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Item Type	Book chapter
Authors	Tesfaye, Ayalkibet Berhanu
Publisher	Regnum Books International
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Download date	2026-11-14 17:16:05
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/166277

(23) ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN AFRICA

Ayalkibet Berhanu Tesfaye

Worldwide, there are six Oriental Orthodox Churches, all of which are in full communion with each other. These churches are the:

- Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria,
- Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church,
- Armenian Apostolic Church,
- Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch (also known as Syrian Orthodox Church),
- Indian Orthodox Church, and
- Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

These six churches indicated above accept the dogmatic position that was taken in the first three ecumenical councils of Nicea (AD 325), Constantinople (AD 381) and Ephesus (AD 431). They ultimately rejected the nature of the Christological formula which was put forth by the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451).[1] The reason for their rejection was that the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) held that Jesus has two natures – one divine and the other human. Although these natures are inseparable, this Council maintained that they act as one *hypostasis* (i.e. one nature who shares two distinct natures).[2] To the spiritual epistemologists who were led by St Cyril of Alexandria and those who supported his Christological formula, the position that was taken at the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) was tantamount to accepting Nestorianism. Doctrinally, this idea of the two natures of Christ was previously rejected by the Council of Ephesus (AD 431).[3]

In response to the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), the counter-argument was effectively advanced by St Cyril of Alexandria who maintained that the Incarnation was more important than all other dogmatic considerations. He expressed his position as follows: 'Incarnation is a divine mystery. The two natures of Godhead and Manhood are perfectly united and Christ is thus one person and one Nature from two natures.'[4] An elaboration on this argument maintained that: 'By the union of the nature in the Incarnation the two natures become one nature, the natures being united without separation, without confusion, and without change.'[5] This union of humanity and divinity of Christ was achieved in the Virgin Mary's womb and is inseparable and indivisible. Consequently, it follows that Christ is completely divine and human at all times and in all actions, just as he is simultaneously fully God and fully human. The Oriental Orthodox churches are, therefore, often labelled by others as monophysite churches. However, this label is rejected by the Oriental churches as it is a misnomer which, at best, represents a gross misunderstanding of the Oriental Orthodox churches' Christological formula. Monophysite is associated with Eutychian Monophysitism,[6] 'who denied the union of the human by divine, and is believed to have taught that in Christ the human Nature was absorbed by the divine nature. They also do not accept the Dyophysite teachings of Nestorius'.[7] Understandably, therefore, the Oriental Orthodox churches prefer to be called

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[1] Desta, Alemayehu. *Introduction to the Ethiopian Orthodox Faith.* (Bloomington: Author House, 2012), 69.
[2] What is Coptic Christianity, and what do Coptic Christians believe? www.gotquestions.org/Coptic-Christianity.html.
[3] Wondmagegnehu, Aymro and Motovu, Joachim. *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church* (Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Orthodox Mission,1970), 121.
[4] Wondmagegnehu, Aymro and Motovu, Joachim. *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 95.
[5] Wondmagegnehu, Aymro and Motovu, Joachim. *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church,* 95.
[6] Denying the two natures of Christ. www.gotquestions.org/Coptic-Christianity.html.
[7] Wondmagegnehu, Aymro and Motovu, Joachim. *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church,* 98.

'non-Chalcedonian' or 'miaphysite' churches (i.e. believing in one composite or conjoined nature from two).[8]

The Oriental Orthodox churches are heirs to some of the richest and most ancient traditions in Christendom in that they are hierarchically independent. These churches use ancient languages in their liturgy and calendar. In the cases of Ethiopia and Eritrea, they operate on the basis of the Julian calendar. The Coptic Church has its own calendar which 'begins with the year 248 (it corresponds to 1 "Anno Martyrum", AM or in the "Year of the Martyrs")'.[9] Other traditional practices pertain. For instance, in the case of the Coptic Church, they use the Coptic language and in Ethiopia's case, the Ge'ez language and modern Amharic. Similarly, in the Eritrean Orthodox Church, both Ge'ez and Tigrinya are used. These churches' long tradition of monastic spirituality has produced considerable religious literature and their own iconographic tradition. Moreover, since their earliest days, the Oriental Orthodox churches have developed their own forms of liturgy, art and literature.[10]

Each of the six churches traces its origins to apostolic missions of the first century. For instance, Saints Thaddeus and Bartholomew are believed to have been martyred in Armenia; St Mark is referred to as the first bishop of Alexandria; St Philip is said to have baptized an Ethiopian eunuch (*Bakos*), who had gone on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and who returned home to spread the faith in African lands, particularly in Ethiopia; Antioch is mentioned in the book of Acts as the place where the term 'Christian' was first used; and St Thomas is believed to have been martyred in South India.[11] These significant manifestations of belief by ancient Christians who were willing to accept martyrdom indicate the spiritual strength of the *kerygma* to which they were responding.

Historically, the division between the ancient Oriental Orthodox Churches and other Churches can be traced back to the years after the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451, whose Christological teaching was not accepted by the Oriental Orthodox Churches. In arguing the merits of the Church's unity, scholars maintain that 'the whole Christian world is fully aware of the fact that there had been a universal church until Chalcedon (451) and believes that it is still invisibly one since Christ is one and the church is one'.[12] Complementing this argument is Archbishop Yesehaq of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church who attests that:

> It is necessary, therefore, for all Christian (Churches) to admit that God is not a Roman Catholic or a protestant. He is neither Monophysite nor Dyophysite or any other kind of indicated denomination that refers to political authorities and nationalistic ideas which are contrary to the high principles of equality, unity and Christian love. But Jesus Christ, Our Lord and God, is one Creator, one Saviour, for all (human)kind, who has the blood of all races in His veins, as he is the universal redeemer.[13]

In his book 'Timherte Melekot' (the Amharic version), Asrat Gebremariam, an Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church writer of the twentieth century, carefully examined the contentious theological argument that took place between the Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches at Chalcedon in 451 and the current retrospective assessment of its divisive arguments. His evaluation of what transpired was that 'the

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[8] What is Coptic Christianity, and what do Coptic Christians believe? www.gotquestions.org/Coptic-Christianity.html.
[9] de Gruchy, John, "From Cairo to the Cape: The significance of Coptic Orthodoxy for African Christianity." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, no.99 (1997), 29. Coptic Orthodox Church, http://pluralism.org/affiliates/student/allen/Oriental-Orthodox/Coptic/CopticChurch.html.
[10] Michael S. Allen (2005). An Introduction to the Oriental Orthodox Churches http://pluralism.org/affiliates/student/allen/Oriental-Orthodox/Home.html.
[11] Michael S. Allen (2005). An Introduction to the Oriental Orthodox Churches. http://pluralism.org/affiliates/student/allen/Oriental-Orthodox/Home.html.
[12] Makarios, Abuna, et al. *The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith, Order of Worship, and Ecumenical Relations* (Addis Ababa: Tensae Publishing House, 1996), 143.
[13] Yesehaq, Abuna. *The Ethiopian Tewahedo Church* (New York: Vantage Press, 1989), 101.

Oriental Orthodox Church as it condemned Nestorius, it also condemns the heresy of Eutyches. Similarly, the Roman Catholic Church as it condemned Eutyches, it also condemns the teaching of Nestorius. Therefore, this is common ground on which the original unity of Christ's church could be restored as long as both church bodies good-heartedly strive for unity'.[14] This argument is consistent with Christ's teachings when he prayed for his followers' unity, '…that they may all be one' (John 17:21).

African Indigenous (Authentic) Christianity

Contrary to what may be viewed as conventional wisdom, Christianity in Africa was not introduced by nineteenth-century missionaries. On the contrary, Africa's piety was manifested in its hosting the Holy Family into Egypt after the birth of Jesus[15] and the baptism of an Ethiopian eunuch,[16] as was indicated above. The antecedent to these developments was the premier position that Ethiopia held in religion in general which saw it being referred to as a metaphor for Africa in Psalm 68:31 which said: 'Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.' In the Christian era, Egypt and Ethiopia are the centres of Christianity's beginning and defenders of its original teachings. These churches, along with the Eritrean Church, are representatives of the '…One, Holy, Universal and Apostolic Church founded by Jesus Christ'.[17] They are called the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

Three of the six sees of the Oriental Orthodox churches are based in Africa. These are the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, in Cairo; the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, in Addis Ababa; and the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, in Asmara. The first two of these churches were founding members of the World Council of Churches (WCC).[18] The Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church was originally under Ethiopia when the Ethiopian Orthodox Church became a founding member of the WCC. Since its autocephaly[19] in 1993, the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church officially became a member of WCC in 2003. It is important that these three churches are examined on an individual basis in order that their historical backgrounds be clearly understood.

The Coptic Orthodox Church

Although it was historically located in Alexandria, the Coptic Orthodox Church is presently centred in Cairo, Egypt. Along with Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome and Constantinople, Alexandria was one of the five patriarchal thrones of early Christendom.[20] Founded by St Mark the Evangelist, the Coptic Church traces its history back to Egypt. St Mark's apostolic mission to Egypt in AD 61 went via the Libyan desert.[21] On his prior missionary journeys he accompanied the apostles St Peter, St Paul and St Barnabas to many locations.[22] St Mark was also known from gospel teachings as one of the seventy apostles who were chosen

[14] Gebeemariam, Asrat. *Timherte Melekot,* 2nd book (Addis Ababa, 1999), 164.
[15] What does scripture tell us about Mary's life? http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/questions/faq/faq02.html.
[16] See: Acts 8,26-40 Tewahedo.
[17] Wondmagegnehu and Motovu, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 96.
[18] World Council of Churches: Oriental Orthodox. www.oikoumene.org/en/church-families/orthodox-churches-oriental/oriental-orthodox-churches
[19] Autocephaly means the self-headed status of a hierarchical Christian church whose head bishop does not report to any higher-ranking bishop. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autocephaly.
[20] Michael S. Allen (2005). An Introduction to the Oriental Orthodox Churches. http://pluralism.org/affiliates/student/allen/Oriental-Orthodox/Home.html.
[21] Michael S. Allen (2005). Coptic Orthodox Church. http://pluralism.org/affiliates/student/allen/Oriental-Orthodox/Coptic/CopticChurch.html.
[22] Michael S. Allen (2005). Coptic Orthodox Church. http://pluralism.org/affiliates/student/allen/Oriental-Orthodox/Coptic/CopticChurch.html.

by Jesus Christ (Luke 10:1). He was also the first patriarch of Alexandria, was martyred in AD 68 and the first church in Egypt was named after him.[23] The unbroken hierarchy of the Coptic Patriarchal See continues up until today with its 118th Patriarch, His Holiness Tawadros II.

One of the greatest legacies of the Coptic Church is the monastic tradition, described by Coptic scholar Aziz Atiya as 'the gift of Egypt to Christendom'.[24] As early as the second or third century, Christians desiring to devote themselves entirely to a life of prayer and fasting began to retreat to the solitude of the Egyptian desert. Paralleling this development is the generally accepted fact that St Anthony the Great is regarded as the father of monasticism, though it was his younger contemporary, St Pachomius, who first organized a formal, communal style of monastic life.[25] From Egypt, the monastic movement spread throughout the Christian world, despite challenges from Islam. It has began to experience a revival in the late twentieth century. Currently, there are several hundred monks and nuns both in Egypt and abroad who have devoted their lives to monasticism. In essence, therefore, the Coptic Orthodox Church is rightly referred to '…as the Cradle of Monasticism…(as it) had a role in laying the bases for… Christian Theology'.[26]

Another significant contribution made by the Coptic Church to Christianity is its theological education through 'The Theological Catechetical School of Alexandria (the First Seminary)'.[27] This partially explains why Alexandria became a renowned centre of learning, especially in theology. It follows, therefore, that many of the early church fathers flourished in Christian Egypt. Notable among them were Clement of Alexandria and his successor Origen who headed the Catechetical School at Alexandria, one of the most famous institutions of learning in antiquity.[28] Other towering figures were St Athanasius the Great, a defender of orthodoxy at the First Ecumenical Council (325), and St Cyril of Alexandria, the most influential voice at the Third Ecumenical Council (431). The works of St Cyril, who vehemently rejected Nestorius's apparent separation of Christ's humanity from his divinity, are often cited by Oriental Orthodox theologians as a foundation for the rejection of the Council of Chalcedon (451). Coptic Church membership is now estimated to be 16 million in Egypt and abroad.[29]

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC)

Historiographically, as has been attested in the Old and New Testaments, Ethiopia is the first African nation to have adhered to the Jewish religion (900 B.C.)[30] and subsequently the Christian religion from its inception, beginning with the apostolic era. With respect to the former, monotheism was concretized between the time of the Queen of Sheba of Ethiopia and King Solomon of Israel. With respect to Christianity, it was first brought to Ethiopia in AD 34 as a result of an Ethiopian eunuch who was baptized

[23] Michael S. Allen (2005). Introduction to our Coptic Orthodox Church. http://stmarkcharlotte.org/wp/the-coptic-church/.
[24] Michael S. Allen (2005). An Introduction to the Oriental Orthodox Churches. http://pluralism.org/affiliates/student/allen/Oriental-Orthodox/Home.html.
[25] Michael S. Allen (2005). An Introduction to the Oriental Orthodox Churches. http://pluralism.org/affiliates/student/allen/Oriental-Orthodox/Home.html.
[26] Tawfik, Wedad. "Theological education in the Coptic Orthodox Church (the Church of Alexandria)". In *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa*, edited by Isabel Apawo Phiri and Dietrich Werner (ed), 263-269 (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2013), 265.
[27] Tawfik, Wedad, *Theological education in the Coptic Orthodox Church,* 267.
[28] Michael S. Allen (2005). An Introduction to the Oriental Orthodox Churches. http://pluralism.org/affiliates/student/allen/Oriental-Orthodox/Home.html.
[29] Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coptic_Orthodox_Church_of_Alexandria
[30] Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, "Historical perspective on the Christian religion in Ethiopia". http://eotc.faithweb.com/orth.html

by the Apostle Philip, and then introduced this faith to his own country (Acts 8:26-40). Following this development, St Matthew, the evangelist, and later St Andrew, also came to Ethiopia and continued this missionary activity of spreading the Christian faith.[31] This evidence leads to the inescapable fact that not only was there a transformation from Judaism to Christianity, but also the EOTC can rightly be regarded as an African Indigenous Church and one of the earliest apostolic churches in the world. This phenomenon has been described thus:

> The Ethiopian Orthodox Church's uniqueness implies that she is not a copy of either the Coptic (meaning Egyptian) or any other church in the world but original, i.e. the Orthodox Church of Ethiopia. She… occupies a remarkable place in the country's history. The long history of indigenization of the Church has enabled her to develop unique features which show that she is (quintessentially) African…. (So profound was this adherence to uniqueness that) African Churches which were founded between 1880 and 1920, established new religious organizations that were run by Africans as religious protest movements, based on the idea of Ethiopianism….[32]

The foregoing accurately describes Ethiopia's unique Christian identity. This was initiated by the visit of the Queen of Sheba (Queen Makeda) of Ethiopia, to King Solomon of Israel as a result of her having been intrigued by his legendary wisdom. That visit brought about a remarkable outcome for Ethiopia and by extrapolation for Africa. What follows are the main elements:

1. The birth of the Solomonic Dynasty in Ethiopia began with Emperor Menelik I, Solomon's first born,[33] whose mother was the Queen of Sheba. The significance of this development is that the… *Kebra Nagast* (The Glory of the Kings), a medieval work usually cited as the textual source for the monarchical tradition, records the intriguing legend relating to Menelik. It has been maintained that he was sent to Jerusalem to visit his father, King Solomon. While he was there, he was anointed in anticipation of returning to Ethiopia. This return on Menelik's part resulted in the Ark of the Covenant (arguably, the most sacred relic in both Judaism and Christianity) being brought from Jerusalem to Ethiopia in approximately 900 B.C.[34] There are many who believe that the Ark is still there (in Ethiopia) to this day, carefully guarded in a sanctuary near the Church of St Mary of Zion in Axum.[35] However, the Solomonic dynasty ended with the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia in 1974.[36]
2. Accompanying this most sacred of relics were members of each of the twelve tribes of Israel, including members of the Levite clergy. They brought with them the Old Testament books.[37] The assembling of this body of relics facilitated Ethiopians in their worship of the monotheistic God.

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[31] Tesfaye, Ayalkibet. "The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and its traditional theological education system." In *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa*, edited by Isabel Apawo Phiri and Dietrich Werner (ed), 281-291 (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2013), 283.
[32] Tamene, Getnet. "Features of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Clergy". *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, no. 7 (1998), 90.
[33] Tamene, Getnet, "Features of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Clergy", 92.
[34] Shahid*, "The Solomonides".* In *The Worlds of Eastern Christianity, 300-1500 Volume 4: Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Ethiopian,* edited by Alessandro (ed), 146-178 (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2012),157. Hancock, Graham, *The sign and the seal: the explosively controversial international best seller: a quest for the lost Ark of the Covenant.* (London: Arrow Books, 1992), 450.
[35] Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, http://pluralism.org/affiliates/student/allen/Oriental-Orthodox/Ethiopian/EthiopianChurch.html.
[36] Tamene, Getnet, "Features of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Clergy", 87. www.aepress.sk/aas/full/aas198h.pdf.
[37] Gerima, Abuna et al., *The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church History from the Birth of Christ up to 2000*: Ethiopia Stretches out her hands to God (2008), 9-11.

3. Ethiopians began to practise circumcision which was a Jewish tradition and as such, expressed their relationship with God. What started as a religious phenomenon has now been acknowledged as a healthful anti-HIV and sexually-transmitted infection preventative. All the above-mentioned phenomena combined in effecting Ethiopia's transformation from being a nation whose religion was based on natural law (law of consciousness) to one that was based on Covenant law.[38]
4. *Axum* (Ethiopia's ancient capital) was founded by *Axsumawi* the great grandson of Ham and descendent of Noah.[39]
5. In the fourteenth century, Emperor Dawit or David (1380-1410) of Ethiopia brought from Jerusalem iconic relics that many maintain are authentic: (a) a part of the True Cross on which Jesus was crucified; and (b) an icon known today as 'Kure'at Reesu' that depicts Christ's Crown with the thorns, and other important Christian relics (including St Mary's image that was painted by St Luke).[40]

Coupled with the twelfth to thirteenth-century construction of 'the rock-hewn church buildings',[41] the heritage mentioned above, its liturgy, history, ancient manuscripts and enchanting musical compositions, Ethiopia has seen a significant influx of scholars, writers and tourists from all over the world. Between A. D. 330 when St Frumentius was ordained by St Athanasius of Alexandria and the Ethiopian Church's autocephaly in 1950, Coptic bishops were assisting the Ethiopian Church solely in ordination. Other administrative matters and evangelization were the sole responsibility of Ethiopian scholars.[42] His Holiness Mathias I is the sixth patriarch of the EOTC. The EOTC has 'more than 45 million members, 40,000 churches and monasteries, and about 500,000 clergymen, mainly in Ethiopia. It has been the dominant church in Ethiopia since the fourth century and is also the largest Oriental Orthodox Church in the world'.[43]

The Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church

Despite the geographical and nationalistic differences between Eritrea and Ethiopia, there is a symbiotic relationship in their religious traditions, which has existed for almost three millennia. This is manifested in the fact that there are no significant differences between the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church on any level or manifestation.[44] This relationship can be explained by the fact that until its independence in 1993, Eritrea was one of the dioceses of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Synod.[45] Because traditionally the Church and the Ethiopian state were twin institutions which

[38] When we say the law of consciousness, it is believed that worship of the one True God (the God of Noah) had been in existence in the early times, but it was confined to a limited number of families, and that the Sun God was widely known in Axum, one of Ethiopia's earliest kingdoms.
[39] Yesehaq, Abuna, *The Ethiopian Tewahedo Church,* 3.
[40] Melaku, L, *History of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church: From the Reign of Emperor Caleb to the end of Zagwe Dynasty and from the Classical (Golden) Age to the Present: Part Two and Three.* (Addis Ababa, 2010), 84-85. http://kweschn.wordpress.com/2012/09/26/meskel-festival-the-finding-of-the-true-cross/ www.adoremus.org/0800-Sheila.html https://ethiopiantimes.wordpress.com/2011/09/27/ethiopian-christians-celebrate-the-discovery-of-the-true-cross/.
[41] Wondmagegnehu, Aymro, *The Oriental Orthodox churches Addis Ababa conference* (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printers,1965), 48.
[42] Gebreamanuel, Berhanu et al., *The church of Ethiopia past and present* (Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Enterprise, 1997), 15.
[43] Gerima, Abuna, et al., *The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church History from the Birth of Christ up to 2000*, xxi.
[44] Michael S. Allen (2005), *Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church*. http://pluralism.org/affiliates/student/allen/Oriental-Orthodox/Eritrean/EritreanChurch.html.
[45] Abbink, Jon., *A Bibliography on Christianity in Ethiopia* (2003), 1. www.ascleiden.nl/pdf/workingpaper52.pdf.

complemented each other, the *abuna* (bishop) was the most influential person in the Ethiopian nation. So much was this the case that in ancient times, the abuna had the power to crown the emperor as well as effect excommunication in consultation with the emperor. This relationship explains why it was maintained that 'the state and the church are two faces of the same book. This book is Ethiopia'.[46]

Eritrea's independence emanated from a protracted civil war in Ethiopia which lasted for more than a decade. One aspect of this war was Eritrea's opposition group to the *Derg* (or military government which deposed Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974) as well as its desire for independence from Ethiopia. Once this independence was achieved, the new Eritrean government insisted that the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church also be independent of the Ethiopian Synod.[47] These developments culminated in the Eritrean church electing its first patriarch, Philipos I, in 1998 who was consecrated by Pope Shenouda III, Patriach of the Coptic Church, Egypt. [48]

The two neighbouring country's churches' relationship is somewhat strained, in the sense that Church leaders in both countries cannot meet each other in either country.[49] However, they remain in full communion with one another as well as with the other Oriental Orthodox churches. Both the Eritrean and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Churches share a common heritage of liturgy and art, along with other oriental Orthodox churches, a relationship which is at least fifteen hundred years old.[50] This theological and ecclesiological relationship has been cemented by the fact that both Churches always sided with non-Chalcedonian Christology, 'which teaches that Christ has but one, undivided nature, at once human and divine'. In celebration of this doctrine, the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Churches also refer to themselves as *Tewahedo*, or 'unity/made one' churches'.[51] Eritrean Orthodox Church membership is now estimated to be 3 million.[52] His Holiness Dioskoros is the fourth patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

Oriental Orthodox Christianity and its African Ethos

The ethos of the Oriental Orthodox Churches is instructive in informing us about original Christianity in Africa. This was inevitable as through the process of acculturation, African elements became an integral part of the Oriental Orthodox Church practices. Such elements as drumming, night vigil, the clapping of hands, appealing to one's ancestors for intercession on one's behalf (which may be viewed as, at least, tangentially related to making a similar request of Saints),[53] and spirit possession are all elements of African religiosity. In elaborating these phenomena, de Gruchy maintains that:

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[46] Wondmagegnehu and Motovu, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 113.
[47] The Eritrean Orthodox Church www.cnewa.org/default.aspx?ID=10&pagetypeID=9&sitecode=HQ&pageno=1.
[48] The Eritrean Orthodox Church www.cnewa.org/default.aspx?ID=10&pagetypeID=9&sitecode=HQ&pageno=1.
[49] The Eritrean Orthodox Church http://pluralism.org/affiliates/student/allen/Oriental-Orthodox/Eritrean/EritreanChurch.html.
[50]The Eritrean Orthodox Church http://pluralism.org/affiliates/student/allen/Oriental-Orthodox/Eritrean/EritreanChurch.html.
[51] Michael S. Allen (2005). *An Introduction to the Oriental Orthodox Churches*. http://pluralism.org/affiliates/student/allen/Oriental-Orthodox/Home.html. About Orthodox Faith and Eritrean Orthodox Church, www.eritreanorthodox.org/id6.html.
[52] Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eritrean_Orthodox_Tewahedo_Church.
[53] The worship of Saints is expressly forbidden by the Church; however, asking for their intercessions is not forbidden. Any (Orthodox) Church is named after a Patron Saint. Among all Saints, the Virgin St Mary (Theotokos) occupies a special place in the heart of all (Orthodox Christians). www.touregypt.net/featurestories/copticchristians.htm Read more: www.touregypt.net/featurestories/copticchristians.htm#ixzz3T3Up77qX.

> …monks and priests, to say nothing of lay people, expect miracles to happen in a way which not only reflects the world of the Bible, but also the world of Africa. In the same way, things such as prayer and fasting, pilgrimage to holy places, baptism and immersion in holy water, the use of holy oil in healing, a liturgy in which time stands still (as priests celebrate the sacred mysteries behind the iconostasis within the 'Holy of Holies', moving around the square altar shrouded in clouds of incense), and, of course, the use of drums in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, are all Hebraic and African in their ethos and significance, yet undeniably Christian of the most Orthodox kind. Who needs European theology or Western Christianity?[54]

Furthermore, from an architectural perspective, Africans believe that the beauty of the place of worship parallels the celestial beauty and holiness of the transcendent God (Lev. 20:26, 1 Pet. 1:16). It is also arguable, however, that the most important aspect of Ethiopian Orthodox Church worship is its liturgy.[55]

This liturgical expression is best expressed in the work of St Yared, a sixth-century Ethiopian scholar, musician, ecclesiastic and a saint in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. In assessing his multi-faceted cultural work, one famous scholar observed that his –

> contributions to the cultural life of the country can be divided into three categories – education, literature, and music. The educational system he developed remained in use, unchanged, until modern times. It stressed the need to adapt teaching to the pace of development of a young intellect, and also held that pupils should not only be taught but should also be diverted from idleness, by means of a stick if necessary. In literature, his work occupies the highest position, and his collection of hymns, *Mazgaba Degwa* ('Treasury of Hymns') is the oldest literary work written in Ge'ez. It is said that before Yared there was no music in Ethiopia, the liturgies and chants being murmured in a low voice; he is therefore believed to be the first Ethiopian composer. He stated that he was inspired by God in his composition, and presented his music in three modes – 'Ge'ez' (the simplest plain chant, used on ordinary days), 'Ezel' (a slow and dignified heavy-sounding mood, usually associated with fasts and funerals), and 'Araray' (the most complex mood, freer and lighter, with musical embellishments, sung on great festivals).[56]

This quotation partially explains why 'the Ethiopian Orthodox Church… is still exerting a powerful influence on the lives of millions'.[57] Influenced by a long tradition of monastic spirituality, this church has produced considerable religious literature and has its own iconographic tradition. So profound has been the influence of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church that, along with Egypt, Ethiopia played a crucial role '… both for the liberation of Africa from slavery and its independence from colonialism'.[58] The EOTC has also accommodated elements of the 'Ras Tafari Movement' which has its roots in Jamaica, West Indies.

With its roots firmly grounded in Garveyism,[59] Rastafarianism represented a rejection of idealized whiteness and as such, regarded Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular as '… that land that would best meet their real needs… a place to belong where they could be themselves without seeking approval from

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[54] de Gruchy, John, "From Cairo to the Cape", 35.
[55] The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Church www.ethiopianorthodox.org/english/church/englishethiopianliturgy.pdf.
[56] Hable-Selassie, Sergew, et al. *The Church of Ethiopia: a Panorama of History and spiritual life.* (Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Orthodox Church, 1997). "Yared (Saint) 6th century Orthodox Ethiopia" www.dacb.org/stories/ethiopia/yared2.html. The sources of St Yared's music are the Bible and the works of the Church Fathers. He praises Almighty God in His different forms of creation. His music refers to "spring, summer, autumn, and winter… and green trees, flowers, fruits, the summer sun and its heat, rain and clouds of winter, lightening and sunder (thunder), spring water, rivers, plants, and all nature in general. Yared's music also includes hymns in tribute to the Virgin Mary, the holy Angels, holy martyrs and saints in general (Tesfaye, 2013:286).
[57] Tamene, Getnet, "Features of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Clergy", 90.
[58] de Gruchy, John, "From Cairo to the Cape", 33.
[59] Yesehaq, Abuna, *The Ethiopian Tewahedo Church*, 221-222.

the white world'.[60] Hewitt maintains that 'the two fundamental tenets of the Rastafarian religion call for the salvation of Afro-Jamaicans through repatriation to Ethiopia and an acceptance of the divinity of Haile Selassie I, King of Kings and the Conquering Lion of Judah and Emperor of Ethiopia'.[61] The foregoing complements Ethiopia's long and illustrious history in its struggle against various forms of oppression (including Italian invasions), which further enhanced its reputation as an iconic anti-repression state.

Indeed, 'Ethiopia evokes a sense of African identity untrammelled by European or any other foreign power, and thereby is the symbol of African independence'.[62] Understandably, therefore, with such an illustrious history, to Rastafarians and many non-Rastafarians alike, 'Ethiopia' and 'Ethiopianism' became the generic term for African nationalism in its struggle against colonialism.[63] Paralleling this phenomenon, a large religious group broke away from Anglicanism in South Africa and joined the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church at the end of the nineteenth century.[64] Currently, there are about 25 Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church parishes with their own native South African clergy and many laity in the Eastern Cape and Western Cape Provinces of South Africa.

In AD 284, Roman Emperor Diocletian continued the longstanding position of persecuting Christians. This practice was reversed by Emperor Constantine in AD 313. Nevertheless, following their conquest of Egypt in AD 639, the Arab Moslems continued to persecute Christians. In Ethiopia's case, Yodit, a ninth-century Jewish leader, and Ahmed Gragn (or Ahmed the left-handed) in the sixteenth century hindered Christian expansion in Southern and Western Africa. However, some missionary activities, coupled with pastoral care for the diaspora, resulted in Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Churches' outreach from their Sees into many African countries. Pastoral care for the diaspora is an integral part of their undertakings. The Coptic Orthodox Church goes one step farther and incorporates missionary activities and the diaspora pastoral care in its ministry. Bishop Antonius Markos of the Coptic Church, based in Johannesburg, is symbolic of this type of multi-faceted undertaking.

Coptic Orthodox Churches are found in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Gabon, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana and South Africa.

In the diaspora, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has established branches in Egypt, Sudan (Khartoum), South Sudan, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda and South Africa.

In January 2015, the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church established a branch for its diaspora in South Africa.

Both the Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Churches have one monastery each in South Africa. In the case of the former, it is St Mark and St Samuel the Confessor Coptic Orthodox monastery in Klipfontein, District of Cullinan, in Gauteng. In the case of the latter, it is the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Holy Trinity and St Yared monastery in Bloemfontein, Free State.

In response to the *Zeitgeist,* the theological school in Alexandria of the Coptic Church, together with Holy Trinity University College of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in Addis Ababa, now includes female students. The Coptic and the EOTC churches now accommodate the participation 'of women in all fields of ministry, except priesthood'. Some women have acquired '… advanced degrees in Theology and (in the Coptic church) teach Theology in the Seminaries and Theological Colleges…'[65]

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[60] Yesehaq, Abuna, *The Ethiopian Tewahedo Church*, 144.
[61] Hewitt, R.R. *Church and Culture: An Anglo-Caribbean Experience of Hybridity and Contradiction* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2012), 143.
[62] de Gruchy, John, "From Cairo to the Cape", 33.
[63] de Gruchy, John, "From Cairo to the Cape", 33.
[64] See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethiopian_movement.
[65] Tawfik , Wedad, *Theological education in the Coptic Orthodox Church,* 271.

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