken out of the prison on July 14, 1979 and never returned back. Although these eye-witnesses saw when he was taken out of prison, they never knew where he was taken, how he was murdered, and where he was buried. Therefore, to his family, the people of Ethiopia, his friends all over the world, and advocates of human rights the whereabouts of Abune Theophilos remained a mystery for a long time. It was made a mystery because he was unjustly and brutally murdered while he committed no crime that deserved even imprisonment, leave alone death.

Nevertheless, time has unravelled the long hidden secrets. When that dark period of the Derg unwillingly gave way to the new light of democracy, all the secrets of the brutal Derg were uncovered.

52

prison. 'May God deliver you from Prison!' was his last word.

From then on nobody had known what had happened to His Holiness for 13 years. However, in the words of the preacher, there is a time for everything. It was through the democratic situation created by the Charter of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia that the manner of the death of His Holiness Abune Theophilos had come to light.

Open inquiry and search regarding the site of Abune Theophilos's grave began to be made beginning July 1991 as soon as the Transitional Government Charter was signed. The search campaign was first stated by his brother Ato Aberra Jemberie Woube and the Gofa St. Gabriel church clergy and the faithful following their foot steps all EOC followers in Addis Ababa voiced their demands. EOC followers in other parts of the country demonstrated in support of the demand. On the basis of this mass movement, the demand was put before the Holy Synod and the Transitional Government.

The first reaction to this widely spreading search campaign came from a physician named Ato Kena who knew the heart of the matter. This man disclosed to journalists of Radio Ethiopia on August 13, 1991 that the Patriarch was brutally murdered and buried together with other prisoners in the premises of the residence of Ras Asrate Kassa in Addis Ababa.

Following this declaration and according to the demand put to it, the Holy Synod appointed Archbishop Abune Barnabas to take care of the matter. The Archbishop soon set up a committee and enhanced the quest. After months of heart-rending campaign, with the support of the government the grave was found at Ras Kassa's residence just as told by the physician.

The Site now discovered, the second trying task was to dig the grave open. After three days of restless labour their effort at last paid off. On April 30, 1992 sharp

at 8:00 P. M. His Holiness's skeleton was found lying with its face downwards. Together with the skeleton were found the silk-like dress, the sandals and the cap which he had put on when he was murdered.

According to the description given by an eye-witness the manner of the death was indeed harsh. He was strangled to death by a squad of specially trained commandoes. Another group of commandoes carried his body to another group who buried him in the grave dug deep down like a trench just at the bottom of the fence.

The skeleton thus recovered was put in a coffin on May 1, 1992 in the presence of Archbishops, government officials, church officials, and thousands of people. The coffin was then carried by Archbishops into a special car amid the wallings of a large number of mourners.

After the coffin was placed in the car, the vice chairman of the Search Committee, Ato Sewasew Aweke, gave a short speech in which he thanked the EPDRF and the Transitional Government for the helping hand they extended to the committee to unravel the Mystery of His Holiness's whereabouts. In addition, he said that the discovery of his body not only pleased his relatives but also world church leaders and the peace loving people of the world. He concluded by saying, "our happiness has a world-wide scope."

At last, the car carrying His Holiness's body, followed by Archbishops, government delegates, relatives and thousands of the faithful, moved to St. Mary Church where the body was laid temporarily.