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# THE DOCTRINE OF THE ORTHODOXY

## THE BASIC DOCTRINES OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

### COUNCILS AND CONFESSIONS

All Orthodox credal formulas, liturgical texts, and doctrinal statements affirm the claim that the Orthodox Church has preserved the original apostolic faith, which was also expressed in the common Christian tradition of the first centuries. The Orthodox Church recognizes as ecumenical the seven councils of Nicaea I (325), Constantinople I (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), Constantinople II (553), Constantinople III (681), and Nicaea II (787) but considers that the decrees of several other later councils also reflect the same original faith (e.g., the councils of Constantinople that endorsed the theology of St. Gregory Palamas in the 14th century). Finally, it recognizes itself as the bearer of an uninterrupted living tradition of true Christianity that is expressed in its worship, in the lives of the saints, and in the faith of the whole people of the Heavenly Father.

In the 17th century, as a counterpart to the various "confessions" of the Reformation, there appeared several "Orthodox confessions," endorsed by local councils but, in fact, associated with individual authors (e.g., Metrophanes Critopoulos, 1625; Peter Mogila, 1638; Dostheos of Jerusalem, 1672). None of these confessions would be recognized today as having anything but historical importance. When expressing the beliefs of his church, the Orthodox theologian, rather than seeking literal conformity with any of these particular confessions, will rather look for consistency with Scripture and tradition, as it has been expressed in the ancient councils, the early Fathers, and the uninterrupted life of the liturgy. He will not shy away from new formulations if consistency and continuity of tradition are preserved.

What is particularly characteristic of this attitude toward the faith is the absence of any great concern for establishing external criteria of truth—a concern that has dominated Western Christian thought since the Middle Ages. Truth appears as a living experience accessible in the communion of the church and of which the Scriptures, the councils, and theology are the normal expressions. Even ecumenical councils, in the Orthodox perspective, need subsequent "reception" by the body of the church in order to be recognized as truly ecumenical. Ultimately, therefore, truth is viewed as its own criterion: there are signs that point to it, but none of these signs is a substitute for a free and personal experience of truth, which is made accessible in the sacramental fellowship of the church.

Because of this view of truth, the Orthodox have traditionally been reluctant to involve church authority in defining matters of faith with too much precision and detail. This reluctance is not due to relativism or indifference but rather to the belief that truth needs no definition to be the object of experience and that legitimate definition when it occurs, should aim mainly at

excluding error and not at pretending to reveal the truth itself that is believed to be ever present in the church.

## HEAVENLY FATHER AND MAN

The development of the doctrines concerning the Trinity and the incarnation, as it took place during the first eight centuries of Christian history, was related to the concept of man's participation in divine life.

The Greek Fathers of the church always implied that the phrase found in the biblical story of the creation of man (Gen. 1:26), according to "the image and likeness of Heavenly Father," meant that man is not an autonomous being and that his ultimate nature is defined by his relation to the Heavenly Father, his "prototype." In paradise, Adam and Eve were called to participate in the Heavenly Father's life and to find in him the natural growth of their humanity "from glory to glory." To be "in Heavenly Father" is, therefore, the natural state of man. This doctrine is particularly important in connection with the Fathers' view of human freedom. For theologians such as Gregory of Nyssa (4th century) and Maximus the Confessor (7th century) man is truly free only when he is in communion with Heavenly Father; otherwise, he is only a slave to his body or to "the world," over which, originally and by the Heavenly Father's command, he was destined to rule.

Thus, the concept of sin implies separation from the Almighty Father God and the reduction of man to a separate and autonomous existence, in which he is deprived of both his natural glory and his freedom. He becomes an element subject to cosmic determinism, and the image of the Heavenly Father is thus blurred within him.

Freedom in the Heavenly Father, as enjoyed by Adam, implied the possibility of falling away from Heavenly Father. This is the unfortunate choice made by man, which led Adam to a subhuman and unnatural existence. The most unnatural aspect of his new state was death. In this perspective, "original sin" is understood not so much as a state of guilt inherited from Adam but as an unnatural condition of human life that ends in death. Mortality is what each man now inherits at his birth and this is what leads him to struggle for existence, to self-affirmation at the expense of others, and ultimately to subjection to the laws of animal life. The "prince of this world" (i.e., Satan), who is also the "murderer from the beginning," has dominion over man. From this vicious circle of death and sin, man is understood to be liberated by the death and Resurrection of Yeshua, which is actualized in Baptism and the sacramental life in the church.

The general framework of this understanding of the Almighty Father God-man relationship is clearly different from the view that became dominant in the Christian West—i.e., the view that conceived of "nature" as distinct from "grace" and that understood original sin as an inherited guilt rather than as a deprivation of freedom. In the East, man is regarded as fully man when he participates in Heavenly Father; in the West, man's nature is believed to be autonomous, sin is viewed as a punishable crime, and grace is understood to grant forgiveness. Hence, in the West, the aim of the Christian is justification, but in the East, it is rather communion with Heavenly Father and deification. In the West, the church is viewed in terms of mediation (for the bestowing of grace) and authority (for guaranteeing security in doctrine); in the East, the church is regarded as a communion in which the Heavenly Father and man meet once again and a personal experience of divine life becomes possible.

## YESHUA, OUR SAVIOUR

The Orthodox Church is formally committed to the Christology (doctrine of Yeshua) that was defined by the councils of the first eight centuries. Together with the Latin Church of the West, it has rejected Arianism (a belief in the subordination of the Son to the Father) at Nicaea (325), Nestorianism (a belief that stresses the independence of the divine and human natures of Christ) at Ephesus (431), and Monophysitism (a belief that our Saviour, Yeshua had only one divine nature) at Chalcedon (451). The Eastern and Western churches still formally share the tradition of subsequent Christological developments, even though the famous formula of Chalcedon, "one person in two natures," is given different emphases in the East and West. The stress on Yeshua's identity with the pre-existent Son of the Heavenly Father, the Logos (Word) of the Gospel According to John, characterizes Orthodox Christology. On Byzantine icons, around the face of Yeshua, the Greek letters "ΩΧ" —the equivalent of the Jewish Tetragrammaton YHWH, the name of the Heavenly Father in the Old Testament—are often depicted. Yeshua is thus always seen in His divine identity. Similarly, the liturgy consistently addresses the Virgin Mary as Theotokos (the "one who gave birth to the Saviour, Yeshua"), and this term, formally admitted as a criterion of orthodoxy at Ephesus, is actually the only "Mariological" (doctrine of Mary) dogma accepted in the Orthodox Church. It reflects the doctrine of Yeshua's unique divine Person, and Mary is thus venerated only because she is His mother "according to the flesh."

This emphasis on the personal divine identity of Yeshua, based on the doctrine of St. Cyril of Alexandria (5th century), does not imply the denial of His humanity. The anthropology (doctrine of man) of the Eastern Fathers does not view man as an autonomous being but rather implies that communion with the Heavenly Father makes man fully human. Thus the human nature of Yeshua, our Saviour, fully assumed by the divine Word, is indeed the "new Adam" in whom the whole of humanity receives again its original glory. Our Saviour's humanity is fully "ours"; it possessed all the characteristics of the human being—"each nature (of Yeshua) acts according to its properties," Chalcedon proclaimed, following Pope Leo—without separating itself from the divine Word. Thus, in death itself—for Yeshua's death was indeed a fully human death—the Son of the Heavenly Father was the "subject" of the Passion. The theopaschite formula ("the Almighty Father God suffered in the flesh") became, together with the Theotokos formula, a standard of orthodoxy in the Eastern Church, especially after the second Council of Constantinople (553). It implied that Yeshua's humanity was indeed real not only in itself but also for the Heavenly Father, since it brought Him to death on the cross, and that the salvation and redemption of humanity can be accomplished by the Heavenly Father alone—hence the necessity for Him to condescend to death, which held humanity captive.

This theology of redemption and salvation is best expressed in the Byzantine liturgical hymns of Holy Week and Easter: Yeshua is the one who "tramples down death by death," and, on the evening of Good Friday, the hymns already exalt His victory. Salvation is conceived not in terms of satisfaction of divine justice, through paying the debt for the sin of Adam—as the medieval West understood it—but in terms of uniting the human and the divine with the divine overcoming human mortality and weakness and, finally, exalting man to divine life.

What Yeshua accomplished once and for all must be appropriated freely by those who are "in Yeshua"; their goal is "deification," which does not mean dehumanization but the exaltation of man to the dignity prepared for him at creation. Such feasts as the Transfiguration or the Ascension are extremely popular in the East precisely because they celebrate humanity glorified in Yeshua—a glorification that anticipates the coming of the Kingdom of the Heavenly Father, when He will be "all in all."

Participation in the already deified humanity of Yeshua is the true goal of Christian life, and it is accomplished through the Holy Spirit.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

The gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost "called all men into unity," according to the Byzantine liturgical hymn of the day; into this new unity, which St. Paul called the "body of Yeshua," each individual Christian enters through Baptism and "chrismation" (the Eastern form of the Western "confirmation") when the priest anoints him saying "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit."

This gift, however, requires a man's free response. Orthodox saints such as Seraphim of Sarov (died 1833) described the entire content of Christian life as a "collection of the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit is thus conceived as the main agent of man's restoration to his original natural state through Communion in Yeshua's body. This role of the Spirit is reflected, very richly, in a variety of liturgical and sacramental acts. Every act of worship usually starts with a prayer addressed to the Spirit, and all major sacraments begin with an invocation to the Spirit. The eucharistic liturgies of the East attribute the ultimate mystery of Yeshua's Presence to a descent of the Spirit upon the worshipping congregation and upon the eucharistic bread and wine. The significance of this invocation (in Greek epiklesis) was violently debated between Greek and Latin Christians in the Middle Ages because the Roman canon of the mass lacked any reference to the Spirit and was thus considered as deficient by the Orthodox Greeks.

Since the Council of Constantinople (381), which condemned the Pneumatomachians ("fighters against the Spirit"), no one in the Orthodox East has ever denied that the Spirit is not only a "gift" but also the giver—i.e., that he is the third Person of the Holy Trinity. The Greek Fathers saw in Gen. 1:2 a reference to the Spirit's cooperation in the divine act of creation; the Spirit was also viewed as active in the "new creation" that occurred in the womb of the Virgin Mary when she became the mother of Yeshua (Luke 1:35); and finally, Pentecost was understood to be an anticipation of the "last days" (Acts 2:17) when, at the end of history, a universal communion with the Heavenly Father will be achieved. Thus, all the decisive acts of the Heavenly Father are accomplished "by the Father in the Son, through the Holy Spirit."

## THE HOLY TRINITY

By the 4th century a polarity developed between the Eastern and Western Christians in their respective understandings of the Trinity. In the West the Heavenly Father was understood primarily in terms of one essence (the Trinity of Persons being conceived as an irrational truth found in revelation); in the East the tri-personality of the Heavenly Father was understood as the primary fact of Christian experience. For most of the Greek Fathers, it was not the Trinity that needed theological proof but rather the Almighty Father God's essential unity. The Cappadocian Fathers (Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Basil of Caesarea) were even accused of being tri-theists because of the personalistic emphasis of their conception of the Heavenly Father as one essence in three hypostases (the Greek term hypostasis was the equivalent of the Latin substantia and designated a concrete reality). For Greek theologians, this terminology was intended to designate the concrete New Testamental revelation of the Son and the Spirit, as distinct from the Father.

Modern Orthodox theologians tend to emphasize this personalistic approach to the Heavenly Father; they claim that they discover in it the original biblical personalism, unadulterated in its content by later philosophical speculation.

Polarization of the Eastern and the Western concepts of the Trinity is at the root of the Filioque dispute. The Latin word Filioque ("and from the Son") was added to the Nicene Creed in Spain in the 6th century. By affirming that the Holy Spirit proceeds not only "from the Father" (as the original creed proclaimed) but also "from the Son," the Spanish councils intended to condemn Arianism by reaffirming the Son's divinity. Later, however, the addition became an anti-Greek battle cry, especially after Charlemagne (9th century) made his claim to rule the revived Roman Empire. The addition was finally accepted in Rome under German pressure. It found justification in the framework of Western conceptions of the Trinity; the Father and the Son were viewed as one Heavenly Father in the act of "spiration" of the Spirit.

The Byzantine theologians opposed the addition, first on the ground that the Western Church had no right to change the text of an ecumenical creed unilaterally and, second because the Filioque clause implied the reduction of the divine persons to mere relations ("the Father and the Son are two in relation to each other, but one in relation to the Spirit"). For the Greeks, the Father alone is the origin of both the Son and the Spirit. Patriarch Photius (9th century) was the first Orthodox theologian to explicitly spell out the Greek opposition to the Filioque concept, but the debate continued throughout the Middle Ages.

## **THE TRANSCENDENCE OF THE HEAVENLY FATHER**

An important element in the Eastern Christian understanding of the Heavenly Father is the notion that He, in his essence, is totally transcendent and unknowable and that, strictly speaking, He can only be designated by negative attributes: it is possible to say what the Heavenly Father is not, but it is impossible to say what He is.

A purely negative, or "apophatic" theology—the only one applicable to the essence of the Heavenly Father in the Orthodox view—does not lead to agnosticism, however, because the Heavenly Father reveals Himself personally—as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and also in his acts, or "energies." Thus, true knowledge of the Heavenly Father always includes three elements: religious awe; personal encounter; and participation in the acts, or energies, which He freely bestows on creation.

This conception of the Almighty Father God is connected with the personalistic understanding of the Trinity. It also led to the official confirmation by the Orthodox Church of the theology of St. Gregory Palamas, the leader of Byzantine hesychasts (monks devoted to divine quietness through prayer), at the councils of 1341 and 1351 in Constantinople. The councils confirmed a real distinction in the Heavenly Father, between the unknowable essence and the acts, or "energies," which make possible a real communion with Him. The deification of man realized in Yeshua once and for all, is thus accomplished by a communion of divine energy with humanity in Yeshua's glorified manhood.

## **MODERN THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS**

Until the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks (1453), Byzantium was the unquestioned intellectual centre of the Orthodox Church. Far from being monolithic, Byzantine theological thought was often polarized by a Humanistic trend, favouring the use of Greek philosophy in theological thinking, and the more austere and mystical theology of the monastic circles. The concern for the preservation of Greek culture and for the political salvation of the empire led several prominent Humanists to adopt a position favourable to union with the West. The most creative theologians (e.g., Symeon the New Theologian died 1033; Gregory Palamas, died 1359; Nicholas Cabasilas, died c. 1390), however, were found rather in the monastic party that continued the tradition of patristic spirituality based upon the theology of deification.

The 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries were the dark ages of Orthodox theology. Neither in the Middle East nor in the Balkans nor in Russia was there any opportunity for independent theological creativity. Since no formal theological education was accessible, except in Western Roman Catholic or Protestant schools, the Orthodox tradition was preserved primarily through the liturgy, which retained all its richness and often served as a valid substitute for formal schooling. Most doctrinal statements of this period, issued by councils or by individual theologians, were polemical documents directed against Western missionaries.

After the reforms of Peter the Great (died 1725), a theological school system was organized in Russia. Shaped originally in accordance with Western Latin models and staffed with Jesuit-trained Ukrainian personnel, this system developed, in the 19th century, into a fully independent and powerful tool of theological education. The Russian theological efflorescence of the 19th and 20th centuries produced many scholars, especially in the historical field (e.g., Philaret Drozdov, died 1867; V.O. Klyuchevsky, died 1913; V.V. Bolotov, died 1900; E.E. Golubinsky, died 1912; N.N. Glubokovsky, died 1937). Independently of the official theological schools, a number of laymen with secular training developed theological and philosophical traditions of their own and exercised a great influence on modern Orthodox theology (e.g., A.S. Khomyakov, died 1860; V.S. Solovyev, died 1900; N. Berdyayev, died 1948), and some became priests (P. Florensky, died 1943; S. Bulgakov, died 1944). A large number of the Russian theological intelligentsia (e.g., S. Bulgakov, G. Florovsky) emigrated to Western Europe after the Russian Revolution (1917) and played a leading role in the ecumenical movement.

With the independence of the Balkans, theological schools were also created in Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania. Modern Greek scholars contributed to the publication of important Byzantine ecclesiastical texts and produced standard theological textbooks.

The Orthodox diaspora—the emigration from Eastern Europe and the Middle East—in the 20th century has contributed to modern theological development through their establishment of theological centres in Western Europe and America.

Orthodox theologians reacted negatively to the new dogmas proclaimed by Pope Pius IX: the Immaculate Conception of Mary (1854) and papal infallibility (1870). In connection with the dogma of the Assumption of Mary, proclaimed by Pope Pius XII (1950), the objections mainly concerned the presentation of such a tradition in the form of a dogma.

In contrast to the recent general trend of Western Christian thought toward social concerns, Orthodox theologians generally emphasize that the Christian faith is primarily a direct experience of the Kingdom of the Heavenly Father, sacramentally present in the church. Without denying that Christians have a social responsibility to the world, they consider this responsibility as an outcome of life in Yeshua. This traditional position accounts for the remarkable survival of the Orthodox Churches under the most contradictory and unfavourable of social conditions, but, to Western eyes, it often appears as a form of passive fatalism.

## THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

### THE DOCTRINE OF ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

As it is shown in this Biblical foundation, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has five pillars of Mysteries through which it teaches and demonstrates its basic religious belief. It is called pillars of mysteries due to the fact religious teaching as a pillar supports a roof.

#### MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY

*“There are three that bear witness in the Heaven, the Father, the Logos, and the Holy spirit, and there three agree in one.” 1 John 5:7*

In this section, the mystery of limit and the Trinity of the triune, the Heavenly Father is described. The formula for the trinity is “three in one and one on three.” The unity of the Heavenly Father is not conceived in the sense of an arithmetical digit nor of a solitary condition but in that of an all-inclusive perfection. So, the one Heavenly Father is also eternally three. He affirms the Anaphora, “three names and one Heavenly Father, three persons and one essence.”

The Holy Trinity is, three in name, persons (Akal) and deed.

#### 1. Three in name. Namely the Father, The Son, The Holy Spirit

In the Bible, there is evidence in the following passages.

*“There are three that bear witness in the Heaven, the Father, the Logos, and the Holy spirit, and these three agree on one.” 1 John 5:7*

*“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit (Ghost)” Matt 28:19*

*“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of Heavenly Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all Amen.” 2 Cor 13:13*

The Father is called the Father but not changed to be the name of the Son or Holy Spirit. The name of the Son is called the Son but not changed to be the Father and the Holy Spirit. The name of the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit but not changed to be the name of the Father and the Son. The three exist internally in their own name and person.

#### 2. Three in person: The Father is a perfect person.

The Son is a perfect person.

The Holy Spirit is a perfect person.

The Trinity are three in person (Akal). The three are one in essence, in existence, will, etc. We don't mean three Heavenly Fathers but one Heavenly Father. While the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit exist in their own perfect person and in one existence. (Faith of Father Ch. 40vs 4:6) . And the one Heavenly Father head (Melekot) is shared equally and eternally by the three persons (Akal).

### **3. Three indeed:**

The Father is the begotter.

The Son is begotten.

The Holy Spirit is the one who proceeds.

## **HEAVENLY FATHER AND MAN**

Yeshua gave us the right to say "our Father" because we were made sons by adoption because of His redemptive Incarnation. Not only were we made sons, but also heirs. But to be partakers of the redeemed, we must believe and express our faith indeed. That is why Yeshua Himself said in the Gospel of Matthew, Ch. 5, Vs. 44 & 45, "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you do good to those who that you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be son of your father."

Therefore, every time we say Our Father, we should think how worthy we are to say it according to our deeds. After He created Adam and Eve, He made them rulers of everything on Earth and allowed them to eat everything that grew on Earth except the fruit of knowledge. After the fall of Adam and Eve, He did not leave us to perish in death, but became flesh from the Virgin Mary and ransomed us with His blood to give us life again. He wants us to call him "Father" because that is what He has been and what He is.

## **HEAVENLY FATHER AND CREATION**

Creation is the Heavenly Father's handiwork. He is the ruler of the Universe and creator of the Angels. The creation was originally good but was corrupted later. Spirit, life, body and all good proceed from Heavenly Father. He is the creator of the whole world, and so He is the Father and Governor of all creation (Gen. 1:1; Neh. 9:7; Deut. 32. 6,18; I Chron. 29:12).

The Heavenly Father is "The Lord, who is a good father"; in His goodness, He forgives, as Father He protects and feeds, as Father He judges. He fills the Heaven and Earth though not seen by the eye of the flesh, is jealous and takes vengeance, is patient, merciful and gentle, omnipotent, omniscient, glorious, most high, mighty, wise, righteous, good, true, faithful. He has no respect for evil persons but gives recompense to all according to what they have done.

## **INCARNATION**

In a paper submitted to the 'Consultation between the Theologians of Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches' held at the University of Aarhus, Denmark, in August 1964, the Very Rev. Like Siltanat Habte Mariam Workineh, Dean of Holy Trinity Cathedral, fully explained the teaching of the Church on Incarnation.

Incarnation is a divine mystery. The two natures of the Heavenly Fatherhead and Manhood are perfectly united and Yeshua is thus one Person and one Nature from two Natures.

Yeshua is one Incarnate nature of the Heavenly Father the Word. After the union, it is impossible to speak of Yeshua as being in two natures. By the union of nature in the Incarnation, the two natures became one nature, the natures being united without separation, without confusion, and without change. Neither of the two natures was assimilated by the other, the properties of the Divine Word were attributed to the flesh and those of the flesh to the Divine Word. The Logos revealed Himself in our flesh and became a man like us. He did all things that man does with the exception of sin (John 8:46). And at the same time was truly the Heavenly Father. He is the Heavenly Father-Man. He is co-equal and consubstantial with the Father in His Heavenly Fatherhead. He is perfectly united with us the union being from two modes of life into one. The union of the Word with the flesh took place in the womb of the Virgin Mary. St. John says: "The Word was made flesh...". In the same way we can say that also the flesh was made divine. The attributes of the flesh can be given to the Divine Word and vice versa. However, the properties of each nature are preserved without change after the union. Therefore, we believe that Yeshua is one Person and one Nature, and thus is both divine and human. We speak of one because of the union. We hold "mia physis", composite nature, one united nature. Again our Saviour, Yeshua is the perfect man and the perfect Heavenly Father. The word "perfect" closes the door to all quibble and prevarication. We accept both unity and duality in Yeshua who in acting performed as one. Yeshua whom humanity and divinity were united in one Person and one Nature, was crucified on the cross. The Divine Word without being united with the flesh cannot be crucified, because as the Heavenly Father He is beyond suffering. But through the union with the flesh, He was crucified and subjected to death. If, on the other hand, only the human body was crucified, He could not save the world.

The purpose of the Incarnation was the salvation of man. The Heavenly Father sent His only Son into the world to bring unto Him the lost sheep and He did this by reason of His unspeakable love towards mankind.

## **THE ISSUE BETWEEN MONOPHYSITISM AND DYOPHYSITISM**

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church considers itself to belong to the One, Holy, Universal and Apostolic Church founded by our Saviour, Yeshua. It is holy because its founder, Yeshua, is holy; it is catholic because the whole world is its province and because it is universal in time and place; it is apostolic because it was established on earth by the apostles of Yeshua

The Ethiopian Church belongs to the group of Orthodox Churches wrongly termed "Monophysite" but which prefer the epithet "Non-Chalcedonian". The other members of this family are the Coptic, Armenian, Syrian and Indian Churches. Together with the Roman Catholic Church and the Byzantine Orthodox Church, they comprised the One Church for four centuries until the division arose on account of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 which insisted that Yeshua had the two natures of humanity and divinity.

Dyophysites teach that, after the union, Yeshua retained the natures of divinity and humanity in His one Person in such a way that He ate food, slept, laughed, suffered, walked as man in the human nature, but healed the sick and resuscitated Lazarus as the Heavenly Father in the divine nature. Thus, He is one Person in two natures of humanity and divinity. The wrongly called Monophysites reject the allegation that they teach one Nature and one Person in Yeshua. The teaching of the Ethiopian Church may thus be summarized:

The Ethiopian Church rejects Eutyches, who is believed to have taught that in Yeshua the human Nature was absorbed by the divine Nature. Nestorius also is excluded.

Dioscorus, whom the Council of Chalcedon deposed, is accepted. But it should be remembered that the Council of 451 did not believe that Dioscorus was a heretic. Dioscorus did not deny the continuance of the Heavenly Fatherhead and manhood in the One Yeshua after their union and he agreed with the Council that the teaching which Eutyches was understood to hold was heretical.

The teaching of the Ethiopian Church is the faith of the Fathers expounded by the great theologians of the Alexandrine tradition, especially by St. Cyril and his illustrious theological followers. Accordingly, the Ethiopian Church maintains that Yeshua is the perfect Heavenly Father and perfect man, at once Unsubstantial with the Father and with us; the divinity and humanity continue in Him without mixture or separation, confusion or change. He is one and the same person both in his eternal pre-existence and also in the economy, in which he performs the redeeming work of the Heavenly Father on behalf of man, from the indivisible state of the union of Heavenly Fatherhead and manhood.

The Church abides by the formula "The one Incarnate Nature of Heavenly Father the Word", on which St. Cyril of Alexandria increasingly insisted, a formula which was accepted as correct by the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. and which, after the Council of Chalcedon, the Chalcedonian side in the East itself admitted. It is unfair for the Church to be nicknamed "monophysite" by the faithful who accept the Chalcedonian formula of "two Natures in the one Person of Yeshua", because the expression used by the non-Chalcedonian side was always miophysis, and never monophysis (mia standing for a composite unity unlike mone standing for an elemental unity). Therefore, these churches are best referred to as the non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches.

After the Union, Christ was no longer in two natures. The two natures became united into one nature without separation, without confusion and without change. Thus, He was at the same time perfect Heavenly Father and perfect man. This is the union of the natures in the Incarnation. After the union, Yeshua is not two persons or two natures but one Person, one incarnate Nature of the Heavenly Father the Son, with one will, but being at once divine and human. If you separate the natures after the union and say that Yeshua is in two natures, you will be confronted with serious problems. You will have to admit, for instance, that Yeshua was crucified merely as a man and that therefore He did not redeem the world, for the Heavenly Father alone is able to accomplish the world's redemption. In brief, it is held that Yeshua, in acting, acted as a united being, not separately as a man or separately as the Heavenly Father.

Monophysitism is rejected. It is a question of error in vocabulary, the concepts of Nature and Person not being clear and there being obscurity in philosophical terms such as physis, hypostasis, ausia, prosopon, atreptos, mia, mono etc. As to the two natures of Yeshua the Dyophysites and non-Chalcedonians are one, it is a matter of interpretation after the union of the two natures. Happily, the Dyophysites are currently realizing the position. The following is the Creed said in the Mass, called "Amakniyo of the Apostles", the one which the Apostles gave in Jerusalem:-

"We believe in one Heavenly Father, Maker of all creation, Father of our Teacher and Saviour and our Yeshua, because His nature is unsearchable."

As declared before (i.e. in Didascalia), He is without beginning and without end, but He is ever living, and He has a light which is never extinguished, and He can never be approached.

One Heavenly Father, Father of our Teacher and our Saviour Yeshua, who was begotten before the creation of the world, the only begotten Son coequal with Him, Creator of all the hosts, the principalities and the dominions:

Who in the last days was pleased to become man, and took flesh from our Lady Mary, the holy Virgin, without Me seed of man, and grew like men yet without sin or evil; neither was guile found in his mouth.

Then He suffered, died in the flesh, rose from the dead on the third day, ascended unto heaven to the Father who sent Him, sat down at the right hand of Power, sent to us the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father, and saved all the world, and who is co-eternal with the Father and the Son.

We say further that all the creatures of the Heavenly Father are good and there is nothing to be repented of, and the spirit, the life of the body, is pure and holy in all.

And we say that marriage is pure and childbirth is undefiled because the Heavenly Father created Adam and Eve to multiply. We understand further that there is in our body a soul which is immortal and does not perish with the body.

We repudiate all the works of heretics and all schisms and transgression of the law because they are for us impure.

We also believe in the resurrection of the dead, the righteous and sinners; and in the day of judgment, when everyone will be recompensed according to his deeds.

We also believe that Yeshua is not in the least degree inferior because of his incarnation, but He is the Heavenly Father the Word who truly became man, and reconciled mankind to the Heavenly Father being the High Priest of the Father.

Henceforth let us not be circumcised like the Jews. We know that He who had to fulfil the law and the prophets has already come.

Our Church has received and teaches the faith which was formulated at Nicaea. In the Creed or in the name of Nicaea she makes known her faith after this fashion:

We believe in one Heavenly Father, in the Saviour the Father, who holds the whole world, omnipotent, who created everything visible and invisible in Heaven and Earth (Gen. 1, 20; Neh. 9. Rom. 1.20).

We believe in our Saviour, Yeshia, the one Son of the Father, who was with Him before the Creation of the world. Light begotten of Light, True Heavenly Father begotten of True Heavenly Father, not created. He is equal with the Father. There is nothing in Heaven and Earth which exists without Him. Mt. 3,17, In 1. 1,4.

For us and for the salvation of men He came down from heaven; by the operation of the Holy Spirit, He put on the flesh of the holy Virgin Mary and became man. In the time of Pontius Pilate, He was crucified for us, suffered and died and was buried, and on the third day He was separated from the dead and rose, and with glory, He ascended to Heaven and sat on the right hand of His Father, and He shall come again in honour and glory that He may judge the living and the dead, and there is no finish, no end of His Kingdom. Mat. 1: 20,21; I Pet. 3. 18; Phil. 2. 6,8; Rom. 5. 8; Cor. 15. 3,4; 1 Pet. 3. 19,20.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Saviour who saves, He who proceeds from the Father; together with the Father and the Son we worship Him, we honour Him, we glorify Him. Jn. v. 3, 4; Jn. xv. 26.

And we believe in one Holy church, which is over-all, the assembly and congregation of the Apostles, Eph. ii. 19, 20,22.

And we believe in one Baptism, that it was given for the forgiveness of sin. Eph. 4. 3,6; Ps. 32. 1,2; Eph. 1. 6.

And believing in the resurrection of the dead, we hope for everlasting life to come. Jn. 5. 28,29; 1 Cor. 15. 22,24; Jn. 10. 27, 28 ( The Teaching of the Abyssinian Church ) .

The dogmas we believe are contained in this symbol of the Faith. No one has any right to add to or take from it. Other dogmas are contained in the dogmatic definitions of the Third Council in Ephesus which declared that Yeshua is one in hypostasis, perfect Heavenly Father and perfect man, is the Son of the Heavenly Father, without a mother on the higher plane, and the Son of His Mother without a father on the lower. His ever-Virgin Mother is properly and truly called the Mother of the Heavenly Father, as having properly and truly given birth in the flesh to Heavenly Father the Logos.

## THE SACRAMENTS

There are seven Sacraments:

- Baptism
- Confirmation
- Penance
- Holy Communion
- Unction of the sick
- Holy orders
- Matrimony

The first four are necessary for every believer, the other three are not obligatory for everyone. Matrimony and Holy Orders are very necessary to the church, the first for the preservation of mankind, and the second for the performance of the Church Services.

Certain prayers are set for each sacrament to ask for the blessing of the Holy Ghost. A bishop may perform any church sacrament, but there must be at least three bishops for the consecration of a bishop (the rule is clear in the Didascalia) in the sacrament of Holy Orders; a priest cannot confer Holy Orders, but he can perform the other six sacraments, a deacon can only help the bishop or the priest in celebrating the sacraments. Laymen cannot celebrate but they participate in their celebration. The blessings got through the sacraments do not depend on the life of the minister; the sacraments do not lose their efficacy if the minister's life is not good, the efficacy is "ex opere operato". It is the Heavenly Father who works in ministers (Phil. 2:13). John Chrysostom said that grace does not depend on the life of the clergy. Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders cannot be repeated.

A sacrament is not a mere symbol or sign of the New Covenant, no; it is not a mere outward ritual. A sacrament brings real invisible grace to the receiver. Sacraments are the normal channel of grace which nourishes the believers' supernatural life of faith. Every sacrament was instituted by Yeshua Himself and it has, besides the invisible grace, an outward sign, visible or audible.

## **HOLY COMMUNION AS A SACRIFICE**

We believe that this sacrament is an unbloody Sacrifice offered for our salvation. Our Saviour said: "This is my blood which is given (Sacrificed) for you" (Luke 22:19, 20). St. Paul (1Cor.10:18-21) gives the proof that the Holy Communion is offered on the altar as a true sacrifice and in Heb. 13:10 he refers to the Christian altar. This sacrifice of the New Testament was foretold in the Old Testament: "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name and a pure offering (or "sacrifice"), for my name shall be great among the heathen" (Mal. 1.11). The Council of Nicaea called the Holy Communion an unbloody sacrifice. All the Church Fathers called it a sacrifice. This sacrifice is the same as that which was offered on the Cross, the Offeror is the same Yeshua. The difference between this and that which was offered on Calvary is this:

On the cross, our Saviour offered a visible sacrifice, in the Holy Communion it is invisible under the form of bread and wine;

On the cross, it was a bloody sacrifice through shedding of blood, in the Holy Communion it is unbloody;

The sacrifice on Calvary was offered for all the races of man once only and in one place, but the unbloody sacrifice is offered continuously, in every place on earth.

## **REAL PRESENCE THE ETHIOPIAN CHURCH HOLDS THE DOCTRINE OF THE REAL PRESENCE**

The consecrated bread and wine are the body and blood of Yeshua. He is truly, really and substantially present in the consecrated elements. In the Eucharist, we eat the blessed flesh of our Saviour and drink His precious blood in the form of bread and wine. As the Church Fathers said, "Our, Saviour is present in this sacrament, not in type or by way of granting His grace as in the case of other sacraments, but He is truly and actually present. The bread is changed after prayer into the Saviour's very body which was born at Bethlehem from the Virgin Mary, baptised at Jordan, suffered, buried and rose from the dead. Likewise, the wine is changed into the very blood of the Saviour which was shed on the cross." We do not take the bread and wine as a mere memorial service in remembrance of the Saviour's suffering and death. How the change takes place we do not know and we do not need to know. It is done by the power of the Heavenly Father, that is that. It is faith, not science. That old-time, ancient conviction, based on faith in an all-powerful Heavenly Father is still deeply entrenched in our Church and this basic belief has been left untouched by the changes affecting many churches in the rest of Christendom.

Proof of the real presence can be gathered from the Bible. Yeshua said: "This is my body... this is my blood"; from the decisions of the early Councils of Nicaea and Ephesus; the writings of the early fathers (Clement, Dionisius, Cyril of Alexandria, Macarius and Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Gregory, Basil and many others); the writings even of Martin Luther who said: "Yeshua said, 'This is my flesh,' and we can do nothing better than to respect His words". Before Communion, the priest declares: "I believe, I believe, I believe and I confess that this is the body and blood of our Saviour and our Heavenly Father. When giving Communion to the recipients he says: "The body of our Saviour Yeshua", and "This is the precious blood of Yeshua". As an expression of exterior reverence, when the Sacrament goes around, the people kneel or bow deeply, small and large bells jubilantly ring, incense fills the air. All this clearly indicates that the real presence is the very heart of the worship which the church is prepared to preserve as handed down by the Apostles. The Institution form in the Anaphoras of John Chrysostom and of St. Mark is: "This is my body... This is my blood". So, from the earliest times to

the present day, the Ethiopic liturgy has witnessed the belief in the doctrine of the real presence.

## **THE CONFESSOR OR SOUL FATHER**

The practice of confession is strictly personal. The believer chooses a confessor-priest who knows him personally, even intimately, and who is acquainted with and sympathetic to his problems. He is called Yenafs Abbat: the soul-father. As a matter of fact, he is the spiritual father of a family. He makes frequent visits to the home and performs services as required. Yearly a man gives to the confessor a gift according to his means. One wishing to confess goes to the house of a Confessor or to the church where they walk aside near the graves and the service is done.

When a man is about to die or is departing on an expedition he calls his Confessor and elders and declares his final wishes, for the 'nuzazei' or death-bed declaration of a testament is much stronger when made in his presence although the present Civil Code does not require confessors as witnesses for the validity of a will, and the court may invalidate a testamentary provision made by the testator in favour of the Confessor. Usually, a written testament is deposited with the Confessor, who on the fortieth day of Remembrance after death reads it to all concerned. The Confessor may be a member of the Family Council. In general, the place of the soul-father is of importance in the Ethiopian family.

## **APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION**

The authority of the bishops is derived in the first place from the Apostles and goes back behind them to Yeshua. They are the agents and servants of Yeshua and are equal to the Apostles to whom He said, "He who receiveth you receiveth me." (Mt. 10, 40 Lk. 10, 16; Jn. 13, 20). The line of succession in the episcopacy from the Apostles to the present time is unbroken. Our bishops to the day of writing are consecrated by those who have uninterrupted authority from the Apostles and this goes back to St. Mark and his successors. It was the Apostles who consecrated bishops and the bishops whom the Apostles consecrated were given the right of consecrating. In this connection the consecration performed by prelates outside the apostolic succession is invalid and the orders conferred by them are likewise null and void. The line of succession can only be broken if the consecration is not performed according to ordinances and is done by those whose authority is of no force.

## **VENERATION OF THE VIRGIN MARY**

The Church honours the Blessed Virgin Mary most of all the saints. She is venerated especially for her supreme grace and the call she received from the Heavenly Father. It is believed that by the grace of the Heavenly Father, she committed no actual sin. St. Elisabeth cried and said: "Blessed art thou above all women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. . ." (Luke 1, 39, 45). St. Gabriel said to her: "Be joyful, O thou that art full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou above all women" (Luke 1, 28). So, we, receiving and believing these words of the Gospel, honour and praise her as the mother of our Lord, our Lady, a lady blessed, holy, exalted, honoured and praised. The Virgin Mother of the Saviour Yeshua has a very special place in the Ethiopian cult, and devotion to our Mother holds the highest place. Ethiopia is known as the country of Mary, her protectress. Among the saints in Heaven, she is venerated in a special way. She is loved by her Son so dearly that He will grant her every prayer. Because of the mission she received from the Heavenly Father, her life is most closely linked with the mysteries of Yeshua, and there is no one who has followed in the footsteps of the Incarnate Word more closely and with more merit than she and no one has more grace and power over the heart of

the Son of Heavenly Father, and through Him with the Heavenly Father. Holier than the Cherubim and Seraphim she enjoys unquestionably greater glory than all the other saints for she is full of grace, she is the Mother of our Saviour, who happily gave birth to the Redeemer for us. She is a glorified human soul, more perfect and more lovable than any other. She is worthy of the highest place and the most exalted honour that a creature can attain in Heaven, for through the Heavenly Father's choosing of her for the destiny of being Yeshua's Mother, through the abundance of grace which He bestowed upon her, and through her fidelity in corresponding with this grace, she has reached a degree of glory which place her higher than the Heavenly Father's angels or His other Saints.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is constantly referred to in the Liturgy. Special prayers to her in the form of Ave Maria or Hail Mary are recited during the Liturgy immediately before the Lections.

Our Lady is commemorated every month and there are more than thirty feasts of Mary in one year. The name of Mary is the most popular, both for men and women. Innumerable churches are erected in her honour. The Nagara Maryam, or History of Mary, is a collection of stories about her life arranged for the twelve months of the year. There are two collections of homilies to be read on the Festivals of the Virgin, arranged for the different days of the week: the Praises of Mary (Weddase Maryam) and the Organ of the Virgin or Organ of Praises (Arganona Dengel, Arganona Weddase). One of the Anaphoras is called "Of our Lady Mary". Many pictures of the Virgin are to be seen in the churches and sleeping places. Another important book we have in connection with the Mother of Yeshua is called The Wonders of Mary. Ethiopia is a daughter of Mary, her star in peace and war and her last resort in everything. Nothing can be taught to the Church in devotion and honour to the Blessed Virgin. Finally, the Church teaches that our Lady was taken to Heaven soul and body where she prays for us until the last Judgement.

## COMMANDMENTS TO BE KEPT

There are commandments which are to be observed, through which the work of our salvation is completed. The keeping of these commandments is equal to the keeping of all the commandments.

They are five:

The first commandment, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy Heavenly Father with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength*", containing all our duties towards Heavenly Father and every commandment having any reference to the Heavenly Father. (Luke 10: 25-28)

The second commandment, "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*", contains all our duties towards Yeshua, who became a Neighbour to us, and whom we ought to love as He also first loved us. In this is every commandment referring to Yeshua.

The third commandment, "*A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye love one another*", contains all our duties towards our brethren and the brethren of Yeshua and every commandment having reference to the Christian Brotherhood (John 13. 34,35).

The fourth commandment, "*Ye shall love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you*", contains all our duties towards the enemies and persecutors of the faith and the teaching of Yeshua, and every commandment having reference to this order of men (Luke 6:27-28).

The fifth commandment, "*All things therefore which you would that men should do to you, do even so to them*", contains all our duties to all men whether ill-disposed towards us or friendly, and every commandment has reference to them (Matt. 7:12 and Luke 6:13)

## **MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE**

Marriage is pure and undefiled, and not unclean, for the Heavenly Father created Adam and Eve so that they might multiply people. Hence flesh is not impure, for He did not repudiate the body (Ethiopic Didascalia, Translations of Christian Literature, J.M. Harden, p. 147). We have a sacrament which blesses the state of married people. Marriage which is consecrated and honourable we honour and bless with 'the crown' (i.e. with the marriage service ) and with the Eucharist. There is a mass for the wedding. Those who pervert nature like the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, and those who practise bestiality shall not escape punishment, for they transgress the law and defile pure marriage. Women must be obedient to their husbands in love and fear, even as the blessed Sarah was obedient to her husband Abraham. And in like manner, men must love their wives. It is said, "Love the wife of thy youth, as the hearth loveth the fountains of waters, for she is thine and is with thee at all times and is a member of thine". (Cf. Prov. 5:18f).

## **CONCLUSION**

The Church teaches that all that exists was produced out of nothing by the Heavenly Father, the world is the work of the Divine Wisdom, and the Heavenly Father was moved by His goodness to create the world for His glorification. The Heavenly Father keeps all created things in existence, and through His Providence protects and guides all that He has created. Every creature of the Heavenly Father is good and there is nothing to be rejected.

## **KINGDOM ORTHODOXY**

It is the mandate of the PDP Foundation to enhance and empower the Kingdom Orthodoxy and to make Citizens of the Kingdom of the Heavenly Father from all believers across the globe.