

The History of the Liturgy

1. The Hebraic Influence

Like the Eastern Christian Churches, the Ethiopian Church did inherit the Hebraic forms of worship. But the tradition of the Hebrew is more preserved in Ethiopia than in any other Christian Church today. This, of course, was “as a result of the visit of Queen Makeda (also known as Queen of Sheba) to King Solomon” at Palestine. (1,000 B.C.) During which time her union with King Solomon produced King Menelik I. who was born while she journeyed back to Ethiopia where she condemned the sun god worship as well as all other types of worship and introduced to her people the worship of the One True God of King Solomon. Her visit is recorded in the Bible (1 Kings 10:1-13) but more details are available in the book of Kebra Nagast (The Glory of Kings).¹ is legend, nevertheless, that the Ethiopians are deeply conscious of and are in agreement with the statement of the Kebra Nagast. The Kebra Nagast states that in later years when Makeda’s son Menelik I visited his father King Solomon, he brought the Ark of the Covenant accompanied by Azarias the son of Zadok the High Priest and all the first-born of the House of Israel. The Bate Israel (Falasha Jews) of Ethiopia and some other natives as well, trace their origin to this day from the people who accompanied Menelik to Aksum. The Ark today is resting in the St. Mary of Tsion Church in the city of Aksum which is the birthplace of the country’s civilization and center for Christian worship. This is perhaps the most remarkable occasion for the introduction of the Hebrew tradition to Ethiopia. Today every Ethiopian Church has an Ark (Tabot) on the altar which is the focal point of worship. Communion cannot be administered without it.

Ullendorff suggests that “Antiphonal singing as part of the worship was an established form of the Hebrew Liturgy since the earliest times and was taken over by the Christian Churches especially in the Eastern rites of the Jacobite Syrians and the Copts. It is unlikely, that the Hebraic forms were anywhere more faithfully preserved than in the Ethiopian service with its emphasis on the Debtera cantor and antiphony”.² The Offices of the Debteras are in most respects comparable to that of the Levites, particularly in their role as cantors and choristers. Most of their duty is to chant from Psalms and hymns. The musical instrument of the Hebrew in 2 Samuel 6: 5, which David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on harps and lyres, drums and sistras, dancing with the high sound of the trumpet, is alive in Ethiopia today. For this and other reasons the rituals of the Ethiopian Christian traditions mingle with the Old Testament traditions identically with the Hebrew traditions and customs. For instance, the men do not enter a church the day after they have had intercourse with their wives; nor do the women come to Church service after childbirth, till the days of their purification are over or till the sacrament of baptism is administered to the child. A person who is, for certain reasons, unclean cannot enter the Church till he is purified. The washing of hands before and after food and eating the meat of animals that are prohibited in Leviticus Chapter 11 and many others are observed identically by both the Ethiopians and the Hebrews. However, these and other laws of the Old Testament are not being observed merely because of the tradition. They are also done in respect of the law written in Matthew 5:18, that “one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.” Back

2. Introduction of the Eucharist

Ethiopian tradition asserts that Christianity was introduced by the Eunuch who was the Finance Minister of Queen Candace in the beginning of the first century (34 A.D.), the Eunuch being baptized by St. Philip the Apostle. (Acts 8:26-39) He preached the Gospel

around the palace in Aksum but the sacrament of Eucharist and Baptism were not performed until the arrival of Frumentius, the first Bishop of Ethiopia.

The Book of the Contending of St. Tekle Haimanot³ tells us that Frumentius (Sidrakos) and Adesius⁴ came from Jerusalem to Ethiopia in the beginning of the fourth century A.D. They were received by the High Priest Anbarom where they grew up learning the life and customs of the country. One day Frumentius expressed how he himself was impressed by the devotional lives of the people towards their God. He then said to Anbarom, ‘My Lord, I admire the life and culture of the people, but you Ethiopians practice neither baptism nor receive communion.’ Anbarom replied, ‘Our Fathers the Levities brought us circumcision and the Finance Minister of Queen Candace (Eunuch) brought us the faith of Christ, yet we do not have an Apostle who can administer the rite of Baptism and the Eucharist, so would you please go to Alexandria.’ This he did. Then Patriarch Athanasius consecrated him Bishop and sent him back to Ethiopia. (A.D. 329—356) He was called Abba Selama (Father of Peace). He then administered the sacraments to the people. The High Priest himself, who was after the order of Judaic tradition, was first baptized and ordained Priest. Since then Eucharist and Baptismal sacraments were in practice throughout most of the country.

There is no clear information on which Liturgy or Anaphora Frumentius had brought with him from Egypt. The Ethiopian Synaxarium states that he translated the Old and New Testaments and other texts from Hebrew, Latin and Arabic into Geez. The Synaxarium continues to say that his work of translation was not completed. It was rather left for the Syrian Monks (Nine Saints) who arrived at Aksum in the 5th century. They are generally audited for the work of translation of the Scriptures and other literature from Greek, Hebrew, Syriac and other languages into Geez, and in propagating the Gospel and setting up the monastic order and schools. There is no clear

information concerning the Liturgical work either by Frumentius or by the Nine Monks.

Nevertheless, the complete work of translation must be attributed to the Nine Monks with respect to the effort made by Bishop Frumentius since the Eucharistic worship was in practice and since the existence of the Liturgy is understood during his time.

The Monks came from different regions of the Middle East. Most of them came from Constantinople and Syria. It is said that they had come to Ethiopia soon after the Christological controversy at the Council of Chalcedon. (AD. 451) During their time the Ecclesiastical Chant was created by a famous Priest (St. Yared) born AD. 505 in Aksum. Yared began his communications with the Nine Monks. Abbe Pentalewon, one of the Nine, remained in Aksum and thus it was convenient for communication between himself and Yared. From him Yared acquired much information, not only from Abbe Pentalewon but also from Abba Aregawl. In addition to this it is said that Yared visited Constantinople (second Rome) twice. Yared himself tells us as follows: "I went to Rome (second Rome - Constantinople) where I saw a Church, I knew her and loved her like my own sister. A few years later, I visited her again during the time she was bathing in the River Tigre." 5 Yared composed all the music used for the Ethiopian Church's chants. His works are skillfully done from the Old and New Testaments. The music speaks concerning Creation, Prophecy, and the coming of Christ, His Incarnation, Nativity, His great works and saving acts; Baptism, Crucifixion, Death, Resurrection, Ascension and His Second Coming. Of course, the music is the national expression of the ideal of the Ethiopian people and the country itself.

It is believed that some of the songs, especially from the Old Testament, have been used for singing and praying by many devoted Ethiopian churchmen before Christ. Therefore, we must admit the existence of the Art of Music in Ethiopia during the Old Testament times since

this was known as one of the creative work of the Kushite Empire at that time. However, all the music of the Church must be attributed exclusively to St. Yared of Aksum.

During the reign of Emperor Gabre Maskal (A.D. 550), Yared compiled the famous Megaba Degguwa (this means the hymn of sorrow) which included three main modes:

Geez - the first stage of song Uzil - the second stage to be sung together with the first Ararai - a sorrowful song and plaintive. Yared begins his work with the words, "Halleluia to the Father, Halleluia to the Son, Halleluia to the Holy Spirit." His divine composition is from the Old and New Testaments and from the works of the Church Fathers; St. Athanasius, St. John Chrysostom and St. Cyril. His work is so intricately done with words suitable for prayers and for the glorification of God. Though he visited Second Rome, his work is uniquely Ethiopian, bearing no resemblance to western notation. Yared's hymns have been divided into four parts characterizing the four seasons of the years; Massow (Fall), Hagie (Summer), Tseday (Spring) and Kiranit (Winter), and they have been planned to bring a greater sense of reality in the praise of the people. The different sounds of the chanting or music are the joy or the sorrow or the brave determination for the Christian people.

St. Yared lived between the time of Emperor Kaleb and his son Emperor Gabre Maskal who succeeded him to the throne. Tarika Nagast, which means "The History of Kings", and Gadla Aragawi state that the Emperor Gabre Maskal, Abba Aragawi and St. Yared lived in the same period as close friends. He composed his first duties in honor of the Church of Debra Damo and the Church of St. Mary of Tsion at Aksum. Then Emperor Gabre/Maskal, Abba Aragawi and St. Yared traveled throughout Tigre, Begemdir and Lake Tans together. It is believed that the original Degguwa which can be found there was written by the hand of Yared himself.

After two years in Lake Tana, they went to Gaient and built the Church of St. Mary at Zur Amba. It is said that the Emperor, Abba Aragawi and Yared, while going to the hill on which they built the Church, had difficulty in finding their way until a guide from God came to them and said to Abba Aragawi, “Zur Amba mengale misraq” which means, ‘Abba turn to the east, you will find the way to the hill.’” Because of this miracle the place is now called Zur Amba, for through the grace of God, they were able to find the right way to build the Church there. At this particular place St. Yared taught Zimmare and Mewasit from Psalms for three years. Since then Zur Aruba has become the seat of the Principal of the Zimmare and Mewasit faculty. After three years in Gaient, St. Yared came back to Aksum and Medebaytabir where he composed the chanting of the fourteen Anaphoras to be used for the Eucharistic service. He then went to Telemt and traveled to the northern parts such as Wagara and Agew teaching and performing his duty. Finally, as a holy man, Yared died in one of the monasteries of north east on 19 May AD. 579. His sacred works were continued by his students Baldados, Sawiros and Sandros. Following the method and philosophy of St. Yared, these men were able to preserve his works for later generations.

According to the Book of Yared, the following students were responsible for the continuation of the work of the Saint. They are Sawiros, Sandros, Baldados, Keffa, Gabru, Abba Gera, Abba Georgia, who was the teacher of Lisane Eferat the Debtera of Bethlehem in Begemdir province, Lisane Eferat wrote a book of Degguwa with notation at this place. It was written during the reign of Emperor Zera Yacob 1470 (western calendar 1477). Between the time of the reigns of Emperors Lebni Dengel and Sersa Dengel it was very difficult to find in the country any ecclesiastical books, including the Liturgical Book, because of the unfortunate destruction at the hand of Ahmed Gran who destroyed canonical and historical properties of the

Ethiopian Christian Churches with fire and other methods. Through God's grace, however, a historical book of Degguwa written by Lisane Eferat was found at Sede Gagne Georgia near Bethlehem. This finding made Bethlehem to be the seat of the Principal for the faculty of Zema, Degguwa, Meeraf and Tsoma Degguwa. This was done by the Imperial Order of Emperor Sersa Dengel (1561). After Lisane Eferat the list follows with Zekale Ab, Ichege Kale Awadi, Hinsa Haimanot, Tetemka Midhin, Wolde Melekot, Sersa Mariam, Kinfe Michael, Gabre Egziabher and Gabre Madhin.

After this the work of St. Yared was found all over the country. Original manuscripts were found in Wallo province at Debre Nagodgad Church, Atronsa Mariam and Tedbaba Mariam. In Tigie province some were found at Abba Gerima Monastery and in Gojjam province at Mertula Mariam. Finally the Qeddasse (Liturgy) was found at Selekleka which remains the principal authority until this day.

It is said that the notation of the Degguwa was rearranged by two well-known scholars, Azzaze Gerra and Azzaze Raquel, who were appointed to serve as Debteras at the Church of Tadbaba Mariam during the reign of Emperor Galawdewos in 1535 (1542 European calendar). But there is no indication of any reformation to the Liturgical chant by these two Debteras.

There is some disagreement between the Ethiopian's conception and some European commentators concerning origin of the chant and the notational system by which it is preserved. Michael Powne, a European contemporary writer, suggests that "Yared only composed the original chants and that these were handed down orally till the middle of the sixteenth century when the two Ethiopian Debteras introduced the notation." 6 Nevertheless, it is a firm Ethiopian Church belief that both the chant and the notation were the invention of Yared and that

all his work was done by divine inspiration and that the two Debetas only rearranged it. The work of Yared is heard throughout the land of Ethiopia today.

Until the 19th century the Liturgy was in mainly manuscript form, in handprint on leather parchment, and has not undergone changes with the exception of individual clergymen who wrote or made copies for use in their parishes. Sometimes it was difficult to obtain a book for church service.

This was due to the technical difficulties of printing Amharic. However, (in AD. 1950) the fourteen Anaphoras together with the preparatory service have been published (in both Geez and Amharic) by the order of H.I.M. Haile Selassie I. It was revised by Blaua Marsie Hazen. The former Patriarchs, His Holiness Abuna Basilios and His Holiness Abuna Theophilus, played a significant role on this important work, both in translation and publishing. In addition to the work of Rev. Marcos Daoud most of the Anaphoras have been translated from Ethiopic into English, German and Latin by Mercer, Harden and Tesfa Tsion, an Ethiopian clergyman in the 15th century A.D. During his stay in Rome it is said that he translated some of the Anaphoras from Greek to Latin. But none of these translations are available in Ethiopia today with the exception of the one by Marcos Daoud. Back

3. Origin of the Anaphoras

The Ethiopian Church has fourteen Anaphoras for the Divine Service, namely:

- The Anaphora of the Apostles
- The Anaphora of the Lord
- The Anaphora of John, Son of Thunder

- The Anaphora of St Mary
- The Anaphora of St. Athanasius
- The Anaphora of St. Basil
- The Anaphora of St. Gregory I
- The Anaphora of the Three Hundred
- The Anaphora of St. Epiphanius
- The Anaphora of St. John Chrysostom
- The Anaphora of St. Cyril
- The Anaphora of St. Jacob of Serough
- The Anaphora of St. Dioscorus
- The Anaphora of St. Gregory II

Doubtless, this Church is one of those which have the largest number of Anaphoras. Tradition asserts that all these Anaphoras were received from the Egyptian Church. The Rev. Marcos Daoud who translated the Liturgy from Ethiopic into English and Arabic said that “The Church of Egypt confirms this but has unfortunately lost most of them. At present it has three of them only, namely those of St. Cyril, St. Gregory and St. Basil. That of St. Basil is identical with the Ethiopian Church Anaphora, but the other two are entirely different from the Ethiopian.”

On this matter, I had discussion with the Very Rev. Fr. Gabriel representative of the Coptic Church in The United States. His information was not different from that of Rev. Marcos Daoud. Fr. Gabriel added that the Egyptian Church received the Anaphora's of St. Basil and St. Gregory from the Byzantine Church. In this case, some of the Anaphora's must have originated in Byzantine and the rest in Syria and Egypt. As we see, the Anaphora of St. Basil is the only one proved to be identical with the Ethiopian Anaphora. It seems that St. Basil's Anaphora, being translated from Greek into Arabic, was the only one which the Ethiopians received from Alexandria. And the rest might have been brought by the Nine Monks directly from Syria and Byzantine. I also believe that this act could not take place without the consent of the Patriarchate of Alexandria.

However, it was the Coptic Church's influence which was important in shaping the Liturgy during its leadership of the Ethiopian Church for centuries. Evidently the entire text of the Liturgy is based on the doctrinal and Christological position of the Ethiopian and Oriental Churches in general.

According to the Ethiopian tradition the origins of the Anaphora's are listed as follows: The Anaphora of the Apostles was first written by the Apostles themselves after the ascension of Christ. Afterwards the Church Fathers made many additions to it. The Anaphora of the Lord was given to the disciples by the Lord Himself in His teaching as it is recorded in Acts 1:3, speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, during the forty days after His resurrection. The Anaphora of the Three Hundred was written by the 318 Bishops, members of the first ecumenical council held in 325 A.D.

The Anaphora of John the Son of Thunder was written by John the Evangelist himself and Anaphora of St. Mary was composed by one of the Egyptian Churchmen, Abba Heryacos,

who was a Bishop of the province of Behnesa in Upper Egypt. It was said that he composed this Anaphora through the Holy Spirit, and the Virgin Mary directed him to hand it over to Yared of Aksum who later compiled it together with the other thirteen Anaphora's.

Authors of the following Anaphora's are not directly mentioned. They are simply known as: The Anaphora of St. Basil, of St. Gregory I, of St. Epiphanius, of St. John Chrysostom, of St. Cyril of Alexandria, of St. Jacob of Serough or Bishop of Serough, of St. Dioscorus and of St. Gregory II. Since all these Fathers are known as authors of metrical homilies, exposition, letters and hymns of different sorts, it is generally assumed that they themselves are authors of their Anaphoras. According to the Ethiopian tradition, St. Basil the Great collected the Anaphora's of the Apostles, the Three Hundred and St. Athanasius. Back

4. Structure and Practice

The structure and practice of present Ethiopian Liturgy, so far as we can judge, is practically the same as was used in the beginning of the fourth century and throughout the succeeding centuries, with the exception of the translation done from Geez (the ancient Liturgical language) into Arabic and the modern language (Amharic) and the translation into English for the use of non-Amharic speaking faithful. No major change or reform has been made into the Ethiopic Liturgy. There are two distinct orders in the services of the Church. There are (a) the Priests and Deacons who officiate at the Mass (b) Debteras whose duties entail "performing" liturgical hymns before and after the Divine Liturgy. The work of the Debteras is done at every divine service in almost every church except certain monasteries where the order of the monks is a silent discipline. The Liturgical Service may be divided into two parts:

(a) Preparatory Service or Pre-Anaphora (Serate Qeddasse)

(b) The Anaphora (Qeddasse) Back

5. The Preparatory Service

The Preparatory Service deals with prayer over the vessels 8 of the Church (e.g.) over the paten, the chalice, the cross-spoon, and the Masob or platter on which the bread is carried. It includes the absolution of the Son, the Litany, the prayer of incense, scripture readings, the washing of hands, the prayer of faith (The Nicaean Creed) and invocation.

When the Priest enters the Church, he shall, before all else, say the prayer of penitence and Psalms: 25, 61, 103, 112, 130, and 131. This is followed by the prayers of St. Gregory and St. Basil. It is the prayer of St. Gregory which the Priest says before entering the veil.

“O Lord our God, who knowest the thought of man because thou hast calm to serve thee in this thy holy altar, though I am unworthy”

Then he shall enter into the sanctuary and prostrate himself three times in front of the veil while saying the prayer of St. Basil.

“O Lord our God who art our Creator, who didst make all through thy word, who hast permitted us to enter into this mystery ... make us meet to approach thy sanctuary that we may offer unto thee a sacrifice and a spiritual sweet incense for the forgiveness of thy people’s sins.”

Then he shall say the prayer of St. John Chrysostom:

“Lord our God who we higher ... than every glory. ...shine upon us with the light of thy glory which destroys in us the thoughts of wickedness and the acts of sin, and send upon us the grace of the Holy Spirit the consuming fire unto which the creature of fire the angels cannot approach and which destroys the wicked mind and burns up sins.”

Except the prayer of penitence, all the above prayers are conducted in private and in a silent manner by the Priest. He stands in fear and prostrates himself once before the Ark, once before the Priests, and once before the Deacons. Then with the vestments in his hands he turns toward the East and says the Lord's Prayer. Before he vests himself completely he turns toward the people to see if there are four other clergymen, including the main Deacon, to help in the service, "because it is not fit for the priest to take off his vestments after having put them on", should there be no more clergymen to help in the service.

In the Ethiopian Church, unlike the Coptic Church, there should be at least two priests and three deacons to celebrate the Eucharist. In the Coptic Church one priest and one deacon is sufficient. Nevertheless, in recent years (1959) permission was given for one priest and a deacon to perform the Divine Liturgy in areas where clergymen are not available. This of course is not fully supported by people who are reluctant and suspicious of changes.

If the Archbishop or Bishop is present the Priest shall take his vestments to him to be blessed, then he shall put them on, but if neither is present the Priest shall himself bless them and put them on. At the time of the service there must be one candle on each side of the altar. Instead of a third candle a qandil (sanctuary lamp) is used. These two candles signify the honor and majesty of the bread and wine.

On Sunday four or five loaves are brought in, but on other days three only. The wine is poured in to the chalice and water is added to it, not more than one third. The Priest shall wash his hands and before drying them he shall select and pass his wet hands over one loaf then begin the service with the prayer of thanksgiving. At the time of the commencement of the Mass no one is allowed to speak or laugh because the Church is not a place of conversation but a place of prayer. The Priest shall make the sign of the cross with his hands over both the host and the wine

three times saying, “Blessed be the Lord, Almighty Father, our God; and blessed be the only begotten Son our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; and blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the Comforter and cleanser of us all. Glory and honor we due to the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, always co-equal, both now and ever world without end.”

He shall then stand upright with his face to the east, stretching forth his hands, and shall chant with a loud voice, “One is the Holy Father, One is the Holy Son, and One is the Holy Spirit.” The people shall respond, “Truly the Father is Holy, truly the Son is Holy, truly the Holy Spirit is Holy.”

Then the celebrant Priest beseeches God that the Holy Spirit may descend upon the elements to change them into the real body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. He makes the sign of the cross three times over each element (over the bread and over the Chalice).

The Absolution of the Son is read by a Bishop if he is present, if not it is done by the assistant Priest followed by the Litany (or Deacon’s bidding prayer). In the entire service of the Mass there are a series of proclamations by the Deacon and the Priest with responses by the congregation such as:

Deacon: Stand up for prayer

People: Lord have mercy upon us

Deacon: Worship the Lord with fear

People: Before thee Lord we worship and thee do we glorify

Priest: Peace be with you all and the Lord be with you all

People: And with thy spirit.

Such proclamations by the Deacon are done in the manner of the fore-runner of the Lamb of God. They are powerful and strong commandments. Both the words “Stand up for prayer” and the salutations by the Priest are said repeatedly in every section of the service. After the Litany the prayer of the Incense follows. Before they are used, the incense and the censer are blessed by the Patriarch or Archbishop or Bishop if present otherwise the Priest blesses them remembering the current year and reckoning of day and night He shall go around the Ark three times with a lighted candle in front of him, while the Chief Deacon goes around the altar carrying the Epistles of St. Paul. The prayer of incense is followed by four designated scripture readings for the appropriate occasion. Two are from the Epistles, one from the Acts of the Apostles and one from the Holy Gospels. The Epistles are read by the Deacons, Acts of the Apostles by the assistant Priest and the Holy Gospel by a bishop if he is present if not it is done by the celebrant Priest. The scripture readings are selected from the Liturgical calendar. After the reading of the Holy Gospel no one is allowed to leave the Church, except in urgency, before the distribution of the Holy Communion. Following the Gospel reading, prayers are conducted for the Church, the Patriarch, the Archbishop and the congregation. This is followed by the Creed, the washing of the hands and the kiss of peace. At this time, a Deacon brings water to wash the hands of the Priest while the faithful recite the Nicene or Apostle’s Creed, depending on the occasion. The Apostle’s Creed is their prayer of faith which was given in Jerusalem.

The washing of the hands of the Priest is like the washing of the hands of Pontius Pilate who did it to be innocent of the pure blood of our Lord Jesus Christ Likewise the Priest shall say that he is innocent of those who take communion unworthily. Back

6. The Anaphora

Different Anaphoras are used on different occasions. The celebrant Priest picks one

which suits the day. For instance, the Anaphora of the Apostles is celebrated on the memorial day of any Apostle and the Anaphora of St. Dioscorus celebrated on Christmas, on Epiphany, on Easter, on the Ascension Day, on Pentecost Day and on the Feast of the Trinity. Service of an Anaphora may be summarized as follows:

Eucharistic Thanksgiving (with response by the congregation)

Intercession

Sanctus

Institution

Prayer of the Fraction

The Lord's Prayer

Inclination

Prayer of the Angels

Prayer of Penitence

Invitation to Communion

Prayer: Pilot of the Soul

Thanksgiving and final Benediction

Traditionally each Anaphora begins with prayer of thanksgiving. Names of rulers are mentioned here, depending that they are Christians. For example, as given in the Anaphora of the Apostles, the celebrant begins with: "Anaphora of our fathers the Apostles may the blessing of

their prayer be with our King (name), President (name), and with our Queen (name), world without end. Amen.”

Priest: Give ye thanks unto our God.

People: It is right, it is just.

Priest: Lift up your hearts.

People: We have lifted them up unto the Lord our God.

Priest: We give thee thanks, O Lord, in thy beloved Son Our Lord Jesus, whom in the last days thus didst send unto us, thy Son the Savior and Redeemer, the messenger of thy counsel ...

This thanksgiving is followed by the Prayer of intercession for the living and for the dead, as well as for the Apostolic Church.

The Prayer of Intercession is done several times before and after the institution. Then comes the Inclination which begins with a direction given by the Deacon, “Ye that are sitting stand up, bow down your head, look to the east, let us give heed, and answer ye”...In this particular command the people responded the Sanctus in (Isaiah 6:3), “Holy, holy, holy, perfect Lord of hosts, heaven and earth are full of the holiness of thy glory.” This is followed by the prayer of the Fraction (“Grant us to be united through thy Holy Spirit and heal us by this oblation that we may live in thee forever”), which is in turn followed by the Lord’s Prayer and by the Prayer of the Angels, said by all communicants three times in succession.

After this the inclination comes once again (“Worship the Lord with fear”) to which the people answer, (“Before thee Lord we worship and thee we glorify”). This ends with the Prayer of Penitence (Intercession) for the living and the dead. Back

7. Invitation to Communion

This section begins with a series of declarations by the celebrant Priest. The Priest declares that the consecrated bread is the body of Christ and likewise the wine is the blood of Christ.

"This (pointing) is the true holy body of our Lord and our God. . . Jesus Christ, which is given . . . for the remission of sin unto them that receive of it in faith. This (pointing) is the true precious blood of our Lord. . .and our Saviour Jesus Christ which is given for life and for salvation and for remission of sin unto those who drink of it in faith."

Similar declaration of belief is pronounced concerning the real presence of Christ and as to the oneness of his humanity and divinity:

"I believe (three times) and I confess.... that His godhead was not separated from His manhood, not for an hour nor for the twinkling of an eye...." The faithful respond "Amen."

Before receiving communion all communicants shall say:

"And when I have received thy Holy Mystery let it not be unto me for judgments nor for condemnation, but have compassion upon me and have mercy upon me; and through it grant me remission of my sin and life for my soul."

During communion, first of all the Patriarch receives, then the Archbishops, then the Bishops, then the Priests and Deacons. After this the men shall receive, then the women; but the babies who have already been baptized receive before the people.

While offering the Holy body the Priest says, for instance at the time of the Anaphora of the Lord: “The Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ for the sanctification of body, soul and spirit.”

After receiving communion all communicants shall say:

“I pray and beseech thee, O my Lord, this my body and thy blood which I have received shall neither be for my shame nor for the guilt of my soul and my body, but let them give life and health: and teach me thy fear and thy love so that I may please thee all the days of my life and glorify thee without ceasing.”

After the people have received communion a prayer of thanksgiving begins by the Deacon who says, “Let us give thanks unto the Lord” etc to which the Priest responds “My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord “ etc. Then comes the prayer of pilot of the soul by the Priest, followed by the benediction and dismissal which begins with the words “Bow down your heads before the Lord our God” etc. by the Deacon, to which the people respond Amen. "The Lord bless us and be propitious unto us". Then the Priest, making the sign of the cross, gives the benediction as follows; “O Lord, save thy people and bless thy inheritance. Feed them and lift them up forever” etc. The Deacon then says, “Depart in peace”, while the Priest blessed with his fingers everyone of the people, touching his or her forehead. But the Priests are blessed by clasping of the hands. Both the body and blood are given. This is because when the Lord gave His disciples, He gave them both the body and blood, not only that He gave them, but he also said, “Drinke ye all of it.” (Matt. 26,27)

Once the bread and wine are consecrated and changed they remain to become the flesh and the blood till they are completely consumed

The bread must be made of pure wheat flour to which nothing is added save water and leaven. It must be baked not earlier than three hours before the beginning of the Liturgy. The wine is prepared from dried raisins.⁸ These are soaked in water for three to five hours and then juice squeezed out of them into vessels until its is transferred into the Chalice at the time of the Liturgical service.⁹

The bread should be leavened because the sacrament was instituted at a time when all the Jews were using leavened bread. (Exodus 12:6, 18, 19)

The Church teaches that every Christian including baptized children, should take the Holy Communion at least three times a year, if not every week.

“Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood you have no life in you.” (John 6:53) but before taking communion the believer must be prepared to examine himself.

“Let a man examine himself and let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself ...” (1 Cor. 11:28,29).

Spiritual Food----- The flesh and blood of Christ is spiritual food which helps the believer to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Him. Jesus said, “I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger for my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed.” (John 6:55)

Through this sacrament the believer receives remission of sin:

“For this is my body and blood which is shed for many for the remission of sin.” (Matt 26:26-28) Both true life in this world and eternal life and salvation are granted in this mystery.

It is a firm belief of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church that Our Lord Jesus Christ is present in his sacrament, not by way of granting His grace, but by actually being there in the form of bread and wine. After the consecration there is no longer bread and wine, for all the substance of the bread is transformed into the body of Christ and all the substance of the wine into the blood of Christ. Back

8. **The Canon**

If the celebrant or the Priest is not well acquainted with the book of covenant (which contains Christ's teaching to the Apostles during the forty days following His death, resurrection and ascension), and with the book of Synodos (which consists of the Apostles Canons, the Didaskalia, which consists of the teachings of the Apostles and the Abtlisat (the council's canons); also if he is not acquainted with all the rules and regulations of the Church and the teachings of the Holy Spirit, let him not enter for service in the Church. If he presumptuously enters he should be deposed from his rank and remain in the Church as a layman. At the time of prayer and at the time of Liturgical Service there must be silence and awe, except for praise and sanctification from the beginning to the end. If one does speak he will suffer punishment

The Priests and Deacons who have not attended the night prayer (seatat or matin) are not allowed to enter the temple to take part in the service. Anyone who disobeys this commandment will become a transgressor of the law.

The Church does not permit more than one Liturgy to be performed a day on the same altar. However, two or more services can be done in the same Church and at the same hour providing that there are several altars in the Church. Back

9. Structure of the Church Building

Churches in Ethiopia have either a round or rectangular shape in keeping with the tradition. It is mandatory that each Church have four entrances facing the four directions of the earth (North, South, East and West). As people who have been God-fearing for thousand of years, religion is the culture of the land and Churches are highly revered and the purity of the sanctuary maintained.

All Churches are divided into three areas. These three areas bear names in Geez which sound like the Hebrew words. The first is the place where the debteras stand and perform services before and after the Mass. It is called Qene Mahlet and his corresponds to the naser of the Tabernacle of Solomon's temple. The next is the Qeddist which is generally occupied by Priests and Deacons; to this place laypersons also have access only when partaking in communion. This corresponds to the Qodes of the Tabernacle of Solomon. The innermost part is called Maqdas (Qeddiste Qedusan) (Holy of Holies). This is where the Tabot rests. Only ordained Priests have access to it. This also corresponds to the Qodush Haqqodasim of the debir of the Temple of Solomon. During service women stand to the right and men to the left. No one may enter the church without first removing his shoes. This custom is based on the command given to Moses by God. Back

10. Bethlehem

Each Church has a small house, called Bethlehem, built within the inner Churchyard and must face the east. This house is used for the preparation of the Holy Communion (the bread and wine used in the Eucharist). This house is not without significance; it represents the Bethlehem of Jerusalem where the Messiah was born. Back

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- Michael Powne, Ethiopian Music, Oxford University Press London. 1968 (p. IS)
- There it a special prayer between this section at the consecration of new vessels, the paten, the chalice etc. This prayer is dons only if the. vessels we new.
- In January 1979 an attempt was made by the Synod of the Church that a manufacturing company for production of communion wine be organized to supply all the Churches in Use country. The Idea was brought in replacement of the dried raisin wine. This was opposed by most of the faithful including several clergymen.
- For more information see Yassa Abd Al-Masih, The Faith and Practices of the Coptic Church, Alexandria. 1953 (p.77) Back **Source:**

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