

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Its Role in Development in 2020

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to look at the contribution of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the country's development plan for 2020 and forward ideas which could be discussed and developed further by invited guests and then disseminated to the public. I will begin by presenting a brief historical overview and a survey of the major accomplishments of the Church so far in the area of development. I will then discuss what I feel the role of the Church should be in the 2020 development plan.

2. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church: An Overview

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is among the churches that were established as early as the 1st century A.D. It is recorded in *Acts* (8:26) tells us that an Ethiopian Eunuch, who went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, was baptized by St. Philip. Hieronymus the father of the Latin Church, a historian called Socrates and Yohannes Chrysostomos have all written that St. Andrews and St. Mathews had preached the Bible in Ethiopia.

There are also a number of historical documents that indicate that Ethiopia received papacy around 330 A.D. The reports of Patriarch Athnathus, Caesar Constance and Rufinos, the metropole of Tyrus and historian are a few of such historical documents.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is

unique in that it had the holy books translated into the country's indigenous language with the help of the monks referred to as the Nine Saints, who came to Ethiopia from Syria in the sixth century A.D., escaping from religious persecution. The monks were also known for their work in expanding monasteries around Axum. The earliest society of monks of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is famous not only for its devotion to the Christian ideals of fasting and prayer but also for its contribution to the expansion of religious knowledge, education and the arts.

The sixth century was a period when a significant progress was made in expanding Christianity in Ethiopia. It was the time when the Church developed and became owner of its own literature, in addition to using translated texts. However, Christianity came under threat in Ethiopia owing to the expansion of the Arabs in the seventh century. Because of this, Ethiopian Christians were denied access to the Holy Land and to Egypt, and they were cut off from the outside world. This was followed in the tenth century by the toppling of the Christian kingdom of Axum by the movement of Israelites, headed by a woman called Judith. As a result, the Ethiopian government had to relinquish power and retreat to the southern part of the country. This, of course, led to the expansion of Christianity in the south of the country.

After Judith, the Axum government was succeeded by the Zagwe Dynasty. The

Zagwes, who were Agews, were Christians when they assumed government power, although it is not clear how they became Christians originally. There is paucity of evidence that documents the activities of the Church under the Zagwes. However, the wonderful churches built around Lasta attest to the great efforts made by the rulers to expand Christianity. A king called St. Harbe attempted to make the Ethiopian Church free from the influence of Egypt, but this was rejected by the Patriarch of Egypt.

The continued expansion of the Arabs weakened the Zagwe Dynasty and later brought to power a king called Yikuno Amlak, who claimed to be a descendant of the Axumite kings. It is told that the new Dynasty agreed to give a third of the share of the government to the Church. During this time, a bishop named Tekle Haimanot, who was the founder of Tekle Haimanot Church, trained 33 priests and sent them to Showa to preach the Bible.

During this Solomonic Dynasty religious literature flourished once again and the period came to be known as the second era (the golden age) of literature. Numerous religious texts were also translated from Arabic to Geez during the reign of King Amde Tsion (1304-1334). The *Kibre Negest* was also written during this time.

It was during the reign of King Amde Tsion that an Egyptian Coptic bishop by the name of Jacob came to Ethiopia and

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worked hard to propagate the Gospels all over Ethiopia. He appointed 12 monks with the title of *Nibure Id* and sent them to Showa and Southern Ethiopia, as he also sent 12 monks with the title of *Kewakifit* to Northern Ethiopia.

Next to Abba Jacob came another bishop called Selama the Exegete (*metergum*) (1340- 80), who focused more on translating the Holy Scriptures rather than the vocation of evangelism. He translated the New Testament into Ge'ez using the Arabic version as a source of authentication. Beside the New Testament, the following books were translated during tenure as bishop: *Gibre Himamat* (the Passion of Christ), *Gedle Abba Kerezun* (Hagiography of Abba Kerezun), *Gedle Azqir* (Hagiography of Azqir), *Dirsane Gelawdewos* (Homilies of Gelewdewos), *Filikesiyus*, *Gedle Yisihak* (Hagiography of Isaac), *Gedle Yost'os* (Hagiography of Yostos), *Gedle Nob* (Hagiography of Nob), *Leha Maryam*, *Dirsane Ya'eqob ze Iyerusalem* (Homily of Jacob of Jerusalem), *Dirsane Ya'eqob ze Sirug* (Homily of Jacob of Sirug?) and *Metsehafe Ginzet* (the Book of the Dead).

Following the reign of King Amde Tseyon, it was during the reign of Zera Yaqob that major religious activities were carried out. Because Atse Zera Yaqob was brought up in northern Ethiopia, where he went through the rigors of Church education, his knowledge of religion was thoroughgoing. He endeavored to bring about a reform in the Church since the time he assumed power. Moreover, he fought vigorously to eliminate idolatry from the country. He also attempted to peacefully reform a group of iconoclasts known as *Deqiye Est'ifanos*, but having failed in his peaceful endeavor, he used force to stop the new teaching. The forceful measure was taken not only against *Deqiye Est'ifanos* but every idolater, not sparing even his children.

Moreover, he peacefully resolved the conflict that arose between the advocates of one Sabbath and those who argued for the observation of two Sabbaths. He resolved this conflict by convincing the

Bishops themselves to follow the tradition of observing two Sabbaths, as he was himself a child of the North. Atse Zera Yaqob was the king who successfully managed to acquire three Bishops in one move. His fame spread to the outside world as a result of the mission he sent to a conference of Christians held in Florence in 1433. Atse Zera Yaqob was also personally involved in the production of Church literature by authoring two books, namely, *Metsihafe Berhan* and *Metshafe Mi'ilad*. It was also during his reign that great intellectuals, such as *Abba Giorgis ze Gasitcha*, contributed to the wealth of the Church's literature. During the Solomonic Dynasty many churches, so the story goes, were built with gold and diamonds, but many of them were destroyed during the war with Gagn.

Atse Gelawdewos had exerted himself to rehabilitate the churches destroyed by the war with Gagn and bring back those who were forced into embracing the Muslim faith into the folds of the Church. However, immediately after the conflict between the Muslims and the Christians came to a lull, a new conflict arose between Catholics and the Orthodox Christians. Catholic missionaries, such as Bermudez, on the pretext of fighting for Catholic Church and Portuguese government, demanded that the Ethiopian government relinquish its sovereignty and faith for the help received from the Portuguese government during the war with Gagn. Though the demand was categorically rejected by King Gelawdewos, the question was once again raised during the reign of Susenyos, who embraced the Catholic faith, resulting in massacres. The Catholic missionaries used the occasion for pursuing their evangelical activities in Amharic, which induced the Orthodox intellectuals to use the same language in their preaching, the same occasion that gave rise to the *andimita* commentary (or exegesis). The *andimita* had two goals: the first was to explain the Bible, which was written in Ge'ez, to the laity in Amharic, while the second was to indoctrinate the people with anti-missionary teachings.

During the Gondarine period, the teaching of *andimita*, *diggua* and *qiné* spread, churches were built, pictures painted and books, though not composed anew, were reproduced. However, following the debate between the Catholic missionaries and the Orthodox intellectuals, the Church became plagued by the *Hulet Lidet* and *Sost Lidet* controversy. The various war lords, just like the clergy, took sides in the controversy which became the onset of drawn-out wars in which the country was immersed. The Solomonic Dynasty based in Gondar gradually weakened and finally lost its hold on power to the contending war lords.

During the *Zemene Mesafinit* the vital role in controlling the country was played by the Yeju war lords. Though the Yeju war lords were fundamentally Muslims, they had to embrace Christianity upon assuming power. There was nothing particularly significant achieved for the Church during this period. However, unlike what their detractors suspected, they did not adopt any overt anti-Church position.

The coming to power of *Atse Tewodros* unsettled the strong affinity between the Church and the State, a relationship that had lasted for a long period. Atse Tewodros decreed that the *Hulet lidet* doctrine was of the correct faith and threatened those who were against the doctrine with punishment. The major cause, however, that resulted in the hostility of the clergy towards the King was his decree that limited the number of clergy in one parish to five, any number in excess of which was, in Tewodros's opinion, unnecessary.

The other issue that put the King into conflict with the clergy was the measure that the former took to reduce the landholding of the Church, known as *yesemon meret* and distribute it among his military. At first sight, the decree appeared to the clergy as a nullification of the covenant between *Abune TekeleHaimanot* and *Atse Yikunno Amlak*, which the clergy considered a breach of faith. The fact, however, was that, while the clergy's claim was only nominal, actual beneficiaries of the land

were the local lords, who claimed descent from the priesthood. The clergy made their living by farming, just like the ordinary peasants. When looked at from this vantage point, the claim that one-third of the country's land was due to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was not only exaggerated but also an old wives' tale.

Atse Yohannes IV, who had a plan to coronate three kings under him, goes down in history as the second only emperor after *Atse* Zer'a Ya'iqob in managing to acquire four bishops [from Alexandria]. The debate between the adherents of *Hulet Lidet* and *Sost Lidet* doctrines, over which he presided at Boru Medda, was one of his religious achievements. While granting *Atse* Yohannes's devotion to the Orthodox faith, but particularly to the *Hulet Lidet* doctrine, the harsh measures he took against the opposing Orthodox doctrine and other religions was by no means warranted.

During the reign of Menilik II, the Orthodox Church had lost one great opportunity of proselytization. While the Church could have followed in the footsteps of Menilik's territorial expansion to attain its major evangelical goals, because the clergy, who had families, had to engage, so it seemed, in farming activities, they did not take part in Menelik's campaigns. Though the nobility and the military elite had father confessors among the clergy, the latter were equipped only with education enough to say Mass and conduct rites of the Holy Communion, with no experience of evangelism, so that the teachings of the Gospels did not spread at the time, particularly in the southern and south western parts of the country. Had due attention been given to evangelism at the time, it could have strengthened the national unity brought about through political expansionism.

When *Atse* Haile Sillassie still was Ras Teferi (regent and heir apparent to the throne), he gathered all the best intellectuals of the Church and had the Holy Scriptures translated and published both in plain Amharic and exegetical

form. Even though there was an Amharic version of the Bible translated and published earlier, this version was much better than the former because it involved the collective effort of many Ethiopian and expatriate intellectuals.

This translation of the Holy Bible represented an official transition from Ge'ez, which the Church had been using for over 1500 years, to Amharic. But this transition in the language of the Holy Books did not sit well with the majority of the clergy and the general congregation. The reason for the reluctance was, on the one hand, attributed to errors in the new translation, while on the other hand the very transition from the long standing religious language to a secular language was considered a kind of heresy. The other reason was that, because there were expatriates involved in the project, there was a possibility for apostasy to make its way into the long standing Orthodoxy of the Church. That was why, until only recently, the Amharic Bible was not distributed in the rural areas and the people who read the Amharic version were considered heretics. For all that, however, it should be emphasized that the translation job indeed was an achievement and a credit to the Emperor.

The other major achievement of Emperor Haile Sillassie was his liberation of the Ethiopian Church from the jurisdiction of the Egyptian Coptic Church. The fact that the Egyptian Coptic Church denied the human rights of the Ethiopians in this regard and for two thousand years prohibited its own bishopry, far from being from the precepts of evangelism, was a crime. The emperor was, therefore, lucky to have accomplished as none before attempted until his reign. While one but must acknowledge this achievement, I, for one, have misgivings about the individual bishops selected for the purpose in that, though some among them had a thorough knowledge of the traditional Orthodox Church teachings, they nevertheless were short when it came to knowledge of foreign languages and perspectives. I think this was one of

the major drawbacks with regard to the development of the Church.

The second problem was that the Bishops were chosen on the basis of their loyalty to the emperor. This fact denied the Church its autonomy. Even though the King was lauded for liberating the Church from the domination of the Copts, how much the Church actually was under the domination of the State was evident in the political essence of the pledge, in accordance with the Constitution, that the patriarchs made on their appointment.

The Church lost yet another great opportunity of evangelization during this period. All black people were distancing themselves from the tradition, culture and religion of the whites because of the segregation they suffered in the hands of the latter. The black people had started a movement called "Ethiopianism". Some of them, who had actively participated in this movement, had wished for, in fact wanted, the establishment of an Ethiopian Church in their respective countries, which they actually established later. For example, one EOTC was built in South Africa in 1844 and the Church's membership had increased to 15 by 1905. Many African leaders and peoples had asked the EOTC to send evangelists for the churches they built, but because no prior preparations had been made on the part of the ETOC, it could not meet the needs of the churches. Such lack of preparedness on the part of the Ethiopian Church still remains a chronic problem to our day. In spite of all these, however, the evangelical services the Church provides to its followers all over the world is a good start, as it will serve to promote, in addition to the services the Church provides, Ethiopian religion, culture and tradition all over the world, with the Church acting as an emissary.

The EOTC is one of the founding members of the World council of Churches (WCC), and the all-Africa Conferences of Churches (ACC). A recent statement released by the EOTC indicates that it has 40,000,000

followers, 500,000 ecclesiastics, 40,000 parishes and 2,000,000 Sunday School comprising the youth. The Church is the 2nd largest Church next to Russia in terms of followers and the largest among the non-Chalcedonic Churches. No Church in the world compares with the EOTC in terms of the size of its clergy. The EOTC has bases of operation virtually in all corners of the country, in cities and rural areas alike.

3. The Current Development Activities of the EOTC

In the area of Education, the EOTC served as the major center of education from the time of its establishment until the beginning of the 20th century. The intellectuals of the EOTC had been dedicating their lives to serving the Church and providing free education to its followers. They devoted their lives to teaching in the day time and praying during the night in the service of their country and God. The existing literature, paintings, art, music, *qene*, law and traditional medicines are all products of their educational endeavors.

Moreover, the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahido* Church has a long legacy of caring for the poor. It has been said in the Holy Book that almsgiving is greater¹ than offering sacrifices. Some of our traditional schools consider (See Mathew 25). These questions, it is believed, are the same questions that Christ would ask at the Second Coming. Because the EOTC diligently inculcated these words of the Gospel in the minds of believers and, also, because the importance of almsgiving was preached in many of the hagiographies and the homilies, it has become an integral part of Ethiopian culture. The students of the traditional school of old as well as those of today's traditional school got their education through this culture the foundations of which the Church laid down and sustained for centuries, not as some would have it, through the support of the government or some cost-sharing scheme. Generally, the Church has served the community by feeding the hungry, by clothing the cloth-less, by

caring for the sick, by sheltering the elderly, and by providing homes to orphans and rendering similar other services.

However, realizing that, if this culture serving the community would be more fruitful had it been organized in a modernized and sustainable manner, the earlier Fathers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had established the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahido* Church Development and Christian Aid Commission. In addition to this, the *Mahibere Qidusan* Association, a subsidiary of the Sunday-School Coordinating Department, together with the different parishes and monasteries, has launched several development projects. The development activities of these Church organs are given below.

3.1 Ethiopian Orthodox Church Development and christian Aid Commission.

3.1.1. The commission in 1972-1984Gregorian Calendar

The commission was legally founded in 1964 [E.C.] by a proclamation published in Nagarit Gazeta No 415/1964. The objectives of the commission were:

Encouraging and supporting the youth to take vocational training in areas in demand; Helping the poor; In general, taking part in the national effort towards educational, economic and social development.

The above objectives are similar with the former activities of the EOTC, except for the modernistic approach employed in their achievement. Thus, the commission working on educational, economic and social development, particularly by giving training to the clergy and helping the poor since its establishment in 1964 E.C. Later on, in 1966 E.C., when the great famine hit the country, the commission had to broaden the scope its activities so as to participate in helping and rehabilitating those affected by the draught and war. The Commission was also participating in rural development particularly in the

areas of afforestation, soil and water conservation, and irrigation. It was also providing farmers with selected seeds and farming tools (including oxen). The Commission is also involved in construction work, such as building health posts, clinics, health centers and veterinary clinics with complete facilities. Besides, it works on digging water wells (including manually dug wells up to a depth of 8-12 meters and bore-holes as deep as 200 meters) and improving springs to provide the rural people with potable water. Training rural communities on the importance of using toilets and building latrines and handing them over to the people are some of the other activities undertaken by the Commission. It also provides training to traditional midwives. There are other minor activities, such as setting up flour mills, oil-extracting tools, baking ovens, cattle rearing, rehabilitating burn down churches, replacing worn out church robes, provision of food items, such as wheat and oil and non-food provisions, such as blankets. With regard to education, the Commission builds primary and alternative schools and hands them over to the government.

There is also a refugee and returnees affairs section. This section caters to refugees from the Sudan, Somalia, Zaire, Eritrea and Yemen. It provides different training programs to the refugees that would enable them to support themselves, mainly in the areas of wickerwork, sewing, and soap production. The commission in addition provides health, education, sheltering and counseling services.

3.1.2 The Commission in 1985-2005 G.C.

The commission further expanded its scope of activities with the preparation of a strategic plan covering the period between 1985 and 2004 with 4 areas of activities in focus: food-security; gender and development; refugees and repatriates; HIV/AIDS prevention. Accordingly, under food-security it has carried out the following programs:

1. Inner-church programs;
2. Humanitarian assistance;
3. Rehabilitation programs;
4. Income generation

These programs are carried out under the following headings:

Training Programs

Under the Church programs, the training and aid provided to the church people has already been mentioned. With regard to its activities in the area of income generation, the Commission has undertaken the following activities, with the view, on the one hand, to ensuring a sustainable human development and, on the other hand, to produce clergymen capable of giving leadership in church management and administration: accordingly, in the past few years it has provided training programs to 12,000 people, embracing those living in monasteries and the local community, in environmental protection, agricultural development, HIV/AIDS prevention and control, and poverty reduction. It has also given training to 15,000 young people, including youth leaders, and 10,000 clergymen distributed among 7 clergy training schools. It has also undertaken development projects in the areas of small-scale irrigation, water supply, horticulture, and cattle rearing.

Humanitarian assistance

The commission has undertaken humanitarian activities, related to provision of food aid (grains, oil and other food items) and rehabilitation in times of emergency situations. Accordingly, it has come to the aid, and saved the lives, of 23,000,000 victims of drought and internal war in Tigray and Amhara regions, in Semien and South Wollo, Semien and South Gondar, East Gojjam, North Shoa and Wag Humra Zones. On this occasion it distributed 5,000,000 quintals of grain, of which 3.3 million quintals went to Amhara Region, 0.76 million quintals to Tigray Region and the remaining amount to the different regions.

Rehabilitation

The commission has undertaken rehabilitation programs in Wombera, Wolayita, Inderta, Fogera, Jinka, Lasta, Wag Humra and Adama. In the process of these programs, it has distributed 20,400 quintals of seeds, 55,000 different farming tools and about 6,900 oxen for ploughing. In addition to this, it has distributed 2,825 quintals of seeds, 743 quintals of fertilizers, 889 oxen and 192 horses or ploughing, 8,334 farming tools, 1,470 improved chicken species, 266 sheep and goats, 180 improved beehives, 5 ploughing donkeys, all going to farmers who were victims of natural/man-made disasters. In addition to this, it has built 15 warehouses and handed over to the government. The Commission's other activities include: providing training services to the communities; re-developing the environment; providing for the basic needs of refugees and repatriates, such as counseling, health care, reuniting separated family members, providing primary, secondary and vocational education.

The Commission has undertaken 21 sustainable income generation and water resource development programs, of which 13 were in Amhara Region, 4 in Tigray, 2 in Southern Nations and Nationalities, and 2 in Oromia Regions. It also has undertaken HIV/AIDS prevention and control programs in 23 different dioceses. For the various projects that the Commission undertook between 1994 and 2004, it spent Birr 200 million.

Refugees and Returnees support

In its 35-year history of aiding refugees the EOC-DICAC has played host to refugees coming from the different parts of the world and around Africa, but particularly to those who came from Somalia and the Sudan. It has specifically provided aid to 22,600 refugees and repatriates in terms of food, clothing, shelter, education, health care and counseling. It has also given training

to the refugees in the area of income generation.

Expanding Family Income Resources

This sector has three sub-sectors under it: 1. Agricultural development and extension programs; 2. Environmental protection; 3. Community service.

Agricultural development and extension programs

Under this program the Commission's activity consists in introducing and distributing different tree, flower, fruit, vegetable and seed species and seedlings to the communities it serves.

Environmental Protection

The activities under this heading include soil and water conservation, forest conservation, seedling stations and seedling boiling, plant biodiversity conservation, capacity building and similar other programs. Since one of the Commission's objectives is environmental rehabilitation, it has been engaged in a planned propagation of tree species and distributing them to the community. Accordingly, in the 64 seedling stations it established it has boiled 137,000,000 different kinds of seedlings and distributed them among its beneficiaries. It has also supported the establishment of 141 seedling stations. Moreover, it has undertaken terracing projects covering 7,400 hectares of land and a distance of 7,986 Kilometers toward the conservation of soil and water. It has also built 61.400m³ of canals and 244,000m³ of dams in addition to distributing 58,000 soil and water conservation tools to its beneficiaries.

While the Commission has distributed drought-resistant grains, as well as vegetable and fruit products, it has in particular distributed 2,600,000 vegetable and fruit seedlings to both highland and lowland farmers. It has also distributed 216 Kilograms of

vegetable and fruit seeds and 250 quintals of potato seeds.

Community service

Under this heading are included: (1) Water; (2) Health; (3) Education; (4) Rural roads; (5) Income generation

1. Water supply: In this category are included: the digging of deep and shallow wells, manually-operated water taps, spring protection, building traditional and improved toilets, and sanitary education.

The commission has bored 22 water holes up to 180 meters deep, 39 wells with a depth of 60 meters, 413 medium-depth wells and 40 small water springs, as well as 340 manually-operated water taps. It has also provided fully equipped water points to 4 towns.

2. Health: Under this category are included the building of health posts, clinics and health stations, provision of medical tools, provision of HIV/AIDS prevention and control education. The Commission provides health services especially to the rural population. So far it has built 13 health posts, 8 clinics and 1 health center in different localities. It has built 3,577 traditional and ventilated latrines and 1,213 garbage disposal pits.

3. Education: The activities in this area include building primary schools, upgrading primary schools to secondary schools, supplying educational aids to support both the formal and informal educational process, educating communities to demand the services that are theirs by right, raising community awareness about HIV/AIDS through youth clubs in schools and with the aid of the clergy, and providing gender education. The Commission has created conducive environment for citizens numbering in the thousands. It has, accordingly, built 15 formal schools and 42 informal schools, all of them fully equipped with the necessary facilities.

4. Rural road construction: The EOC Christian Aid Commission has constructed 488 Kilometers of rural roads and 8 sizeable bridges and handed them over to the government.

5. Income generation: With the mitigation of women's workload in mind the Commission has put up 63 flour mills, 1 oil-extracting machine and 1 carpet weaving shop.

6. Capacity building: About 20 million Ethiopians are believed to have undergone awareness raising training and education about HIV/AIDS. Moreover, the Commission has trained 51 professionals in environmental protection, 201 in agricultural development and 7 in the educational sector. Over a million members of the Church have been trained in the areas of grain production, soil and water conservation, forest conservation, cattle rearing, vegetable and fruit production, beekeeping, irrigation and water resource development.

7. HIV/AIDS prevention and control: Considering the fact that Ethiopia is one of the foremost countries afflicted by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, with about 2.5 million people living with the virus and 10% of this total infected by the disease, the EOC Christian Aid Commission has been conducting various programs on HIV/AIDS prevention and control. Of the programs the Commission has been undertaken, one finds awareness creation among the communities it serves regarding abstinence before marriage and spousal faithfulness after marriage, providing counseling services, providing support to those living with the virus, caring for orphans and children exposed to the virus, and encouraging premarital blood test.

3.1.3 Plans for 2005-2009 G.C.

Following the Government's Rural Development Policy adopted in 1991 (G.C.), the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Development and Christian Aid Commission has designed a strategic plan for 2005-2009 (G.C.), which has set down seven major objectives aimed at making a transition from the aid and rehabilitation venture to engagement in sustainable development. The objectives are:

1. To participate in the struggle to ensure sustainable food-security;
2. To combat illiteracy;

3. To combat HIV/AIDS STDs;
4. To contribute its share to the realization of gender equality;
5. To do its share of work in the peace building and conflict resolution effort;
6. To build the capacity of the Commission and the EOC's monasteries and parishes;
7. To provide education on human rights.

The EOC Development and Christian Aid Commission has as its mission to see every Ethiopian community leading a good life. Its declared mission is to enable communities victimized by drought, conflicts, gender discrimination, HIV/AIDS, etc. to engage in sustainable development activities and become self-sufficient. At present it has designed 39 projects with a cost of 45 million Birr, with a focus especially on Amhara, Oromia, Somalia, and Gambella Regions. The estimated number of the beneficiaries of these projects is 2.5 million.

The EOTC has another organization that goes by the name of 'Children's and Family Affairs', which was founded following the 1966 [E.C.] drought. Since its establishment it has nurtured 20,000 children, with 7,000 children in its custody at present. It has also prepared a plan to engage in community activities.

3.2 Development Activities by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church's Mahibere Kidusan Unit

Among the development activities of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church are those carried out by the Mahibere Kidusan unit. Mahibere Kidusan is a theological association founded by students who graduated from institutions of higher education. In 1977 [E.C.], strongly determined to serve the Church, the then Orthodox Christian students of the institutions of higher education started to gather in their respective campuses in Sunday-school and get-together associations, the latter to commemorate saints of their choice. This movement was strengthened by

students trained in the Zeway Hamere Berehan St. Gabriel Monastery and clergy training center. The movement continued to expand, proliferating to all institutions through the efforts of the students when they met at the Bilatie military training. The year was 1983 E.C.

At present the Association is operating in the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahido* Church under aegis of the Department of Sunday Schools, with 29 sub-centers, 5 interim sub-centers, 2 public relay posts, and 130 congregations in higher educational institutions in the country. The association also has 4 sub-centers and relay posts outside Ethiopia. The association has taught the apostolic teachings, practices and traditions of the Church and certified thousands of students from different higher educational institutions with the blessings of the Church Fathers.

In addition to this, the association plays a role in the dissemination of the true teachings of the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahido* Church by producing audio and video recordings newspaper, magazine, spiritual songs and postcards and distributing them all over the country. The association has 16 units variously engaged in the implementation and follow-up of its spiritual services. Among these the one that has direct relationship with my topic is the "Development and Cooperative Unit of Holy Places." The section is implementing different development projects by mobilizing and organizing the followers of the Church. The major objectives of this department are:

- a) Designing different projects to enable the monasteries and churches to become self-reliant and to take part in the development of the society;
- b) Enabling the preservation of the monasteries and churches, the holy relics, and manuscripts;
- c) Providing, as capacity permits, support to monasteries and churches to enable them meet their recurring resource needs (such as *t'waf* [bee-wax candles], incense,

raisins, ceremonial robes, holy relics, etc.);

- d) To support the traditional church schools (Church education) so as to enable them maintain and strengthen their traditional systems and codes of conduct;
- e) To enable the laity living in areas where there are anti-Church elements to keep their faith and follow the practices of the Church by providing—by way of incentives—the parishes and the priests with holy relics and financial subsidies.

The Unit mobilizes Sunday schools in Ethiopia and outside the country, associations established to commemorate saints, workers' congregations and individual donors to give emergency relief that could enable the monasteries and churches to sustain themselves and become models for the communities in their respective areas. To give such services, the Department

- Looks into the problems of the monasteries, churches and traditional church schools with the help of the diocese and design projects to help find long-lasting solutions;
- Solicits material, financial and professional support from individual donors and members of the association for the implementation of the projects;
- Mobilizes individual donors, workers' congregations, Sunday school and get-together associations to provide emergency relief for monasteries, churches and traditional church schools and to pay for the salaries of the teachers of these schools.

Accordingly, the Association gives church offerings (such as candles, incense, raisins) and holy relics for 200 monasteries and churches and holy garments for 30 monasteries and churches annually.

In addition to this, to keep the traditional church schools, which are known for producing church intellectuals and

clergy members, maintain their standards, it allots a yearly budget of 70,000 Birr, out of which it pays salaries ranging between 150 and 350 Birr a month to the teachers of the schools.

Since the land that provided sources of income for the monasteries and churches in the past became public property (i.e. confiscated by the State), most of the monasteries and churches deprived of income even for their daily needs, resulting in the destitution of the members of the monasteries and their eventual abandoning of the monasteries and migrating to other places. Keenly cognizant of this situation, the *Mahibere Kidusan* Association has managed to secure the support of donors and designed and implemented different development projects, the costs for each of which ranged between 20,000 and 300,000 birr . The main projects undertaken are minor irrigation schemes, beekeeping, animal husbandry, provision of clean potable water and handicrafts. Since 1993 E.C. about 17 projects have been implemented and handed over to the community and are now fully operational, while 14 projects are in the process of being implemented.

4. What development accomplishments are expected of the EOTC by 2020?

4.1 Peace building as priority concern

Homer has written that Ethiopians have since early on in their history been a generous and peaceful people. Both Christianity and Islam made their way into the land peacefully. The Church was founded in peace and has always been praying for peace since its establishment. When, during Mass, the Deacon untiringly urges the congregation to "rise-in-prayer-for-peace," the voices of the priests always resonate with the refrain "Peace be unto thee all!" while the laity respond "With Thine Spirit, Oh Lord!" The Church songs always end with hymns for peace.

The Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahido* Church should be appreciated for going beyond merely praying for peace and incorporating the agenda of peace in its development program to make practical contributions to the actual realization of peace. The existence of peace among family members, within communities, among nations and nationalities and among religions is sure to facilitate the development process. If the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahido* Church, which is an institution erected on the solid foundation of families, communities and nations and nationalities, engages peacefully for the realization of peace among families, communities, nations and nationalities, it is my conviction that it will be successful. It is therefore my belief that the Church should work hard in accordance with the designed development program for the success of its efforts towards the realization of peace.

Among the many requisites for the realization of peace, social and economic equity constitutes the major one. Therefore, the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahido* Church should strongly advocate the existence of economic and social justice within families, communities, among nations and nationalities and all around the world as well.

4.2 Advocating tolerance, forgiveness, conciliation and love

Just as peace serves as the foundation for development so also are tolerance, forgiveness, conciliation and love necessary for the realization of peace, in addition to economic and social justice. Tolerance, forgiveness, conciliation and love should always be practices, as a matter of course, in families, communities, and between religions, etc. Good examples for this kind of practice are the age-old Ethiopian Orthodox Christian and Islamic religious institutions. The EOTC and Islam have existed peacefully in mutual tolerance for more than 1400 years, for which legacy they are considered as good

examples of mutual tolerance for the rest of the world to emulate. This is no mere laudation but a fact based on comparisons made with the state of affairs in other countries where the two religions are practiced. Consider the history of the Middle East, Asia, North Africa and Europe. In Middle East, for example, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, and in North Africa, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, the Sudan and other countries there have been Christians. As for Europe, Turkey had its share of Christians, while Spain had Muslim communities. In all of these countries, however, the two religions nowhere have been practiced with as much mutual tolerance as they have been in Ethiopia, and for so long. In the said countries, one religion has always managed a continued existence only at the expense of the other. The situation is quite different in Ethiopia. The Christian government of Ethiopia not only believed that different religions could co-exist, but it also proved to be a state that shamed and sent back the Qurayish who came all the way to Ethiopia to persecute the followers of the Prophet Mohammed. Since that moment, no recorded history, with the exception of one incident, is known that alleges that the Christian Kings of Ethiopia forced the Muslims to adopt Christianity as their Faith. There is no denying that there were conflicts involving both religious communities, for one reason or another, but I have not found anything regarding measures taken for the express purpose of forcing the Muslims to convert to Christianity. One important point regarding the mutual tolerance between the two religions needs to be highlighted. There have been no incidents in which a Christian preacher approached Muslims, whether at their homes or on the road, in an attempt to preach the Gospel, or Muslims trying to preach the Qur'an to Christians. Neither have there been instances, officially speaking, whereby the preachers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church spoke or wrote of the Muslim Faith denigratively. Such things as mentioned above could be cited as examples of the healthy relationship between the two religions, the continuity of which will certainly

play a significant role in our development endeavors.

Similarly, if there is a positive relationship between the EOCT and other Christian sects, it will benefit our development. Ethiopia is a land of many problems. It is also a land of many nations and nationalities inhabiting an extensive area of land. Even though we have a long history of a shared past, because of the country's topography and the poor transportation system we do not have one language, one religion and one culture. While this diversity in language, religion and culture could be considered a virtue in some respects, it is equally undeniable that it overcomes its own problems, since our differences are wide and spread, which could be aggravated by some forces working against our co-existence.

It is known that Ethiopia has a long history as a country with independent states, free culture and free religion in the black world. This history makes of the country a model and source of pride for many African countries, serving, since the 19th century, to initiate a movement called "Ethiopianism." It is obvious that there are forces that are not happy with such black people's movement. These forces would only be too happy to see Ethiopia, the cause of "Ethiopianist" movements, divided on account of linguistic, cultural and religious differences. They might also work untiringly to loosen this unity of the society and destroy it. One of the tools for such purposes is religion.

During the reign of Emperor Haile Sillase, foreign missionaries were allowed to engage in evangelization projects in those areas of Ethiopia where the people were not Christians. But their evangelization activities were focused in those areas where the EOTC, which had a history of thousands of years before their advent, was operating. At the time, the clergy and followers of the EOTC had considered this as an invasion and repeatedly protested to the authorities. The activities of the missionaries were considered as damaging to the social relationships existing among the

Ethiopian people, thereby weakening the future development endeavors of the country. Therefore, if both parties, i.e. the Christians and the Muslims, were to freely discuss such problems and seek appropriate solutions to them, it will have a good impact on the development plan we envision for the year 2020.

4.3 Mobilizing the congregation for work

Work is the foundation of development. Development and progress are the results of work. One should work to eradicate poverty. Therefore religious institutions should not only encourage work but also transform themselves into diligent workers. The first commandment of the Holy Bible is "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread". Jesus Christ also said "My father worketh hitherto, and I work," emphasizing the nobility of work. St Paul, too, has said, "He who does not work, neither should he eat." The Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahido* Church clergy constitute a good example of a hard working community. They serve the church while, at the same time, they work their land.

On the other hand, there are protestations about the excessive number of holidays that the EOTC requires its followers to refrain from work. There is indeed truth in this claim in the sense that the actual working days do not even account for half the days of the year. But one should understand that not all these holidays are decreed by canon law. Most of the holidays in Ethiopia were decreed during the reign of King Zera Yaqob. There supposed justification for the decree was the proliferation of idolatry during his reign and the plan was to get more time for the dissemination of the teachings of the Church. The decree was written in the "*metshafe mist'er*":

In accordance with the said decree 33 days were set aside to commemorate the Virgin Mary, 12 days for St Michael, 3 days for St. Gabriel, 2 days of St. Rufa'el and 5 days for other archangels. Thus the total holidays decreed were 56.

The total number of holidays decreed during the reign of Zera Yaqob was 109. In addition to the above mentioned holidays, the following were set down as Church holidays:

Major holidays	9
Be'ale Egziabher	12
Be'ale Medhane Alem	12
Holidays of the Apostles	12
Holidays of St. George	3
Holiday of St. Tekle Haimanot	2
Holiday of St. Gebre Menfes Qidus	2

When we add the Sabbath—Sunday—the total comes to 100. The grand total of holidays is 210, while the working days are limited to 150. This sum does not include the monthly holidays. It should be clear that the Saints for which the different Churches are named are commemorated every month. When we include these days the number of Holidays will exceed the total sum given above. Personally, I prefer to see most of the holidays (including Saturday) simply remembered with no cessation of work, and I say this with all due respect to the sensitivity of the laity for holidays.

When we take a close look at the situation in our country, it has already been mentioned that Atse Zera Yaqob decreed many holydays because he wanted to have more days to indoctrinate the laity as part of his campaign to eliminate idolatry. Besides, there might not have been a problem of poverty in the country at the time. But for us today poverty has become the major issue. We have also learned from the story of King David and that of the Apostles what hunger could do to people. In present day Ethiopia, moreover, the problem of idolatry is non-existent. Even if it is said to exist, we do not see the Church using those holidays for teaching the idolaters, especially in the rural areas where additional working days are a necessity.

It is believed that one of the reasons for our poverty is that people individually do not put enough time into their work. Some of the people simply could not find work, while others do not work enough because of the holidays. In fact, I know there are believers who claim that

they have nothing to do even on working days. Particularly in the northern part of the country, most households only have a very small plot of land, so small, in fact, that they are forced to idle away their time. Even though, the absence of work while there is a lot of manpower without work should be worrisome, it should nevertheless be noted that there are also a lot of people who have work to do but are worried by the excessiveness of the holidays to be observed. Our focus precisely is on such people as have a lot of work to do, but are constrained by the number of holidays. For those who have nothing to do, everyday could be a holiday. Let us suppose there is an investor who happens to be a believer. As a believer, that investor wants to comply with the rules of the Church, while, as an investor he wants to develop his country and support his people. What is to be done? The working people face the same dilemma. They are believers. But they also want to work and make a living without agonizing over violating the rules of the Church, while at the same time wanting to inherit the kingdom of Heaven. Ethiopian priests are farmers who must work the land to survive. But they are duty-bound to observe the holydays themselves first and, then, urge the laity to do the same. But the priests spend most of their working days in the service of the Church and the remaining days would be holidays. This makes them the most victimized sector of the society. We also should not forget that most of the holidays were decreed by Atse Zer'a Ya'iqob, not in the Holy Bible or by the Synod or by the international canon of the Church.

On the contrary, we know that all the holydays of Virgin Mary are not being observed. Thus, I humbly suggest that the synod of the EOTC revise the holydays and decree that some of the holydays should be remembered only, since most of the holydays are not decreed by synod.

4.4 Adopting the principle of thrift and teaching others to save

Economists advise that one of the ways to bring about development is through savings. The biblical sayings "Take therefore no thought of the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought of for the things of itself" (Mathew 6:34), "behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly father feedeth them" have been wrongly understood by Ethiopian believers. Christ said these words to demonstrate the omnipotence of God, not to teach the people neither to sow, nor reap, nor to save for tomorrow. If that were so, the divine command "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" would have been unnecessary. Because the Ethiopian believers have miscomprehended the significance of these words, the Ethiopian culture understands the Amharic term for savings, *quteba*, as greed or avarice. The economists' recommendation about the importance savings could not be assimilated into the culture of the people. The advice of the economists regarding the importance of savings could probably be easily absorbed into the culture of the society if it were delivered through the teachings of the Fathers of the Church. It is the Fathers of the Church that taught the people the importance of being benevolent. If these Fathers could make the society benevolent, they should also be in a position to teach the same society about the importance of savings. One of the factors that prevent the believers from engaging in savings and, consequently, exposes them to poverty is the money they spend for the rites attending both mournings and festivities.

It is in the nature of things that sickness precedes death. When a person falls ill, his family spends all that they have for hospitals or for treatment by Holy water at different churches. Their energy is similarly exhausted. Once the sick person is dead, however, instead of simply performing the appropriate funeral rites and laying matters to rest

and continue with their regular life, they are forced by tradition to do otherwise. First of all, even though there is nothing to be gained by it, it is not only the relatives of the family of the deceased that attend the funeral ceremony but also friends of the relatives as well. This will have a negative impact on the community's private as well as public engagement. When government work in particular is affected, its impact is felt by every sector of the community, for the simple reason that every time a given civil servant goes one or another funeral, it is the clients of the firm for which the civil servant works that suffer in the process. After the funeral the mourning period may extend for 40 days. All this will cause unnecessary expenditure, both in terms of finance and labor, not only to the family of the deceased but also to the community and the country as a whole. In addition to this, the expenses for the 3rd, 7th, 12th, 30th, 40th, 80th day, memorials the 6th month, and the annual memorials, for the unveiling of the tomb, etc., simply consumes virtually all that the family has, including what little the deceased might have left behind. Pushed to its logical conclusion, the children of the deceased, elders to be supported and, as a whole, the family of the deceased will be left without a penny to scratch a living. Even though this custom is performed all in the name of the Church, the fact is that it is caused by the competition among the members of the community, who try to outdo each other at whatever it is that they are trying to accomplish. There also is social pressure expressed in terms of placing the deceased above everyone else, be that person a husband/wife; child or parent, thereby justifying the excesses in expenditure, to which is usually added that all is done to save one's soul. Those who exert such pressure are the illiterate and prisoners of their culture, while those who succumb to such pressure also happen to be of the same stock. Therefore, the religious fathers should exorcise such people from their bondage to culture, for such people do what they do believing it to be their religious duty.. Because these people do such things thinking that it is a religious obligation. The waste people indulge in during

festivities is of no less magnitude than that for funerals and mourning rites.

The victims of such practices are not only the laity but also the clergy themselves. Members of the clergy, too, have families, just like any other member of the community. They have their own wives, kids and parents. Both joy and sorrow take turns upon them. They are, therefore, subject to the same traditional practices. The loss the members of the clergy suffer is, in fact, of a multiple nature. First, they lose as members of the community. Then there is their loss as members of an institution, as they also lose as citizens of the same state. The death of believers is in and of itself a loss to the Church Fathers.

It is, therefore, incumbent upon the Church Fathers to such extravagance on the part of the community, whether in times of festivity or in moments of mourning. They should teach and rebuke the believers that going to such an extent of extravagance to entertain people on such occasions is simply a harmful practice. The clergy should understand that the tradition is driving the believers to poverty and should, therefore do everything to fight it. The poverty of the believers is the poverty of the Church. A church that has poor members is itself poor.

Believers spend as much as they do when a family member dies in the belief that they will get consolation from the act itself. The only way to be consoled is through education, education about resurrection, which is one of the five pillars of the Church. They should console the believers by invoking the promise of life after death.

I say all this because the religious fathers are very close to the society. They are the first to be called upon when there is mourning in a family, the first to be invited on occasions of festivity, and they are the ones who offer advice, which the people accept. They are called upon during births to bless the new-born with Holy water or christen the child; they are present at weddings to bless the happy couple and wish them a wedlock

as long-lasting as that of Abraham and Sarah, etc.

4.5 Playing the advance guard in the fight against HIV/AIDS

The EOTC teaches the words "I was sick, and you took care of me" (Mathew 25:36) as one of the six commandments of the Gospel. While Jesus Christ was on earth He commiserated with the sick. In His presence the recovered their sights, the deaf recovered their hearing, the mute recovered their speech, the lepers were healed, the hunchback were straightened, and demons were exorcized. The EOTC, following the footsteps of Jesus Christ, has been known to have healed those who could not see, hear, or speak and those who had been hunchbacked and possessed by demons. It is common to see in this age science that the number of people seeking the aid of the Church is greater than that of the people visiting the hospital.

The Church should now be appreciated for opening a secretariat for HIV/AIDS and working to eradicate this rapidly expanding epidemic, in addition to helping the sick through prayer and Holy water. The epidemic until recently charged through urban centers, but now it is also invading the rural areas. The reasons for the rapid spread of the epidemic are lack of awareness, on the one hand, and poverty on the other. In this regard, because lack of awareness about the disease is less in the rural areas than in urban centers and the poverty level of the rural people is higher than that for urban dwellers, the level of vulnerability to the disease is also higher in the rural areas.

The EOTC, nurtured on Ethiopian soil as it is, very well understands the significance of the Amharic saying "*tammo kememaqeq asqeddimo met't'enqeq*" (which freely rendered into English corresponds to "an apple a day keeps the doctor away." The EOTC has a system of networks all over the rural areas and it is highly heeded by the rural communities. It should, therefore, use

these networks and the respect it commands to arrest the disease in its track and stop its unchecked spread in the rural areas. The first step in this direction is for the Church to show its affection and warmth to those living with the virus and, accordingly, teach believers to do likewise. To work against the practices of unsafe sex and illegitimate marriage is one of the major steps the Church must take.

4.6 Working on marriage

Marriage is a venerable rite in the eyes of the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahido* Church. In addition to being a contractual agreement undertake between a man and a woman, it is a rite, with a mystery all its own, that unites the two persons. The Church further believes, after the teachings of Christ, that Christian marriage is not something that should be undone for every unseemly reason. It seems, however, that the EOTC could not inculcate this sacrament of Holy Matrimony in the hearts of its believers. I do not think that believers even know that it is one of the sacraments of the Church, for which reason, it so appears; they divorce their partners for every insignificant cause that comes their way. Divorce was unknown in any of the ancient Churches. While there are different reasons attributed to the practice of divorce, I think it has some other historical reason.

As we know from our study of history, The Heads of EOTC and the Church of England had for long been the sovereigns of the respective countries, specifically the kings. For the most part, the kings did not observe the rules of the Churches. For example, Ethiopian kings had practiced having two wives, to whom they gave the nomenclatures the Lady of the Right and the Lady of the Left. This practice gradually percolated to the lower levels of society and the culture of having two, or even more, wives took root, regardless of whether or not the men had the resource capacity to maintain more than one wife. The models for this kind of practice were the kings of the Old Testament. I think this Old Testament tradition paved the way

for thinking of marriage as something casual, and, therefore, readily avoidable.

The Church's effort in the 14th century to eliminate this unseemly practice of polygamy had failed. Since then, because no bishop with the resolve of *Abuna Ya'iqob*, who lived during the reign of Emperor Amda Tsion and who campaigned to bring the practice to an end, came on the scene, the practice has continued to our day un-rectified. The practice of divorce, over and above being a cause for the breakup of families, has at present become a major cause for the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Needless to say, this constitutes a great drawback to our development. It is, therefore, incumbent, upon the Church to teach the holiness of the institution of marriage and combat the practice of having more than one wife, which is anathema to Christian teaching. The righting up of the culture of marriage, it should be noted, is essential not only to the building of families but also to the project of nation-building and development. The campaign of the Church to combat divorce on groundless reason should be intensified in the rural areas, where the practice has become very common.

4.7 Working harder for spiritual development

We have already noted how the EOTC established its own Development and Christian Aid Commission and engaged in community service activities. But when we look at the history of the Commission's establishment, and even its strategic plan, we find that its main focus was restricted to the material dimension of its activities. It has been said that "the soul cannot exist as an entity separate from the Flesh." It stands to reason, therefore, that the EOTC's activities in the area material development deserve due appreciation. However, it should be known that the starvation, thirst and nakedness of the spirit are by no means less important than the starvation, thirst and nakedness of the flesh. It is inevitable that a hungry and thirsty person should go around

nosing out his needs. This is one of the critical problems of the Church - the emigration of its believers. The number of believers that emigrate to other religious denominations is not only saddening but also shocking. The EOTC should give priority to this shocking problem and take actions to overcome it. The Church should provide the believers with what they lack, should feed and offer them words of God for which they hunger and thirst. As has been pointed out earlier, the Church has a refugees' and repatriates' department to help refugees from different African countries, such as the Sudan, Somalia, Zaire, Eritrea and Yemen. Similarly, it should have a department to rehabilitate its own refugees and repatriates. It has been said in the Gospel, "Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Accordingly, therefore, the Church should act by giving priority to the problem of the spiritual emigration of its followers than to their physical exodus, to their spiritual development than to their material development. If the Church does not act in accordance with such priority, it will have failed to fulfill the responsibility given to Peter in the following words: "Feed my lambs; tend my sheep." It is clear to every one what the wages would be of the shepherd who abandoned the sheep and the lambs to the wolves.

The crucial importance of material development for a poor country like Ethiopia is certainly not debatable, but it is only natural for the Church to focus more on the spiritual development of its followers.. Spiritual development will bring with it material development. Hence, the Church should design a strategy of spiritual development alongside of its activities in the area of material development. The Church, in other words, should, on the one hand, strongly promote the development of the Gospel, while on the other hand, it should preach the gospel of development.

4.8 Training the clergy as a core activity towards the realization of the country's vision of material and spiritual development in 2020

The EOTC should immediately embark on activities that ensure the realization of the spiritual and material development of the country by 2020. The key solution for such development consists in the education, the development and the building of the capacity of its clergy. As most of us know, the qualification of our clergy is in the area of *zema*, with its attendant branches, which are all used for the purpose of saying Mass and singing the praises of God. The *zema*-cluster of disciplines is not oriented to enable the learners familiarize themselves with the main corpus of the Bible, a task that is better served by that branch of Church learning known as *Tirguame Metsahifit* [Scriptural exegesis], in which, further, there are only few qualified people the Church can boast. In the process of such education, which usually requires 15 - 20 years, such skills as teaching and preaching the Holy Bible, or history of the Church, or formal literacy are not included. Because members of the clergy spend 15 to 20 years to qualify as worthy of the Church's blessing, time will have run out for them to continue with formal education. Because the education is limited to acquiring only indigenous knowledge, it renders the clergy total alien to modern education, international perspectives and critical/scientific thinking. They are thus not able to distinguish between tradition and religion, culture and religion, and science and religion, thereby failing to grasp the relationships and differences existing between them. They would not get the opportunity to learn from the experiences of other Churches. As the saying "what you do not know won't hurt you." goes, they do not dream of a better spiritual and material development.

I would like to suggest two solutions to this problem. The first is a short-term solution, namely, provide continuous and sustainable training for the clergy

now in the service of the Church, supporting the program with distance education. The second solution is to give modern education and training for the young clergy. If the EOTC-DICAC had been working in this area for the past 35 years, the project would have assumed a national dimension and the result would have been very fruitful. As the folks put it, "*lallefew kiremt bet ayisserram*" ["It's no use crying over spilt milk"]. Henceforward, however, the EOTC should take up the training of the young clergy as a serious project if our spiritual and material development is to be successfully achieved.

It is very important to prepare a new kind of traditional curriculum, such that the time it takes to cover it would be much shorter than it is now, so that the young would-be clergy will have enough time left to attend modern education and other systematic theological studies. This way the new clergy will not be strangers to the traditional education, thereby winning the respect and acceptance on the part of those followers of the Church that are sensitive to the traditional education. At the same time, the young clergy, exposed as they are to a systematic approach to theological matters and inquiry, will be equipped with international perspectives as well as both religious and scientific outlooks, which would mean that they could easily communicate with and understand the needs of the young generation. That is why the EOTC, when thinking the development scenario in 2020, should emphasize the training of the clergy as one of the core issues to be tackled.

At present the Church has two colleges and one senior theological school, namely, the Holy Trinity Theological College, the theology college in Makele, Tigray, and the *Sewaswe Birhan* St. Paul Senior Theological School. I do not have enough information regarding the resources, both material and human as well as financial. Still, I would like to go ahead and recommend that, when the EOTC plans on opening colleges and training centers, it should furnish the institutions with all the resources required, including qualified teaching

and support staff, without which it will continue to train its traditional students with the help of traditional teachers, equip the students with the same traditional knowledge, in the process the Church itself remaining traditional and nothing else.

The first basic problem of the EOTC is its inability to properly train its clergy, while the second one is inability to provide jobs to those who have been trained. Comparatively speaking, the best trainees are those who graduated from the Holy Trinity Theological College, but the graduates did not get hired by the EOTC. As a matter of fact, the ones with a better opportunity to be hired by the EOTC were those trained in the Zeway Clergy Training School, the main reason for this being that the school was founded by the current Patriarch himself and because the structure of the school system itself also constrains the graduates from being hired anywhere but the EOTC alone.

The main obstacle that prevented the trainees of old from being hired by the EOTC was the old Church bureaucracy itself. The personnel that ran the bureaucracy at the time were those with no traditional education or any kind of church training, and they were usually hired through nepotism to fill in low-paying positions, such as errand boys or secretaries, and gradually made their way up the ladder to higher offices to run the bureaucracy as they wished. These people were afraid that the new graduates would take away their jobs from them, so that they used all sorts of pretexts and smear tactics to manipulate the Church officials into rejecting the hiring of the trained clergy. In my opinion, such bureaucracy so very well versed in the art of intrigue, is the major problem for the Church's inability to make progress.

I do not have adequate information, but it is only my hope that the present administration of the Church has changed all this. To speak boldly of the Church's administration in such terms, one should undertake studies to find out how many of the employees of the

Church, including the different diocese, parishes, but especially in the EOTC Management and Christian Aid Commission, are members of the clergy, how many have undergone church education, how many have been trained in higher theological education, how many, moreover, are actually Orthodox Christians. If, on the basis of such studies, one finds that all the practices of the past bureaucracies have indeed changed, one can then say that the Church is indeed ready for engagement towards the realization of Ethiopia's vision of development for the year 2020

4.9 The need for attitudinal change

At this point we should mention that the Eastern and the Western Churches have different outlooks, which we will look at in some detail.

The Church was established when the ancient Greek Philosophy and science had reached their apex. During that period, when the ancient Greek philosophers were striving day and night in search of the truth in order to put human life on the right track, some pilgrims came to the Greeks from the East with the following message: "We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked and touched with our hands" (1 John 1:1). Their teaching preaches that Jesus of Nazareth resurrected from the dead on the third day after he was buried, that they saw his ascension to Heaven and through him that truth had been revealed. The Greeks who were searching for truth for many years, as usual, were eager to listen to this new story and there, in the land of Greece, philosophy and religion confronted each other. Following this the philosophers began to convert to Christianity and the Christians began to study Philosophy. Contrarywise, people who were against the confounding (according to them) of Christianity with Philosophy began to protest, claiming that there could possibly be no kinship between Jerusalem and Athens as darkness with

light, and started their fight against the fusion of religion and philosophy. For this reason, it was been declared that the Church should distance itself from Greek philosophy and science. Christians thought to find all truth from the Holy Bible alone. Philosophical books were burnt; Christians who read philosophy were excommunicated for apostasy.

While the philosophical controversy found its solution with this move, the Church was nevertheless embroiled in another controversy regarding the interpretation of the Holy Bible itself. Because of this, especially because of the theological controversy that emerged in 451 G.C. the Church was split into two, i.e. East and West. The Eastern Churches were those of Egypt, Ethiopia, Syria, India, Armenia and Jerusalem, while those of the West were the European Churches and those of the northern African countries. The theology of Greece and that of her likes became one with that of the Western Churches.

The theological difference also had a political dimension. With the exception of Ethiopia and India, the other countries of the Eastern Orthodox Church were under Byzantine (Greek) rule. The colonized countries tried to get their political independence using their theological difference as a pretext. Conversely, the Byzantine (Greek) Empire took forceful measures to impose its theology on those countries, as a result of which numerous believers, clergy and bishops were executed. The conflict continued from 451 to the 7th. The split provided an opportunity for the expansion of Islam. The Eastern people, who were tired of the 300-year war, wrongly gave their support to Islam considering it as a protector from their Christian brothers (enemies). Using this opportunity, Islam immediately controlled Egypt, Syria, Jerusalem and other northern African Christians. While, on the one hand, these countries were freed from Byzantine hegemony, on the other hand they fell into the hands of Islam, from the frying pan into the fire, as the saying goes. The promise given them by the Muslims to freely practice

their religion proved false and they were forced, through different forms of coercion to adopt Islam as their religion. At present the number of Christians these countries had has declined.

After the split of the Church into East and West, for all the Churches went their own ways for the next 1500 years. Their theological differences accordingly became even greater. For example, the Western Churches ignored the decision to ride the Church of philosophy and decided, on the contrary, to make philosophy an integral part of Church education. Their priests read philosophy more than they read the Holy Bible. The most surprising thing is that most philosophers were canonized as saints, which goes to show the privileged position given to philosophy in the Western Church. Philosophy thus was christened by the Western priests and became Christian.

The western clergy, in addition to the teaching of philosophy, learned much from the Crusades, as a result of which the scope of their secular outlook broadened. They started revising their history and culture continuously and made many reforms, developing from year to year. By opening colleges and universities, they managed to become the centers of their respective countries' education. In tandem with this move, the western churches started focusing on material development. The then Western world was a place where one could only live by working hard, unlike the Eastern world where people idled away their time in the sun. This situation served as a motivation for the churches to work hard for development.

The history of the Eastern Churches was different from that of the Western Churches. The Eastern Churches were, first and foremost, very loyal to the teachings of their Fathers, that is why they still stick to the doctrine of avoiding philosophy. Therefore, while the West inclined towards philosophy, the East firmly held onto monasticism; while the West tended towards preaching/teaching, the East tended towards hymnology; and while the West looked outward to

development, the East persisted on fasting, prayer and righteousness. That is why the Eastern Churches are lauded for their spiritual life than for their material development.

The Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahido* Church, as has been pointed out, is part of the Eastern Orthodox faith, with which Ethiopia has geographical, linguistic, cultural, psychological and genealogical affinity. More specifically, the Syrian and Coptic monks who fled the persecution perpetrated by the Byzantine empire and sought refuge in Ethiopia on account of its affinity to the Eastern Church, not only translated the Scriptures into Ge'ez but also brought with them monasticism to the Ethiopian Church and built monasteries. The net effect of this was that they infused the clergy as well as a considerable size of the congregation with their spiritualism. The Ge'ez manuscripts reflect this reality through and through. To cite but one example, St. Yared, in one of his hymns, calls forth the need for seeking the spiritual life in the following words: "Oh, my brothers! Forsake and disdain thee this corporeal world. For the world, with all its wealth, is but ephemeral." The Ethiopian monks, who were nurtured from early on with these words, sustained themselves on roots, leaves, completely abandoning even grain and water. This way of life was unknown even during what is known as the Apostolic Age.

Because the Christian Ethiopia has been indoctrinated in line with this orientation, the attitude of the society in general towards material progress has remained minimal. What needs to be noted at this juncture is that, during those early days of Ethiopian Christianity, the size of the Ethiopian population was small, the country's forest resources were abundant and the general climate was salutary, so that it might not have been necessary to worry much about material property or prosperity. This much could be surmised. When it comes to the present time, however, the poverty situation in our country has increased, due, for the most part, to the increase in the country's

population and the adverse climatic change that has been taking place over the years. This is a serious indicator of the need for development.

Moreover, the absence or lack of development inevitably means dependency or subjection to external forces. Economic dependency brings with it religious dependency or subjection. It stands to reason, therefore, that the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahido* Church should strive towards development if it means to maintain its religious independence. What is needed for this to happen is to effect attitudinal change within the Church itself.

As I have already pointed out earlier, the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahido* Church is part of the Eastern Orthodox block. Because of this, the Church still adheres to the injunction of the early Fathers to ban philosophy and science from its teachings and has remained aloof from the said disciplines, while all the other Churches have made attitudinal adjustments with regard to the acquisition of both philosophical and scientific knowledge. Being knowledgeable in the field of science is nothing but understanding the laws of Nature. A judicious understanding of the laws of Nature and living according to their dictate is as rewarding as knowing the Word of God and living by it. Our clergy should accordingly possess awareness of science and philosophy as well as material development and progress.

Conclusion

As we have observed earlier, the EOTC has been undertaking, as it still does, various development activities through the Development and Inter Church Aid Commission, Children's Affairs Department, and the *Mahibere Kidusan* Association. Moreover, there are other development activities, undertaken by the different parishes, in the area of education and preservation of religious relics. But the fact remains that much more than what has been done is expected from the Church.

It **has also been pointed out** that the EOTC **has been** serving as Ethiopia's center of education since the time of its founding until the beginning of 20th century. A century before, when Emperor Menilik II set up his cabinet, no minister had been assigned for education. The alleged reason for the vacancy was that the Egyptian bishop, Abune Mathewos, who was the more enlightened among the clergy at the time, claim the position as appropriate for the Church. When Menilik II School was opened, the first teachers were people who came from Coptic Orthodox Church. However, since the EOTC itself was alien the very notion of modern education, the idea simply fell through. What is surprising, however, is that the Church continued to persist in its aloofness from the idea of modern education even during the century just gone by. This stance has hurt the Church very much. While the other missionaries equipped their followers with modern education, the followers of the EOTC remained uneducated, the result of which is there for everybody to see. Even though the Church has a few modern schools in Addis Ababa, the **scenario** is not encouraging, given the long history of the Church as the country's center of education. Given its influence over the Ethiopian state, had the EOTC collaborated with the various governments in the area of education, the coverage of education by now would have increased manifold. Even as things stand now, however, the Church should actively train its followers, particularly the clergy, and participate in kindergarten and primary school education. Of all the development activities that the Church should participate in aggressively, education must stand out as a priority concern.

The other issue that should be given due attention is that of the traditional schools (*yeabinet timihirt bet*), with all its branches, such as *Tirguame Metsahift* (Scriptural exegesis) and *Qene* (poetry), to name but two of the branches. Even though disciplines such as *Tirguame Metsahift* are obviously on their last legs, there are still tens of thousands of students of these disciplines. These

traditional schools, whether viewed from the perspective of their way of life or the nature and structure of the curriculum, still find themselves in the same state as they had been a millennium ago. The state of the students of these traditional schools is as pathetic as that of a flock of sheep without a shepherd. It would, therefore, be worth the Church's while if both the students' way of life and the curriculum were visited with a radical change. Such change would certainly help our development endeavors.

The condition of the monasteries is a matter of equal concern. The Land Tenure Proclamation of the Derg period has left the monasteries without any form of tenure. With the conversion of land into a state ownership, the monasteries have been rendered incapable of providing support to orphans and the elderly, as of old. Their age-old tradition has been undone. If only one gave the matter serious consideration and knew how to go about it, monasteries can prove a fertile ground for development projects. If only they were provided with some training, with the attendant setting up of development schemes, they could, over and above helping themselves, revive their tradition of helping others. Moreover, since monasteries could also serve as centers of training and grounds for recruiting the appropriate Church leaders, it is my contention that they should be given due attention.

I have personally found the efforts of the Mahibere Kidusan Association to provide support to the traditional schools and monasteries gratifying. I have also come to realize that the Association is implementing different development projects to enable the churches and monasteries to be self-sufficient and contribute towards the development of the community, to conserve the holy relics in their present condition, to strengthen and help the traditional schools to maintain the traditions of the Church, for which it has allocated Birr 1,000,000. I am quite happy that the Association's activities are carried out with spiritual wisdom and tact.

The other issue that requires the Church's attention is that of holy relics. Thanks to our forefathers and kings, the relics they handed down to us constitute both the expression of our identity and a source of our pride and dignity. Most of these relics are religious. However, nowadays many relics are deteriorating through mismanagement, while quite a few have simply disappeared. The government and the Church should work in tandem to protect these relics.

The major input for the success of any development project is the creation of favorable administration structure and the production of trained personnel. The Mahibere Kidusan Association a case in point when it comes to the importance of having qualified personnel. If all the clergy were as qualified as the people serving in the Mahibere Kidusan Association, the Church would have come a long way by now.

It has already been pointed out that, in order to overcome the problem of qualified personnel, the Church has opened 23 clergy training centers, one senior theological school and two colleges (the Holy Trinity Theological College and the Theological College at Makelle). While this is a good beginning, for a Church with 40,000,000 followers, 500,000 clergy, 2,000,000 Sunday School youth members, 44 diocese, 511 district offices and 40,000 churches, the number of the qualified personnel who graduate from these institutes is far below adequate. In my opinion, each parish should be equipped with a clergy member who has graduated from one or the other of the recognized institutions. Therefore, the EOTC should increase its training institutions manifold, at the same time maintaining the quality of training. The next move of the Church should be assigning the graduates in the right place.

To accomplish the goals of vision 2020, the clergy should:

1. Be versed in both traditional and modern knowledge;
2. Be authentic in their Faith;
3. Have the respect and acceptance of the society and be capable of giving

- leadership to the followers of the Church;
4. Be capable of bridging the gap between the new and the old generations;
 5. Have a thorough knowledge of their own Faith those of the other Churches;
 6. Be capable of distinguishing between religion and custom as well as religion and culture;
 7. Be capable of grasping the correlation between religion and science;
 8. Cultivate international perspectives;
 9. Show concern for spiritual and material development of the public;
 10. Have the capacity to organize and lead the Church; and
 11. Be able to represent the Church at international forums.

However, based on the information I have, EOC-DICAC's former activities and the approved strategic plan has not taken the preceding points into account. For example, the budget allocated for 5 years for the purpose of training the employees of the Commission and the clergy and to support the monasteries and the parishes of the EOC is 9.5 million Birr, which accounts for only 2.8% of a total budget of 346 million Birr. If we assume, for example, that half of this would be allocated for training and divided among the 500,000 clergy members the Commission is said to support, the per capita share of one clergy member does not even add up to one Birr. This clearly shows that not serious attention has been given to the training of the clergy. If the Church is to contribute to the country's vision of attaining its development goals for 2020, it should make a priority concern of developing itself and building the capacity of its clergy. It should learn from the government's capacity building program and produce from the outset clergy members who would prove capable of being both teachers and fathers to the youth currently undergoing education and training, while at the same time they should be able to integrate their activities with Ethiopia's vision for

the future. I believe the government, too, must lend a hand in this respect and ensure that the two work in tandem for the attainment of the same goals.

While, on the one hand, the Church has an adequate and quality theological legacy that has been tested through time, it is equally true that it also has age-old and deep-rooted beliefs and practices that could prove the undoing of the Church. This situation must be rectified. These should be corrected. One of the problems of our clergy is their inability to distinguish between religion and culture and religion and custom. Thus, every time they hear of the need for transforming the inherited culture and customs of the society, they feel dismayed, going even to the extent of considering the suggestion an act of heresy. But what actually constitutes heresy is changing the fundamental doctrine of the Church, not transforming tradition and custom. The doctrine of the Church cannot be changed, nor is there any need for doing so, for there is nothing the matter with it.

Among the traditions the Church received from the past is the procedure of appointing bishops, which actually goes contrary to the Church's regulations. For example, if a disciple has proved his worth as a capable student of the Psalms, he has the cultural right to be a deacon. This is the current practice. While, on the one hand, this practice belittles the clerical profession, on the other hand, it has swamped the Church with a community of clergy that it cannot manage. Besides, unqualified clergy cannot be relied upon as capable of contributing to the spiritual and material development that the country needs. Therefore, the Church should consider this deep-rooted problem take the necessary step to solve it.

Moreover, it behooves the Church to put in place a system for a balanced budget allocation. The absence of balanced budget allocation results in an unbalanced assignment of the clergy. For example, while a parish in a given town may be assigned 200 or more clergy

members, its rural counterpart may be left with none. Since no budget is allocated for rural parishes, one observes the rural clergy continuously migrating to cities, as a result of which the cities overflow with clerics, while the rural parishes are left with none to serve them. The net effect of this is seen in the unchecked increase of the unemployed in the country's urban centers.

Two kinds of solution could be suggested for this problem. The first solution is the opening up of development projects by EOC-DICAC and assigning some of the clergy to engage in these projects. This would not only contribute to the development of the country, but the clergy and the Church would also be beneficiaries of the income thus generated.

Neither is it heresy to suggest transformation in the area of traditional marriage, excess festivity during holidays, extravagant feasts to commemorate the dead. Making changes in mourning rituals and doing away with superfluous holidays, far from hurting anyone, comes in useful in a very practical sense. For all this to be realized, the Church needs disciples who emulate the ways of Jesus Christ and the example of St. Paul to fight the harmful in the society's tradition and culture and who work truthfully for genuine Orthodoxy and for development. If the Church works hard to produce such clergy in 2020, keeping the right balance between quantity and quality, the years following 2020 will shine on it with Hope. We should, however, take note of the fact that the EOTC's strategic plan addressed in this paper covers the period between 2005 and 2009.