MIAPHYSITE CHRISTOLOGY

AN ETHIOPIAN PERSPECTIVE

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AN ETHIOPIAN PERSPECTIVE

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In loving memory of my spiritual sister

Mrs. Militetsega Andebirhan (1979–2007)

Who lost her life suddenly in Toronto, Canada
on August 26 / 2007.

May God, our Heavenly Father, in His Mercy
Reckon her with His Blessed Ones
in His Heavenly Kingdom.

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PREFACE

As in the case of the christology of the other non-Chalcedonian Oriental Orthodox Churches, Ethiopian christology is usually nicknamed as *monophysite* christology. Disproving such a pejorative designation, this book contends that the christological position of the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahedo* Church (EOTC) should correctly be termed as *miaphysite* christology. Besides, the book proves the orthodoxy of Ethiopian christology, demonstrating how it is based on the christology of St. Cyril of Alexandria (+ A.D. 444).

The introductory part, which is the first chapter of the book, presents background information on Ethiopian christology and a brief review of the works previously conducted on the christology of the EOTC by Ethiopian and foreign scholars. The second chapter is solely devoted to the historical aspects of the christological controversies in Ethiopia. Having showed the establishment and development of the non-Chalcedonian christology in Ethiopia, the chapter addresses the internal disputes which strengthened the EOTC's christology. It is the purpose of the third chapter to present a detailed christological exposition according to the Ethiopian tradition. The chapter deals with the teaching of the EOTC about the mystery of the incarnation and the perfect union of the two natures in Christ as expounded in the writings of Ethiopian theologians. By doing so, it presents Ethiopian christology as a *miaphysite* christology.

In the fourth chapter, the theological importance of the Ethiopian *miaphysite* christology is briefly discussed. This chapter also argues for the orthodoxy of Ethiopian christology by showing how it is opposed to the known christological heresies. Finally the last chapter gives a brief overview of modern christological dialogues with special reference to the christology of the EOTC,

and the conclusion succinctly summarizes the main ideas and arguments of the book.

Here it should be noted that though an attempt has been made in this book to present the *miaphysite* christological teachings of the EOTC as accurately as nuanced by the renowned traditional scholars of the church, the author by no means claims that the book is an in-depth study. In addition to offering the basic christological thoughts of the EOTC to foreign readers, who are interested in the teachings of the church, and to English speaking members of the church, who were born oversees, the book may only serve as a signpost for further comprehensive studies on Ethiopian christology.

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This book is a revised version of the culminating project of my master's studies in theology, i.e. an M.A. thesis on Ethiopian christology, so thanks are due to all who supported me during my studies and to those who assisted me in the process of publishing the thesis as a book.

My theological studies at Toronto School of Theology in general, and the process of writing the original thesis in particular, have been financially assisted by *Kirche in Not* (Churches in Need), a charitable organization in Germany, and Emmanuel College of Victoria University here in Toronto, Canada to which I am eternally thankful. Of equal importance have been additional bursaries from Emmanuel College which enabled me to pursue my current doctoral studies in the same university. I extend my heartiest gratitude to *Kirche in Not* and Emmanuel College for their exceedingly generous financial aid.

I am indebted to His Grace Archbishop Timotheos, the head of Holy Trinity Theological College—Addis Ababa, for recommending me for scholarships that made advancements in my theological studies possible. Many thanks should also go out to my parents and all family members for their unceasing prayers and unfailing love, which mean a lot to me, and which are dear to my heart. I also offer heartfelt thanks to my beloved wife Helen Birhane for her patience and understanding in the process of my graduate studies that demand undivided attention and painstaking endeavour.

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Above all, for His unspeakable gift, **MAY GOD, THE LORD OF OUR FATHERS, BE BLESSED—ይትባረክ እግዚአብሔር አምላክ አበዊነ**.

CHAPTER I
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The early church was highly haunted by christological controversies. Apologists like Justin Martyr showed interest in philosophical studies on the Logos, considering the Logos as a mediatory being between God and man. The same trend was followed by Origen, and Tertullian who was "the first Christian thinker to raise the question how the person of the incarnate Logos should be described."[1] These preliminary thoughts paved the way for the heresy of Arius which denied the co-eternity and consubstantiality of the Son with God the Father. After Arianism had been defeated at the council of Nicea (A.D. 325), which affirmed that the Son is ὁμοούσιος [*homoousios*] (consubstantial) with the Father, inquiries continued on the person of the Son. Hence Apollinarius tried to deal with the human nature of Christ, an issue that was not raised in the Athanasian refutation against Arius. In doing so, Apollinarius overemphasized the divinity of Christ, denying the existence of a human soul or mind in Him.

Further inquiries studied the unity of the human and the divine in Christ. As is usually presented in studies of the period, it was Nestorius who brought the idea of two natures and two persons by making a distinction between the Son of God and the Son of Mary. He also denied that Mary is *Theotokos* (Mother of God).[2] Nestorius' heresy was successfully refuted by St. Cyril of

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[1] Norris, Richard A. *The Christological Controversy*, 14. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.

[2] According to Grillmeier, the doctrine of two sons and two persons in Christ was assigned to Nestorius in view of the consequence that the denial of the title Θεοτόκος-*Theotokos* would bring forth. He also suggests

Alexandria (+ A.D. 444), when the latter argued that the Son of God who had been born of God in eternity was born of St. Mary in the fullness of time. Cyril's position was clearly presented in his famous formula: μία φύσις τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου σεσαρκωμένη—one incarnate nature of God the Word. Going to the extreme of St. Cyril's christology, Eutyches thought of the presence of only one nature in Christ; this led to the conclusion that the humanity of Christ was absorbed in His divinity. With the intention of refuting Nestorianism and Eutychianism, the council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) proposed a formula, which highlighted that there are two natures in the one *hypostasis* of the Word. The formula was accepted by the Chalcedonian Churches (e.g. the Roman Catholic Church, Byzantine Orthodox Churches). But for the Oriental Orthodox Churches,[3] the definition of Chalcedon appeared to be contradictory to the Cyrillian formula.[4] Thus after A.D. 451 a regrettable schism occurred between the Chalcedonians and Oriental Orthodox Churches (non-Chalcedonians).[5]

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that it should be thoroughly studied whether Nestorius was a Nestorian. See Grillmeier, Aloys. *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, vol. 1, 448–9. Trans. John Bowden. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975.

[3] The five historically recognized Oriental Orthodox Churches are: Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahedo* Church, Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch and All the East, Armenian Apostolic Church, and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church.

[4] As the "μία φύσις—*miaphysis*" in the formula indicates the *hypostatic* and perfect union of the divinity and humanity in Christ, the Chalcedonian phrase: "in two natures" does not sound harmonious with Cyril's formula. According to Samuel, "the 'in two natures' could mean only that God the Son and the man Jesus were united in the realm of *prosopon*." See Samuel, V. C. *The Council of Chalcedon Re-examined*, 247. Madras: Diocesan Press, 1977. I will discuss this in more detail in chapter III.

[5] Harnack states that after the dispute between the Western and Eastern Churches on the Chalcedonian formula had lasted for 68 years, ecclesiastical division happened in A. D. 519. See Harnack, Adolph. *History of Dogma*, vols. 4–5, 226 and 228. London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1976. But according to Jones and Monroe, the schism occurred at the beginning of Justinian's regime, A.D. 527. See Jones, A. H. M., and Elizabeth Monroe. *A History of Ethiopia*, 31. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1962.

In fact, at the council of Chalcedon there were a number of factors that led to the breach between the churches. The first was the unwholesome political interference in ecclesiastical issues which exerted pressure among the churches. Most probably, Chalcedon's doctrinal formula would have been different if the Emperor Marcian and his wife Pulcheria had not intervened. Furthermore, cultural differences and the difficulty in finding out the exact uses of the Greek terms also contributed to the regrettable schism in Christendom.

The particular emphases laid by the Chalcedonians and the non-Chalcedonians have led to unfortunate mislabeling and mis-understandings. The former underlined the distinctness of the divinity and humanity in Christ, so that they were considered by the non-Chalcedonians as Nestorians and advocates of *dyophysitism*. Since the non-Chalcedonians highlighted the union of the natures in Christ, though without considering the mixture of these natures, they were nick-named by the Chalcedonians as *monophysites* as if they agreed with Eutyches that in Christ there was *only one* nature, indicating that one of them was absorbed by the other.

Contemporary christological dialogues have discovered that the reason which separated the churches in the fifth century was more terminological than theological. As proven by recent research, although the two parties at Chalcedon used different formulas, they professed the same faith in Christ, so that their difference was semantic. In other words, the different uses of the Greek terms contributed a lot to the breach. Being convinced that the Chalcedonian issue should not have been a dividing factor, members of the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches have been clearing up their misunderstandings by conducting christological dialogues in view of unity.

As a member of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahedo*[6] Church (EOTC) does not accept the definition of the council of Chalcedon. The church has developed her own christological exposition based on St. Cyril's formula. It is interesting to note that the EOTC takes Cyril's

[6] *Ge'ez*, also known as *Ethiopic*, is the ecclesiastical language of the EOTC. The *Ge'ez* word ተዋሕዶ [*tewahedo*] is translated as "union (unification)—ἕνωσις. The phrase "μία φύσις—*miaphysis*" in Cyril's formula conforms to the Ethiopian word *tewahedo*, so that in this thesis Ethiopian christology has been designated as *miaphysite* christology.

christology very seriously, and so the church calls herself "*Tewahedo* Church," meaning a church that strongly believes in the perfect union of the humanity and divinity in Christ without change (*wulate*-**ውላጤ**), confusion or mixture (*tusahe*-**ቱሳሔ**), separation (*filtet*-**ፍልጠት**) and division (*buadé*-**ቡአዴ/ክፍለት**). But the word *tewahedo* and the expression in it: "one nature" of Christ "from two natures" does not indicate the presence of one single and dominating nature in Christ that resulted from the absorption of one of the natures into the other; but rather it implies "one united nature—*mia physis*" in preservation of the properties of the natures. The phrase "*mia-physis*" in Cyril's formula does not mean "single one—*monos*" or "simple numerical one" nature, but one composite or united nature.[7] Hence, "*monophysite*" christology is entirely different from "*miaphysite*" christology, and *miaphysitism* is none other than the *tewahedo* christological doctrine of the EOTC.

Even though some writers asserted that the time when the EOTC actually accepted the one-united nature (*mia-physis*) christology is not known,[8] there is some historical evidence for the entrance of *miaphysite* Christology to Ethiopia. In fact, the EOTC was not represented by anyone at the council of Chalcedon, for there was no structured hierarchy in the church. However, as the EOTC was under the jurisdiction of the Alexandrian Church since the ordination of Abba Salama in A.D. 328 as the first bishop of the EOTC by St. Athanasius of Alexandria,[9] the prevalence of the Alexandrian theology in the Ethiopian Church is clear. The various doctrinal books of the church, which were translated from Arabic to *Ge'ez,* explicitly denote the adoption of Alexandrian theology by the EOTC One of these books, *Haymanota Abaw* -**ሃይማኖተ አበው**- (Faith of the Fathers),[10] contains trinitarian and christological

[7] Samuel, V. C. "One Incarnate Nature of God the Word." *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 10, no. 2 (1964): 51.

[8] For example, see Ayala Takla Haymanot. *The Ethiopian Church and Its Christological Doctrine*, 45. Addis Ababa: Graphic Printers, 1982.

[9] Abba Gorgorios. *YaEthiopia Orthodox Tewahedo Betechristian Tarik* **የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተክርስቲያን ታሪክ** [History of the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahedo* Church], 21. Addis Ababa: Tinsae Zegubae Printing Press, 1999.

[10] A collection of patristic texts (pieces of homilies and theological treatises of the fathers of the church) on Trinity, the incarnation and the

expositions of the pre-and neo-Chalcedonian fathers of the church, and thus the christological position of the council of Chalcedon is well known in Ethiopia. Moreover, as liturgical books of the Coptic Orthodox Church that reflect the Alexandrian christology were translated to *Ge'ez* in the 5th century, and have been used in Ethiopia ever since, it can be said that the EOTC accepted the *miaphysite* christology in the 5th century.

Based on the accepted Alexandrian theology, indigenous Ethiopian scholars have displayed exuberant christological expositions in their writings. Recent research shows that most of the anaphoræ of the EOTC were the results of christological controversies in 15th century Ethiopia. Understanding *lex orandi norma est credendi* (the law of prayer is the law of belief), Ethiopian theologians of the 15th century, such as Abba Giyorgis of Gassicha (1365–1425) and Ritua Haymanot[11] wrote various anaphoræ which reflect the christological position of the church.[12] The prolific writer Abba Giyorgis is especially known for his profound christological thoughts which are well preserved in his valuable books.

Even if the works of contemporary Ethiopian scholars are not known to the outside world, since they have not been translated into other foreign languages,[13] the scholars have offered us a

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nature of Christ. It was compiled by Jacobite theologians in Arabic (*Itirāf al-abā* = confession of the fathers) around the year 1078, and translated into Ethiopic (*Ge'ez*) by Mab'a Seyon, son of Ras' Andu, during the reign of Baeade-Maryam (1468–1478). See Ayala Takla Haymanot, "The Theological Terminology of the Haymanota Abaw." *Misellanea Aethiopica* 2 (1986): 226, and Grillmeier, Aloys, SJ. *Christ in Christian Tradition*: *The Church of Alexandria with Nubia and Ethiopia after 451*, vol. 2, pt. 4, 347. Trans. O. C. Dean Jr. London: Mowbray, 1996. Modern texts of *Haymanota Abaw* are bilingual with the Amharic and *Ge'ez* translations in divided columns.

[11] Ritua Haymanot's specific dates are not known; he is considered to be the contemporary of Abba Giyorgis of Gassicha.

[12] Haile, Getachew. "Religious Controversies and the Growth of Ethiopian Literature in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries." *Oriens Christianus* (1981): 108.

[13] The traditional Ethiopian scholars are well versed in *Ge'ez*, the literary language of the EOTC. Their eloquent expositions are preserved in their works written in *Ge'ez*, and Amharic (the official language of Ethiopia). Unfortunately, since these scholars were not exposed to

treasure trove of considerable christological works. As the scholars know the bloodshed,[14] which resulted from the attempt to insert the "two natures" christological theory into Ethiopian christology by the Portuguese missionaries in the 17th century, the scholars write and speak about christology zealously enough. For them, chrystology, which mainly refers to the mystery of the incarnation (*mistire siggawe* **-ምስጢረ ሥጋዌ**),[15] is worth dying for.

When Ayala Takla Haymanot, an Ethiopian Catholic, translated his doctoral dissertation from Italian to Amharic in 1959, the translation brought outraged refutations among Ethiopian scholars. Besides the various articles and apologies written by other scholars against the translated dissertation, two renowned Ethiopian theologians, namely Meleake-Birhan[16] Admasu Jembere and Liketebebit[17] Ayalew Tamiru, wrote two books in defense of the *miaphysite* christology.[18] In their works, they successfully refuted the dissertation, and exposed the biased position of the author which contends that Ethiopian christology promotes the "two natures" stand of the council of Chalcedon despite its claim to stick to the one-nature position. We would not have had such significant books, had not the dissertation been translated into Amharic, the mother tongue of these Ethiopian scholars. Even now, their christological works in Amharic are unknown to the outside world, unfortunately. This is what initiated me to write the first manuscript of this book thereby disclosing the profound

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modern education, they could not show the depth of their christological discourses to outside world (foreign readers) by expressing their theological thoughts in foreign languages.

[14] The Ethiopian emperor Susenios (1607–1632) was converted to the Roman Catholic faith by Pero Paez, who preached the "two natures" doctrine in Ethiopia. As a result, the people and the clergy fought against the emperor, and in the civil war about 8,000 members of the EOTC were killed. See Gorgorios, *YaEthiopia*, 52.

[15] This Ethiopian term seems to have been derived from I Tim 3:16: "great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh" (NKJV).

[16] A clerical title, meaning *angel of light*.

[17] A clerical title, meaning *chief of the educated ones*.

[18] See the brief reviews of their books on pp. 10–12 below.

christological nuances of the Ethiopian scholars as articulated in their local writings.

Various foreign scholars have showed a particular interest in the christological works of the Ethiopian theologians, even if some of them failed to understand the works fully. A. F. Matthew and J. A. Douglas interviewed Ethiopian scholars, and edited a book entitled: *The Teaching of the Abyssinian Church as Set Forth by the Doctors of the Same.*[19] There are also a number of articles and books on Ethiopian christology written by foreign scholars.[20] Because of their limitations in understanding the Ethiopian language, some of these foreign theologians, however, did not fully understand the christological insights of Ethiopian doctors. As a result, some of the foreign scholars have misrepresented the christological position of the EOTC as *monophysite*, likening it to the heresy of Eutyches. As stated below, this study will clear up many of these mis-understandings and biases.

THESIS AND METHODOLOGY

Ethiopian christology can be studied from different aspects. The EOTC's theology of redemption (atonement), the church's teachings about the divinity of Christ and Christ's reconciliatory deeds can be explored from the liturgico-dogmatic texts of the church. As each of these subjects is worthy of considerable research, it is out of the scope of this book to deal with all of them in detail. Hence, the study of this book will be limited to the church's basic teaching, which is **ምስጢረ ተዋሕዶ** [*mistire tewahedo*]: the belief in the perfect union of the *hypostasis* (*akal*-**አካል**) and nature (*baharey*-**ባሕርይ**) of the Word with the *hypostasis* (*akal*) and nature (*baharey*) of humanity that resulted in the incarnate Son of God. Based on the selected primary and secondary christological sources[21] written by Ethiopian and foreign scholars, this book will analyze the christology of the EOTC, and show its orthodoxy,

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[19] Mathew, A. F., and J. A. Douglas. *The Teaching of the Abyssinian Church as Set Forth by the Doctors of the Same*. London: The Faith Press Limited, 1936.

[20] Please see the *Literature Review* below.

[21] See the bibliography of this thesis for the primary and secondary sources chosen for this study.

contending that Ethiopian christology is in fact not *monophysite*, but indeed *miaphysite*.

While dealing with Ethiopian *miaphysite* christology in this book, I will examine historical, dogmatic, and linguistic aspects of the subject. Strauss contends that "the Orthodox Church's perspective on the nature of Christ cannot be evaluated until the contextual nature of theology is understood."[22] This is true for Ethiopian christology, so that following the literature review in this introduction, chapter two will provide a brief historical survey of Ethiopian christology. Also the dogmatic aspect of Ethiopian christology is very important, for it serves as the heart of Ethiopian theology. The designation of the church as *tewahedo* and the abundance of christological confessions in the church's liturgical and doctrinal books imply the firmness of the church in dogmatic issues. Thus, in chapter three, the EOTC's christological doctrine will be analytically explored in light of the church's authentic books that are listed in the bibliography of this book.

Another very important aspect of any considerable study on Ethiopian christology is the need for familiarity with the language of the EOTC. It is very difficult to conduct studies on Ethiopian christology without acquiring a good knowledge of the christological terminologies employed by Ethiopian theologians. Hence, in this study, care will be taken to correctly present the Ethiopian christological terminologies as they have been used by the church's theologians. Chapter four deals with the theological importance of Ethiopian christology, approving its orthodoxy. Finally, in chapter five, I will show the ecumenical aspect of EOTC's christology, and offer my concluding remarks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Even if there are a number of books and articles written on the christology of the Greek Orthodox and a few Oriental Orthodox Churches, materials on Ethiopian christology, especially in English are rather scarce. Following is a brief review of some studies on the history and the theological features of Ethiopian christology.

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[22] Strauss, Stephen J. *Perspectives on the Nature of Christ in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church: A Case Study in Contextualized Theology*. Ph.D. diss., 29. Illinois: Trinity International University, 1997.

Dr. Takla Haymanot's Ph.D. dissertation, which was translated to both English and Amharic from Italian, argues that the difference between Ethiopian and Roman Catholic christologies is only semantic. It also contends that these two christological traditions do not differ in truth expressed, so that they are substantially the same.[23] To support his thesis, the author deals with historical interpretation, linguistic examination of the christological terms employed by Ethiopian theologians, and a review of liturgico-dogmatic sources of the EOTC. In contrast to the accusation of Ethiopian christology of *monophysitism* by other writers,[24] Takla Haymanot asserts that Ethiopian christology is the same as the *dyophysite* position, and so it is not actually *monophysite*. Moreover, approving the orthodoxy of the christological teaching of the EOTC and comparing it with the christology of the Roman Catholic Church, he also takes pain to show that the former is in full agreement with the latter.

In order to support his argument, Takla Haymanot presents his own historical interpretation. Elsewhere in his paper he contends that there was no time when the EOTC showed opposition to the christological doctrine of the council of Chalcedon, and separated herself from the Roman Catholic Church. According to Takla Haymanot, the Coptic bishops misguided the EOTC and imposed their own *monophysite* beliefs on the teachings of the church. However, though the EOTC theoretically appears to be in opposition to the Chalcedonian "two natures" christological doctrine, her writings substantially agree with the definition of the council of Chalcedon. Furthermore, Takla Haymanot contends that the nine saints who migrated to Ethiopia in the fifth century were *dyophysites*, and so they have contributed to the spread of the Chalcedonian doctrine in Ethiopia.[25]

Dealing with an intensive linguistic examination of the Ethiopian terminologies, Takla Haymanot considers them ambiguous. He contends that *akal* and *baharey*, the *Ge'ez* equivalent terms for person (*prosopon/ hypostasis*) and nature (*physis*), are used by Ethiopian scholars in a pre-Chalcedonian sense, so that they

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[23] Takla Haymanot, *The Ethiopian Church*, 148.

[24] For example see the review of Donald Brake's work on pp. 16–17.

[25] Takla Haymanot, *The Ethiopian Church*, 43.

lack the philosophical insights which were innovated at the council of Chalcedon. He also asserts that Ethiopians take *baharey* (nature) in a concrete sense, and so they understand the phrase "two natures" as "two persons." Thus, according to Takla Haymanot, what Ethiopians really reject is the heretical teaching of Nestorius, not the Catholic "two natures" formula.[26] Besides, Takla Haymanot deals with various Ethiopian theological terms to show that in spite of the equivocacy and interchangeable use of these terms by Ethiopian scholars, there is nothing that disagrees with the *dyophysite* christological position.

Refuting the dissertation of Takla Haymanot as authoritative representatives of the EOTC, Melake-Birhan Admasu Jembere and Liketebebt Ayalew Tamiru wrote two books on this subject. Both authors replied to the Amharic translation of the dissertation, dealing with it paragraph by paragraph; they followed the sequence of the chapters in the dissertation, and mostly presented the arguments of Takla Haymanot word by word. In his refutation, Jembere sounds more polite and logical than Tamiru does. Jembere argues that the historical analysis, which Takla Haymanot presents in his book, is unfounded. He further contends that while the EOTC confesses the Alexandrian christology since its foundation, and stays faithful to it, Takla Haymanot incorrectly asserts that there was no time when the EOTC officially rejected the council of Chalcedon but it was simply misguided by the Coptic bishops.[27] Moreover, Jembere reasonably disproves Takla Haymanot's consideration of the nine saints as Chalcedonians who came to Ethiopia in the 5th century, arguing that such a view contradicts the works of the saints shown during their lives in Ethiopia.[28]

Jembere also offers a systematic analysis and a scholarly response to Takla Haymanot's terminological and dogmatic studies of Ethiopian christology. According to Jembere, Takla Haymanot confuses the Ethiopian term *baharey* with *akal*, and incorrectly argues that Ethiopian scholars understand the term nature (*baharey*)

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[26] Takla Haymanot, *The Ethiopian Church*, 70.

[27] Jembere, Admasu. Medilote *Amin*—**መድሎተ አሚን** [A Balance of Faith], 45. Addis Ababa: Tinsae Printing Press, ²1998.

[28] Ibid., 67.

as person (*akal*).[29] Also criticizing the Chalcedonian definition of faith from a biblical point of view, Jembere demonstrates how non-Chalcedonian christology differs from the Chalcedonian christology in terms of terminologies and the interpretations behind them.[30] In doing so, he rejects Takla Haymanot's attempts to assimilate Ethiopian christology with the christological stand of the Roman Catholic Church. Finally supporting his arguments with authentic sources of the EOTC, Jembere denounces Takla Haymanot's stand on Ethiopian christology with regard to the preservation of the two natures in Christ, the exchange of properties between the divine and human natures, and the one operation of the incarnate Logos.

Like Jembere, Tamiru replied to Takla Haymanot's historical, terminological and dogmatic presentations of Ethiopian christology, which he regarded as incorrect. Unfortunately, however, out of his zeal to defend Ethiopian christology, and as a result of his feelings of outrage at Takla Haymanot's misrepresentations, Tamiru projects, in a polemical manner, a number of derogatory words and pejorative designations against Takla Haymanot and against the christology of the Roman Catholic Church respectively. He rejects Takla Haymanot's historical interpretation[31] and terminological analysis of Ethiopian christology, commenting on them critically and polemically.[32] Tamiru especially resents the expressions in Takla Haymanot's book which seem to belittle the divinity of Christ.[33] He also refutes the author's contention that Ethiopian christology embraces the Chalcedonian "two natures" christological view regardless of the semantic differences in the terminologies used by the two christological doctrines. Equating the "two natures" Chalcedonian stand with "two persons," based on the contention that "there is no nature that has not person," Tamiru accuses the Chalcedonian christology of Nestorianism.[34] Furthermore, while dealing with Takla Hay-

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[29] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 113–7.

[30] Ibid., 103.

[31] Tamiru, Ayalew. *Meche Telemedena Ketekula Zimidina*—**መች ተለመደና ከተኩላ ዝምድና** [When has kinship with the wolf become customary?], 122. Addis Ababa: Tinsae Printing Press, 1961.

[32] Ibid., 154.

[33] Ibid., 172.

[34] Ibid.

manot's idea of *enhypostasia* that presents the humanity of Christ as impersonal, highlighting that in the *hypostatic* union the *hypostasis* belongs to the Logos, Tamiru sees Eutychian fallacy in it, for the impersonal status of Christ's humanity denotes its fusion in the Logos.[35]

Tesfazghi Uqbit, an Eritrean Catholic theologian, conducted a christological study, dealing with the work of Takla Haymanot and the responses given to it by Ethiopian scholars.[36] Uqbit's study presents a detailed analysis of the historical and dogmatic aspects of Ethiopian christology. In a close reading of Jembere's and Tamiru's books written by critiquing the translated dissertation of Takla Haimanot, Uqbit analyzes the christological terms employed by the theologians of the EOTC. For this purpose, he relies on Kidane Wold Kifle's Geez-Amharic dictionary, and tries to show that though the meanings of the terms were differently presented by Tamru and Jembere, the dictionary clearly indicates the "two natures" formula demonstrated in the Ethiopian terms. Uqbit's reliance on Kifle's interpretation of the Ethiopian christological terms, which apparently denotes the latter's acceptance of the teaching of the council of Chalcedon, has an implicit assumption that the christology of the EOTC agrees with the Chalcedonian formula.[37] Obviously, while studying the refutations written against the dissertation of Takla Haymanot, Uqbit defends the dissertation,

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[35] Tamiru, *Meche Telemedena*, 144.

[36] Uqbit, Tesfazghi. *Current Christological Positions of Ethiopian Orthodox Theologians*. Roma: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1973.

[37] Though Aleka Kidane Wold Kifle's dictionary is valuable for etymological studies of Ethiopian terms, it cannot be a reliable source to study the christology of the EOTC since the author personally tends to the "two natures" Chalcedonian formula. In line with this point, R. W. Cowley, in his article: "The Ethiopian Church and the Council of Chalcedon." *Sobornost: the Journal of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius* 6, no. 1 (1970): 34, writes, "The book *Metshafe Sewasiw Wegiss Wemezgebe Qalat Haddis* [Grammar and New Dictionary of Words] by Kidane Wold Kifle, Addis Ababa, 1948, is a large Geez-Amharic dictionary; it can only be used with caution for examining the meanings of Christological terms, as the author is inclined to the Greek Orthodox Christology."

contending that the Ethiopian scholars who responded to it did not understand the real intent of Takla Haymanot's work.[38]

Uqbit furnishes us with an exhaustive synthesis of the four main Ethiopian christological terms, viz *hillawe*, *baharey*, *tabayee* and *akal*.[39] Comparing and contrasting the various meanings given to these terms by different scholars, he states that apart from *akal,* all the rest of these four terms appear to be equivocal. As his main intention was to show how Ethiopian scholars express their own terms, he dealt with the reactions of Jembere and Tamiru to the linguistic studies of the Ethiopian terminologies presented by Takla Haymanot. By doing so, he demonstrates that though Tamiru totally rejects the interpretation of the terminologies given by Takla Haymanot, Jembere mostly agrees with Takla Haymanot's meanings that are based on Kifle's dictionary.

In the conclusion of his study, Uqbit asserts that Ethiopian scholars have a peculiar understanding of "person" and the union of the natures. He also notes that there is a lack of metaphysical understanding of personality in the christological nuances of the scholars. According to him, while the Chalcedonian christology has undergone metaphysically elaborated developments, Ethiopian christology retains a pre-chalcedonian sense. Based on the thesis: "no nature exists without person," Ethiopian theologians teach that Christ is one person (*ənd akal*) and one nature (*ənd baharey*) from two natures and two persons. Thus, in Uqbit's view, the Chalcedonian view of *enhypostasia* which states that in the *hypostatic* union the humanity has not its own *hypostasis* as the *hypostasis* belongs to the Logos is unknown to Ethiopian scholars.[40]

R. W. Cowley's brief article: *The Ethiopian Church and the Council of Chalcedon* examines the terminologies of the EOTC, focusing on the church's non-acceptance of the Chalcedonian definition. Cowley enumerates the primary and secondary christological sources of the EOTC, and then briefly highlights the main concepts found in one of the primary sources, the *Haymanota Abaw*. Finally, summarizing succinctly the main ideas in the study of Ayala

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[38] Uqbit, *Current Christological Positions*, 179.

[39] The terminologies can be translated as **ህላዌ-**[*hillawe*] = essence or nature (*ousia*), existence, subsistence; **ባሕርይ-**[*bahiriy*] = nature or essence (*physis*), substance, characteristics; **ጠባይዕ-**[*tabayee*]= properties, characteristic element, nature or essence; **አካል-**[*akal*]= person, *prosopon, hypostasis.*

[40] Uqbit, *Current Christological Positions*, 176.

Takla Haymanot and the response given to it by Ayalew Tamiru,[41] Cowley offers his own observations and findings. According to Cowley, the Ethiopians understand the Chalcedonian definition of faith to be contradictory to the doctrines affirmed at Nicea (A.D. 325) and Ephesus (A.D. 431).[42] Also Ethiopians accept neither "the application of Cappadocian Trinitarian categories to the doctrine of the Incarnation"[43] nor the use of any term that signifies duality in the incarnate Logos.[44] However, Cowley concludes, as the teaching of Cyril of Alexandria is accepted by both the Ethiopian and Chalcedonain traditions, "a mutual approach to it should do much to bridge the gulf between the two."[45]

We find the basic christological views of the EOTC in the article of Lique-Siltanat[46] Habtemariam Worquineh presented in the first unofficial christological consultation between the theologians of the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches in Aahrus, Denmark in 1964. According to Worquineh, the EOTC believes that the second person of the Trinity, who was born of the Father of the same substance, was made flesh in the fullness of time.[47] Thus, Christ (the incarnate Word) is one nature and one person from two natures and two persons. That means the human person and the human nature being united with the divine person and divine nature, became one person and one nature. As a result of the perfect union (*tewahedo*), Christ is known in one nature and one person, so that He is not divided into two natures. This mystery of the union is found in Christ's soteriological work as the Logos could not be crucified unless He was perfectly united with the flesh, and the flesh could not save the world unless it was

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[41] See above the brief reviews of the works of Takla Haymanot and Tamiru, pp. 9–12.

[42] Cowley, "The Ethiopian Church," 37.

[43] About the application of trinitarian terms to christology, see Meyendorff, J. "Chalcedonians and Monophysites after Chalcedon." *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 10, no. 2 (1964–65): 18.

[44] Cowley, "The Ethiopian Church," 38.

[45] Ibid.

[46] A clerical title, meaning *chief of the authorities*.

[47] Worquineh, Habtemariam. "The Mystery of the Incarnation." *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 10, no. 2 (1964–65): 158.

united with the Logos. The union was perfect to the extent that after Christ's crucifixion the divinity was not separated from His flesh and soul.[48]

Expressions similar to that of Worquineh's are found in EOTC's two official books. In the book written by Aymro Wendimagegnehu and Joachim Motovu an article is devoted to the church's teaching of the incarnation.[49] The writers state that the EOTC considers the incarnation as the means of our salvation. The divine and human natures were perfectly united in Christ so that it is impossible to speak of Christ as being in two natures after the union.[50] Christ is at the same time perfect God and perfect man, and there is exchange of properties between the natures, which were united in Him without division, change, confusion, and separation. Since the EOTC acknowledges Christ as *mia-physis* (composite or one-united nature) the church rejects both Eutychianism and Nestorianism.[51]

In EOTC's Patriarchate publication: *The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith, Order of Worship and Ecumenical Relations*, an article entitled "Incarnation"[52] briefly contains the same explanations as in the articles of Worquineh and that of Wondmagegnehu and Motovu. Highlighting the salvific purpose of the incarnation, the article confesses Christ as one person and one nature.[53] The article also asserts that in its union with the Logos, the flesh was honoured and exalted to divine status; as the Word was born of St. Mary in the flesh, St. Mary deserved to be called *theotokos* (mother of God).[54]

Based on B. M. Weischer's edition of the *Qerellos*, a 5th century Ethiopian collection of Alexandrian christological texts, in his

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[48] Worquineh, "The Mystery," 158.

[49] See Wendimagegnehu, Aymro, and Joachim Motovu. *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 95–100. Tinsae Zegubae: Addis Ababa, 1970.

[50] Ibid., 95.

[51] Ibid., 97.

[52] According to the dogmatic teaching of the EOTC, the other four pillars of mystery are: mystery of the Trinity, mystery of baptism, mystery of the Holy Communion and mystery of the resurrection of the dead.

[53] *The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith, Order of Worship and Ecumenical Relations*, 26. Addis Ababa: Tinsae Zegubae Printing Press, 1996.

[54] Ibid., 28.

article: *Elements of an Ethiopian Christology*, Josef Lossel investigates how Ethiopian christological texts, translated from Greek texts varied in meaning from their Greek originals.[55] Lossel agrees with Weischer that Ethiopian christological texts stress the unity of Christ much more strongly than the Greek originals from which they were translated. But while Weischer contends that *dyophysite* formulas had been maintained in Ethiopian texts prior to the introduction of Arabic and Syrian *monophysite* terms to Ethiopian texts during the middle ages, and thereby influencing Ethiopian christology,[56] Lossel argues that it is not appropriate to use the term *monophysite* while referring to Ethiopian christology. According to Lossel, without embracing any heretical views, Ethiopian christology has developed the capacity to express the incarnation as the relationship of God with humankind in Jesus Christ.[57] In addition, orthodox formulas, which stress the unity of Christ, are highlighted in Ethiopian christology not as a sign of *monophysite* tendency but as an "expression of a strong concern for the unity of person as principle of divine-human action in Jesus Christ who is God and man, *One as the Same*."[58]

Donald Brake's study of Ethiopian christology is purely historical. Having dealt with the differences held between the Alexandrian and Antiochean theological schools, he presents an overview of the christological disputes in the early church. Then he categorizes Ethiopian christology with the Alexandrian position, which he calls *monophysite*, and chronologically studies the development of christology in Ethiopia. As mentioned above, while Takla Haymanot argues that there is no time when the EOTC expressed her opposition to the Chalcedonian formula, Brake contrarily contends that the EOTC has not ever diverted from her non-Chalcedonian stand despite the challenges the church faced from Catholic missionaries?[59] Also in contrast to Takla

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[55] Lossel, Josef. "Elements of an Ethiopian Christology." *Ostkirchliche Studien* 42 (1993): 289.

[56] Ibid., 294.

[57] Ibid., 301.

[58] Ibid., 302.

[59] Brake, Donald L. *A Historical Investigation of Monophysitism in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, Ph. D. diss., 2. Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1977.

Haymanot's contention, Brake argues that the EOTC is a *monophysite* church, since her christology teaches the existence of only one nature in Christ.[60]

Brake concludes his studies with a comment that since the difference between the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian christological teachings is not semantic, but purely theological, any attempt towards unity would be impossible. He supported his conclusion by his historical studies of the EOTC, asserting that the church has closed her doors for ecumenical activities. Thus, according to him, unless the problems of the theological differences are resolved, it is unrealistic to bring the *monophysites* and *dyophysite*s into harmony. Any simple effort to unite them will be faced by oppositions from the members of the two theologically-minded camps.[61]

There is a contextual case study on Ethiopian christology in the work of Stephen Strauss. Based on an interesting literature review, Strauss presents a detailed survey of Ethiopian christology from historical, theological and linguistic perspectives. In the historical studies, he shows how the non-Chalcedonian theology entered Ethiopia, and gradually developed. In his theological studies, without demonstrating the right understanding of *communicatio idiomatum* in its deepest sense as expressed by Ethiopian scholars, Strauss incorrectly regards the Ethiopian one-united nature (*mia-physis*) christology as tending to Apollinarianism.[62] According to him, it is contradictory to teach that there is one-united nature (*mia-physis*) in Christ, while confessing that the properties of the two natures are neither divided nor mixed. His linguistic approach of Ethiopian christology was concluded with the view that in the Ethiopian language it is impossible to speak of two natures without implying the idea of two persons. He also correctly reports that the EOTC prefers her christology to be called *miaphysite* to *monophysite*.[63]

In conclusion to our brief literature review, we find a descriptive survey of Ethiopian christology in the paper of Belihu Delelegne. Dividing the subject as ontological christology and

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[60] Brake, *A Historical Investigation*, 1.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Strauss, *Perspectives*, 88.
[63] Ibid., 15.

functional christology, Delelegne deals with various christological issues, such as the co-eternity of the Logos with the Father, the incarnation of the Son, the virgin birth, the motherhood of St. Mary, the nature of Christ and the offices of Christ. We also find in Delelegne's work a comparison between Chalcedonian and Ethiopian christologies. Based on this comparison, he points out that there are important theological terms in Ethiopian christology which should be thoroughly studied for theologizing in the Ethiopian context.[64]

In the above briefly reviewed works, we have noted that the authors varied in their attitudes and conclusions towards Ethiopian christology. Some have understood it to be similar to the *dyophysite* position, whereas others considered it as a sheer *monophysitism*. Also in the reviewed literature, there are some incorrect historical and theological interpretations of Ethiopian Christology—misrepresentations which will be cleared up in the forthcoming chapters of this book. Above all, the most important and peculiar features of Ethiopian christology were overlooked, and in none of the studies were the christological teachings of the EOTC presented as *miaphysite*. If Ethiopian christology is taken as *miaphysite* in a correct sense, there is a need to deal with its basic teachings, such as the *hypostatic* union (*tewahedo*), the *communicatio idomatum*, the idea of *yekewin tewahedo*—**የከዊን ተዋሀዶ** [union in mode of being], and the importance of maintaining the *miaphysite* christology. In addition, the way in which Ethiopian scholars contemplate on the wonder of the mystery of the incarnation and the analogies they use to express the mystery should not be discarded. Such issues, untouched by the reviewed literature, will be studied in the following chapters of this book so as to fill the gap in the field of studies on Ethiopian christology.

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[64] Delelegne, Belihu. *Understanding the Current "Official" Christological Positions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church: A Search for an Indigenous Christology*, Th. M thesis, 99. Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology, 2001.

CHAPTER II
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES OF ETHIOPIAN CHRISTOLOGY

In order to understand the nature of Ethiopian christology, one needs to have a glimpse into the history of Ethiopian Christianity in general and the development of its christology in particular. As we will discuss, since the establishment of the non-Chalcedonian (*miaphysite*) christology in Ethiopia in the 4th and 5th centuries, the Ethiopian Church has remained faithful to it despite the relentless attempts of Catholic missionaries in the 16th and 17th centuries to convert the church to Catholicism. As Strauss put it, "over the centuries, non-Chalcedonian christology has become one of the most important defining points of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church distinguishing it from western Christianity."[65] Thus in this chapter, we shall briefly study the historical aspects of Ethiopian christology, dealing with its establishment, the factors that contributed to its development, and the challenges it faced.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NON-CHALCEDONIAN CHRISTOLOGY IN ETHIOPIA

The EOTC is one of the most ancient Christian churches in Africa. As we read in Acts. 8: 26–39, following the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ in A.D. 34, the Ethiopian eunuch, official and treasurer of queen Candace of Ethiopia, was baptized by Philip. Upon returning to Ethiopia, the eunuch proclaimed his own belief in Jesus Christ to his countrymen. This was testified by Eusebius the historian who wrote that "He (the eunuch) was the first to

[65] Strauss, *Perspectives*, 49.

receive the divine Word from Philip by revelation, and the first to return to his native land and preach the Gospel."[66] There are various assumptions by historians like Jerome that the apostles Matthew, Andrew and Thomas evangelized Ethiopia.[67] The assumptions, however, cannot be taken for granted because nothing in Ethiopian history is written regarding the evangelization of the apostles in question.

The Christian faith preached by the eunuch in Ethiopia was strengthened by the pastoral activities of Abba Salama in the 4th century. As narrated by Rufinus, a philosopher named Meropius was traveling to India with two Christian young men: Frumentius and Aedesius. On his way back home, his ship was boarded, and he was killed with the other persons on the ship by the inhabitants of the southwestern shores of the Red Sea. But the two boys were found studying under a tree, and were taken to the king of Ethiopia[68] by the inhabitants. The king made Aedesius his cupbearer, and Frumentius his treasurer. Finally the king died, leaving the queen with an infant son. As she understood that she could not get faithful subjects like Frumentius and Aedesius, the queen begged them to help her govern the country till her son was grown. When the prince grew up, he allowed the boys to go free; Aedesius went to Tyre. Concerned about the seed of Christianity sown by the eunuch in Ethiopia, Frumentius went to Alexandria to get a bishop for Ethiopia. In A.D. 328, St. Athanasius, the then Patriarch of Alexandria, consecrated Frumentius himself as a bishop, understanding that he could get no better man than him.[69]

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[66] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Eusebius: The Church History, A New Translation with Commentary*, 59. Trans. Paul L. Maier. Baltimore: Kregel Publications, 1999.

[67] Cot. Script. I. 262 quoted in Gorgorios, *YaEthiopia*, 18–9.

[68] According to the Ethiopic Synaxarium, a book which contains the biographies of the saints of the church, the name of the king was "Ayzana." See *Sinkisar*—**ስንክሳር** V. II, 625. Addis Ababa: Tinsae Zegubae Printing Press, 2001. But the English translation of the Ethiopian Synaxarium calls the king *Ella Allāda.* See Guidi, I., ed. *Synaxaire éthiopien* II, *Hamlĕ*, [411]–[413]. PO, 7. Paris 1911, quoted in Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol. 2, pt. 4, 300.

[69] The narration condensed and paraphrased here is Rufinus' narration found in Jones and Monroe, *History*, 26–7.

Upon his return to Ethiopia, Frumentius won great converts including King Ezana whom he baptized. Thus, Christianity became a state religion in Ethiopia in the 4th century.[70] Frumentius also ordained priests and deacons, and translated some books from Syrian to *Ge'ez*.[71] Ethiopians call him "Abba Salama (father of peace) and *Kessate Birhan* [revealer of light]," as he is the father of peace who illuminated Ethiopia by the glorious message of the Gospel.[72]

The relationship of Abba Salama with the Coptic Patriarch Athanasius has paved the way for the entrance of Alexandrian theology to Ethiopia. Considering the need of the Ethiopian Church, Abba Salama brought some liturgical texts of the Alexandrian Church to Ethiopia which are still used by the EOTC. Also the anaphora of the apostles contained in the Apostolic constitution, and known to the Coptic Orthodox Church, the liturgy of St. Mark (later adapted by St. Cyril and called by his name), and the anaphora of St. Basil were brought to Ethiopia by Abba Salama.[73] Thus, as *lex orandi norma est credendi* (the law of prayer is the law of faith), the Alexandrian christological beliefs were adopted by the Ethiopian Church through the liturgical texts brought by Abba Salama. For instance, in the preparatory service of Ethiopian Liturgy we read: "O Lord our God, Jesus Christ our

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[70] Regarding the entrance of Christianity to Ethiopia, Sergew Hable-Sellassie says: "There was a fundamental difference between the way in which Christianity was introduced into Ethiopia and the way in which it was first introduced into the Greco-Roman world. There Christianity began among the lower classes and gradually, after three centuries, succeeded in gaining converts among some members of the royal family. In Ethiopia, it was the other way round; Christianity began among the upper classes and gradually spread down to the lower levels of society. In other words, Christianity in Ethiopia started as the official religion of the country and as such, it secured the help of government from the very beginning. Therefore, the Christian Church in Ethiopia did not experience the persecution which occurred in other countries. In fact, the support of the state implied the rapid expansion of Christianity in Ethiopia." See Hable-Sellassie, Sergew. *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270*, 104. Addis Ababa: United Printers, 1972.

[71] Gorgorios, *YaEthiopia*, 21.

[72] Ibid., 22.

[73] Tzadua, Paulos. *The Divine Liturgy According to the Rite of the Ethiopian Church*, 11. Addis Ababa: Graphic Printers, 1973.

God, who truly was made man, whose godhead was not separated from thy manhood,"[74] underlining the unity of the two natures in Christ. Elsewhere in the Ethiopian Liturgy it is stated that the humanity taken from St. Mary was united with the divinity without mixture or confusion, without division or alteration. Moreover, we find the Alexandrian way of expression to emphasize the perfect union which the non-Chalcedonian christology safeguards: "I believe, I believe, I believe and I confess that his godhead was not separated from his manhood, not for an hour nor for the *twinkling of an eye*."[75]

Based on the alliance and sisterhood of the Ethiopian Church and the Alexandrian Church, it is reasonable to say that in matters of dogma, the former sided with the latter who opposed the Chalcedonian christological formula.[76] History recalls that "Chalcedon was followed by schism of hearts and minds throughout the whole of the east."[77] Since the "Churches of the East"[78] were suspicious of Nestorianism in the definition of Chalcedon, they issued severe condemnations on the Chalcedonian creed. As a result, there was a great deal of tension in the East when some bishops, who favoured Chalcedon, like Juvenail of Jerusalem, were not accepted by the people. Also riots were aroused when the Chalcedonian bishops Maritirius and Proterius were strongly opposed in Antioch and Alexandria, leading to their replacement

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[74] *The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Church*, 14. Trans. Marcus Daoud, rvsd. Marsie Hazen. Cairo: Egyptian Book Press, 1959.

[75] Ibid., 82 (Italics mine). The same phrase: "twinkling of an eye" is found in the *Coptic Liturgy of St. Basil*. The priest prays, "I believe that His Divinity never departed from His Humanity not even for a single instant nor a *twinkling of an eye*." See *Coptic Liturgy of St. Basil*, 106. NSW: Coptic Orthodox Electronic Publishing Australia, 2000 (Italics mine). Similarly in his book: *The Nature of Christ*, 22. Cairo: Dar El-Tebaa El-Kawmia Press, H. H. Pope Shenouda III writes, "But as for the unity of the Divine and human natures of Christ, it is an inseparable union as the Divine nature never departed the human nature for one single moment, nor *for a twinkle of an eye*" (Italics mine).

[76] Hable-Sellassie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History*, 112.

[77] Frend, W. H. C. *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries*, 62. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

[78] The term refers to the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

by Peter the Fuller and Timothy Aurelius, respectively.[79] Alexandria appeared to be an especially strong opponent of the council of Chalcedon. Thus as a church under the jurisdiction of the Alexandrian Patriarch, the Ethiopian Church shared the Alexandrian position which objected to the definition of the council of Chalcedon. In other words, "when the Alexandrian church rejected the council of Chalcedon, Ethiopia stayed allied with her mother church in Egypt."[80]

In Frend's words, "It is true that in the century after Chalcedon the Syriac and Coptic masses felt the power of the empire to be a hated yoke."[81] As followers of the non-Chalcedonian position, the Copts and Syrians suffered persecutions under the Chalcedonian emperor Leo. In A.D. 459, the emperor sent Timothy of Alexandria to exile.[82] Though the Henoticon of Zeno, the encyclical of Basiliscus, and the Cyrillic-Chalcedonian document of Justinian were meant to make peace between the Chalcedonians and the non-Chalcedonians, all these peace processes were in vain. Thus in this harsh period of estrangement and schism, in A.D. 480, nine saints[83] from the Roman empire[84] fled to Ethiopia where they thought that they would be treated

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[79] Frend, *The Rise*, 154.

[80] Strauss, *Perspectives*, 50.

[81] Frend, *The Rise*, 51.

[82] Ibid., 163.

[83] The nine saintly monks are: Abba Aléf, Abba Aregawi (Za-Mikael), Abba Afsé, Abba Liqanos, Abba Gerima (Yeshaq), Abba Guba, Abba Yim'ata, Abba Penteléwon, and Abba Sehma. See Gorgorios, *YaEthiopia*, 24.

[84] Hable-Sellassie states that the monks came from different parts of the Roman Empire: "Liqanos from Constantinople; Yim'ata from Cosait; Sehma from Antioch; Guba from Cilicia; Afsé from Asia Minor; Aléf from Caesarea; Aregawi, Isaac or Gerima and Penteléwon from Rome." However, though the monks belonged to different nationalities, they were united by sharing the same non-Chalcedonian faith. See Hable-Sellassie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History*, 116. With a few variations from what is stated in Hablle-Sellassie, the names of the nine saints are also enumerated in the English version of the Ethiopic Synaxarium. See Budge, E. A. W. *The Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Church: A Translation of the Ethiopic Synaxarium* I–IV 1009–10, quoted in Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol. 2, pt. 4, 302.

well, as Ethiopians shared the same non-Chalcedonian christology with them.

The Ethiopian Church's acceptance of the non-Chalcedonian position was sealed when the nine saints entered Ethiopia in the late fifth or early sixth century during the reign of the Ethiopian King Ella Amīdā.[85] In their stay in Ethiopia the saints performed considerable work which strengthened Christianity and the non-Chalcedonian christological position in Ethiopia. They studied *Ge'ez*, and translated a number of books from the Syriac language to *Ge'ez*.[86] As the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch belongs to the non-Chalcedonian family that rejects the Chalcedonian christological formula, the influence of the nine saints' translations on Ethiopian christology is quite clear.[87] Two of the considerable christological books which they translated are the *Qērellos* and the

[85] According to the vita of St. Cyriacus by Cyril of Scythopolis, a monk by name Thomas was consecrated as a bishop for Abyssinia (Ethiopia) by Timothy II (Saloph), the Melkite patriarch of Alexandria (460–475, 477–482). This presupposes that there was a Chalcedonian missionary work in Ethiopia around A.D. 480 prior to the coming of the nine saints. However, since there is no mention of a Chalcedonian bishop Thomas in the Ethiopian literature, the account in the vita of St. Cyriacus is not reliable. See Garitte, G. "La version géorgienne de la Vie de S. Cyriaque par Cyrille de Scythopolis." *Le Muséon* 75 (1962): 399–440, cited in Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol. 2, pt. 4, 303.

[86] Gorgorios, *YaEthiopia*., 23. The account in the *Acta Pantaleonis*, which states that the nine missionaries (saints) came from Syria, signifies their possible knowledge of the Syriac language. See *Acta Pantaleonis*, in Conti Rossini, C., ed. *Acta Yared et Pantelewon*. CSCO 27. Louvain, 1904 (1955), cited in Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol. 2, pt. 4, 302.

[87] Takla Haymanot's contention that the nine saints were Romans, and they held the Chalcedonian position is erroneous. Even one of the sources he consulted states that "…the famous "nine Saints" were *monophysites* [sic], and that they propagated this doctrine…" Dillmann, A. *Zur Geschichte des Axumitischen Reichs im vierten bis sechsten Jahrhundert*, quoted in Takla Haymanot, *Ethiopian Church Christology*, 85; see also p. 42. Even though Takla Haymanot tries to argue that there is no evidence for the nine saints' non-Chalcedonian stand, his argument cannot dismiss the fact that in their works the saints strengthened the non-Chalcedonian christological position in Ethiopia.

De Recta Fide of Cyril of Alexandria.[88] Lossel comments on *Qērellos*, stating that it strongly stresses the unity of Christ (μία φύσις) over against its distinction in two natures (δύο φύσεις).[89] Since its translation, the book of *Qērellos* has become a major christological source for Ethiopian theologians. Thus, it has served as a strengthening factor for the maintenance of *miaphyiste* christology in Ethiopia.[90] As a result, the Cyrillian christology that emphasizes the unity of the two natures in Christ became well grounded in Ethiopia. As the *De Recta Fide* is also a christological treatise of St. Cyril of Alexandria, it can safely be said that the same characteristic feature as that of the *Qērellos* is maintained in it.

The centuries that followed the establishment of the non-Chalcedonian christology in Ethiopia witnessed to its firmness. The 6th century writings of St. Yared, the famous Ethiopian scholar and hymnologist, consist of basic christological thoughts adopted by the EOTC. His four hymnal books: **ድጓ** [*Deggua*], **ዝማሬ** [*Zimare*], **መዋሥዕት** [*Mewasi't*], and **ምዕራፍ** [*Mi'raf*] contain contemplations on the lives of the Lord Jesus and the saints of the Church. His books are prayed and sung in accordance with the four seasons of spring, summer, autumn and winter.[91] In his *Deggua*, St. Yared states the unity of the Logos and the flesh in Christ, attributing the properties of the flesh to the Logos. He chants: "the Word became flesh… He united our flesh with His divinity. The incorporeal Word was touched in His flesh… He took mortal flesh, and He

[88] Jones and Monroe, *History*, 35. The *Qērellos* is a christological collection named after St. Cyril of Alexandria (+ 444). The *De Recta Fide*, also called 'On Right Faith' or the *prosphonetickos*, as well is a christological treatise sent to Theodosius II, Arcadia, and Marina. See Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol. 2, pt. 4, 341.

[89] Lossel, "Elements," 288.

[90] Regarding the influence of the *Qērellos* on Ethiopian christology and theology, Grillmeier writes: "Even if it must be conceded that that Arabian-Jewish-Syrian bearers of religious convictions are preeminent and the gospel led more from the east over the Red Sea than from Nubia into the Ethiopian highland, we still learn, surprisingly, that it is precisely Alexandria that conveyed the soundest foundation of Ethiopian Christology and theology; and this was done not so much through the living word as through an Alexandrian collection of great value, the so-called *Qērellos,* a collection that was named after Cyril of Alexandria (d.444)." See Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol. 2, pt. 4, 332.

[91] EOTC Faith and Worship, 48.

walked on earth."[92] The non-Chalcedonian christological belief which highlights the unity of the human and divine natures without the change of one of them to the other, and the exchange of properties (*communication of idioms*) between the natures can also be demonstrated in the following portion from the Ethiopian feastal hymnary.

> The sun of righteousness rose from the virgin…He was born of her, and His divinity was not lost. He came in human flesh without being separated from His divine throne.[93] The one who created the heaven and earth was born of St. Mary. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers came to us through the seed of David; the Son of God was born of St. Mary the Virgin.[94]

The quotes clearly denote that the one who was born of God eternally was born of St. Mary in the fullness of time, and as He has made the flesh His own, the properties of the flesh (sleeping in a manger, being wrapped by cloth etc.) were attributed to Him.

ETHIOPIAN CHRISTOLOGY DURING THE DARK AND GOLDEN AGES

The Dark Ages (A.D. 680–1270) in Ethiopia is marked with conflicts and tiresome struggles. In addition to the rise of an Islamic empire that physically separated Ethiopia from the rest of the Christian world, the Ethiopian Church had difficulties in getting bishops from the Alexandrian Church because of the imposition exerted by Muslim governors of Egypt on the process. In order to get a single bishop, the Ethiopian Church was supposed to pay homage, namely gold, ivory or other treasures to the Coptic Patriarchs and the governing Muslim powers. The Muslim authorities were mistreating the Coptic Patriarchs, and even to the point where they were controlling the assignment of a

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[92] Yared, St. *Tsome Degua* -ጾመ ድጓ [Fasting Hymnary], 209. Addis Ababa: Tinsae Zegubae Printing Press, 2002. Quotes, in this book, from the primary and secondary Amharic and *Ge'ez* sources are my own translations unless otherwise mentioned.

[93] *Ziq* -ዚቅ [Feastal Hymnary], 106. Addis Ababa: Tinsae Zegubae Printing Press, 1995.

[94] Ibid., 104.

bishop for the Ethiopian Church.[95] In the 9th century of the Dark Age a certain Jew by the name Judith, who was among those who emigrated from Israel to Ethiopia, invaded Ethiopia, being helped by her countrymen, and ransacked the Ethiopian Church for about 40 years.[96] Thus in this age we do not see any considerable development of Ethiopian christology. As Brake put it, "one would not expect a detailed theological debate in a period of struggle for religious existence."[97] But this does not mean that in this period the EOTC diverted in any way from its non-Chalcedonian christological belief. As the church stayed formally in relationship with the Coptic Orthodox Church, and since there is no evidence which indicates that the EOTC deviated from its belief, it can safely be concluded that in this Dark Age the church remained steadfast to her non-Chalcedonian position.

In the Golden age of the 15th century, when Ethiopian literature reached its peak, we find a few factors that contributed to the development of Ethiopian theology in general. The period marks the rise of renowned Ethiopian theologians, such as Abba Giyorgis of Gassicha (1365–1425) and Ritu'a Haymanot. As there were heated theological debates in the time, some local dissidents tried to instill their heretical christological views by composing some new anaphoræ.[98] Understanding the threat, emperor *Zär'a Ya'əqob* (1434–1468) forbade the usage of these anaphoræ.[99] Among the christological works of this period we find the compiled work of *Akabe Se'at*. The work reproaches the *dyophysite* christology, reflecting the non-Chalcedonian christological position of the EOTC.[100]

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[95] Gorgorios, *YaEthiopia*, 33.

[96] Ibid., 30.

[97] Brake, *A Historical Investigation*, 86.

[98] The word "Anaphora" is derived from the Greek word Ἀναφέρω (*anaphero)* = to carry up or offer up that, it is literally translated as "offering." Anaphoræ are liturgical texts which contain Eucharistic prayers and some other constituents like anamnesis, epiclesis, sanctus etc.

[99] Haile, "Religious Controversies," 127.

[100] Worquineh, Habtemariam. "YeEthiopia Orthodox Tewahedo BeteChristian Emnet Tarikawi Masreja -**የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተክርስቲያን እምነት ታሪካዊ ማስረጃ** [Historical Proof of the Faith of the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahedo* Church]." *Proceedings of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* 3 (1996): 267.

Abba Giyorgis, the prolific writer, has written valuable books and treatises which reflect the dogmatic position of the EOTC.[101] His christological insights have likened him with St. Cyril of Alexandria, so that he is known as "*The Ethiopian Cyril*."[102] In his *Fikare Haymanot*,[103] Abba Giyorgis felt right in his condemnation of those who divide the united nature (*mia-physis*) of Christ. He writes, "if there is anyone who says that the divinity and humanity (of our Lord) exist in two modes and in two orders after becoming one, let him be anathema like the council of Chalcedon."[104] In the same work, according to the *communicatio idiomatum* concept of Ethiopian christology, Abba Giyorgis states that the incarnate Word acted as God-man. That is to say that all the human and divine deeds are the deeds of the incarnate Logos, and so it is impossible to attribute some deeds to Christ's humanity and others to his divinity. The Lord Christ walked as man, and that same Lord acted as God.[105]

The second half of the golden century furnishes us with *Haymanota Abaw,* a valuable doctrinal work and collection of patristic writings, which is so rich in its exposition of the *miaphysite* christology. The *Haymanota Abaw* is full of trinitarian and christological expositions of the pre- and post-Chalcedonian fathers.[106] Strikingly enough, the christological parts of the book indicate that all the fathers unanimously confess the non-Chalcedonian christology, opposing the *dyophysite* doctrine. In some cases anathemas are issued on those who tend to divide Christ,

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[101] Some of Abba Giyorgis' doctrinal works are *Masehafa Mestir*—**መጽሐፈ ምስጢር** [Book of Mystery], *Fikare Haymanot* -**ፍካሬ ሃይማኖት** [Exposition of Faith], *Fikare Hawaryat* -**ፍካሬ ሐዋርያት** [Exposition of the Apostles], *Arganona Wuddase* -**አርጋኖነ ውዳሴ** [Hymn of Praise], and various anaphoræ. See Tadesse, Fisseha. *Abba Giyorgis—The Ethiopian Cyril: His Trinitarian and Christological Expositions*. B. Th thesis, 10. Addis Ababa: Holy Trinity Theological College, 1999.

[102] Haile, Getachew. "*Fikare Haymanot* or the Faith of Abba Giorgis Saglawi." *Le Muséon. Revue D' Études Orientales* 3 (1981): 241.

[103] *Fikare Haymanot* = Exposition of faith, a doctrinal treatise which deals with christology and other dogmatic issues.

[104] Haile, "*Fikare Haymanot*," 251.

[105] Ibid., 244.

[106] Takla Haymanot, *Haymanota Abaw Terminology*, 226.

upholding two distinct natures in Christ. The portions quoted from the *Haymanota Abaw* in the third chapter of this book clearly imply the christological importance of this worthwhile source.

We have seen how Ethiopian christology developed throughout the centuries. The EOTC has not diverted from her non-Chalcedonian christology, which entered Ethiopia in the 4th century, and was strengthened in the 5th century by the nine saints. As we shall see in the following subtopic, despite the challenges brought by Western missionaries to convert the church to Catholicism, the EOTC by no means submitted to Western theological thoughts which are unfounded in her doctrines. Understanding the firm stand of the EOTC, Strauss testifies: "rather than passively following the lead of the Western church, the church of Ethiopia would tenaciously cling to teachings which it deemed were true to the traditions of its founders."[107]

CHRISTOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES WITH PORTUGUESE MISSIONARIES

The christological controversies in the 16th and 17th centuries in Ethiopia were preceded by a very devastating war which lasted for 15 years (1527–1542). In 1527, being encouraged by the Turkish power, Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim el Ghazi,[108] nick named Ahmed *Gragn* [the left-handed], a king of the Muslim Adals in North East Ethiopia, invaded the country with the aim of ravaging the Ethiopian Church. Consequently, King Libne Dingle (1508–1540) sent John Bermudez the cleric, whom he had detained as his ambassador, to Portugal for the purpose of a military allegiance.[109] The help was delayed and meanwhile the troops of *Gragn* ransacked the EOTC; churches were burnt along with their invaluable heritages, and a great number of Christians were massacred.[110] The Portuguese King and the representative of the Roman Pope in Portugal sent 400 troops to Ethiopia led by Christopher de Gama in 1541.[111] Unfortunately, when they reached Ethiopia, they found out that king Libne Dingle had been killed in 1540 by the Muslim

[107] Strauss, *Perspectives*, 52.
[108] Jones and Monroe, *History*, 82.
[109] Ibid., 83.
[110] Gorgorios, *YaEthiopia*, 48.
[111] Strauss, *Perspectives*, 68.

power, which prevailed over the Ethiopian army. In their initial fights with the Muslims, the Portuguese soldiers were discouraged by the death of their leader. But finally they were joined by the new king Gelawdewos (Claudius 1541–1559), who succeeded his father, and they defeated *Gragn*.

The victory over the Muslim power, however, sparked a christological controversy in Ethiopia between Jesuit missionaries and Ethiopian scholars. Bermudez returned back to Portugal and convinced the Portuguese authorities that it would be possible to convert Ethiopia to Catholicism. Thus they sent Andre Oviedo as a patriarch with Jesuit missionaries. But king Gelawdewos was not pleased with this, since he already had a Coptic bishop.[112] No sooner than had they reached Ethiopia, the missionaries started propagating their faith. Gelawdewos called Oviedo, and expressed his displeasure with the activities of the missionaries, as he understood that their mission would result in controversies and schisms in Ethiopia. He also held talks on christological issues with Oviedo, and in answer to the queries of Oviedo, Gelawdewos prepared his famous christological confession called *Confessio Fidei Claudii Regis Aethipiae*.[113] In the confession, he clearly demonstrated the teachings of the EOTC, expressing opposition to the definition of the council of Chalcedon. The kings' confession denotes that up to that period of his reign the prevalent non-Chalcedonian faith was maintained by the EOTC without any intention to embrace the Chalcedonian christology.

The First Christological Debate

Various writers have noted that the first christological debate between the Jesuit Portuguese missionaries and Ethiopian scholars was held during the reign of Gelawdewos.[114] According to Admasu, the representatives of the EOTC were Abba Pauli and Abba Zekri,

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[112] Gorgorios, *YaEthiopia*, 39.

[113] Uqbit, *Current Christological Positions*, 57. See also *Confession Claudii*, in Ludolfus, I. *Commentarius,* pp. 237–241 cited in Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol. 2, pt. 4, 328.

[114] Gorgorios, *YaEthiopia*, 49; Uqbit, *Current Christological Positions*, 56; Jones and Monroe, *History*, 85; Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 18; Strauss, *Perspectives*, 70.

and the debate was mainly focused on the nature of Christ, the subject of main difference between the Ethiopians and the Portuguese missionaries. In accordance with the definition of the council of Chalcedon, the missionaries purported that they confessed two natures and properties in Christ. Moreover, they noted that since the two natures preserve their own distinct properties in Christ, all the divine deeds are attributed to His divinity, and the human ones to His humanity. As the lowly deeds are attributed to the humanity of Christ, Christ's humanity is inferior to His divinity. Also the missionaries contended that since Christ said "the Father is greater than me" (Jn. 14: 25)[115] it is unlikely to say that the humanity of Christ ascended with His divinity, and sat at the right hand of the Father.[116] In addition, to show the created nature of Christ's humanity, the missionaries quoted from scripture where Christ asked for a drink from the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4: 7) and for the place where Lazarus was buried (Jn. 11: 34).[117]

Abba Zekri answered that it is impossible to make a distinction between the humanity and divinity of Christ after the union, because the union has avoided duality. Presenting an analogy he also said:

> As the soul does not cease its invisibility, and the flesh does not lose its materiality and limitedness, for both are united in one human being, so also neither did the divinity lose its immanence nor did the humanity lose its corporeality and

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[115] All the biblical quotes in this thesis are from New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise mentioned.

[116] This view is the same as Theodore of Mopsuestia's position. He contended that "While the phrase of the creed, 'and he ascended into heaven,' meant that the man who had been assumed had become a partaker of the grace of the Logos and that therefore believers could also become so, the phrase 'and he shall come again with glory' could only be referred to the Logos, since the Logos had come to dwell in the man who had been assumed, but the man had not 'come' from heaven but had been born on earth, and therefore could not come 'again.'" Thdr. Mops. *Hom. Catech.* 7.14., quoted in Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Christian Tradition: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, vol. 1, 255. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971.

[117] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 18.

> limitedness when Christ became one person, one nature by the hypostatic union.[118]

Abba Zekri also added that as a result of the communication of properties between the two natures, the divinity was seen in the flesh. In line with this view, John said: "we declare to you what was from the beginning. What we have seen with our eyes" (I John 1:1). That is to say that the eternal Word was seen to humans through the flesh; all the attributes of the flesh were ascribed to the Logos and vice versa. Thus there is no doubt that the incarnate Logos ascended gloriously, and His humanity which is united with the divinity sat at the right hand of the Father. That is why Christ said "the Son of man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God" (Lk. 22: 69). Also displaying that He would come in His human person with the glory of His divinity, Christ said "For the Son of man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father" (Mt. 16: 27).[119]

As for the last points raised by the missionaries, Abba Zekri said that if Christ's request for a drink from the Samaritan woman indicated that He is a creature, why did He say to her that "if you know the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water" (Jn. 4:10), which cannot be claimed by any human creature?[120] Also if for asking the place where Lazarus was placed at burial (Jn. 11:34), Christ is to be considered as a created being, how could He raise Lazarus from the dead as this is impossible for creatures? But His asking is like the requests of God "where are you O Adam?" (Gen 3: 9), "What is there in your hand O Moses? (Ex 4: 2). As we do not say that God was ignorant of the place where Adam hid and what was in the hands of Moses, the same applies for Christ. Thus, since the humanity of Christ belongs to the divinity, without any distinction between His humanity and divinity, Christ is God who became man.[121]

Even though the Ethiopians objected to the teachings of the Jesuits, they did not enforce them to leave the country. So the

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[118] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 18.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid., 19.
[121] Ibid.

Jesuits stayed for a while undertaking a limited ministry. In A.D. 1559 Gelawdewos died in a battle, and he was succeeded by his brother Minas. In the reign of Minas, the Jesuits tried to win converts by intensive debates. But always they faced oppositions. Meanwhile king Minas forbade Oveido to preach the Roman Catholic faith. Holding resentment, he plotted the death of the king in collaboration with the Muslims. As the king was informed of the plot, he exiled him. Finally Oviedo died in 1577.[122]

The Second Christological Debate

Without any despair in the unsuccessful mission of the first Jesuit missionaries, Rome continued to show interest in Ethiopia. Thus, other Jesuit missionaries came to Ethiopia under the leadership of Pero (Peter) Paez in 1603. As they approached Ethiopia, most of them were killed by the Muslim Turks who occupied Massawa, the gateway to Ethiopia.[123] Paez was detained, but finally he managed to enter Ethiopia. As "a man of prudence and ability,"[124] Paez appeared to be "a complete contrast to Oviedo."[125] Rather than directly confronting the Ethiopian scholars as Oviedo did, Paez adapted himself to the situation, and as a brilliant linguist he studied both Amharic and *Ge'ez*. His talent was highly appreciated by the then king Zedingil (1603–1604).[126]

The debates held between Paez and the Ethiopians during the reign of Zedingil showed the difference between their understanding of the christological terms: person (**አካል**-*akal*) and nature (**ባህርይ**-*baharey*). As narrated by Takla Haymanot, Paez challenged the Ethiopians by his view that since Christ is perfect God and perfect man, He has a divine and human nature, so that there are two natures in Him. Paez further clarified His view that as the Lord Christ shed His blood for us, He has a human nature. Moreover, it was His human nature, distinct from His divine nature, which Jesus showed to Thomas after his resurrection. Thus there are two

[122] Gorgorios, *YaEthiopia*, 4.
[123] Jones and Monroe, *History*, 92.
[124] Strauss, *Perspectives*, 71
[125] Jones and Monroe, *History*, 93.
[126] Ibid., 94.

distinct natures in Christ, and therefore they cannot be considered as one nature unless they are mixed.[127]

Takla Haymanot said that there was no Ethiopian scholar who could give a satisfactory response to the issues raised by Paez.[128] Here let me present the position of the EOTC on the points raised, as discussed in Jembere's refutation to Takla Haymanot's book. Jembere contends that, by saying: "our Lord shed His blood for us, and the shedding of blood shows that there is a human nature in Christ distinct from his divine nature as the divinity does not have blood" Paez speaks as if the blood was shed not from the person (*akal*) of the humanity but from its nature (*baharey*).[129] The same is true for his reference to Christ's wounds to argue that there is a distinct human nature in Christ. But as nature (*baharey*), in abstract sense, is a manifestation of person, nothing can be attributed to a given nature (*baharey*) in separation of its person. Thus we say that the blood was shed from the person of Christ in which human and divine natures were united. Also Christ showed His wound from His body, and so the wound should not be attributed to the nature (*baharey*) of Christ but to His person (*akal*).[130] As we shall discuss in the next chapter, here it can be noted that the Ethiopian christological terms (*baharey* and *akal*) do not convey the same meaning as their English equivalent: nature and person.

The Third Christological Debate

As soon as Fasil (1632–1667) assumed the throne, a christological debate was held between Alphonzo Mendez, who entered Ethiopia in 1622 as a Catholic Patriarch, and an Ethiopian theologian, named Betregiorgis. Reflecting that the death of Christ should not be attributed to His divinity, Mendez asked: "where is it written that the natural Son of God died?" Then Betregiorgis replied, "the apostle said that 'while we were his enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son'" (Rom. 5: 10). Mendez was confounded. He then abruptly asked "where is the face of God?" Immediately Betregiorgis ordered a candle to be lit, and asked

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[127] Takla Haymanot, *Ethiopian Church Christology*, 79.
[128] Ibid., 80.
[129] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 149.
[130] Ibid., 149–50.

Mendez where the face of the light was. As Mendez stood overwhelmed, Betregiorgis himself answered the question, saying that as the light does not face any direction, it cannot be said that the face of God is either towards here or there; God is omnipresent. Being impressed by the wit of the Ethiopian theologian, a certain scholar composed a poem—**ቅኔ** [*quine*]:

ረክብናሁ ለበትር ዘያደክማ ለሮሜ
ጽሩብ በምግባር ወቅሩጸ በትርጓሜ
Rekebnahu lebetir zeyadekima leRome
Tsiruhe benibab weqirutse betirguame[131]

That is to say that "we have found a rod which is shaped by literal reading and interpretation, and is able to weaken the Roman faith." In the *Ge'ez* language, *betir*–**በትር** means "rod," and the word *betir* in the poem refers to the name of the theologian, Betregiorgis, meaning the rod of St. George. The poem, thus, was meant to appreciate Betregiorgis for beating Mendez, the representative of the Roman Catholic christological position.

Besides the challenges they brought to the christological thoughts of the Ethiopian scholars, the christological debates have helped the scholars re-consider their position. In harmony with this view, Brake says "the Roman Catholic challenge was the single most important influence that has so firmly established the *monophysite* [sic] doctrine in Ethiopia."[132] However, as we shall see later, the debates with the missionaries had also negative impacts; the internal schisms and controversies were direct results of the debates raised by the Catholic missionaries. Moreover, the insistence of the missionaries on the acceptance of their position by the Ethiopians created hatred towards them among the clergy and laity. As Strauss says, "two hundred years of contact with Western Christians had left the Ethiopian Orthodox Church bitterly hostile toward Chalcedonian theology, convinced that only non-Chalcedonian christology could be authentically Ethiopian."[133]

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[131] Gorgorios, *YaEthiopia*, 54.
[132] Brake, *A Historical Investigation*, 2.
[133] Strauss, *Perspectives*, 75.

CHRISTOLOGICAL SECTS IN ETHIOPIA

The christological sects, namely *quibat* (unction) and *tsegga* (grace), created in the 16th and 17th century Ethiopia were mainly concerned about the unction (anointment) of Christ and His sonship. When they appeared first they were opposed by the adherents of the existing non-Chalcedonian (*tewahedo*—union) position. After an exhaustive debate, the two sects were condemned, and the *tewahedo* position was declared to be the official belief of the EOTC. As the issues brought by the sects are confusing enough, various scholars have differed in presenting the doctrines of the sects and their designations. Here I will try to present the christological thoughts of the sects as clearly as possible.

The Quibat—ቅባት (Unction) Sect[134]

The *quibat* (unction) Sect was followed by monks of the order of St. Ewostatewos in Lake Tana (Gojjama, Northwest Ethiopia),[135]

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[134] Strauss (*Perspectives*, 79) considers the *tewahedo* (union) belief as a position that emerged together with the *quibat* (unction sect) in the 17th century after the expulsion of the Catholic missionaries from Ethiopia. However, *tewahedo* is not a christological position, created in the 17th century. The Ethiopian scholars relate the word *orthodox* with the first ecumenical council of Nicea, and *tewahedo* (unification—ἕνωσις) with the third ecumenical council of Ephesus. Hence, they believe that, ignoring the council of Chalcedon, they maintained the *tewahedo* position which emerged in the fifth century when Nestorius was condemned. The Ethiopian scholars in the golden period (15th century) wrote valuable theological writings as *tewahedo* scholars. Also, as adherents of the *tewahedo* position, the Ethiopian theologians of the 16th and 17th centuries argued with the Catholic missionaries. The two sects (*quibat* and *tsegga*) were heretical sects which emerged in the 17th and 18th centuries in contrast to the existing *tewahedo* position. Crummey considers the *quibat* position as a modification of the "received *Tawāhedo* doctrine." See Crummey, Donald. *Priests and Politicians: Protestant and Catholic Missions in Orthodox Ethiopia*, 20. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972. When in 1878 a council at Boru Meda condemned the two sects, and affirmed the *tewahedo* position, the latter was not merely favoured as a sect but it was officially declared as the position of the EOTC that lasted throughout the centuries.

[135] In Ethiopia there are two main monastic orders: the order of St. Ewostatewos (1273–1352), and the order of St. Takla Haymanot who

who are known as *Ewostatians* and *unctionists*.[136] Their position is based on the biblical references, such as Is. 61: 1, Lk. 4: 18, Acts 4: 27 and Acts 10: 38. The *unctionists* (the adherents of this sect) contend that in Christ the two natures were fully united by the unction of the Holy Spirit;[137] by unction they mean the grace of the Holy Spirit which the Son received while in the womb. The Father is the anointer, the Son is the anointed, and the Holy Spirit is the anointment (unction).[138] The act of unction belongs to both the Word and flesh, so that by the unction the Word was made perfect man whereas the flesh was made divine.[139] Because of this view, the *unctionists* [140] are allied with Eutychianism which states that the human nature of Christ was absorbed by the divine.[141] Briefly in

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lived in the 13th century. The monks in Lake *Tana* belong to the first order whereas the monks at Dabra Libanos monastery in Shoa (province of Addis Ababa) adhere to the Takla Haymanot order. See Chaillot, Christine. *The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Tradition*, 153. Paris: Inter-Orthodox Dialogue, 2002.

[136] Crummey, *Priests*, 21.

[137] Ibid., 20.

[138] This would read in Greek: χρίστης, χριστός, χρίσμα. See Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol. 2, pt. 4, 347.

[139] To quote them exactly, the *unctionists* said: "When the Logos united to himself the flesh, he became poor; he emptied himself [Phil. 2:7], and he lacked his divine riches; but then he was anointed with the Holy Spirit, was exalted, and became the natural Son of God; that is our belief." See Guidi, I. *Bessarione* 8 (1900/01): 16, Quoted in Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol. 2, pt. 4, 350.

[140] Kifle states that the *unctionists* had three subdivisions. The first teaches that upon the union, the Word emptied Himself (Phil 2:8) or lost His divine honour. When Christ (the incarnate Word) was anointed in the womb, He became the natural Son of God in His divinity and humanity. The second group rejects the idea that the divinity lost His divine honour, and contends that the flesh got divine honour (natural son-ship) by the unction, not by the union. The third group purports that the flesh was exalted to the divine status both by the unction and the union. According to Kifle, all reflect change of the nature of the flesh, denying its created nature. Also they overlook the idea that the Word is "the Messiah." See Kifle, Kidanewold. *Metshafe Sewasiw Wegis Wemezgebeqalat Haddis* -**መጽሐፈ ሰዋስው ወግስ ወመዝገበ ቃላት ሐዲስ** [Grammar and New Treasure-House of Words. Geez–Amharic], 780. Addis Ababa: Birhanena Selam Printing Press, 1966.

[141] Brake, *A Historical Investigation*, 155.

their christological views, they give special importance to the work of the Holy Spirit. According to them, "the flesh that was taken by the person of the Son was created by the Holy Spirit."[142] The *unctionists* also believe that Christ has two births: the one from God the Father eternally and the other from St. Mary in the fullness of time.

For the *unionists*, adherents of the existing *tewahedo* position, the *unctionists'* view was not acceptable. According to the *unionists*, the *unctionists'* concept reflects subordination of one of the persons in the Trinity. That means, if the Son received grace from the Holy Spirit as the *unctionists* teach, He would be subordinate to the Holy Spirit. Thus, in the *unionists* realm of thought, the Incarnate Word is the natural Son of God the Father not by the unction of the Holy Spirit but by the union (*tewahedo*) of the divine and human natures.[143] It is the Word who glorified His flesh by uniting Himself to it. Therefore, the Son Himself is the anointer, the anointed and the ointment (unction).[144] The biblical verses about the anointment of Christ are understood in the sense of union (*tewahedo*) by the *unionists*; as in their words, "the union of humanity and divinity is called unction,"[145] or "the union of the divinity [with the humanity] in him [Christ] takes the place of the anointment of his humanity."[146] That is to say that, the unction is applied to the flesh of Christ, which became deified by possessing the Holy Spirit. The

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[142] Haile, Getachew. "Materials on the Theology of *Qəb'at* or Unction." *Ethiopian Studies: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference* 6 (1996): 206.

[143] Ibid., 205.

[144] We find the same explanation in the work of St. John of Damascene, *Contra Jacobitas*, PG, 91 (1), 1481 quoted in Takla Haymanot, *Ethiopian Church Christology*, 92, footnote no. 9. Regarding the unction of Christ, the saint says that "…the "anointing" or "unction" of Christ seems to mean sanctifying grace, as well as sustaining grace, called the "gratia unionis," which consists in the sustaining presence or union of the nature of the Word, with human nature. In consequence of this union, "the anointer, the anointed and the oil of anointment" would be the Word."

[145] Haile, "Materials," 207.

[146] Guidi, I. *Di due frammenti relativi alla storia di Abissinia.* Rome, 1893, Quoted in Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol. 2, pt. 4, 347.

unction also indicates the birth of the Word in the flesh.[147] However, it is impossible to say that the Word was glorified by the Holy Spirit as if the Word lost His honour. While the *unctionists* and the *unionists* agree that Christ (the incarnate Logos) is the natural Son of God, and He has two births (from God the Father eternally and from St. Mary in the fullness of time), they differ in their understanding of "the process or the agent that made the incarnated Word the natural Son of God."[148] For the former, it is the grace of the Holy Spirit that made the incarnate Word the natural Son of God, whereas for the latter, the union brought forth the natural sonship.

The Tsegga—ጸጋ (Grace) or Sosit Lidet—ሦስት ልደት (Three Births) Sect

In the middle of the 17th century, a new sect emerged among the monks of the order of Takla Haymanot who had been the adherents of the national *tewahedo* position. The sect is called *tsegga* (grace) because it teaches that "Christ in his humanity became the Son of God by grace or adoption through the Holy Spirit either in the womb of the Virgin Mary or at his baptism in the river Jordan."[149] As this teaching is similar to the third century's heresy of adoptionism, the adherents are called *adoptionists*. The sect is also called *sosit lidet* (three births) because it teaches that the Son has three births: the eternal birth from the Father, the temporal one from the Virgin Mary, and finally the birth by the ointment of the Holy Spirit.[150] Kidane Weld Kifle, an ardent supporter of this sect, calls the third birth *yegibir lidet*—**የግብር ልደት** (literally practical birth or birth by adoption).[151] The *adoptionists'* idea that Christ is Son by grace (by adoption) in his humanity is meant to preclude any idea of the transformation of the body of Christ to be divine. Thus they believed in the co-existence of two distinct natures in Christ. As a result, they were called crypto-Catholics.[152]

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[147] Tamiru, *Meche Telemedena*, 208.

[148] Haile, "Materials," 206.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Kifle, *Metshafe Sewasiw*, 780.

[152] In his relentless attempt to prove that the christology of the EOTC is the same as that of the Roman Catholic Church, Takla Haymanot (115) contends that the *tsegga* view (the position of the monks of Debre

The *tsegga* sect was condemned by the adherents of the *tewahedo* position (*unionists*) for its *adoptionist* view reflected in its teaching about the third birth of Christ. The *unionists* argued that the Son of God has births but two; the third birth view of the *tsegga* sect makes Him an adopted Son, contrary to His natural sonship. Thus the *adoptionists* nicknamed the *unionists* as *kara* (knife),[153] meaning that they *cut off* (rejected) the third birth.[154] There were a number of debates held during the reigns of various emperors in the 17th and 18th centuries between the existing *tewahedo* position and the two sects. Finally following the council at Boru-Meda in 1878, emperor Menelik II declared the existing *tewahedo* position to be the official position of the EOTC, and "*de facto* it has ever since reigned peacefully."[155]

As discussed above, the disputes with the Catholic missionaries gave new insights to Ethiopian scholars, and led them to perplexing controversies. However, this did not mean that the prevalent *tewahedo* position of the EOTC was discarded. The main interest in the controversies on the unction of Christ was to see whether the adherents of the sects embraced the "two natures" view, which the missionaries insisted to interpolate in the teachings of the EOTC. In other words, "the purpose of the subtle arguments on unction was to demonstrate whether one accepts a duality of natures in Christ."[156] As a result, the *unionists* (faithful

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Libanos) is the official position of the EOTC. But as Crummey (*Priests*, 23) correctly puts it, the *tsegga* position had once "won over the last institutional basis of *tewahedo*—the Debra Libanos Clergy." That is to say that the monks of Debra Libanos, who had been the adherents of the *tewahedo* position, accepted the sect of *tsegga* when it emerged in the mid of the 17th century. Finally at the council of Boru-meda in 1878, the *tewahedo* position was reconfirmed. Thus Takla Haymanot overlooks the difference between the *tsegga* and *tewahedo* positions.

[153] In *Ge'ez* "*karra*" means "knife." As both the *unctionists* and *unionists* reject the third-birth idea of the adoptionists, writers vary as to which of them the pejorative term *karra* is ascribed. Some associate *karra* with the *unctionists* whereas others understand *karra* as the nickname of the *tewahedo* position.

[154] Crummey, *Priests*, 26.

[155] Uqbit, *Current Christological Positions*, 86.

[156] Ibid., 88.

followers of the EOTC's christological position) rejected the *tsegga* sect, since it mainly reflected *adoptionism*, and tended to the "in two natures" teaching of Chalcedon. Thus, the controversies mainly imply how much the *unionists* wanted to exclude the Chalcedonian view, rather than invoking any influence on the existing *tewahedo* stand. Besides, for their *monophysite* (Eutychian) stand, which overlooked the perfect humanity of Christ, the adherents of the *quibat* sect as well were admonished by the *unionists*. Therefore, because of their heretical teachings the small minority adherents of the *tsegga* and *quibat* sects were excommunicated by the *unionists*, so that the failure of the followers of these sects to maintain the official orthodox *tewahedo* position did not affect the well-established non-Chalcedonian christology of the EOTC. By objecting to the *monophysite* and *dyophysite* positions of the two sects, the *unionists* safeguarded the *miaphysite* christology of the EOTC. The *miaphysite* christology of the *unionists,* which is the official position of the EOTC, will be studied in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III
MIAPHYSITE CHRISTOLOGY ACCORDING TO THE ETHIOPIAN TRADITION

Ethiopian christology is based on the Alexandrian christology of which St. Cyril is an exponent. The formula used by St. Cyril: μία φύσις τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου σεσαρκωμένη—one incarnate nature of God the Word, serves as a key for the christology of the EOTC, which is elaborated on the basis of the famous biblical passage: "the Word became flesh" (Jn. 1: 14). Thus as it has patristic and biblical bases, Ethiopian christology is regarded to be "substantially orthodox."[157] As quoted by Lossel, in his extensive study on Ethiopian christology, "Weischer finds many occasions to praise Ethiopian christology and its capacity for orthodox theology."[158] This chapter, therefore, deals with basic christological themes according to the tradition of the EOTC.

MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

The dogmatic teaching about the incarnation of the Word, one of the three *hypostases* of the Trinity, is called *mistire siggawe* [**ምስጢረ ሥጋዌ**], i.e. mystery of the incarnation.[159] The teaching mainly lays emphasis on the unification (*tewahedo* = ἕνωσις) of the divinity and humanity in the incarnate Son of God. As in the case of St. Atha-

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[157] Takla Haymanot, *Ethiopian Church Christology*, 87.

[158] Lossel, "Elements," 290.

[159] Tamiru, Ayalew. *Ye Ethiopia Emnet BeSostu Higigat*—**የኢትዮጵያ እምነት በሦስቱ ህግጋት** [The Faith of Ethiopia in the Three Laws], (Addis Ababa: Birhanena Selam Printing Press, 1961) 251.

nasius' theology of redemption, Ethiopian scholars emphasize that the main purpose of the incarnation of the Son of God was the salvation of the world.[160] In line with Athanasius, Ethiopian scholars teach that the Word's incarnation was the only means for the restoration of the divine image which had been effaced from humans as a result of the transgression of the first Adam.[161] Since death had reigned over all humanity, it was possible only for God to abolish the sentence of death from humanity, and redeem humans by sending not a messenger or an angel, but by sending His begotten Son (Is. 63: 8).[162]

The writings of Ethiopian scholars are full of contemplations on the greatness of the mystery of incarnation.[163] According to the scholars, the wisdom which God showed in His incarnation to save humankind is more wonderful than His wisdom of creating the world. In *Haymanota Abaw* we read: "as the angel said that the Holy Spirit would overshadow St. Mary, the Word was conceived by the work of the Holy Spirit in a way unknown to human mind. The one who forms the fetus in the womb, was conceived as a babe in the womb of St. Mary."[164] In like manner, the renowned Ethiopian

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[160] This idea is shared by V. C. Samuel, the non-Chalcedonian theologian. He says, "non-Chalcedonian theologians are unanimous in affirming that the purpose of the incarnation is the salvation of the world." See Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 234.

[161] Athanasius of Alexandria, "On the Incarnation of the Word," in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. IV, 39. Trans. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Michigan: Erdmans Publishing Company, 1991.

[162] Tamiru, *Ye Ethiopia*, 149.

[163] St. Paul as well marveled this mystery when he wrote: "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh" I Tim. 3:16 (NKJV).

[164] *Haymanota Abaw* -**ሃይማኖተ አበው**- [The Faith of the Fathers], 68. Addis Ababa: Tinsae Zegubae Printing Press, 1994. Similar expression is found in one of the writings of Severus of Antioch, a theologian of the non-Chalcedonian tradition. He writes, "Thus we also know in reference to the Emmanuel that the Logos participated in blood and flesh as we do by nature and at the same time in a supernatural way. If one wants to say 'how', this surpasses every word and every thought." Hom. 58: PO 8, 219 quoted in Grillmeier, Aloys. *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590–604)*, vol. II, 134. Trans. John Cawte and Pauline Allen. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995.

theologian, Abba Giyorgis, contemplates the mystery of the incarnation as follows:

> I believe in the Son of God who came into the world by His own good pleasure and the good pleasure of His Father and the Holy Spirit. He journeyed without moving, He descended without diminution above and without commotion below. He was carried without being gathered in the womb. He was born without opening the gate of the body (virginity). He was nourished by the milk of virginity.[165]

In the Ethiopian tradition, mariology is closely inter-related with christology, so that Ethiopian scholars admire the mystery of incarnation in light of the grace bestowed on the Blessed Virgin Mary. St. Yared, the Ethiopian hymnologist, expresses his astonishment on the mystery revealed in the Blessed Virgin Mary: "how could the womb of the Virgin accommodate the one whom the earth and heaven cannot limit? How could the Virgin suckle the Son of God?"[166] In the Ethiopian anaphora ascribed to St. Mary, we find symbolical presentation of the mystery of the incarnation. It reads:

> O Virgin, full of glory, with whom and with what likeness shall we liken you? You are the loom from which Emmanuel took his ineffable garment of flesh. He made the warp from the same flesh as that of Adam, and the woof is your flesh. The shuttle is the Word himself, Jesus Christ. The length of the warp is the shadow of God the Most High. The weaver is the Holy Spirit.[167]

Though no perfect analogy can be found for the mystery of incarnation, based on the traditional manual work of Ethiopian weavers, the composer of the anaphora[168] presents here an interest-

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[165] Haile, "*Fikare Haymanot*," 243.

[166] Yared, *Tsome Degua*, 170.

[167] *Ethiopian Church Liturgy*, 134.

[168] Traditionally the authorship of the Ethiopian anaphora of St. Mary is attributed to Abba Hiryacos (Cyriacos), an Egyptian episcopos. But any scholarly research on Ethiopian anaphoræ can disapprove this spurious attribution. Hammerschmidt categorizes the anaphora with the other local Ethiopian anaphoræ. See Ernst Hammerschmidt, *Studies in the Ethiopic Anaphoras*, (Berlin: GDR Printing Press, 1987) 40. Also based on the content of the anaphora, which is similar to the other treatises of Abba

ing symbolism. The loom (the weaver's pit) is symbolized by St. Mary: as the warp and weft (woof) are united in the loom, likewise in the womb of St. Mary the divinity and humanity were united. The sentence: "he made the warp from the same flesh as that of Adam" implies that the Word assumed the passible and corruptible flesh, the same as Adam's flesh. The Holy Spirit is likened to the weaver, who makes a garment by uniting the warp and woof, because the incarnation happened in the womb of Mary by the work of the Holy Spirit.[169]

Ethiopian scholars teach about the virgin-birth that St. Mary experienced no pain in the birth of Jesus Christ. They liken the birth of the incarnated Logos from a sealed womb with the coming out of sweat from the forehead.[170] As sweat comes out from our body without the feeling of pain, likewise the Virgin gave birth without any pangs of child-birth. In the Ethiopian anaphora ascribed to St. Cyril, we read another likening: "as Adam did not feel pain when a bone was taken from his side, so also the Galilean Mother of God did not feel travail."[171] But this does not mean that

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Giyorgis of Gassicha, Hable-Sillassie ascribes the authorship of the anaphora to Abba Giyorgis. See Hable-Sillassie, Sergew. "Giorgis Zegasitcha: Teacher and Author." *Ethiopian Journal of Education* 8, no. 1 (1975): 16.

[169] *Metsihafe Quiddase Andimita*—**መጽሐፈ ቅዳሴ አንድምታ** [Commentary on the Missal of the Ethiopian Liturgy], 227–8. Addis Ababa: Tinsae Zegubae Printing Press, 1999. This point can be supported biblically. When St. Mary asked the angel Gabriel how she would conceive the Son of the Most High, the angel's response: "the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (Lk 1: 35, NRSV) showed that the conception of the Word would be the work of the Holy Spirit.

[170] Haile, "Materials," 225.

[171] *Ethiopian Church Liturgy,* 276. Also in the *Commentary of the Ethiopian Theotokia* we read that St. Mary gave birth to the Lord Jesus Christ without suffering from the pangs of child-birth. See *Widdase Mariam Andimita*—**ውዳሴ ማርያም አንድምታ** [*Commentary on the Praise of St. Mary- Theotokia*], 128. Addis Ababa: Tinsae Zegubae Printing Press, 1998. As the Lord Christ was uniquely born of St. Mary without the seed of man, also His birth was extraordinary. St. Mary gave birth to Him without losing her perpetual virginity, so that He came out of a sealed womb. Thus, in such

the birth was not real. Also there is no implication here that the Virgin did not feel the birth at all. As the Lord Christ became truly man, His birth was real. The absence of travail in the virgin-birth should be understood in the light of the divine favour given to St. Mary as she uniquely conceived the Son of God without the seed of man. St. Severus, the non-Chalcedonian theologian, agrees with Ethiopian scholars in this regard. He writes, "He (Christ) who willed to come truly in everything that pertains to us and identify himself with us, his brethren, in all things except sin, was most certainly born in the flesh by a manifest and real birth, causing her who bore to feel the reality of the birth though she was free from all pain and suffering."[172]

ETHIOPIAN CHRISTOLOGICAL TERMINOLOGIES

It is not possible to study Ethiopian christology without a correct understanding of the Ethiopian christological terms which have particular meanings. The *Ge'ez* terminologies do not convey the same meanings as the Greek christological terminologies, so that Ethiopian christology should not be studied on the basis of the latter. In line with this point, Lossel says, "Ethiopian christological texts cannot possibly be judged according to Greek terminological standards."[173] It should be noted that the Ethiopian christological terms do not mean what their equivalent English or Greek terms transmit to the modern reader. While some non-Chalcedonain theologians used the same Greek christological terms and nuances as St. Cyril did, Ethiopian scholars developed their own way of exposition in the usage of the *Ge'ez* terms. The christology of Ethiopian scholars, however, is substantially the same as that of St. Cyril and the other non-Chalcedonian theologians.

Baharey (ባሕርይ) ≈ essence, substance, nature, οὐσία, φύσις.

The most important Ethiopian christological term, usually misunderstood by those who are not familiar to the Ethiopian tradition is *baharey*. According to Jembere, *baharey* is something which exists in an individual person (*akal*) as the characteristic

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an extraordinary virgin-birth, it is not unrealistic to say that St. Mary gave birth to Christ without feeling travail.

[172] Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 228.

[173] Lossel, "Elements," 289.

properties of that person, either a material or spiritual reality.[174] It subsists in a person (*akal*), so that *baharey* is not self existing. Hence it should be understood in an abstract sense, not as a concrete reality. Jembere explains this with an example: "as the nature of water, moisture (humidity) subsists in water, and expresses its characteristics. We see the person (*akal*) of water when it is spilled over or being contained in a glass. So the natures of water like moisture and coldness are known while they are expressed as features of the person (*akal*) of water." The same is true for the *baharey* of fire which is hotness; of wind which is coldness, and of earth which is dryness.[175] Thus *baharey* cannot be separated from its *akal* (person) which it manifests.

Also according to Jembere, *baharey* is the root or origin of *akal*. Thus, a person (*akal*) cannot be formed apart from its *baharey*. Similarly *baharey* cannot be perfected by itself without *akal*. Both are inseparably combined like a root, a trunk and a branch. Though *baharey* and *akal* are different in their characteristics, they are concomitant to each other. Since *baharey* serves as the origin of *akal* (person), the *akal* of Adam (his full stature from his hair to his toes) was made up of the four natures (*aratu bahreyat*—**አራቱ ባህርያት**): water, earth, wind and fire.[176] In accordance with Jembere, another Ethiopian theologian, Tamiru, defines *baharey* as "an immaterial reality, a fundament or an origin which can be perceived by no eyes, nor touched by hands, but only can be understood by conscience."[177]

In contrast to the aforementioned definitions of the Ethiopian term *baharey*, Takla Haymanot presents an incorrect expression of the term. In his words, "*baharey* of the Ethiopian Orthodox is quite a long way from its real philosophical connotation, as a specific substance; it signifies, rather, 'person,' more accurately, subsistent

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[174] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 108.

[175] Ibid., 145.

[176] Ibid. We find a similar view in Pelikan (*The Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, 234): "the universe was made up of the invisible, rational beings such as angels, and of the visible, material things, composed of the four elements of earth, air, water and fire." It is clear that as part of the universe, Adam as well was made up of the four elements.

[177] Tamiru, *Mech Telemedena*, 165. See also Uqbit, *Current Christological Positions*, 36.

nature, and never 'nature' as abstracted from personality."[178] It is a paradox that while the Ethiopian scholars clearly differentiate between *baharey* and *akal*, applying different meanings to them as stated above, Takla Haymanot argues the other way.[179] Again his contention reads: "In the concept of the dissident Ethiopians, 'nature' is something of subsistent in itself, having a proper autonomy. In one word, they confuse and identify the two concepts of person and of nature. Therefore for the dissident Ethiopians to affirm in Christ two natures is considered the same as to affirm two persons."[180] Actually, why Ethiopian scholars consider the "in two natures" formula as tending to Nestorianism is not because for them *baharey* (essence or substance) is concrete, and so "two natures" mean "two persons" as Takla Haymanot contends, but the scholars think that there is no nature which exists deprived of person, so that according to them, the "two natures" necessarily imply "two persons" in which they subsist. Objecting to Takla Haymanot's incorrect definition, Jembere contends that Takla Haymanot misunderstands the Ethiopian term *baharey* (essence) as person (*akal*). Since *akal* is something tangible and concrete, *baharey* (essence) subsists in a person (*akal*) as an abstract reality. Thus the Ethiopian definition of the two terms does not reflect any sense of confusion.[181]

Despite the wrong contention of Takla Haymanot, it can be safely said that the Ethiopian term *baharey* is not even as equivocal

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[178] Takla Haymanot, *Ethiopian Church Christology*, 68.

[179] In his study of Ethiopian christology, Uqbit defended Takla Haymanot on different issues; but while dealing with the Ethiopian terminologies he testified that Takla Haymanot's view of Ethiopian terms is incorrect. In his words: "So far, many Chalcedonian writers, both Ethiopians and outsiders, believe that the Ethiopian Orthodox theologians confuse and identify the concepts of 'person' and 'nature.' Even Dr. Ayele (Takla Haymanot) himself thinks that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church designates as 'person' the 'human nature subsisting in the person of the Logos.' However, following the recent documents of the controversialists, the above-mentioned allegations of the Chalcedonain writers would not be exact." Uqbit, *Current Christological Positions*, 174.

[180] Takla Haymanot quoted in Uqbit, *Current Christological Positions*, 32.

[181] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 114.

as the Greek *physis* or *hypostasis*.[182] While *physis* in pre-Chalcedonian times used to indicate a concrete reality or *hypostasis* as used by St. Cyril of Alexandria,[183] the Ethiopian term *baharey* is not used in the concrete sense at all. Thus unless *physis* is understood like *baharey* in abstract sense without implying any subsistent concrete reality, it cannot be considered as equivalent to *baharey*. Moreover, though the meaning of *baharey* is close to the English term "nature," the latter is not the exact equivalent term of the former. For example, when we say "human nature" in English, we mean body and soul, but the *Ge'ez* term *baharey* does not convey the same meaning. It is always understood as the characteristic feature of a body (person—*akal*), so that it does not mean body and soul. It appears that *ousia*[184] is more suitable than *physis* or nature as an equivalent term to *baharey*, because being a generic term, *ousia* implies pure essence or substance as *baharey* does. Moreover, although the term *hypostasis* can be taken as an equivalent terminology to nature (underlying essence), it does not have the same meaning as the Ethiopian *baharey*, since the former as

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[182] It is usually said that the council of Chalcedon clarified the ambiguity which pertains to the term *hypostasis* (ὑπόστασις). Prior to the development of trinitarian theology, *hypostasis* was taken as a synonym to *ousia (substantia*—Latin). Later it was taught that there are three *hypostases* in the one nature (*ousia*) of the Trinity, so that *hypostasis* was understood as subsistence or person. Again in christological theology, *hypostasis* was equated with *physis*. The council of Chalcedon expressed Jesus Christ as one *hypostasis* in two natures. Also Christ, the single *hypostasis*, was considered as one of the three divine *hypostases*. See "Hypostasis," in Rahner, Karl, and Herbert Vorgrimler, eds. *Dictionary of Theology* (²1985): 223. In present theology, *physis* is understood as subsistent reality in generic (abstract) sense. As a combination of two words: hypo=underneath and stasis=standing, *hypostasis* implies the underlying substance or actual concrete reality of a thing (an individual reality). See McGuckin, John A. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy: Its History, Theology, and Texts*, 138–141. New York: E. J. Brill, 1994.

[183] McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria*, 139.

[184] This term is normally used to describe the divine substance. Also the term has various meanings, such as "existence, category or status, substance, stuff or material, form, definition, truth." See Hanson, R. P. C. *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 183. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Ltd., 1988.

individuated nature signifies "the actual concrete reality of a thing,"[185] while the latter always reflects an abstract reality.

Baharey is synonymous with two other Ethiopian terms: *tabayee*—**ጠባይዕ** (characteristic element or essence) and *hellawie*—**ህላዌ** (essence or nature). As in the case of *baharey*, both signify the characteristic features of person (*akal*) in an abstract sense.[186] Conversely, Takla Haymanot considers *hillawie* as the most ambiguous term of all the Ethiopian christological terminologies. In his words: "This (*hillawie*) is among all the Ethiopian theological terms, the most equivocal and the most indeterminate. Many times it can be found where it means essence, substance or nature, while at other times it is used to express the sense of hypostasis or person."[187] Jembere objects to this view, saying that like *baharey*, *hillawie* is an origin (radix) of person (*akal)*, and thus a verse may be found in Ethiopian writings, using person (*akal)* as *hillawie* to denote that the latter is the origin of the former, but always *hillawie* is understood in an abstract sense.[188] Therefore, *hillawie* should not be confused with *akal* (person) as if it denotes a concrete reality as *akal* does.

Akal (አካል) ≈ Person, πρόσωπον, ὑπόστασις.

For the Ethiopian theologians, the term *akal* signifies person, individuality or stature.[189] It is predicated both to God and human beings, and in the former case it reflects the invisible, immaterial and immanent persons of the Triune God. When it is applied to a human being, it is understood as a visible and tangible being from head to toe. Jembere quotes Ps. 139: 15: "My frame (*akal*) was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth" to support the Ethiopian meaning of *akal* which is predicated to human beings.[190] Both Takla Haymanot and Uqbit agree that the Ethiopian term *akal* is univocally used in all the christological writings of the EOTC.[191]

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[185] McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria*, 138.

[186] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 123.

[187] Takla Haymanot, *Ethiopian Church Christology*, 69.

[188] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 123.

[189] Uqbit, *Current Christological Positions*, 30.

[190] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 145.

[191] Takla Haymanot, *Ethiopian Church Christology*, 68; Uqbit, *Current Christological Positions*, 28.

Akal (person) has two synonyms: *ghets* (**ገጽ**) and *aqqanim* (**አቃኒም**), and both transmit the same meaning as *akal*.[192] *Akal* may also be considered as equivalent to the Greek πρόσωπον [*prosopon*]. But unlike *prosopon*, which reflects the external "observable character" as manifestation of a reality,[193] *akal* relates to the basic frame of any personal reality. Also *akal* serves as an expression of a specific essence (*baharey*) which is its origin.[194] Thus *prosopon* is not closely related to nature (*physis*), as is *akal* to *baharey*. Also *hypostasis* may signify to some extent the same meaning as the Ethiopian *akal*, for the former is usually understood as concrete reality. The difference between them lies in the ambiguity of the term *hypostasis*. That is to say that, *akal* (person) is always univocal, and it is not used as synonymous with *baharey* (*ousia*), whereas *hypostasis* can mean both person (concrete reality) and subsistence (individuated nature).

THE WORD BECAME FLESH (ΛΌΓΟΣ – ΣΑΡΞ [LOGOS-SARX]) CHRISTOLOGY

While the Antiochene Logos-man christology highlights the indwelling of the Logos in the man Jesus, the Alexandrian christology reflects the union (ἕνοσις) of the Logos with the flesh which was formed in the union. Thus the latter is known as *Logos-sarx o*r Word-flesh christology.[195] As EOTC's christology belongs to the Alexandrian theological tradition, "the Word became flesh" (Jn. 1: 14) has been taken as a key in the exposition of the church's christology. Ethiopian scholars teach that the Son of God, who is also known as the "Word of God," became man, taking flesh and soul from St. Mary.[196] Though the word "soul" is not mentioned in

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[192] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 118.

[193] McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria*, 138. *Prosopon* is also defined as face, mask, form, appearance or manifestation. See "Prosopon" in O'Collins, Gerald, and Edward G. Farrugia, eds. *Concise Dictionary of Theology*, 215. 2000.

[194] Tamiru, *Mech Telemadena,* 160.

[195] Grillmeier, *Christ ... From the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. II, 415.

[196] Gabremedhin, Hailemasqal. *Serwe Haymanot—ሥርዐ ሃይማኖት* [The Root of Faith], 53. Addis Ababa: Tinsae Zegubae Printing Press, 1971.

the Johannine verse, it does not mean that the Word assumed mere flesh, void of soul. The verse, therefore, should not be taken literally lest it should lead to the Apollinarian heresy which states that Christ did not have a rational soul as it was replaced by the Logos.[197]

Ethiopian scholars support the Johannine theme: "the Word became flesh," by other biblical references to show that the Word's becoming flesh also indicates His taking over of a human soul as well. In the Bible we find various references where the flesh indicated the presence of soul and vice versa, predicating to human beings. For example, when Adam said "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh…" (Gen. 2: 23—NKJV) in reference to his wife Eve, he did not mean that she was flesh and bones alone. It is clear that she also assumed a rational soul from Adam, though he did not say "soul of my soul."[198] In Acts 7: 14 we read: "then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to him, seventy five souls." Obviously, seventy five souls did not go to Egypt, but seventy five persons, so that the persons were identified by the souls; here we find the word "soul" representing a full human being. In Joel 2: 28: "I will pour out my spirit on all

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[197] St. Cyril clearly explains this point: "Therefore, if anyone says that the Word was made flesh, he confesses that the flesh which was united to him was not without a rational soul. Thus, as I think, or rather as it is, to speak boldly, the all-wise evangelist John said that "the Word was made flesh," not that the was united to flesh without a soul, far from it, nor that he endured a change or alteration, for he has remained what he was, that is , God by nature, and having taken to himself existence as man, that is, being born according to the flesh as we from a woman, again he remained the one Son, except that he is not fleshless as he was before, that is, before the period of the Incarnation when he clothed himself, so to speak, with our nature." See Cyril of Alexandria, "2nd Letter to Succensus, Bishop of Diocaesarea." In *The Fathers of the Church: St. Cyril of Alexandria: Letters 1–50*, 199. Trans. John I. McEnerney. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1987.

[198] *Mazgaba Haymanot*—**መዝገበ ሃይማኖት** [The Treasure of Faith], 102. Addis Ababa: Holy Trinity Cathedral Printing Press, 1967. *Mazgaba Haymanot* is a dogmatic book which deals with trinitarian and christological doctrines. It was written by an anonymous Ethiopian scholar in the 16th century when Ethiopian scholars were engaged in controversies with Catholic missionaries. See the introduction of the book, p. 9.

flesh," the word "flesh" represents human beings. The Holy Spirit was meant to be poured out not on mere flesh, but on humans. Similarly, "the Word became flesh" does not mean the Word assumed only flesh, but He assumed both flesh and soul, and became man.

The Word became man means, then, He assumed flesh and soul without being changed to man; without leaving His divine nature, the Word became man. Jembere clarifies this point with an example. He asserts that the Word was not changed to be man as the wife of Lot was changed to a pillar of salt (Gen. 19: 26) or as the water at the wedding of Ca'na was changed to wine (Jn. 2: 1–10).[199] The Logos remaining as He was, emptied Himself (kenosis), and took the form of a slave.[200] He appropriated to Himself the flesh with a rational soul and mind which He also assumed. Had the Logos been transformed to the nature of humanity, it would not have been possible for the incarnate Logos (Jesus Christ) to say "I and the Father are one" (Jn. 10:30). The assumed flesh as well, was not transformed to the nature of divinity, thus losing its essential character and reality. This view of Ethiopian christology can be summarized briefly by a quote from one of the letters of St. Cyril of Alexandria.

> Considering, therefore, as I said, the manner of his Incarnation we see that his two natures came together with each other in an indissoluble union, without blending and without change, for his flesh is flesh and not divinity, even though his flesh became the flesh of God, and likewise the Word also is God and not flesh, even though he made the flesh his own according to the dispensation.[201]

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[199] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 105. In line with Jembere, Severus adds similar examples: "The incarnation of the Logos cannot be thought of as a happening in the manner like, for example, the transformation of the staff of Moses into a snake or the light of Egypt into darkness." Hom. 42: PO 36, 50 quoted in Grillmeier, *Christ ... From the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. II, 134.

[200] *Ye Kidus Paulos Metsihaf Nibabuna Tirguamew*—**የቅዱስ ጳውሎስ መጽሐፍ ንባቡና ትርጓሜው** [Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul], 302. Addis Ababa: Tinsae Zegubae Printing Press, 1996.

[201] Cyril Alex., "I Letter to Succensus." In *Cyril's Letters 1–50*, 193.

The incarnation was not a mere indwelling of the Word into a man. The evangelist said "the Word became flesh," not the "Word indwelt in a man or in flesh." The Word united Himself to the flesh and the animated soul, so that the union between the divinity and humanity was perfect. Also there was no pre-existent flesh or human person prior to the incarnation in which the Word dwelt. Rather, "the flesh came into being in the very incarnate nature of God the Word, and then the flesh gradually underwent development in taking on the likeness of man."[202] That is to say that the flesh was formed in the union which took place at the moment of conception. In the words of Gebremedhin:

> When St. Mary said to the angel "let it be with me according to your word," trusting his words, the Word, who is the Son of God, immediately assumed flesh and soul from her by the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit, and was conceived in a way incomprehensible to human mind.[203]

Again in *Haymanota Abaw* we read: "the Logos united to Himself the flesh which He created in the womb of Mary. If anyone says the Logos dwelt in a man who had been created, let him be anathema."[204] Thus, Ethiopian christology, avoiding any sense of indwelling of the Logos in the pre-existing human person, reflects that the union of the divine and human *hypostases* and natures (*physeis*) occurred at the moment when the flesh was assumed by the Logos. Obviously this Ethiopian stand is in conformity with St. Cyril's view of *hypostatic* union which is opposed to any notion of the pre-existence of the flesh prior to the incarnation, highlighting the formation of the flesh in the very union with the Word who made it His own.[205]

Divinization (Deification) of the Flesh

A key element in Alexandrian theology, "the deification of the Lord's flesh,"[206] is found in Ethiopian christology. Ethiopian

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[202] Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 228.

[203] Gabremedhin, *Serwe Haymanot*, 69.

[204] *Haymanota Abaw*, 216.

[205] McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria*, 144. According to St. Cyril, "…he (the Word) became man, and did not assume a man, as it seems to Nestorius." See "I Letter to Succensus," in *Cyril's Letters 1–50*, 195.

[206] Ibid., 133.

scholars teach that when the "Word became flesh," the flesh as well was deified as the flesh of the Word. But the deification (divinization) of the flesh does not mean that the flesh was transformed to the nature of the Word, as the incarnation of the Word does not mean that the Word was changed to be flesh (man). Nor does this view of Ethiopian scholars deny the real humanity of Christ, since doceticism is condemned in Ethiopian christology.[207] Clarifying the divinization of the flesh, Gabremedhin says, "when the flesh became Word it was not changed from its nature. The 'flesh became Word' means, it was united with the Word without any transformation of its nature. Had the flesh been changed to the nature of the Logos, it would not have been born in flesh, nor it would be seen being wrapped by cloth" (Lk. 2:7, 12).[208] Thus, without any transformation of one of the natures (divinity or humanity) into the other, Christ became one united nature (*mia-physis*). This Ethiopian view, which signifies God's becoming man and vice versa, is supported by Gregory of Nazianzus. The theologian asserts, "His (Christ's) two natures are distinguishable in thought, and can be referred to as 'the one' (ἄλλο) and 'the other' (ἄλλο), but there are not two persons (ἄλλος καὶ ἄλλος); rather, 'they both form a unity (ἐν) …*God having become man and man God*."[209]

However the above Ethiopian view supported by Gregory of Nazianzus should not be misunderstood in the sense of what Gregory of Nyssa said on this regard. Indicating the transformation of the human nature into the divine, Gregory of Nyssa wrote: "Like a drop of vinegar which falls into the sea and is wholly absorbed, the humanity loses all its proper qualities and is changed

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[207] For example, in his *Fikare Haymanot*, Abba Giyorgis (Haile, Getachew. "*Fikare Haymanot*," 250, 254) condemns docetic ideas: "If there is any one who says that the body of Christ was not like our body, and did not suffer, let him be anathema;" "if there is anyone who says that it was His phantom that ascended the cross, and that it was not He Himself who was nailed, and is ashamed of the passion of the Son of God which took place for our salvation, let him be anathema."

[208] Gabremedhin, *Serwe Haymanot*, 72.

[209] Ib. 30, 8 and *Ep.* IOI, IO: cf. or. 38, 13 quoted in Kelly, J. N. D. *Early Christian Doctrines*, 297. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978 (Italics mine).

into divinity."[210] This is totally unacceptable for Ethiopian scholars. When the scholars speak about the unity of the two natures they underline that the natures were united *beteakibo*—**በተአቅቦ**—[in preservation][211] without change (ἀτρέπτως)—•••—[*wulate*], without confusion or mixture (ἀσυγχύτως)—**ቱሳሔ**—[*tusahe*], without separation (ἀχωρίστως)—**ፍልጠት**—[*filtet*], and without division (ἀδιαιρέτως)—•••—[*buadé*].[212] Gebremedhin clarifies the unity (*tewahedo*) of the natures (divinity and humanity) with an example that it is not like the mixture of milk and water or of coffee and milk;[213] but rather, without any confusion they were perfectly united like soul and flesh.[214] While transformation to the other nature is denied, the union of the natures is maintained without any sense of division, for the union (*tewahedo*) has abolished duality. In other words, the Word did not lose His divine nature, nor did the flesh lose its human nature; both were perfectly united to the extent that one of them cannot exist distinctly from the other. We find the same view as this Ethiopian perspective in the second letter of Cyril to Nestorius:

> We do not say that the nature of the Word was altered when he became flesh. Neither do we say that the Word was changed into a complete man of soul and body. We say rather that the Word by having united to himself hypostatically flesh animated by a rational soul, inexplicably and incomprehensibly

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[210] *Antirrh.* 42 quoted in Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 300.

[211] *Beteakbo*-**በተአቅቦ**-[in preservation] signifies that the respective natures of either the Word or flesh were preserved in the union as neither of the natures was transformed to the other. The union did not violate the respective essence of either the Word or the flesh. The Word remaining divine, became flesh, and the flesh as well without losing any of its substance was deified in the union. The same view as the Ethiopian *teakbo* [preservation] is found in the treatise of Bar Ebraya. He says, "…preserving the distinctiveness of the natures in one Son (*Had Bro*), one is Christ (*Had Msiho*), one is ousia (*Had Ousia*), one is Hypostasis (*Had Knumo*) one is person (*Had Parsupo*), one is will (*Had Sebyono*), one is power (*Had Hailo*) and one is operation (*Had Mabrdonuto*), as said by Athanasius and Cyril." Assemani, BO II, 276., quoted in Panicker, John. *The Person of Jesus Christ in the Writings of Bar Ebraya*, Ph. D. diss., 30. Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1995.

[212] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 104.

[213] Gabremedhin, *Serwe Haymanot*, 72.

[214] *Haymanota Abaw*, 216.

> became man…. The differences of the natures are not destroyed through the union, but rather the divinity and humanity formed for us one Lord Jesus Christ and one Son through the incomprehensible and ineffable combination to a unity.[215]

The Ethiopian idea of the "deification of the flesh" is understood in the sense that after the union the flesh became the flesh of the divine Word. The idea is not meant to assert that Christ's divinity overshadowed his humanity or the humanity diminished in the union. But it means that by taking the humanity into Himself, the Logos "honoured the humanity (flesh), and raised it to His divine glory."[216] Thus when Ethiopian theologians say that the humanity was deified, they mean that it became the flesh of the Godhead, not it was transmuted to divine nature. This is what we read in the *Haymanota Abaw*: "the flesh of our Lord Christ became God (was deified) as it became the flesh of the Logos, but we do not say that it was changed to divinity."[217] St. Cyril as well explains this view with the analogy of the stick caught alight from the fire, underlining that the humanity of Christ was deified as the humanity of the Logos. According to Cyril, as the wood has become one with the fire, "likewise the divinity plays through the flesh of Christ like a lancing flame to deify his own body in a most natural and intimate way…"[218]

No Oriental Orthodox theologian, who has the correct perspective of the Alexandrian christological position, teaches that the humanity of Christ was absorbed in the divinity, as this is a sheer denial of Christ's perfect humanity.[219] Severus of Antioch,

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[215] Cyril Alex., "2nd Letter to Nestorius." In *Cyril's Letters 1–50*, 39.

[216] Poladian, Terening. "The Doctrinal Position of the Monophysite Churches." *Ethiopia Observer* 7, no. 3 (1964): 262.

[217] *Haymanota Abaw*, 310.

[218] Scholia. 9, quoted in McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria*, 187.

[219] While Meyendorff belongs to the Chalcedonain tradition, in his book we read the same view as that of the non-Chalcedonain theologians with regard to the deification of the humanity of Christ. He says, "The humanity assumed by the Logos, hypostasized in him, deified by his energies, becomes itself the source of divine life, because it is deified not simply by grace but because it is the Word's own flesh." See Meyendorff,

the systematic non-Chalcedonian theologian, wrote: "the flesh remained flesh even after the God-befitting resurrection and ascension. It shines in glory that becomes Him whose it is. *As the body of God it is divine*, but it has not been changed into the *ousia* of Godhead."[220] Bar Ebraya (Barhebraeus +1286), the Syrian theologian, is of the same opinion as Severus and the Ethiopian theologians as well. He says:

> The created nature (*kyono baryo*), we call it not God in itself, in as far as it is created, and not because it is changed (*eshtahlap*) and it has become uncreated by its union with the uncreated (divine), that, in effect, is impossible (*lo metmasyonuto*). *However, because it has been united with the uncreated without suffering change in its nature* (*bel'ad hoy d-shuhlopo nehash ba-kyoneh*), *we call it God*…[221]

One Hypostasis, One Nature (አንድ አካል አንድ ባሕርይ–ənd akal, ənd baharey)

In their "Word-flesh" christology, Ethiopian scholars display a peculiar way of expression with regard to the union of the personal Word (*akalawi qal*—**አካላዊ ቃል**) with the humanity. As we have seen in the synthesis of Ethiopian terminologies, it is not possible to speak of *baharey* (*physis*) without *akal* (*hypostasis*) and vice versa, since Ethiopian theologians stress that neither *baharey* nor *akal* can exist without the other. Thus in their teachings of the union (*tewahedo*) of the divinity and humanity, the scholars mention the natures (*bahareyat*) and *hypostases* (*akalat*) of both. "That is to say, the human person (*hypostasis*) and the human nature being united with the divine person and divine nature, became one person and one nature."[222] The personal Word, who is eternal, united His invisible *hypostasis* (*akal*) and impassible *baharey* (essence) with the flesh, which became *hypostasic* in the union, and with its *baharey* (*physis*). One needs here to note that in *Ge'ez* neither the divinity

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John. *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 78. New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987.

[220] P. O. Vol. XIII, 266, quoted in Samuel, V. C. "The Christology of Severus of Antioch." *Abba Salama: A Review of the Association of Ethio-Hellenic Studies* 4 (1973): 155 (Italics mine).

[221] Bar Ebraya, *De l'Incarnation,* 236, quoted in Panicker, *The Person of Jesus Christ*, 186 (Italics mine).

[222] Habtemariam Worquineh, "The Mystery of the Incarnation." *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 10, no. 2 (1964–65): 158.

nor humanity is called *baharey* (nature). In fact, in English it is possible to say "from two natures," referring to the divine nature and human nature (body and soul). And also, usually the divinity and humanity are referred as two *hypostases*, for *hypostasis* is synonymous with nature, reflecting concrete reality as an individuated nature. But since the Ethiopian term *baharey* (*physis*) cannot be taken as a synonym for *akal* (*hypostasis*), these two Ethiopian terminologies insist for the consideration of the other term while using either of them.

We find two non-Chalcedonian theologians, forwarding their thoughts in line with the Ethiopian expression: from two natures (ἐν δύο φύσεων) and two *hypostases* (ἐν δύο ὑποστάσεων). According to Bar Ebraya, the Syrian theologian:

> The body, taken as part, abstraction made without union, is another hypostasis and nature than the nature and the hypostasis of the Word. Taken with the union (*Hdoyuto*), it conceived *one hypostasis and one nature from two hypostases and two natures.* Otherwise it would not have been a union, that which results from the union of the two.[223]

In like manner, Severus of Antioch writes, "the *natures and the hypostases* of which he (Christ) has been composed are perceived irreducibly and unchangeably in the union."[224] However both of the theologians underscore that a *prosopon* of the humanity did not exist by itself prior to the union. Thus the union "from two natures" is not understood in the chronological order as if the two natures pre-existed as concrete realities. In other words, the idea that the manhood of Christ had come as a human person (child) before it was assumed by the Logos is rejected. The humanity of Christ became *hypostatic* (an individuated manhood) only in the union.

The same concept, regarding the humanity of Christ is maintained in the teachings of Ethiopian theologians. Jembere contends that "the Word did not assume, nor dwelt in a complete human form (*akal zeyeakil*—**አካል ዘየአክል**) which had existed prior to the union. But He assumed the flesh animated with soul, and

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[223] Bar Ebraya, *De l'Incarnation,* 238, quoted in Panicker, *The Person of Jesus Christ*, 189 (Italics mine).

[224] Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 252 (Italics mine).

was conceived like any other child."[225] Thus the flesh was formed in the very moment of the union. Ethiopian christology rejects the Adoptionist view which states that the child had existed by itself before the Logos dwelt in it. The *Haymanota Abaw* condemns: "If any one says the Logos dwelt in a human being who had been created, let him be anathema."[226]

As discussed above, Ethiopian scholars speak about "from two *hypostases* (*akalat*)" in addition to "from two natures [*bahareyat*)" because they emphasize that no nature exists without its *hypostasis* (*akal*). By the phrase: "from two *hypostases* [*akalat*]," therefore, they do not mean from the person of the Logos, and the person of the child (flesh or individuated nature) that pre-existed in the womb of St. Mary. Rather they demonstrate that the humanity which was united to the Logos was taken from St. Mary, thereby highlighting that the humanity of Jesus was not *impersonal*, since it was formed (assumed) from the flesh of the Virgin mother at the moment of the union. Thus what the scholars call "human person" is the flesh which was assumed; without existing distinctly by itself prior to the union (*tewahedo*), the humanity became *hypostatic* in the union. So the two natures (divine and human) are considered as *hypostases*. This is the same as what V. C. Samuel, the renowned Indian theologian, says: "the natures, therefore, which came into the union, were *hypostases* although the manhood received its *hypostatic* status in the union."[227]

The expression that Jesus Christ is one nature and one *hypostasis* (*ənd akal, ənd baharey*) from two natures and two *hypostases* does not indicate the existence of one dominant nature after the union. But rather it implies that the Saviour is one-united nature (*mia-physis*), and "one composite *hypostasis* of the Logos became flesh."[228] However, this does not mean the union of the two natures (divinity and humanity) resulted in one single nature in the sense that one of the natures is absorbed into the other. The union is understood in preservation (*teakbo*—**ተአቅቦ**) of the properties of the natures without any confusion or mixture. However, since Christ is one incarnate nature of the Logos (*siggiw qal*—**ሥግው·**

[225] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 177.
[226] *Haymanota Abaw*, 216.
[227] Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 246.
[228] Ibid., 247.

ቃል) "from two natures—ἐκ δύο φύσεων," he is not "in two natures—ἐν δύο φύσεσιν."[229] When Christ is understood to be one nature that does not mean he is one *single* nature (*mono-physis*), but one *united* nature (*mia-physis*), so that there is a clear difference between *monophysitism* and *miaphysitism*. The former denotes the existence of only one dominating nature, whereas the latter implies the existence of one-united nature in the one *hypostasis* of the Lord. That is why Ethiopian theologians, together with the other non-Chalcedonian theologians describe their christology as *miaphysite*.

Analogies Used

Although no perfect analogy can be found for the *hypostatic* union of the divinity and humanity in Christ, it can be clarified with some analogies. Presenting the analogy of soul and flesh, St. Cyril states that "…because man is composed of two natures, this does not make two men be one, but one and the same man through the composition, as I said, of soul and body."[230] In English, the phrase "human nature" indicates "soul and body," but nobody is considered as having two distinct natures or as being two persons because of his/her body and soul. Likewise, Christ should not be separated into two because of the two natures united in Him without division or confusion. Otherwise, we would find three natures in Christ: the divinity, the soul and the body, and each of them has its own distinct entity and essence.[231] Interpreting the analogy systematically, Severus of Antioch says that "Made up of body and soul, man may be said to be "from two natures" or "from two *hypostases*," because it is not as *ousias* that body and soul exist in man, but as *hypostases*. The ousias become individuated together in union, so that man does not exist *in two* natures."[232] That is to say that, composed of body and soul man is not two but

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[229] Samuel, "One Incarnate Nature," 51.

[230] Cyril Alex., "1st Letter to Succensus." In *Cyril's Letters 1–50*, 193.

[231] Pope Shenouda III, *The Nature of Christ*, 19. Cairo: Dar El-Tebaa El-Kawmia Press, 1991.

[232] *Contra Gr.* 1, p. 181, quoted in Samuel, "The Christology of Severus," 136.

one composite *hypostasis*; likewise, Christ is one-united nature (*mia-physis*) from two natures.[233]

There are two similar analogies: the burning thorn bush (Ex. 3:2–3) and glowing coal (Is. 6: 6–7) as stated by St. Cyril. The former signifies "unmingledness in becoming one," whereas the latter emphasizes unity.[234] In *Haymanota Abaw*, the latter is likened with an ignited bar of iron.[235] In all cases the divinity is symbolized by fire whereas the humanity is symbolized by bush,[236] coal or iron bar. As Moses saw the thorn bush united with the fire without being consumed by the fire, nor extinguishing the fire by its moisture, likewise in the unity of the two natures, the humanity was not absorbed into the divinity, nor was the divinity changed to be human.[237] As the union of the fire with the bush, with the coal or with the iron bar cannot be separated, nor can either of these elements be changed to the other, also the union (*tewahedo*) of the divinity and humanity cannot be separated, as well. Moreover, what Moses saw is not a mere bush or fire but a bush united with fire. The same is true for the glowing coal which is not a mere coal, and for the ignited iron bar which is not only just a mere iron bar. As a result of the union, the bush, the coal and the iron have received new names: burning-bush, glowing-coal and ignited-iron. In like manner, Christ is neither mere man nor mere God, but a God-man or incarnate Word.

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[233] In line with this analogy, Jembere (Medilote *Amin*, 112) writes, "In the union of flesh and soul, the flesh does not lose its limitedness, nor does the soul its invisibility. But both are united in preservation, and both the *ousiai* (*bahareyat*) and persons (*akalat*) of the soul and of the body are united, resulting in an individual. The same is true for the union of the divinity and humanity. The divinity, without ceasing its invisibility and without being tangible, and the humanity without changing to be invisible, leaving its tangibility and visibility, both were united in preservation."

[234] Grillmeier, *Christ ... From the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. II, 39.

[235] *Haymanota Abaw*, 272.

[236] *Widdase Mariam Andimita*, 128.

[237] Meseret Sibhat-Leab, *Simea Tsidiq Biherawi*—**ስምዐ ጽድቅ ብሔራዊ** [National Testimony of Truth], 77. Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press, 1959.

Double Consubstantiality

As God-man, Christ is consubstantial (of the same substance—ὁμοούσιος)[238] with the Father and the Holy Spirit in His divinity, and consubstantial with us in His humanity. The double consubstantiality clearly denotes that Christ is at once perfect God and perfect man. In His deity, He is the only begotten Son of the Father co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. Also, as the humanity of Christ was formed from the flesh of St. Mary, it is of the same substance as ours, sin excepted. Having completed the time of conception, the Word was born in flesh like any human child. The only difference, as Severus contends is that "the flesh (Christ's) had its being in concurrence with God the Word."[239] That means, unlike any human flesh, the flesh of Christ was formed in the union with the Word, thereby becoming the flesh of the Word.

The "from two natures (*bahareyat*)" and "from two *hypostases* (*akalat*)" expression of the union, which is from divinity and humanity, clearly implies that Christ is consubstantial with the Father in His divinity, and consubstantial with us in His humanity. Jembere infers that since Christ is consubstantial with the Father in His divinity, He said: "I and the Father are one" (Jn. 10: 30). Also as a second Adam, Christ is consubstantial with us in His humanity, and so it was said that, "since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things…." (Heb 2:14).[240] The double consubstantiality is nicely stated in the Ethiopian anaphora of St. Cyril as well. It reads: "He (Christ) is your Son, messenger, counsel, your image, your appearance, your mind, your wisdom….He was born from your essence….He who is perfect like you and is your image, walked among us in our image."[241] Also the *Hayamnota Abaw* gives us a clear expression of the double consubstantiality. The reading goes: "You (Christ) are immortal as you are consubstantial with the

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[238] The *Ge'ez* equivalent for this theological term is *éruy* [ዕሩይ].

[239] *Contra Gr. I*, p. 183, quoted in Samuel, "The Christology of Severus," 152.

[240] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 104.

[241] *Ethiopian Church Liturgy*, 265–6.

Father, and you are mortal in the sense of your consubstantiality with us."[242]

ONE INCARNATE NATURE OF GOD THE WORD

The Alexandrian christology which has been adopted by the EOTC and her sisterly churches is based on the famous formula: "μία φύσις τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου σεσαρκωμένη—one incarnate nature of God the Word."[243] Meyendorff contends that St. Cyril attributed this formula by error to St. Athanasius while it really belonged to Apollinarius.[244] Thus it is usually assumed that any christology which is based on this formula tends to Apollinarianism.[245] Understanding such assumption, Samuel argues that even if the formula has an Apollinarian origin, its orthodoxy should not be denied, since what is important is not the origin of the formula but the idea assigned behind it. As an example, Samuel mentions that the Nicean term: "of the same substance with the Father" had belonged to the Valentinian vocabulary. But the church adopted it, taking its theological need into consideration.[246]

It is clear that though Cyril adapted the formula, his christology does not have any Apollinarian traces since he acknowledges the presence of a soul in Christ.[247] As discussed above, Ethiopian theologians and other theologians of the Oriental Orthodox tradition understand "the Word became flesh" as assuming full humanity (flesh and soul). Thus, non-Chalcedonian christology is free from the defects of Apollinarius. Taking this fact into consideration, Grillmeier testifies that despite the dependency on Apollinarian sources, the followers of Logos-sarx (Word-flesh)

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[242] *Haymanota Abaw*, 155. Similar expression is found in Takala Haymanot's *Terminology of the Haymanota Abaw* (254) taken from an older version of the *Haymanota Abaw*. It reads: "Again we believe that Christ is God-man, consubstantial with the Father in His divinity and consubstantial with us in His humanity."

[243] As the followers of Cyrillian christology, Ethiopian theologians translated this formula as: "*ahdu hillawehu le'Egziabher qal zetesegewe*—**አሐዱ ህላዌሁ ለእግዚአብሔር ቃል ዘተሠገወ**," and use it as the basis of their christological exposition. See Worquineh, *EOTC Tarikawi Masreja,* 269.

[244] Meyendorff, *Christ*, 22.

[245] Grillmeier, *Christ ... From the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. II, 414.

[246] Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 236.

[247] See footnote no. 41 of this chapter.

Christology, such as Cyril of Alexandria and Severus of Antioch confess the perfect humanity of Christ, so that the term *monophysitism* should not be ascribed to their christology.[248] Even Grillmeier contends that the Chalcedonian designation of the non-Chalcedonian christology as *monophysite*, as if it signified a mixed nature, is "unfair."[249]

The word "nature" in the Cyrillian formula is taken as *hypostasis* in the sense of concrete individual. That is to say that Jesus Christ is considered to be an incarnate Word, resulting from the union of divinity and humanity, and "after the union one nature is understood, viz. the enfleshed nature of the Word."[250] As Sellers interpreted the formula, it should be understood to mean that "....the nature or hypostasis (φύσις, ὑπόστασις) of the divine Logos (τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου), which is now an incarnate (σεσαρκωμένη) nature or hypostasis, is one (μία)."[251] This was what Cyril meant by "the one concrete individual subject of the incarnated Word," though "Nestorius heard him to mean the one physical composite of the Word" in the sense of an Apollinarian mixture or fusion of the natures of God and man or the absorption of the human in the divine.[252] In opposition to Cyril's formula, Nestorius laid emphasis on the distinct *prosopa* with their respective natures which continued to exist even after the moral union. By contrast, without implying any distinct concrete realities that existed independently before the union, Cyril underlined the formulation of the flesh at the moment of the union with the Word in whom it subsisted and received its concreteness. Therefore for Cyril and for the followers of his christology, "as one incarnate nature of God the Word, Jesus Christ is composed of Godhead and manhood."[253]

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[248] Grillmeier, *Christ ... From the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. II, 154.

[249] Ibid., 157.

[250] *C. Nest.* 2, prooem., quoted in Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 319.

[251] Sellers, R. V. *Two Ancient Christologies: A Study in the Christological Thought of the Schools of Alexandria and Antioch in the Early History of Christian Doctrine*, 89. London: Church Historical Society, 1940.

[252] McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria*, 140

[253] Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 245. The same view is found in Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 112. He states that Christ is one incarnate nature of the Word as the Word in preservation of His nature united Himself with the humanity.

***Communicatio Idiomatum* (Exchange of Properties)**

The exchange of properties between the united natures signifies the one incarnate nature (*physis*) of God the Word. Regarding the exchange, St. Cyril says that "What belonged to the Logos thus became the property of the humanity, and again what belonged to the humanity became to the property of the Logos."[254] This is to say that as a result of the union of the natures, the Word may be recognized in the properties of the flesh, and the humanity can be recognized in the properties of the Word; the human properties have come to belong to the Word, and the properties of the Word to the flesh.[255] However, it should be noted that neither of the natures has lost its own distinct properties. Without any change of one's properties to the other, one of the natures was known in the properties and activities of the other. Here it can be said that the idea of the communication of idioms conforms to the *one nature of God the incarnate*.

As the Word made the flesh His own, in *communicatio idiomatum* (ἀντίδοσις ἰδιωμάτων), the properties that cannot be attributed to the Word *per se* are attributed to Him in the flesh. Hence, unlike the Nestorians who assert that the temple of the Word was seen, hungered, thirsted, suffered, rose etc., followers of Cyril's christology, on the other hand say that the Word was seen, hungered, suffered etc. in the flesh.[256] Such Cyrillian expressions are abundant in the writings of the EOTC, and so Ethiopian theologians consider the *communicatio idiomatum* as an important facet of their christology. For example, Jembere says:

> When the Word assumed the flesh He was called Emmanuel; this name is neither the name of the Word nor of the flesh but

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[254] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 177. This Cyrillian expression has been translated to *Ge'ez*, and often used by Ethiopian scholars to expound the idea of *communicatio idiomatum*. The *Ge'ez* translation reads: **እንቲአሁ ለቃል ኮነ ለሥጋ ፡ ወእንቲአሁ ለሥጋ ኮነ ለቃል በተዋሕዶ** [*enti'hu leqal kone lesiga, we'nti'hu lesiga kone leqal betewahedo*]. See Gorgorios, *YaEthiopia*, 91.

[255] Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 209.

[256] Attributing human properties to the Word, Cyril says, "And in order that it might be believed that he (the Word) became man even though he remained what he was, God by nature obviously, therefore it is reported that he was hungry, and was weary from the journey, and endured sleep, and trouble, and pain, and the other human blameless experiences." See 1st Letter to Succensus, in *Cyril's Letters 1–50*, 195.

> of the incarnate Word. As the Word was born of St. Mary in the flesh, we call her *Weladite Amlak*—**ወላዲተ አምላክ** (*Theotokos*). So as we can say that the Word was born in the flesh, also it is possible to say that the divinity performed all the human deeds, that is, the divinity was baptized in the flesh, was crucified in the flesh etc.[257]

In line with this view, the *Haymanota Abaw* states that "the divinity became one with the flesh, and was suckled by the Virgin."[258] Similarly in the Ethiopian anaphora of St. John Chrysostom we find a reading that attributes the properties of the flesh (humanity) to the divinity:

> They took hold of Him who takes hold of all, bound the ruler of all and shackled the Son of the living God… They caused to stand in the court, before whom stand archangels in fear and trembling… Him, who crowns seraphim with a coronet, they crowned with a crown of thorn. Him, who clothes cherubim with garments of might, they clothed with a scarlet robe to mock Him….Oh the hands which formed Adam were nailed with the nails of the cross! Oh the feet which walked in the garden were nailed with the nails of the cross! Oh the mouth which breathed the spirit of life into the nostrils of Adam drank vinegar mixed with gall![259]

It is true that the incarnate God has shared our sufferings in the flesh which He assumed, so that His participation in our sufferings cannot be denied. The idea of the death of the Son of God is purely biblical as we can read in various verses. In Rom. 5:10 St. Paul says that we were reconciled to God through the death of the Son of God. Again in I Cor. 2: 8 Paul tells us that the one whom the Jews crucified was "the Lord of glory," not a mere human being. The words of St. Peter in I Pet. 3: 18: "He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit" (NRSV) indicate that while the incarnate Logos suffered in the flesh, He was impassible in His nature. Also Acts. 20: 28 says, "…the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with His own blood" (NKJV). Obviously, while God, in

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[257] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 155.
[258] *Haymanota Abaw*, 148.
[259] *Ethiopian Church Liturgy*, 255.

His nature, does not have blood, He was said to have shed His blood because the Word suffered in the flesh that He assumed.[260]

As the properties of the flesh are attributed to the Word, also the properties of the Word (Lordship, worship etc.) are attributed to the flesh. That is why in Mt. 28: 18 Christ said: "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me." Since no authority can be given to the Logos, who is consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the verse applies to the divine power given to Christ's manhood as a result of the communication of idioms between Christ's humanity and divinity.[261] Likewise, the wise men (Mt. 2: 11), the blind (Jn. 9: 38), and those who were in the boat (Mt. 14: 23) worshipped the one incarnate Logos (Jesus Christ) without any distinction between His humanity and divinity.[262] Thus, worship is to be addressed to the one person of the God-man (Christ) because as a result of the *communicatio idiomatum* the entire person was worthy of adoration. It is impossible to say I prostrate to the divinity, and not to the humanity, or to offer two distinct sorts of worship. That is why in his eighth anathema St. Cyril condemned those who speak of *the man* assumed as deserving worship along with the Word. This signifies separation between the Word and the man (Jesus) indwelt by the Word as Nestorius thought. For Cyril, "Immanuel is the Word incarnate, and one indivisible form of worship is owing to Him."[263]

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[260] The phrase "crucified for us—σταυρωθεῖς δι' ἡμάς" added by Peter the Fuller of Antioch to the *Trisagion,* which begins with "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal," is an example of *communicatio idiomatum.*

[261] *Mazgaba Haymanot*, 83.

[262] In addition, the phrases that indicate divine attributes: "Everlasting Father" in Is. 9:6, and "whose origin is from of old, from ancient days" in Micah 5:2 foretold to the infant Jesus, are examples of *communicatio idiomatum.* Other biblical references which need to be understood in the same sense of *communicatio idiomatum* are also found in I Jn. 1: 1–2: "We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands;" the apostles saw and touched Christ physically, who is referred here as the one who "was from the beginning;" and I Cor. 10:4: "and all (the Israelites) drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ." While Christ is a post-incarnation name, here it is used as a pre-incarnation name, signifying the ascription of His divine attributes to His humanity.

[263] *Ep.* 17 (*cum salvator*), in Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 325.

One Operation and One Will

Since Christ is one united nature (*mia-physis*) from two natures, He has one operation and one will. There is a divine-human activity (καινὴ θεανδρικὴ ἐνέργεια)[264] in Jesus Christ, which belongs to the one incarnate Logos. Thus, as Grillmeier comments, the one operation view appears to be a logical outcome of the *mia-physis* formula.[265] This view is strongly maintained in Ethiopian christology. In the *Haymanota Abaw*, we read that the two natures which became one-united nature (*mia-physis*) were not separated from all deeds performed by the incarnate Logos.[266] All the human and divine deeds and words belong to the incarnate Word, and so there is only one operation in Christ. Thus Ethiopian christology precludes the attribution of the lowly deeds to Christ's humanity, and the higher ones to His divinity because this indicates two operations and a sense of duality in the one person of the incarnate Logos. The *Haymanota Abaw* is clear on this point:

> When you see Christ getting hungry, getting thirsty, sleeping, and being crucified, do not attribute this to His humanity; when you see Him healing the sick, creating eyes, multiplying loaves of bread, rebuking the storm do not say that these are God befitting. Do not attribute the higher deeds to His divinity and the lowly ones to His humanity. All belong to the incarnate Word; all the divine and human deeds are attributes of the one Lord. Being one-united nature (*mia-physis*) and one *hypostasis*, the Lord performs both the divine and human deeds.[267]

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[264] As a theologian of the non-Chalcedonian tradition, Severus of Antioch writes, "There is only one single activity (*energia*), only one single operative motion (*motus operativus*), as there is also only one single speaking of the incarnate Logos, be it that the actions and the words have been different." Severus Ant., *C. imp. Gram., Or.* III, ch. 38: CSCO 102, p. 175, 6–7, quoted in Grillmeier, *Christ ... From the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. II, 163.

[265] Ibid., 170.

[266] *Haymanota Abaw*, 359.

[267] Ibid., 121 (translation mine). The same can be said for the miracle which Christ performed on the blind-born man, by making mud with His saliva (Jn. 9: 1–12). We cannot say the miracle was performed by the divinity, as it is not appropriate to the divine nature to have saliva; nor can

In fact, since the natures were not fused, different properties were seen in Christ, and He performed both divine and human deeds. But all the deeds were done by the one and the same Word of God incarnate, so that the operation is one, and the deeds should be attributed to the one incarnate Word.[268] As Christ is God-man, people saw him doing both human and divine works. It is not right to overlook His human deeds because Christ's full humanity cannot be denied; also as God He has showed supernatural acts. But all the activities belong to the one Lord (the incarnate Logos), and so the human and divine acts should not be considered as two different operations. It is the same Lord who performed both the human and divine deeds: the one who felt weary is the one who strengthened and healed many; the one who made the miracle at the wedding of Ca'na is the one who Has been invited to attend (Jn. 2: 1–12); the one who created eyes on the forehead of the blind-born is the one who spat on the ground and made mud (Jn. 9: 6).[269] Thus one and the same Christ (the incarnate Word) is the subject of both the human and divine predicates.[270]

As there is one operation in the incarnate Logos, there is also one will. Jembere clarifies the one will in Christ based on the miracle which Christ performed. As we read in Mt. 8: 1–3 the leper asked Jesus to make him clean, and Jesus "stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I do choose. Be made clean!'" Immediately the leper was cleansed. Here we see the one Lord (incarnate Logos) doing both the duties (touching and cleansing) at

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the performance be attributed to the humanity, which is not able to do miracles. Thus both the spitting and the miracle are attributed to the one Lord, Word of God incarnate.

[268] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 178.

[269] Haile, "*Fikare Haymanot*," 244.

[270] The idea of one operation can also be understood in the analogy offered by St. Cyril. "…just as it would be foolish for a person to say: 'I will take my body for a walk', instead of, 'I will go for a walk', just so to speak of two realities in Christ is unnecessary except in theoretical or technical discussion which want to state the obvious fact that Godhead is different to manhood." 2nd Letter to Succensus, para. 5, in McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria*, 211. Thus, without distinctly attributing the human activities of Christ to His humanity and the divine ones to His divinity, Ethiopian scholars say that as the incarnate Word, Christ performed both the divine and human duties.

the same time. The leper knelt before the incarnate Word, and it was the will of the one God Logos incarnate to cleanse the leper. We cannot say that the cleansing was only the will of the divinity because it is not appropriate to the divine nature to touch and speak to the leper; it is a human hand that touched the leper, and a human word that spoke to him. Also we cannot say that the will on its own exclusively belongs to the human nature, as humanity is not able to cleanse the leper. Thus the will as in the case of the one operation, belongs to the incarnate Logos. There are no two conflicting different wills in Christ distinguished as human will and divine will.[271]

In this chapter, I presented the christological views of Ethiopian theologians as they expounded them in their writings. Also their views were correlated with the thoughts of theologians of the Alexandrian christological tradition, who share the same non-Chalcedonian stand with the Ethiopian scholars for nearly the past two millennia. In fact, Ethiopian scholars have their own terminologies which are not direct equivalents of the Greek terms known to the other non-Chalcedonian theologians. However, both groups profess the same *miaphysite* (one united nature) christology which is based on St. Cyril's christogical formula. Having Cyrillian origin, Ethiopian christology has developed sound christological nuances. The main themes discussed above: one incarnate nature of the Logos, *communicatio idiomatum*, one will and one operation have been tied to the one thread of the Word-flesh christology which emphasizes the one-united nature (*mia-physis*) in Christ. All the themes have been treated as reasonable outcomes of the one-united nature (*mia-physis*) view, and they appeared to be interrelated to one another. Without overlooking the real humanity and divinity of Christ, Ethiopian christology signifies the *hypostatic* union (*tewahedo*) of the two natures that resulted in the one incarnate nature of God the Word.

[271] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 160.

CHAPTER IV
THE THEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF ETHIOPIAN CHRISTOLOGY

The orthodoxy of the Ethiopian *miaphysite* christology can be proved from its rejection of the christological heresies and from its agreement with basic theological beliefs. In contrast to *monophysitism*, which denotes confusion in the union of the natures of Christ thereby disregarding the true humanity of Christ, the EOTC's christological teachings clearly maintain the perfect divinity and humanity of Christ united without absorption or mixture. Also according to Ethiopian christology, any sense of duality in the one-united (*miaphysis*) nature of Christ is rejected, so that Ethiopian christology is free from the theological flaws of *dyophysite* christology. Highlighting the importance of the EOTC's *miaphysite* christology, this chapter demonstrates how the church's christology agrees with the basic Trinitarian and Marian beliefs as it rejects the known christological heresies.

HERESIES REJECTED

The Ethiopian *tewahedo* christology rejects the three main christological heresies, namely Apollinarianism, Eutychianism and Nestorianism. As discussed previously in chapter three,[272] in Ethiopian christology the "Word became flesh" is interpreted as the Word assumed flesh animated by soul. Thus the Apollinarian heresy, which denies the presence of a rational soul in Christ, is rejected. Denying the full humanity of Christ, the heresy of Apollinarius makes our redemption impossible because if the

[272] See p. 52–55.

redeemer were without soul, our human nature could not be fully redeemed. In other words, the heresy of Apollinarius misses the "essential conditions of redemption," for as in the famous phrase of Gregory of Nazianzus, "what has not been assumed cannot be restored."[273] Highlighting the perfect humanity of Christ, Ethiopian scholars usually say that "the Logos took flesh from the flesh of St. Mary, and soul from her soul."[274] Thus the humanity of Christ is perfect, and Christ is consubstantial with us in His humanity with the sole exception of sin. The manhood of Christ which was taken from St. Mary had its own properties and faculties without confusion and change. The *Haymanota Abaw* on this regard says, "since He (Christ) is man, He felt hungry, thirsty, got weary after a long journey, slept,… While He is sinless, He suffered for us, as He is God who became man."[275] Also in the Ethiopian perspective of *hypostatic* union (*tewahedo*), it is taught that the humanity of Christ was not changed to His divinity by leaving its nature. Though the humanity is considered to be deified only since it became the flesh of the Logos, it was not transformed to the nature of the Logos.[276] The idea of the deification of Christ's humanity is meant to safeguard Christ's divinity; not to deny His perfect humanity.[277] Obviously this Ethiopian stand is opposed to the teaching of Apollinarius, which states that the humanity was 'mixed up'[278] with the deity, and thereby overlooks the consubstantiality of Christ's flesh with ours.

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[273] *Ep*. I0I, 7 quoted in Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 297.

[274] *EOTC Faith and Worship*, 24.

[275] *Haymanota Abaw*, 308.

[276] Ibid., 310.

[277] Takla Haymanot (*Ethiopian Church Christology*, 70) testifies that no Ethiopian christological document is found which denies the humanity of Christ. In his words, "There is not a single example in Ethiopian documents where in Christ, the "*teshe'et*" or "*seggawie*" (humanity) is denied, or the "*hellawie sega*" or "*bahereya sega*" (human nature) all of which, as we have said, indicate human nature, and in no place is Christ affirmed simply "*malakot*" (divinity) or "*hellawie melakot*" or "*bahereya malakot*" (divine nature)."

[278] Mackintosh, H. R. *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*, 199. New York: Charles Scribner' Sons, 1924.

The rejection of the idea of *enhypostasia* by Ethiopian scholars signifies that the real humanity of Christ is maintained in Ethiopian christology. According to John the Grammarian, the Chalcedonian scholar, the humanity of Christ has not its own *hypostasis*, since in the union the Word gave it His *hypostasis*. Thus, Christ's manhood is *enhypostasos* (without *hypostasis*), and yet it became concrete as it received the *hypostasis* of the Logos.[279] This idea is not accepted by Ethiopian scholars because it presents the humanity of Christ as abstract and impersonal. Jembere argues that as we read in the Pauline epistle to the Romans, Christ came according to the flesh (Rom. 1: 4), so that even though the *hypostasis* of the flesh did not exist independently, it became *hypostatic* in the union when it was assumed by the Word.[280] According to Jembere, therefore, if we say that the *hypostasis* of Christ is the *hypostasis* of the Logos, this does not agree with the "Word became flesh" motif of John the Evangelist and with the existential reality of Christ.[281] That means, even though the Word is personal, His *hypostasis* (person) is invisible, so that the idea of *enhypostasia* contradicts the incarnate status of the Word as implied in the evangelist's saying: "the Word became flesh" (Jn. 1: 14). Likewise, Tamiru argues that if we say that the person (*hypostasis*) of the Lord Christ is the person of the Logos, which is invisible and intangible, then it will be impossible to accept that Christ was conceived, was born, was crucified etc.[282] Thus, for Ethiopian scholars, Christ's humanity, which became *hypostatic* (personal) in the union without independently existing prior to the union, is real and perfect.

In line with Ethiopian scholars, V. C. Samuel, the non-Chalcedonian theologian, contends that "the *hypostasis* of Jesus Christ is not simply the *hypostasis* of God the Son, but it is the *hypostasis* of God the Son in His incarnate state."[283] The Logos who is *hypostatic* by Himself united Himself with the humanity which became *hypostatic* in the union. Hence, the *hypostasis* (person) belongs to the incarnate Logos, not to the Logos alone. The Grammarian's view that the *hypostasis* of God the Word united to

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[279] John of Damascus: *Writings*, 274, quoted in Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 264.

[280] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 108.

[281] Ibid., 133.

[282] Tamiru, *Meche Telemedena*, 144.

[283] Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 251.

Himself the manhood as a second nature is not clear, and so it cannot be defensible. As Samuel argues, the Grammarian's idea may also reflect that God the Son assumed the flesh in abstract reality, and if so it is impossible to assert that the humanity which is affirmed as abstract became visible and concrete by its inherence in the invisible God. The idea of the absence of a human *hypostasis* in Jesus Christ contradicts His historical reality, since the manhood of Christ as an abstract reality could not enter the world of time and space unless it inhered in a visible and tangible person.[284] Hence, the idea of *enhypostasia* disregards the existential reality of the humanity of Christ which became *hypostatic* in its union with the Logos.[285] To avoid these flaws, therefore, it is preferable to agree with what Severus of Antioch asserts that the *hypostasis* belongs to the *hypostasis* of God the Word who is composite.[286]

Similar to Apollinarianism, the heresy known as "Eutychianism" is also rejected in Ethiopian christology. In the home synod of Constantinople, A.D. 448, even if Eutyches appeared to be an ardent follower of St. Cyril of Alexandria, he was still condemned for his ideas which displayed his lack of theological training. He believed that the Lord Christ was from two natures, but he was reluctant to accept that Christ was consubstantial with us in His humanity. Eutyches said: "I have not spoken of the body of our Lord that it was of the same substance with us. But I confess that the Virgin was consubstantial with us."[287] He was hesitant to affirm the consubstantiality of Christ's flesh with us since he considered it to be different from ours as it is the flesh of the Logos. Moreover, his statement: "I confess that our Lord was from two natures before the union, but after the union I confess

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[284] Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 149.

[285] Criticizing the theory of *enhypostasia*, Mackintosh says, "…the humanity so reduced to a mere selfless 'organ' of the Divine Word that it becomes impossible to think this Christ as the Head of a new redeemed race of men and Himself the pattern Man." See Mackintosh, *The Doctrine*, 214.

[286] *Contra. Gr.* I, p. 187, quoted in Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 251.

[287] ACO, II, I, p. 142:516, quoted in Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 20–1.

one nature"[288] led the participants of the home synod to conclude that Eutyches was a follower of Apollinarius. Eutyches was trying to confess the teaching of St. Cyril, but he did not spell out the Cyrillian *one incarnate nature of God the Word* view properly. The second council of Ephesus in 449 exonerated Eutyches by investigating the minutes of the home synod of 448, which showed that he had not any preconceived intention to deny the humanity of Christ, and also by considering the fact that he had previously condemned Valentinus, Apollinarius, Nestorius and all those who say that the flesh of the Lord Christ had come down from heaven.[289] In A.D. 451 the council of Chalcedon justified the condemnation of the home synod of Constantinople. Ever since, the so-called heresy of Eutychianism which states that the humanity of Christ is absorbed in his divinity, has been ascribed to Eutyches.

Even if in Ethiopian christology the phrase "from two natures" is accepted, the phrase "one after the union" is not understood in an Eutychian sense. When Ethiopian theologians teach one-united nature (*mia-physis*) in Christ, they do not mean merely one nature (*mono-physis*),[290] denoting the absorption of one of the natures into the other. But the theologians underline that after the union Christ is one incarnate nature of God the Word, for the two natures are united in Him without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation. Hence, Christ is known as the incarnate Logos -ሥግው ቃል [*siggiw qal*] without any reduction of the natures.[291] But both Eutyches' statement: "two before the union, and one after" taken in chronological priority and his denial that the flesh of Christ is of the same substance with us indicate the assimilation of Christ's body in the Logos. As noted in chapter three above,[292] Ethiopian christology approves Christ's consubstantiality with us in His flesh, so that Eutychianism is renounced. According to Ethiopian scholars, it is the same flesh as passible, created and mortal as ours which the Lord assumed from

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[288] ACO, II, I, p. 143: 527, quoted in Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 21.

[289] Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 267.

[290] In Greek μόνος (*monos*) means only one or single.

[291] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 104

[292] See p. 64 in Chapter III above.

St. Mary.[293] Conversely, contradicting the economy of salvation, Eutychianism regards Christ's body as impassible. Moreover, the heresy disregards the essentials of the incarnation, since if the flesh of Christ were different from our flesh, being absorbed in the divinity, Christ's birth would not be real. With this insight in mind, Abba Giyorgis condemns the heresy of Eutyches: "If there is anyone who says that the body of Christ was not weak like our body, and did not suffer, let him be anathema like Eutyches."[294]

Any christology, which is faithful to Cyril, rejects Nestorianism; so does Ethiopian christology, as it fully adopts the Cyrillian christological views. According to Nestorius, the two natures subsisting in their own respective *prosopa* continue side by side in Christ even after the moral union.[295] Thus for Nestorius, Jesus Christ is not God the Logos incarnate, but the man who was assumed by the Logos. That is why he could not accept the title *Theotokos* for St. Mary. Moreover, as it is the outcome of his "two persons" perspective, Nestorius attributes the human actions and words of Jesus to His humanity, and the divine attributes to His divinity.[296] All these heretical views of Nestorius are rejected in Ethiopian christology. The *Haymanota Abaw* elsewhere condemns any division attributed to the one Word of God incarnate, and the denial of the title *Theotokos* for St. Mary. For Ethiopian scholars, the flesh of Christ is not considered to have independent existence from His divinity, nor was the divinity separated from the humanity after the union even for a twinkling of an eye. Christ is known to be one person (*ənd akal*), one nature (*ənd baharey*) or one incarnate nature from two natures without the separation, division, confusion and absorption of the natures.[297] Also the *Hayamanota Abaw* is opposed to the distinction in worship between Christ's humanity and divinity which Nestorianism signifies. Christ is worshipped as God the Word incarnate, and all His actions and

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[293] *Haymanota Abaw*, 216.

[294] Haile, "*Fikare Haymanot*," 250.

[295] Sellers, *Two Ancient Christologies*, 89.

[296] *Heracle* (*Liber Heracleidis*), 229–34, in Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 316.

[297] *Haymanota Abaw*, 133.

words are attributed to the one incarnate nature of God the Word.[298]

As Eutychianism destroys the mystery of incarnation in its view of absorption, so does Nestorianism overturn the whole mystery. Though both heresies appear to be opposed to one another, as the former highlights the fusion of the natures whereas the latter emphasizes their division, both are against the mystery of incarnation. Philoxenus of Mabbogh, the non-Chalcedonian theologian, elaborates this view:

> The Nestorian and Eutychian positions seem to oppose each other, but in reality they hold the same view, in that both deny that God was born of Mary. If God assumed only the likeness of the flesh and not this our body taken in truth from the Virgin, the fact that *Theotokos* gave birth is not real.

Having denounced Eutychianism like this, Philoxenus writes about Nestorianism:

> Nestorianism does not admit that the Word became flesh, but only that flesh came into being and was assumed by the Word. Mary is not therefore *Theotokos*; she is only the bearer of the flesh, namely the man in whom God dwells.[299]

Any christology which overlooks the humanity of Christ or reflects division in the perfect unity of the human and divine natures in Christ renounces the essentials of the incarnation, and of redemption for which purpose God became man. As Severus of Antioch put it, without the *mia-physis* formula, the mystery of the incarnation could no longer be expressed adequately.[300] Thus in contrast to *monophysitism* and *dyophysitism*, which were influenced by Eutyches and Nestorius respectively, Ethiopian *miaphysitism* fully agrees with the basic thoughts of incarnation. Besides, the orthodoxy of Ethiopian *miaphysite* christology can be exhibited in the areas of trinitarian theology, mariology, soteriology, and human deification as discussed below.

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[298] *Haymanota Abaw*, 134.

[299] Philoxenus, *Tractatus*, 141, quoted in Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 205.

[300] Severus Ant., *C. imp. Gram., Or.* III, ch. 8: CSCO 94, 114–5, in Grillmeier, *Christ ... From the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. II, 153.

NO TRINITARIAN CONFUSION

The theory of *enhypostasia*, which is attributed to John the Grammarian, is thought to be unduly obsessed with a concern to exclude the idea of *quaternity* in the Holy Trinity.[301] By the contention that the humanity of Christ has not its own *hypostasis* because in the union the *hypostasis* belongs to the Logos, the theory tries to avoid any attribution of a fourth person in the Trinity. But as Severus argues, John's theory cannot escape from the feared idea of *quaternity*. Since there is no "prosopon-less nature,"[302] though the Grammarian acknowledges only one *hypostasis* of the Logos, his acceptance of the two natures in Christ implies two *hypostases*. For Severus, in "the two natures" formula there is recognition of two *hypostases* (persons) in Christ. In this case the Grammarian's theory implies four *hypostases* in the Holy Trinity. Thus the theory cannot avoid the preconceived Trinitarian confusion.

Ethiopian theologians have the same argument as that of Severus. Jembere contends that there can be no nature (*baharey*) without *hypostasis* (person—*akal*) and vice versa. Thus, Christ is one nature and one person. Ethiopian christology does not say that when the Word became flesh there was union only in person (*akal*), and the natures (*bahareyat*) remained without being united; rather it teaches that the union applies to the natures as well. Moreover, it is taught that the incarnate Logos ascended and sat at the right hand side of the Father as testified in the scriptures: Mk. 16: 19, Heb. 1: 3, 1 Pet. 3: 22. And by saying this Ethiopian christology does not imply *quaternity* in the Trinity as if there was a fourth person, since duality was abolished in the union. According to Jembere, however, the Chalcedonian "in two natures" view reflects the presence of a fourth person in the Trinity, for the two natures in Christ denote two persons in Him.[303] The same argument is made by Tamiru,

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[301] Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 251.

[302] Grillmeier, *Christ ... From the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. II, 65.

[303] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 108. The Ethiopian view that "two natures (*bahareyat*) indicate two persons (hypostases—*akalat*), as there can be no nature with out person and vice versa" is shared by Bar Ebraya, *De l'Incarnation*, 146, quoted in Panicker, *The Person of Jesus Christ*, 38. He writes, "Therefore, if as you (Chalcedonians) profess Christ exists in two natures, it is necessary that they may be two hypostases."

another Ethiopian theologian.[304] Thus, such implicit trinitarian confusion maintained in *dyophysite* christology is not found in the Ethiopian *miaphysite* christology, which acknowledges Christ as one person (*ənd akal*) and one nature (*ənd baharey*) of God the Word incarnate.

Ethiopian scholars also teach that the incarnation of the Logos does not raise an erroneous idea which indicates that when the Logos was made flesh the other two *hypostases* of the Trinity as well became incarnate. The scholars teach that though there is one *ousia* (essence) in the Trinity, the three persons are distinct in their *hypostases* (*akalat*). Thus, the Word became flesh (man) in His distinct *hypostasis* (*beteleye akalu*—በተለየ አካሉ), which is different from the other *hypostases* of the Trinity. Also the Word became man in His own mode of existence (ከዊን—*kewin*). The mode of being "Word" in the Trinity is attributed only to the second *hypostasis* of the Trinity (the Son), so that the Word became flesh in His distinct mode of existence (*bekalinetu kewin*—በቃልነቱ ከዊን). One possible analogy is that the Sun has three distinct modes: light, warmth, and its body. While the modes are three, the Sun is one. This is likened with the three persons and one essence of the Trinity; the Father is symbolized by the body of the Sun, the Son by the light, and the Holy Spirit by the warmth. Among the three modes of the Sun it is only the "light" which is united with our eyes, enabling us to see. Likewise, among the three persons of the Trinity, it is only the Son who was incarnated without being separated from the Father and the Holy Spirit in the one *ousia* of the Holy Trinity.[305] Therefore the attribution of one-united nature (*mia-physis*) to the incarnate Logos (Jesus Christ) does not bring any Trinitarian confusion.

The same applies to the sufferings of the Word in the flesh. As the other *hypostases* of the Trinity were not incarnated, the sufferings are not attributed to them. It should be noted that in

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[304] Tamiru, *Meche Telemedena*, 142.

[305] *Mazgaba Haymanot*, 77. Also Bar Ebraya, the Syrian theologian, explains how only one of the three *hypostases* of the Trinity was incarnated. "...each one of the hypostases has the power to do every possible things. But it is to the hypostasis of the Word that the union is convenient. The property of filiation is constant to the Word. Being Son, eternally generated from the Father, He again became Son from a human mother...." Bar Ebraya, *De l'Incarnation*, 26, quoted in Panicker, *The Person of Jesus Christ*, 28.

Ethiopian christology when it is said that God was born, was baptized, and was crucified etc., that is not to say that the Word underwent all these events in His divine nature, but in the flesh which He assumed from St. Mary. While all these properties cannot be attributed to the Word in His nature, in the full sense of *communicatio idiomatum*, it is possible to ascribe them to Him in the flesh that He assumed. In this sense, it is permissible to say that the Word suffered in the flesh. From this it can be deduced that the sufferings are ascribed only to the Word, the only incarnated *hypostasis* of the three *hypostases* of the Holy Trinity. Thus the *tewahedo* christology of the EOTC does not embrace the so-called *theopaschite* heresy, which originally stated that "one of the Trinity suffered for us,"[306] implying implicitly the death of the Son of God in His divine nature.[307]

ETHIOPIAN CHRISTOLOGY RETAINS THE TITLE THEOTOKOS FOR ST. MARY

As one of the Trinity was born in the flesh from St. Mary, she duly deserves to be called *Theotokos*—mother (bearer) of God. In contrast to the Nestorian view that St. Mary conceived and gave birth to the man Jesus indwelt by the Word, and so that she is *Christotokos* (mother of Christ). Ethiopian christology approves the title *Theotokos* for St. Mary since she conceived the Word in flesh and gave birth to the incarnate Logos. Thus the one who was born of St. Mary was not a mere man, but the Word of God incarnate. In other words, the humanity conceived in Mary's womb was

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[306] "Theopaschism." In O'Collins and Farrugia, *Concise Dictionary*, 265.

[307] St. Cyril warns that the idea that the divinity of the Son of God suffered in His humanity should not be confused with *theopatheia* (Θεοπαθεῖα)—"suffering on the part of God," or "God-suffering." Cyril, *2nd Letter to Succensus*, 202. Again writing against those who ascribe the suffering of Christ to His humanity, Cyril says, "Since the divinely inspired Scripture says that he suffered in his flesh, it is better that we also speak thus, rather than to say in the nature of his humanity, even though, if this was not said by some perversely, in no way at all would they do injury to the statement of the mystery…. Hence they speak with undue precision of him suffering in the nature of the humanity, as if they separate it from the Word and set it apart by itself, so that they mean two not one…" (Cyril, *2nd Letter to Succensus*, 204).

exclusively the Word's,[308] as the Word assumed it at the moment of the union in the womb; hence the incarnate Logos was born of the blessed Virgin. The same view is found in *Haymanota Abaw*: "when Virgin Mary gave birth to the flesh, she gave birth to the Word; as she gave birth to the Word in the flesh, she was called *Weladite Amlak*—**ወላዲተ አምላክ** (*Theotokos*) indeed."[309] Again signifying this fact, the *Haymanota Abaw* states that "the Virgin gave birth to her creator."[310]

As Ethiopian scholars explain, the Word, who had been born of God the Father before the ages without a mother, was born of St. Mary in the last days without the seed of man (without an earthly Father). Thus when Jesus (the incarnate Word) was being baptized, God the Father testified: "this is my Son in whom I am pleased" (Mt. 3:17). God the Father did not say, "the one who dwelt in him (in Jesus) is my Son," but rather "this (Jesus, the incarnate Word) is my Son." Also, in his annunciation, the angel Gabriel did not say to Mary "the one whom you will bear will be indwelt by the Son of God," but he said that "you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High" (Lk. 1: 31–32a).[311] All these imply that the Son of God became the Son of Man, and St. Mary gave birth in flesh to the one who had been born of God the Father eternally. In line with this view, the Ethiopian Liturgy calls Jesus: "Son of the Lord of hosts,[312] and Son of pure Mary."[313] Thus it will be possible to entitle St. Mary with *Theotokos* if only Christ is taken to be the *incarnate Logos* as taught in the *miaphysite* christology of the EOTC.

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[308] Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 322.

[309] *Haymanota Abaw*, 142.

[310] Ibid., 150.

[311] *Mazgaba Haymanot*, 64.

[312] The *Ge'ez* phrase for "the Lord of hosts" is "*Egzi'abher Tsebaot* — **እግዚአብሔር ጸባኦት**," meaning God the Powerful (Almighty), so that it slightly varies from its English equivalent. The "Lord of hosts" literally agrees with the Arabic *Ibin Rab El-gunud*: ابنا بر نجلدون as seen in the translated Ethiopian missal. See *Ethiopian Church Liturgy*, 73.

[313] Ibid., 95.

IT IS IN HARMONY WITH THE ORTHODOX THOUGHT OF SOTERIOLOGY

As "christology is a key to our understanding of soteriology,"[314] any genuine christology should be in agreement with the essential conditions of salvation. The Ethiopian *tewahedo* christology, affirming the perfect humanity and divinity of Christ, maintains the basics of soteriology according to the Ethiopian tradition. It teaches that assuming our full humanity, Christ was able to restore our distorted nature. Also as God-man, Christ was sinless, and so He offered Himself as propitiation for the sin of mankind. Though the flesh became the flesh of the Logos, Christ fulfilled all human activities except sin. Sinlessness and perfect humanity were needed from the Saviour in order to accomplish our redemption. That is to say that soteriology required Christ as the Saviour to be both divine and human, so that He could take the sins of humans on their behalf and sanctify their entire humanity.[315]

As God incarnate, Jesus grew up little by little like any human being. In line with this view, the Ethiopian anaphora of St. Dioscorus says: "the Lord came down through the will of His Father, sojourned in Mary and was born while she was a pure virgin….He walked openly and appeared like a man, grew little by little."[316] This does not mean, however, Jesus was brought to perfection little by little as Nestorius erroneously contends.[317] Jesus was born as perfect God and perfect man (incarnate Word). But for the purpose of redemption, and since His humanity is real, it was necessary for Him to grow little by little. Thus it was said of Him, "Jesus increased in stature and in wisdom and in grace" (Lk. 2: 52). In St. Cyril's words:

> The Logos could have brought his body to perfection immediately and that he could easily have endowed it with wisdom immediately. But this would have been "a monstrous affair' and a violation of the words of the economy

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[314] Taylor, William H. "Convergence in Christology." *One in Christ* 26, no. 1–2 (1990): 110.

[315] Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, 257.

[316] *Ethiopian Church Liturgy*, 296.

[317] Nes. *Hom. in Heb.3:1* (Loofs 235–6) quoted in Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, 251.

> [salvation]." Therefore the incarnate Logos, who in his divinity could not increase or change, took our nature upon himself to such an extent that he did increase.[318]

Based on the teaching of Cyril, Ethiopian christology rejects the Nestorian stand that it is the man who suffered on the cross. For Nestorius, "God incarnate did not die, but he raised up him in whom he became incarnate."[319] In his doctrine of two sons, Nestorius reflects division by ascribing human deeds to the man Jesus and the divine ones to the Logos. So in his view, the sufferings and death belong to the man Jesus in whom the Logos dwelt, for the Logos cannot die.[320] But such views imperil human salvation, as no mere man can be the Saviour of the world. Following the teachings of St. Cyril, Ethiopian scholars teach that though the Word is impassible in His nature, He suffered in the flesh that He assumed.[321]

The danger of ascribing the suffering to the humanity of Christ was noted by St. Cyril.

> If the God-Logos did not suffer for us in a human way then He did not accomplish our salvation in a divine way, and if He was only man or a mere instrument, then we are not truly redeemed. Our Immanuel would not in any way have benefited us by His death if he had been a man; but we are redeemed because the God-Logos gave His own body to death.[322]

Any christology that makes a distinction between Christ's humanity and divinity, considering Christ as a man who died on the cross, is soteriologically defective. Therefore, the right concept of redemption cannot be maintained unless the Logos is thought to

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[318] *Cyr. Chr.un. (SC 97:454*) quoted in Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, 251.

[319] *Serm.* I (Loofs, 252), quoted in Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 316.

[320] As the follower of the Antiochene tradition, Theodore joins Nestorius in this regard. Theodore taught that "the deity was separated from him who suffered according to the experience of death, for it was not possible for it (the deity) to undergo the experience of death." Thdr. Mops. Hom. *catech*. 5.6 (*ST* 145:107) quoted in Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, 246.

[321] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 132.

[322] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 175.

have suffered in the flesh that He assumed as Ethiopian *miaphysite* christology asserts.

IT REFLECTS THE DEIFICATION OF HUMANITY (*THEOSIS* OR *DEIFICATIO*)

Highlighting the perfect unity of the humanity with the divinity in Christ, the Ethiopian *miaphysite* christology signifies the deification of the whole humanity (*theosis* or *deificatio*).[323] In the union, the humanity was exalted to the level of the divinity, and the exaltation presupposes the effect of the incarnation on humanity. As in the famous saying of St. Athanasius, "God became man, so that man may become God."[324] This does not mean, however, that we are small gods, or our nature has changed to the divine nature, but as a second Adam, Christ the incarnate Word, in his humanity makes us partakers of the divine nature (II Peter 1: 4). As Taylor nicely put it, the saying of Athanasius can also be understood in the sense that "God became by nature man, so that man may become by grace God." In the body of Christ, which is consubstantial with us, God brings us into fullness of communion with Himself in order that we may be transfigured from glory to glory.[325] Here the expression of Severus of Antioch on this point deserves mention. He says:

> The only begotten Son of God became consubstantial with us by being united hypostatically to one flesh animated with a rational soul. By reason of this, the entire human *ousia* and the whole race became united in love to the divine nature from which it had formally been estranged. Hence, as it is written,

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[323] The Orthodox view of *theosis* is found in the definition of Anastasius of Sinai as quoted by Stavropoulos. "Theosis is elevation to what is better, but not the reduction of our nature to something less, nor is it an essential change of our human nature. A divine plan, it is the willing condescension of tremendous dimension by God, which he did for the salvation of others. That which is of God is that which has been lifted up to a greater glory, without its own nature being changed." See Stavropoulos, Christoforos. "Partakers of Divine Nature." In Clendenn, Daniel B., ed. *Eastern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader*, 184. Michigan: Baker Books, 1995.

[324] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 43.

[325] Taylor, "Convergence," 111.

> we being made worthy of the original harmony, have become partakers of the divine nature.[326]

The Ethiopian *Miaphysite* christology relates the idea of the deification of humanity with the concept of redemption. Sin left humans wholly corrupted, and when it was impossible for them to reach God, the Saviour appeared in a body so as to renew the divine image in them which was lost as a result of sin; hence the scriptural dictum: "I have said you are gods, and you are all sons of the most Highest" was fulfilled (Ps. 82: 6).[327] Eliminating our corruptibility, the Saviour exalted our nature to His likeness. Yet our transformation into His likeness is not absolute, but relative. Therefore, in addition to the redemption that Christ brought to us by His incarnation, He has also honoured our humanity, by raising it into His divine substance.[328] In other words, we were not only saved but were also deified, for our humanity was represented in the humanity of Christ, united with the Logos. Thus, maintaining the necessary conditions for the theology of redemption, and highlighting the perfect and inseparable union between the divinity and humanity, the Ethiopian *miaphysite* christology reflects the ultimate deification of humanity. The Logos entered our world through His incarnation, and as the new Adam, Christ redeemed us, renewed our relation with God, and enabled us to be partakers of the divine nature.

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[326] *Contra Gr.* I, p. 200., quoted in Samuel, "The Christology of Severus," 157.

[327] According to the Ethiopian commentary of the Psalms, this verse signifies the deification bestowed on humanity by grace. *Mezmure Dawit Tirguame*—**መዝሙረ ዳዊት ትርጓሜ** [Commentary on the Psalms of David], 412. Addis Ababa: Tesfa Gabre-Sillasie Printing Press, 1990. This does not mean, however, our nature was changed, but it shows our partaking of the divine nature through the humanity which was assumed from St. Mary, and united with the Logos.

[328] Poladian, "The Doctrinal Position," 262.

CHAPTER V
THE ETHIOPIAN *MIAPHYSITE* CHRISTOLOGY IN LIGHT OF MODERN CHRISTOLOGICAL DIALOGUES

As one of the founding members of the World Council of Churches, the EOTC has been demonstrating interest in ecumenical activities towards the unity of the church.[329] The keen interest of the EOTC for the unity of the divided Church of Christ was clearly seen when in January 1965 the church took the initiative for the historical conference of the heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In that conference convened by the late Emperor H. I. M. Haile-Sellassie I of Ethiopia,[330] the heads of the churches expressed their readiness for the reunion of Christendom which can be achieved through common studies of the christological controversies that caused the breach.[331] Also the EOTC participated through her representatives in all the unofficial and official christological consultations between

[329] *EOTC Faith and Worship*, 140.

[330] *The Oriental Orthodox Churches Addis Ababa Conference January, 1965*, 123. Addis Ababa: Artistic Printers, 1965. In his speech delivered at the Addis Ababa conference (1965), H.H. Pope Kyrillos VI of Alexandria praised the late emperor His Imperial Majesty Haile-Selassie I as "the Defender of the Faith in the twentieth century." Similarly, H.H. Moran Mar Baselios Augen I Catholicos of the East designated the emperor: "the Defender of the Orthodox faith," (p. 127), whereas H.H. Moran Mar Ignatius Yacub III of Syria proudly considered him as "the one and only Orthodox King" (p. 125).

[331] Ibid., 109.

the Eastern Orthodox Church and Oriental Orthodox Churches.[332] One of the unofficial consultations was held in Addis Ababa in 1971.

CHRISTOLOGICAL CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN THE CHALCEDONIAN AND NON-CHALCEDONIAN CHURCHES

Until the second half of the 20th century there had not been any formal, nor effective meetings held between the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches since the theological and semantic schism of the 5th century. In fact, the awareness that the churches were divided at Chalcedon on terminological differences while they confessed the same faith had remained alive in the minds of the adherents of both groups much earlier than the 20th century. For example, in the 13th century Gregory Bar Hebraeus of Syria was reported to have said that "…the dispute of Christians among themselves is not based on essentials, but on words and terms. All Christians confess that Christ our Lord is perfect God and perfect man without mixture and confusion of the natures. While one refers to the union of natures as 'nature,' another calls it 'person' and a third 'prosopon.'"[333]

The unofficial consultations held between the theologians of the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches confirmed that they had the same belief expressed in different ways. The first of these consultations was held in Aahrus, Denmark (1964). The theme of the consultation was "One Incarnate Nature of God the Word," central to the theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria.[334] Discussing the papers presented in accordance with the theme and studying the essence of Cyril's formula, the theologians who represented the churches found themselves in full agreement. They

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[332] *EOTC Faith and Worship*, 144.

[333] Gregorios, Paulos, Nikos A. Nissiotis and William H. Lazareth, *Does Chalcedon Divide or Unite? Towards Convergence in Orthodox Theology*, 43. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981.

[334] Samuel, V. C. "The Fourth Unofficial Consultation of Theologians Belonging to the Eastern and the Oriental Orthodox Churches." *Abba Selama: A Review of the Association of Ethio-Hellenic Studies* 3 (1972): 176.

said that, "through the different terminologies used by each side, we saw the same truth expressed."[335]

The second consultation in Bristol, England (1967) mainly discussed "the manhood of Christ in the liturgical traditions of the two families," with particular reference to the will and operation of Christ.[336] The theologians pointed out that some of them affirmed two natures, two wills and energies *hypostatically* united in the One Lord Jesus Christ, while others confessed one united divine-human nature, one will and energy in the same Christ. However, it was agreed that the two positions does not appear to be incompatible because both signify that "the union is without confusion, without change, without division, without separation…, and the human will is neither absorbed nor suppressed by the divine will in the Incarnate Logos, nor are they contrary one to the other."[337]

In the Geneva, Switzerland (1970) consultation, it was felt that the history of the christological controversies before and after Chalcedon should be studied.[338] The participants found themselves in full agreement with the teaching of the undivided church despite the fifteen centuries of separation. The groups confirmed that though they used different terminologies, they both were maintaining the teaching of St. Cyril on the *hypostatic* union. They said: "We both teach that He who is consubstantial with the Father according to Godhead became consubstantial also with us according to humanity in the Incarnation…and that Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect man, with all the properties and faculties that belong to Godhead and to humanity."[339]

The mutual lifting of anathemas was the main concern of the Addis Ababa, Ethiopia consultation in 1971. Understanding the fact that the church has been given by the Lord Christ the authority to bind and to loose, the participants agreed on the lifting of the anathemas pronounced by one side against those regarded as saints and teachers by the other side. But there was no imposition on either side of the groups to recognize the saints who previously had been anathematized by them.[340] The Addis Ababa consultation also

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[335] Gregorios, Nissiotis and Lazareth, *Does Chalcedon Divide or Unite?*, 3.
[336] Samuel, *Unofficial Consultation*, 177.
[337] Ibid., 6.
[338] Ibid., 177.
[339] Gregorios, Nissiotis and Lazareth, *Does Chalcedon Divide or Unite?*, 8.
[340] Ibid., 14.

discussed the reception of the work of all the consultations by the authorities of the churches concerned, and submitted the results hoping official reception.[341]

These unofficial consultations had led to three official meetings which issued declarations on christology. In 1989 a joint commission of the Orthodox Church and Oriental Orthodox Churches was formed, and the commission issued a declaration at *Wadi Natrun* (Abba Bishoy Monastery) in Egypt. Based on previous conversations, the declaration underlined that the four adverbs: without confusion, without change, without separation and without division in the mystery of the *hypostatic* union belong to both traditions of the dialogue partners.[342] By the same token, the meetings in 1990 and 1993 (both in Chambesy, Switzerland) approved the doctrinal unity maintained in the beliefs of the Orthodox Church and Oriental Orthodox Churches, despite their breach on terminological differences. In consonance with the Aahrus consultation, the Chambesy meeting stated that in their expression of the *hypostatic* union, "those who speak in terms of 'two' do not thereby divide or separate, and those who speak in terms of 'one' do not thereby commingle or confuse."[343]

The Oriental Orthodox Churches also had official meetings with the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), which accepts the christological formula of the council of Chalcedon. When Catholicos Vasken I of Armenia visited Pope Paul VI in May 1968, the prelates urged theologians to devote themselves to a profound study of the mystery of the Lord Christ, paving the way towards unity which will overcome the differences that exist among the churches.[344] Consequently, in 1971 and 1973 the Pro-Oriente ecumenical institute in Vienna devoted two ecumenical conferences to christological discussions to overcome the differences that exist among the RCC and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. The first meeting issued a christological declaration. The declaration reads:

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[341] Taylor, "Convergence," 107.

[342] Ibid.

[343] *EOTC Faith and Worship*, 144.

[344] Stransky, Thomas F., and John B. Sheerin, eds. *Doing the Truth in Charity: Statements of Pope Paul VI, Popes John Paul I, John Paul II and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity,1964–1980*, 231. New York: Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle, 1982.

> We believe that our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is God the Son incarnate, perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity. His divinity was not separated from his humanity for a single moment, nor for the twinkling of an eye. His humanity is one with his divinity without commixture, without confusion, without division, without separation.[345]

Following the outcome of the first Pro-Oriente conference, in October 1971 Pope Paul VI and Mar Ignatius Jacob III, Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church, agreed that "there is no difference in the faith they profess concerning the mystery of the Word of God made flesh and became really man."[346] In May 1973 H. H. Pope Shenouda III of Alexandria visited H. H. Pope Paul VI of Rome, and in continuation to the growing agreement, they commonly declared that "….our Lord and God and Saviour and King of us all, Jesus Christ, is perfect God with respect to His divinity, and perfect man with respect to his humanity…."[347]

Continual official christological agreements signed between the RCC and Oriental Orthodox Churches until October 1989 approved what had been declared in the previous dialogues. In 1984, Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I demonstrated in their common declaration that their predecessors had denied that there was any difference in the faith that they confessed in the mystery of the Word of God made flesh and became truly man.[348] In February 1988 a theological commission of the RCC and the Coptic Orthodox Church was formed. In the same year, the commission formulated a christological statement almost verbatim to the one which had been issued by Pro-Oriente in 1971.[349] This growing consensus was joined by the Armenian Church when in 1989 Catholicos Karekin I of Etchmiadzin visited Pope John Paul II in Rome, and the pontiffs drew a common christological declaration in harmony with the preceding statements.[350] The joint international commission for dialogue

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[345] Taylor, "Convergence," 108.

[346] Stransky and Sheerin, *Doing the Truth*, 238.

[347] Gros, Jeffrey, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch, eds. *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982–1998*, 688. Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000.

[348] Ibid.

[349] Taylor, "Convergence," 108.

[350] Ibid.

between the RCC and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, in October 1989 at Kottayam, India issued the same declaration as well.[351] Moreover, there were continued meetings in early and mid 1990s which resulted in consonant declarations to the previous ones.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE EOTC TOWARDS THE CHRISTOLOGICAL AGREEMENTS

The EOTC participated through her representatives in all the seven (four non-official and three official) consultations held between the theologians of the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Oriental Orthodox Churches.[352] Thus all the agreements reached in the meetings have been accepted by the EOTC. Even if there has not been any particular meeting between the RCC and the EOTC, like the meetings held between the RCC and the other Oriental Orthodox Churches, the EOTC cannot be indifferent to the agreements reached between these two groups. The publication issued by the EOTC's Patriarchate states that the EOTC is always ready for decisions on christological issues in consultation with her sister Oriental Orthodox Churches.[353] Therefore, there is no reason that impedes EOTC's acceptance of the christological declarations signed by the RCC and the rest of the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Moreover, the agreements between the RCC and the other bodies of the Oriental Orthodox Churches were influenced by the common declarations of the previous consultations between the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Oriental Orthodox Churches in which the EOTC participated. Thus as all the agreements maintain the same spirit of fellowship in the hope of reuniting the divided churches, the EOTC by no means rejects the christological agreements signed between the RCC and four of the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

As a matter of fact, together with her sister Oriental Orthodox Churches, the EOTC does not accept the *definitio fidei* of the council of Chalcedon. In his logical and theologically sound comment on the definition of the council of Chalcedon, the

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[351] Taylor, "Convergence," 697.
[352] *EOTC Faith and Worship*, 144.
[353] Ibid., 146.

Ethiopian scholar Jembere asserts that most of the points in the definition are biblically justified, and they agree with the teachings of our fathers as the definition claims.[354] But the phrase "in two natures" cannot be found in any writings of the fathers prior to Chalcedon, so that it is not acceptable to the EOTC[355] Obviously the "in two natures" is not accepted by the other Oriental Orthodox Churches as well. However, the definition of the council of Chalcedon may be accepted by the Oriental Orthodox Churches with "a textual variant"[356] made on the phrase "in two natures—ἐν δύο φύσεσιν." Except the phrase and the interpretations it bears, the rest statements of the definition are agreeable to the Oriental Orthodox Churches. These Churches teach that Christ is "one united nature" (*mia-physis*) "from two natures—ἐκ δύο φύσεων," but He is not known "in two natures." As the consultations discussed above found out, nevertheless, the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches have much in common on christological issues. In the agreed statements signed by the Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians we do not see any implication that divides the one-united nature of Christ into two. In both the Pro-Oriente's theological consensus of 1971 and in the agreement signed at Abba Bishoy monastery in Egypt in 1988, it was declared that "His (Christ's) humanity is *one* with his divinity without mixture, nor mingling, nor confusion."[357] Thus, in the joint declarations we find a textual variant to the "in two natures" phrase of the council of Chalcedon.

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[354] The definition of faith (dogmatic formula) of the council of Chacledon begins with, "Following, then, the Holy Fathers, we all with one voice teach…" The statement in the definition with which the Oriental Orthodox Churches do not agree is: "One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, made known *in two natures* [which exist] without confusion, without change, without division, without separation." (Italics mine). See Sellers, R. V. *The Council of Chalcedon: A Historical and Doctrinal Survey*, 210–11. London: S.P.C.K., 1953.

[355] Jembere, Medilote *Amin*, 103.

[356] Varghese, Paul. "Orthodox Churches: Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian." *Eastern Churches Review* 1 (1966): 136.

[357] Taylor, "Convergence," 109 (Italics mine).

MIA-PHYSIS FORMULA AS A MIDPOINT BETWEEN MONOPHYSITISM AND DYOPHYSITISM

The meetings between the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches were important mainly because they cleared up the misunderstandings which had been maintained in the minds of the followers of the churches. Also as a result of the mutual studies conducted during the meetings, the churches came to the recognition of each other as the followers of the orthodox teachings of the one universal Church of Christ. This is evident in the confession made at the unofficial consultation of Aarhus by Archbishop Severius of the Syrian Orthodox Church, representing the non-Chalcedonian churches. He said:

> We were afraid that the faith formulated by the council of Chalcedon tended towards Nestorianism, and you were led by the misunderstanding that we were holding the heresy of Eutyches. However, the fact is that we are not Eutychians; neither are you Nestorians. Therefore, the way is clear before us for mutual understanding. This means that we have been, and still are, fighting about words and phrases.[358]

As both groups always rejected the heresies of Nestorius and Eutyches, none of them were embracing either of the heresies despite the mislabeling that resulted from biased views. Thus as said in the agreed statement of the Aahrus consultation, the acceptance or non-acceptance of the Council of Chalcedon does not entail the acceptance of either Nestorianism or Eutychianism.[359]

By rejecting Nestorianism and Eutychianism, both groups consider St. Cyril of Alexandria as their common father on whose teaching their positions are based. Although the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches have different interpretations of Cyril's formula: μία φύσις τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου σεσαρκωμένη, they rely on the formula for their teachings of the *hypostatic* union. As Karmiris, representing the Chalcedonian tradition commented on Cyril's formula, in contrast to Nestorius, St. Cyril emphasized the one

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[358] Gregorios, Nissiotis and Lazareth, *Does Chalcedon Divide or Unite?*, 43.

[359] Ibid., 3.

hypostasis of the God incarnate which is composed of two natures. And all the words and actions of Christ as mentioned in the Gospels are to be attributed to the one incarnate *hypostasis* of the Logos.[360] It is accepted by the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches that, while St. Cyril's formula is opposed to the Nestorian view of two persons, the *hypostatic* union which is understood to be without confusion and mixture rejects the heretical views of Eutyches. Thus it can be safely said that the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches have reached into agreement by taking the *miaphysite* christology into consideration as expressed by St. Cyril.

Since the right understanding within the *mia-physis* christology of St. Cyril denies both Nestorianism and Eutychianism, the churches which had been wrongly designated as *monophysites* and *dyophysites,* commonly agreed upon the balanced *miaphysite* christology that denotes neither division nor confusion in the union of the humanity and divinity of Christ. The Chalcedonian churches had thought that the teaching of the non-Chalcedonian churches were Eutychian in nature, whereas the latter had viewed the formers' teaching as tending to Nestorianism. But despite such misunderstanding, as both teachings of the two groups discarded any division or confusion in the union of the two natures in Christ, they finally reached into consensus through the right perspective of the *miaphysite* christology. The highlight in the agreed statement of the two groups: "He (Christ) made his humanity one with his divinity without mixture nor mingling, nor confusion"[361] conforms with neither *monophysitism* nor *dyophysitism* but with *miaphysitism*, for it is the *miaphysite* christology which underlines one united nature (*mia-physis*) in Christ without division or confusion. In other words, without simply stressing on "one nature" or "two natures," which served as watchwords of the non-Chalcedonians and Chalcedonians respectively, the agreed christological declaration of the churches reflected "the one-united nature" thought of *miaphysite* christology.

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[360] Gregorios, Nissiotis and Lazareth, *Does Chalcedon Divide or Unite?*, 34.

[361] Ibid., 688.

CONCLUSION

This book has discussed the historical, dogmatic and ecumenical aspects of Ethiopian christology. It has been stated that as the Ethiopian church was under the jurisdiction of the Alexandrian church, in terms of christology it sided with her mother church of Alexandria, which rejected the *definitio fidei* of the council of Chalcedon. The Alexandrian liturgical texts which were adopted by the Ethiopian church also consolidated the non-Chalcedonian faith in Ethiopia. Moreover, the works of the nine saints in the 5th Century contributed a lot for the establishment of a non-Chalcedonian christology in the Ethiopian church. Among others, the saints translated the *Qerellos*, a dogmatic book that consists of the christological homilies of St. Cyril of Alexandria and other church fathers, on which the christology of the EOTC is largely based. Later developments of Ethiopian christology were realized in the golden age when the renowned theologians such as Abba Giyorgis and Ritua Haymanot rose. Their anaphoræ and christological writings enriched the dogmatic position of the EOTC. Important to mention here is that, though the Catholic missionaries in the 16th and 17th centuries challenged the then Ethiopian scholars, and created internal disputes among the scholars, they failed in their approach to convert the EOTC to Catholicism. Ironically, the challenge strengthened the well established non-Chalcedonian christology from which the EOTC has not diverted since its establishment in the 4th century.

With regard to the dogmatic aspect of Ethiopian christology, we have studied the major themes as expounded in the writings of the Ethiopian theologians. It has been stated that for Ethiopian theologians christology is centered on the incarnation of the Logos which is marveled as a divine mystery that surpasses human comprehension. According to the theologians, the incarnation of

the Son of God was the only means of human salvation. The Word revealed Himself in the flesh for our salvation. Thus for Ethiopian scholars, Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate *siggiw qal* (**ሥግው ቃል**), not a man indwelt by the Logos. Based on the Johannine theme: "The Word became flesh" (Jn. 1: 14), they teach that the Word assumed the flesh animated by soul at the very moment when He dwelt in the womb of St. Mary. Even though the flesh did not exist prior to the incarnation, it became *hypostatic* in the union, so that Jesus Christ is one nature (*baharey*) and one *hypostasis* (*akal*) from the two natures and two *hypostases* of the divinity and the humanity.

Since the flesh belonged to the Logos, it became deified without being changed to the essence of the divinity. The Word also did not lose its divine nature when He became man. Thus the union between the humanity and the divinity is perfect, and so there is no change or confusion in the union. As the natures were perfectly united, there is *communicatio idiomatum* (exchange of properties) between the divinity and the humanity; the attributes of the flesh can be ascribed to the Word and vice versa. All the human and divine words and deeds belong to the incarnate Word, so that there is only one operation and one will in the incarnate nature of God the Word. Thus, one and the same worship is offered to our God and Saviour Jesus Christ as the Word of God incarnate.

As far as the ecumenical christological dialogues are concerned, we have discussed that the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonain churches have agreed that the difference between their christologies is only semantic. As a result, the churches were able to declare common christological declarations. The declarations did not contain the phrase "in two natures" for which the non-Chalcedonian churches usually demand a textual variant. Rather the unity of the humanity and divinity was highlighted in the declarations. Also in the declarations, it was stressed that there was no separation between the two natures even for "a twinkling of an eye."[362] The two groups discarded the heresies allied with *monophysite* and *dyophysite* christological positions, and reached into agreement in a moderate christological stand which reflects neither

[362] Taylor, "Convergence," 108.

confusion nor division in the union of the divinity and humanity of Christ as taught in Ethiopian christology.

From our discussion in this thesis, it can be deduced that despite the misunderstandings of some scholars, Ethiopian christology does not merely end with "one nature," starting "from two natures." Brake incorrectly argues that the "one nature" view of Ethiopian christology denies one of the natures in Christ.[363] Similarly, Strauss observes Apollinarian fallacy in Ethiopian christology as if the latter asserts the absorption of the humanity in the divinity.[364] However, Ethiopian scholars do not simply teach in a numerical sense that Christ is only one nature (*mono-physis*) from two natures (divinity and humanity). As the perfect humanity and divinity of Christ are acknowledged in the teachings of Ethiopian christology, neither the human or divine nature of Christ is denied. As an incarnate God, therefore, Christ is one-united nature (*mia-physis*), not "only one nature" (*mono-physis*). It is impossible to acknowledge merely one nature in Christ, for this denies either the divinity or humanity of Christ, overturning the whole mystery of the incarnation and our salvation. If the divinity of Christ is denied, Christ would be a mere man, and also if His humanity is overlooked, His historical reality would be illusive. Without displaying such christological problems, Ethiopian christology considers Christ as one-united (composite) nature (*mia-physis*) and one *hypostasis* (*ənd akal ənd baharey*) in whom the divinity and humanity were perfectly united. This christological formula does not display a *monophysite* tendency, but rather it demonstrates the "strong concern for the unity" (ἕνωσις—*tewahedo*) of the two natures in Christ as highlighted in the invaluable writings of the Ethiopian scholars.[365] Hence, Ethiopian christology should be termed as *miaphysite* christology, not as *monophysite*, the pejorative term which has been wrongly attributed to it by some scholars.

Unfortunately still some modern writers continue to use the pejorative designation. For example, Collins nick-names the christology of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, to which Ethiopian christology belongs, as *monophysite*.[366] Also Methodios

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[363] Brake, *A Historical Investigation*, 246.

[364] Strauss, *Perspectives*, 88.

[365] Lossel, "Elements," 302.

[366] O'Collins, Gerald. *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, 184. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

contends that those who teach unity of the natures without the confusion of the natures are "moderate *monophysites*."[367] In Ethiopian christology, the unity between the humanity and divinity is highlighted without overlooking the difference in the essence of the two elements. The unity is not emphasized at the expense of the particular attributes of the natures which remained unchanged. Therefore, Ethiopian christology does not bear the Eutychian and Apollinarian fallacies which disregard the perfect humanity of Christ. The unity is highlighted to preclude any Nestorian sense of division. Also when it is said that the unity was without confusion, separation, change or absorption, this does not signify any contradiction in the Ethiopian *miaphysite* christology which highlights the unity of the natures in Christ because the phrase *miaphysis* denotes the united existence of the two natures that became *one-united nature*[368] in preservation without the fusion of one of the natures into the other. Thus Ethiopian christology makes sense only if it is understood as *miaphysite* christology which is opposed to both *monophysite* and *dyophyiste* positions.

From a solely *miaphysite* stand, it is obvious that Ethiopian christology is free from all the alleged christological flaws of *monophysistism* and *dyophysitism*. Unlike *monophysite* christiology, the Ethiopian *miaphysite* christology proves the perfect humanity of Christ, highlighting that the Logos assumed the flesh animated with soul, and that the perfect human properties and faculties were maintained in Christ. *Monophysitism* is mainly rejected in Ethiopian christology because it contradicts the doctrine of soteriology by denying the humanity of Christ. Also, by emphasizing the division of the natures in Christ, *dyophysitism* falls in the same trap of denying the theology of redemption. As a view originated from the two sons doctrine of Nestorius, the *dyophysite* position demonstrates a sense of division in the one-united nature of Christ. Moreover, the position ascribes all human attributes to the humanity of Christ,

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[367] Metropolitan Methodios. "Inter-Orthodox Theological Commission for the Dialogue with the non-Chalcedonian Churches." *Abba Selama: A Review of the Association of Ethio-Hellenic Studies*, 3, no. 2 (1972): 133.

[368] Bar Ebraya's term: "one double nature [*Had hu Kyono 'Apipho*]" can be taken as a synonym for "one-united nature." Bar Ebraya, *De l'Incarnation*, 186, in Panicker, *The Person of Jesus Christ*, 160.

so that the one who suffered on the cross is taught to be the human nature of Christ. Such stand is rejected in Ethiopian christology, because human suffering cannot make atonement for mankind. But acknowledging Christ as incarnate God, Ethiopian christology teaches that St. Mary gave birth to the Word in the flesh, and the Word underwent all the sufferings in His flesh, redeeming us from the bond of sin. Hence the orthodoxy of the Ethiopian christology cannot be doubted. Confessing Christ as perfect God and perfect man, and being in harmony with the essentials of the theology or redemption, the Ethiopian *miaphysite* christological position maintains the basic characteristic features of orthodox christology.

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