

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

# **SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH**

---

**BY:- HILENA BELETE (GSE/0839/07)**

**ADVISOR:- DR. FASIL MERAWI**

**9/13/2022**

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

## ABSTRACT

Philosophy has a great role in formulating doctrines of Christian theology. The sources of knowledge that have been argued in philosophy, specifically, empiricism, rationalism and criticism have been the basis of knowledge in the earliest Christian schools, namely, school of Alexandria and school of Antioch; Rationalism contributing to the school of Alexandria and Empiricism to the school of Antioch. As one of the ancient churches, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church had been influenced by these two ancient Christian schools of thought. The source of knowledge in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is either empirical and is contributed by the thought of the Antiocheans, as in the case of the explanation that the sense organs perceive and learn the existence of God from nature; Or rational and is contributed by the Alexandrians, as in the case that the knowledge of the existence of God and that of good and evil is naturally put in the heart; Or it is defined as criticism, meaning, both empirical and rational sources, or both of the schools have contributed to the church equally, having in mind that mystical sources being common together with all of the philosophical sources in all cases.. This study definitely answers what the source of knowledge in the EOTC is and what the influences of the two schools are.

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

## Contents

ABSTRACT .....	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	5
INTRODUCTION .....	6
CHAPTER ONE .....	10
1.SITUATING THE DEBATE.....	10
1.1.School of Alexandria and Rationalism .....	11
1.1.1.The Christian School of Alexandria .....	12
1.1.2.Philosophers and Deans of the Alexandrian School.....	13
1.1.3.Rationalism and the Allegorical method of Interpretation .....	15
1.2.School of Antioch and Empiricism .....	20
1.2.1.Empiricism and Literal Method of Interpretation.....	21
1.3. Criticism.....	26
CHAPTER TWO .....	28
2.THE INFLUENCE OF THE ALEXANDRIAN SCHOOL ON EOTC .....	28
2.1.Introduction of Christianity to Ethiopia.....	28
2.2.Scholars and Their Teachings accepted from Alexandria .....	29
2.3.Faith, Reason and Knowledge.....	31
2.3.1. Faith and Reason .....	31
2.3.2. Knowledge.....	34
2.3.3. Is philosophizing or investigating forbidden in faith?.....	36
2.4.Method of Theology – Apophatism .....	40
2.4.1. Cataphatic approach .....	40
2.4.2.The Appophatic Approach .....	42
2.5. Allegorical Interpretation.....	44
2.6.Existence of God witnessed by Rational Thought .....	46
2.6.1.Witness of the ‘Nous’ (የሕሊና ምስክርነት) .....	46
2.6.2.Natural Leaning of Man (የሰው ልጅ የተፈጥሮ ዝንባሌ).....	47
CHAPTER THREE .....	49
3.THE INFLUENCE OF THE ANTIOCHEAN SCHOOL ON EOTC .....	49
3.1.The Method of Interpretation – “አንድምታ” .....	50

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

3.1.1.The Upper House and the Lower House .....	52
3.2.Revelation and Interpretation .....	54
3.3.Transcendence and Immanence.....	56
3.4. Empirical witness of Existence of God .....	57
3.4.2. The Argument from Efficient Cause and Design .....	60
3.5. Typological interpretation .....	63
CHAPTER FOUR .....	67
4. CONCLUSION.....	67
4.1.Judeo-Christian Tradition and Worship .....	67
4.2.Theory of knowledge and Criticism in the Church.....	68
4.3. Which School has the most impact?.....	71
4.3.1.Mystery of the Holy Trinity .....	72
4.3.2.Christology .....	73
4.3.3.Historical facts.....	74
4.3.4.The Sources of the Andimta Commentary.....	76
REFERENCES .....	78

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, I would like to thank the Almighty God for allowing me to do this thesis. It would have not been done without the help of God. It would not have been done without the help of the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, which I depended on Her intercession.

Dr. Fasil Merawi, My Advisor, all the qualities of this thesis have been designed with his help. He was always available, friendly, easy to communicate, concerned and very helpful academically. I would really like to give my hearty gratitude to him. I would also like to thank the Philosophy department staffs of the University for they were also very helpful.

My work colleagues and family have also contributed a lot in letting me have a comfortable surrounding for the study. I would like to thank all.

This thesis has been completed with the help of all the above mentioned and also some others which are missed to be stated here. However, all the weaknesses of this study remain to be because of the researcher.

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

## INTRODUCTION

In Christian Philosophy, two schools of Christian thought have been considered as very influential in the history of Christian theology; the School of Alexandria and the School of Antioch.

Alexandria is a city in ancient Egypt, which was founded 311 years before Christ. It was the second capital city of the Great Roman Empire until the seventh century, and it also was the center of Jewish, Greece and Egyptian philosophers. Many Christian scholars also emerged from the city, where one of the greatest schools is found. The School of Alexandria is known in its Allegorical method of interpretation, which makes it different from that of the Antiochean school, which is known for its Literal method of interpretation. The school of Alexandria is instituted to attract the numerous philosophers residing in the city, who later, after being baptized, played an important role on the development of Christian Theology.<sup>1</sup>

The school of Antioch, which was found in the capital of Syria, Antioch, which in turn was the third capital of the Roman Empire, and founded in the third century before Christ. Antioch was colonized by Greeks, and then by the Romans. As a result, the culture in Antioch is a two-fold, the original unspoiled Syrian culture and a Greco-Roman culture. Several Greek and Roman philosophers also resided in the city, influencing the school.<sup>2</sup>

The scholars from the two schools used to criticize each other. The Antiocheans call the Alexandrians as Seballians, while the later call the former as the sons of Paul of Samosata, where both of the mentioned individuals are considered as Heretics in Christianity.<sup>3</sup> These Critics came as a result of the method of interpretation in the two schools, which we would discuss clearly

---

<sup>1</sup> የቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ በዓለም መድረክ፣ አባ ጎርጎርዮስ፣ 1978 ዓ.ም.፣ ገጽ. 70-72

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p 72-73

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

later. The Antiochean School, which uses the literal method of interpretation, is methodically related to the philosophy of Aristotle, while the Alexandrian school is related to the thoughts of his master, Plato.

Now, it is clear that the dispute between the two sides is a dispute between Platonic and Aristotelian schools of thought, which strongly suggest Rationality and Empiricism respectively, in their theories of Knowledge. Let us now see how this difference in thought, within the two giant schools of Christianity, described a single truth of theology.

## **The nature of Christ described in a Rational and Empirical view**

In Orthodox Christianity, the nature of Christ is described as one person (hypostases) from two persons, and as one nature/essence (ousia)<sup>4</sup> from two natures. It is believed that the second person of God is united with the person of Man, and became One Person in Christ. Similarly, the nature of God is united with the nature of Man, and became one united nature in Christ, who is believed to be truly God and truly Man.<sup>5</sup>

The Person of Man is tangible with specific height and width, while the person of God is the opposite. Regarding nature/essence, Man is a creature, mortal, weak, etc..., while God is the Creator, Immortal, Omnipotent, Omniscient, etc...

If we urge ourselves a little, to define this further in other words, Man's personhood and nature can be seen, tasted, touched and the likes, while God's cannot. This means, If an Aristotelian, Empiricist philosopher, who believes that knowledge is only conceived from the surrounding environment, which is perceived by the sense organs, happens to study the nature of Christ, he/she tends to focus on the Manhood of Him, which is perceivable by the sense organs; And this is exactly what the Antiocheans did. Regarding the nature of Christ, they intensively focus on the Manhood of Him and then come to the Godhead. They come to the Omnipotence, OmniScient,

---

<sup>4</sup> <Ousia> is an Aristotelian word and concept which was first used in Christianity by the Alexandrian Scholar known as Oregon. It is a known concept a <<Form and Matter philosophy>> of metaphysics. Hypostases is also a word known in theology of Trinity, and is similarly a borrowed word from ancient Greek Philosophy.

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that this belief is the oriental orthodox belief.

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

Omnibenevolent nature of Christ, only after they intensively narrate that he was given birth, ate, once hungry, asleep, crucified and the likes. Some extremists, like Arius, from this group of scholars, who ignored the Godhead, have been condemned by the ancient Church.

The Scholars of the Alexandrian school, with their Platonic rational view of knowledge, do exactly the opposite from that of the Antiocheans. They start from the Logos, when they start their study on Christ; The nature of the Logos, his Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Omniscient nature are clearly described before coming to his virgin birth and becoming Man, while keeping the nature of his Godhead.

These two ancient Christian schools of thought have influenced many ancient church theologies including the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church and its teachings. Both rationalism and Empiricism are seen in many of its teachings. Let us take the following examples regarding how we know the existence of God:

- “እንዘ ኢየሱድግ ርእሶ ዘእንበለ ሰማዕት፤ ወይገብር ሠናይቶ፤ ወይሁብ እምሰማይ ዝናመ፤ ወያከርም በበዓመት፤ ወያፈሪ፤ ወያሠምር ከመ ያጽግበነ ወያስተፍሥሕ ልበነ፤  
- Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness”<sup>6</sup>

Here, the witnesses of God’s existence are named as the rain, the fruits, the food and the gladness He put in the hearts. All these can be sensed with the sense organs. It is either what we see, or feel, or touch. Through what we see, feel and touch, we can know that he exists. Therefore, it seems that the external world perceived through the sense organs is the source of our knowledge of God’s Existence.

Let us also see the following:

- “አሕዛብኒ እለ አልቦሙ ሕግ ይሠርዑ ሎሙ ሕገ ወየሐግጉ ሎሙ ለሊሆሙ፤ ወይገብሩ ዘበሕጎሙ፤ ወያሬእዩ ገቢረ ሕግ እንዘ ጽሑፍ ውእቱ ውስተ ልቦሙ፤ ወይትዐወቅ እምግባሮሙ፤ ወያርሰሐስሐሙ ልቦሙ፤ ወይቀልዮሙ፡፡ - For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these,

<sup>6</sup> መጻሕፍተ ሐዲሳት ሠለስቱ፣ ገጽ 117

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;”<sup>7</sup>

The mentioned gentiles here, do not have the knowledge of the law from the outside world. It is not given to them from something or someone in the outside world. They are the ‘laws unto themselves’ and the ‘law is written in their hearts’. They know the law, not because they grabbed something from the world using their sense organs, but because they take it out from their hearts. This is rational.

So what can we say about the source of knowledge in the Ethiopian orthodox Tewahido Church’s teaching? Does it have some Aristotelian thought, like that of the Antiochean church, and so that related to Empirical knowledge? Or has it more of Platonic thought, like that of the Alexandrian church, and so that more related to Rational knowledge? Or does it use both, and as a result can be classified as those who follow Criticism?

This thesis aims to answer all these questions. The concepts Empiricism, Rationalism and Criticism, together with the two mentioned schools are going to be elaborated well. The influence of the two schools on the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the Church’s source of knowledge is the main concern.

Therefore, in Chapter One, the debate is situated. The historical backgrounds of the Alexandrian and Antiochean schools and their method of interpretation and philosophical basis is well expressed. Chapter Two and Chapter Three deal about the influence of the Alexandrian school and the influence of the Antiochean School on the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, respectively. Chapter Four, the final chapter, is the one within which evaluation and analysis is explained in, before conclusion for the whole work is given.

---

<sup>7</sup> የቅዱስ ጳውሎስ መጽሐፍ ንባቡ ከነትርጓሜው፣ ገጽ 32-33

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.SITUATING THE DEBATE

The aim of this chapter is to clearly introduce and situate the debate. While getting through it, we will discuss about an epistemological theme stated as the source of knowledge. We will see all the three groups of arguments raised on the source of knowledge; these are Empiricism, Rationalism and Criticism. Most importantly, the two ancient Christian schools, namely, the school of Alexandria and the school of Antioch would be briefly introduced with their philosophical basis, especially with their rational and empirical backgrounds, respectively.

To start with, in Epistemology, the source of knowledge has been one of the centers of discussions, as any of the philosophical themes that have been raised through ages. Some philosophers argue that the source of knowledge is fully external from the human mind, and is perceived through the sense organs; while the others believe that knowledge is not grabbed from the external world, but the source of knowledge is within the mind itself. The former theory is called as Empiricism, while the later is Rationalism.<sup>8</sup>

These thoughts have contributed to the two most influential schools of theology of the early Christianity - the school of Alexandria and the school of Antioch. The Alexandrians study theology in a way which seems to be highly methodologically related to rationality, with their known method of interpretation, namely, allegorical interpretation. The Antiocheans also have a method of interpretation, by which they use to interpret biblical texts and is called as literal interpretation, and of course, it is methodologically related to empiricism.

---

<sup>8</sup> የፍልስፍና ትምህርት፣ ገጽ 118

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

## 1.1.School of Alexandria and Rationalism

Long before the establishment of Christianity in Alexandria, the city of Alexandria was famous for its many schools. By far, the largest school known as the "Museum," was founded by Ptolemy Soter, and zealously pursued by his successor Ptolemy Philadelphus. It became the most famous school in the East. Alexandria, the cosmopolitan city, was chosen as a home for learning, and a unique center of a brilliant intellectual life.<sup>9</sup>

“In the School of Alexandria, Egyptian Priests, Jewish Rabbis, Magi from Persia, Brahmins and Buddhist monks from India, Gnostic Christians, Druids and Shamans, met in an atmosphere of inclusiveness and mutual respect. And thus, Alexandria became the birthplace of the Hermetic and Alchemical Arts and was a unique flowering of the cultural and esoteric learning in the ancient world”<sup>10</sup>

Ptolemy I entrusted Demetrius of Phaleron, who was one of the students of Aristotle, with the task of gathering books and scrolls, as well as appointing him to supervise a massive effort to translate other cultures' works into Greek. This process began with the translation of the Septuagint, the Old Testament, into Greek, for which he hired and housed 72 rabbis.

At the time of Demetrius, Greek libraries were usually collections of manuscripts by private individuals. Egypt's temples often had shelves containing an assortment of religious and official texts, as did certain Museums in the Greek world. It was Ptolemy's great ambition to possess all known world literature that pushed these idiosyncratic collections - the web sites of the ancient world - into the realm of a true

---

<sup>9</sup> School of Alexandria; Wisdom School of a Thousand Years; St. Mary and Archangel Michael Coptic Orthodox Church; Houston,TX; P 1-3

<sup>10</sup> School of Alexandria; Wisdom School of a Thousand Years; St. Mary and Archangel Michael Coptic Orthodox Church; Houston,TX; P 4

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

library.<sup>11</sup> It is recorded that the library cataloged scrolls and manuscript in the topics of mathematics, medicine, astronomy, geometry, mechanics, as well as philology. The two principal libraries of Alexandria were in the Bruchium, the distinguished palace area where the Museum stood, and the Serapeum, the magnificent temple of Serapis, built by Ptolemy III.

The number of rolls or "books" is estimated to have numbered between 400,000 and 700,000. The Bruchium was accidentally set on fire when Caesar burnt the fleet in the harbor, but many rolls were rescued. The Bruchium quarter was destroyed by Aurelian in 273; About 390 AD Emperor Theodosius ordered the destruction of the Serapeum Temple. The Moslem Caliph `Omar of Demascus finally destroyed the remainder of the library, because, as he said of the books: "They will either contradict the Koran, in which case they are heresy, or they will agree with it, so they are superfluous." So enormous was the volume of literature that it took six months for it all to be burnt to ashes.<sup>12</sup>

## 1.1.1. The Christian School of Alexandria

St. Jerome, as the western Christians call him, records that the Christian School of Alexandria was founded by St. Mark the evangelist himself, in the year 60AD. The School became the oldest center for sacred sciences in the history of Christianity.<sup>13</sup>

We should not, of course, assume that teaching took place in the typical school buildings, or even church buildings, of our modern world. Instead, instruction was conducted in the teacher's private house. This Christian School started as a Catechetical School, where candidates were admitted to learn the Christian faith and some Biblical studies to qualify for baptism. The deans were in fact catechists or teachers of the faith. Origen, a well known scholar of the school, describes the catechist's functions in more than one of his books. He was entrusted with both teaching

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid;

<sup>12</sup> Ibid;

<sup>13</sup> አባቶችህን ዕውቅ (ኅገረ አበው)፣ ገጽ 258-260

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

doctrine and providing instructions on the Christian life.<sup>14</sup>

Admittance was open to all people regardless of culture, age or background. By the second century, the school became quite influential on church life for many reasons: It was able to satisfy the thirst of the Alexandrian Christians for religious knowledge, encourage higher studies and create research work in a variety of fields. Through its missionary zeal, the School was able to win many souls to Christianity from Egypt and abroad.

In a true ecumenical spirit, it attracted students from other nations, many of whom became leaders and bishops in their own churches. It offered the world the first systematic theological studies. It used philosophy as a weapon in dealing with pagan philosophers. It would have been a grave error to have confined the School's activities to theology.

Its teaching was encyclopedic; first presenting the whole series of secular sciences, and then rising to moral and religious philosophy, and finally to Christian theology, as set forth in the form of commentaries on the sacred books. Philosophy meant ceasing to bother much about temporal affairs, such as politics and professional matters, and putting matters of the soul first. The philosopher's ideal was the quest for the perfect life. Conversion, in the ancient world, meant conversion to philosophy.

## 1.1.2. Philosophers and Deans of the Alexandrian School

In the third and fourth centuries, after Christ, the school gave more focus on philosophy because of the numerous converts of former philosophers and many philosophers joined it with their students.<sup>15</sup> The lessons became more and more advanced forcing the school to be changed from a beginners' center to a scholars' center. However, philosophy has not been separated starting from the school's

---

<sup>14</sup> ዝኒ ከግሁ

<sup>15</sup> የቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ በዓለም መድረክ፣ አባ ጎርጎርዮስ፣ 1978 ዓ.ም.፣ ገጽ. 70-72

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

existence.

The learned philosopher Athenagoras, influenced the School greatly due to his philosophical ability which brightened his star over his predecessors. Hence, the beginning of the School was related to him, especially that his writings were universally interchanged from the first century. Many historians consider Athenagoras as the first dean of the School. Athenagoras was a philosopher who was anxious to write against Christianity. Not only was he converted to Christianity (c. 176 A.D), he also became one of the most famous deans of the Christian Theological School. He wrote a treatise "on the Resurrection of the dead". It is probably the best early Christian treatise on the subject. It reflects a skillful understanding, and is regarded as the first attempt ever made by a Christian writer to prove this dogma by means of philosophical arguments and not by revelation and the biblical texts alone.<sup>16</sup>

Pantenus, the other philosopher, who became Christian under Athenagoras, succeeded his teacher as the dean of the School in 181 A.D. He introduced philosophy and sciences into the school to gain the educated pagans. He introduced the Coptic Alphabet, by using the Greek letters and adding seven letters from the ancient Demotic letters. The Holy Bible was translated into the Coptic language under his guidance, assisted by his disciples, Clement and Origen.<sup>17</sup>

Clement of Alexandria is the father of the Christian philosophy of Alexandria, and was well versed in the Holy Scriptures. He was born around the year 150 A.D. After converting to Christianity, he traveled extensively to Southern Italy, Syria, and Palestine. His purpose was to seek instruction from the most famous Christian teachers. At the end of his journeys, he reached Alexandria where Pantenus' lectures had so attracted him that he settled there and made this city his second home. He became the pupil and assistant of Pantenus. He was ordained a priest in Alexandria and succeeded Pantenus as head of the School. Among his pupils

---

<sup>16</sup> School of Alexandria; Wisdom School of a Thousand Years; St. Mary and Archangel Michael Coptic Orthodox Church; Houston, TX; P 5-10

<sup>17</sup> Ibid;

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

were Origen and Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem. Clement is the first Christian writer who brought Christian doctrine face to face with the ideas and achievements of the time. He believed that the very constitution of the Church and Holy Scriptures was not incompatible with Greek philosophy.<sup>18</sup>

"The School of Alexandria reached its greatest importance under Clement's successor, Origen, the outstanding teacher and scholar of the early church, ...a man of encyclopedic learning, and one of the most original thinkers the world has ever seen."<sup>19</sup> Origen, was born probably in Alexandria, in or about 185 A.D. He was a great scholar in the school and was also very rich in the knowledge of Platonic Greek philosophy.<sup>20</sup> He contributed a lot in developing Christian doctrine with explanations borrowed from Greek philosophy, and he even brought some Platonic and Aristotelian terminologies to theology.

After Didymus the blind, who was born around the year 313, an obscure period in the history of the School followed. Its greatest days were over. After the first split of the Church which happened as a result of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the emperor of Constantinople closed the School as an avenue of persecution against the Copts.

It was in the 19th century, that the revival of education began in Alexandria again. But, the school of Alexandria has a great influence till now in Christianity.

## 1.1.3. Rationalism and the Allegorical method of Interpretation

### 1.1.3.1. Rationalism

As the school of Alexandria is methodologically under the Platonic contribution, rational thinking is seen in most of its theological expressions. Here, we shall see rationalism in a boundary of source of knowledge.

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid; አባቶችህን ዕውቅ (ነገረ አበው)፣ ገጽ 246-257

<sup>19</sup> J. Quasten

<sup>20</sup> የቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ በዓለም መድረክ፣ አባ ጎርጎርዮስ፣ 1978 ዓ.ም.፣ ገጽ. 76-80

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

Rationalists believe that knowledge emanates from our own mind and human beings, without any education or support, and with only his or her understanding can reach to different types of knowledge. Here is a known example for this: **For Example:** There are three pencils, namely, A,B and C. If it is given that A is equal to B, and A is equal to C, our mind knows that B is also equal to C, without being told or measuring. This shows that the mind can have knowledge without any external factor.

Having this in mind, we can observe that the Christian Creed, which is highly influenced by the Alexandrians during its formulation, and which explains the equality of the three persons of the Christian triune God, usually explains it as the above example. Most scholars, when speaking about God the Son, they might say that He is with equal substance with God the Father. Even though, they may not mention the third person, the Holy Spirit, every believer knows that the three persons are of equal and the same substance. Here is part of the Nicene Creed, where in the council, the Alexandrian deacon Athanasius was the main speaker and the other Alexandrian scholar Alexander was the head of the synod<sup>21</sup>.

“ነአምን በአሐዱ አምላክ እግዚአብሔር አብ አኃዜ ኩሉ ገባሬ ሰማያት ወምድር ዘያስተርአ ወዘኢያስተርአ፤ ወነአምን በአሐዱ እግዚእ ኢየሱስ ክርስቶስ ወልደ አብ ዋሕድ ዘህልው ምስሌሁ እምቅድመ ይትፈጠር ዓለም፡ ብርሃን ዘእምብርሃን አምላክ ዘእምአምላክ ዘበዓማን ዘተወልደ ወአኮ ዘተገብረ ዘእሩይ ምስለ አብ በመለኮቱ፤ ዘቦቱ ኩሉ ኮነ ወዘእንበሌሁሰ አልቦ ዘኮነ ወኢምንትኒ ዘበሰማይኒ ወዘበምድርኒ... We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial to the father, through him all things were made.”<sup>22</sup>

Rationalists claim that the external world has no use in being the source of knowledge, except in helping us to dig the knowledge that is hidden in our mind. We cannot get something in our nature from the external world. Our knowledge is within ourselves. Therefore, it is our rational

---

<sup>21</sup> The council of Nicaea is a religious council that was held in the city of Nicaea, in the year 325 A.D.

<sup>22</sup> The EOTC Creed

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

mind that should be thought as the source of any knowledge.<sup>23</sup> The external world is perceived through the sense organs. However, as the ancient philosopher Heraclitos suggests, the sense organs cannot be trusted, as they are telling us everything is cool and stationary while everything in the universe is moving. This is why the ears and the eyes cannot be called for witness; And this is why we should rely on our mind in order to know everything. He believes that the human soul is the source of every knowledge and wisdom.<sup>24</sup>

Socrates also believes that the mind is the source of knowledge. He argues that everybody knows that three multiplied by four is twelve and not fifteen or thirty, and this is only by thinking or calculating with the mind. Therefore, everybody should use the mind and turn the deep darkness of ignorance into the glimpse of the brightness of knowledge that is found within our mind.<sup>25</sup>

When we come to Plato, it is interesting how he defines that the knowledge is within ourselves. He says that the soul was primarily in an ideal world before coming to this phenomenal world and joins the flesh as a constituent of a human being. The soul, while being there, had the knowledge of everything and forgot it in this world. But, when it gets something that reminds, it acquires or remembers the knowledge that it had before. So, the external world, or something that is perceived through the sense organs cannot teach the soul a new thing, but remembers what it had already used to know. He presents this idea with an example which is a story that is very similar to some parables and stories of saints in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

He said that there was a man, an adult, who has never been educated, and came to his master, Socrates, who led him in different topics. Socrates did not teach him directly, but asked him different questions of different types, even questions of geometry and the likes and led that unlearned adult to answer all the questions by himself, with an interesting method. How did that unlearned man answered all Socrates' questions? Plato says that it is because the man had the knowledge within him, but forgot it. He needed a man like Socrates to remember it, as he answered all his questions. As the German philosopher Leibnit says that our knowledge is just

---

<sup>23</sup> Creighton J.E. Studies in speculative philosophy, 1925. Renn A. W., History of English ... in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 1906, -- Robertson J.M., Rationalism, 1912.

<sup>24</sup> ሐመረ ክርስትና በመዋግድ ፍልስፍና፣ ገሠሠ ፋሬስ፣ 1998 ዓ.ም.፣ መቀሌ፣ ገጽ 40-43።

<sup>25</sup> የፍልስፍና ትምህርት፣ ገጽ 119

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

like a fire covered with an ash, or like a seedling. For it to be exposed, the external world is needed, as for someone is needed to burn the fire by bringing it out from the inside of the ash, or to give care to the seedling for making it grow<sup>26</sup>. Socrates did the same thing for the man.

Now, let us see the following narration from the church's teachings. We will find that after some years of ups and downs, St. Yared came to study a lot within one day.

“...ያሬድ ማኅሌታይ ኢትዮጵያዊ... ወዝንቱ ቅዱስ እምክዝማዲሁ ለአባ ጌዴዎን ውእቱ እምካህናተ አክሱም... ወዝንቱ አባ ጌዴዎን ሶበ ወጠነ ይምህር ትምህርተ ስእነ ተወክፎተ ወወቂቦተ እስከ ብዙኅ መዋዕል። ወአሐተ ዕለተ ተምዐ ላዕሌሁ መምህሩ ወዘበጦ ወአሕመሞ ወጎዩ ያሬድ ውስተ ገዳም ወእምብዝኃ ኅዘን አጽለለ ታኅተ ም፤ ወርእዮ ለዕፄ እንዘ የዐርግ ላዕለ ም ወበጸሐ ኅበ መንፈቃ ለም ይወድቅ ውስተ ምድር ወይገብር ከመዝ ብዙኅ ጊዜ ወእምዕቡብ ዐርገ መልዕልተ ም። ወሶበ ነጻረ ቅዱስ ያሬድ ትጋሆ ለዕፄ ነስሐ በነፍሱ ወተመይጠ ኅበ መምህሩ መንፈሳዊ ወይቤሎ ሥረይ ሊተ ኦ አቡዮ ወረስየኒ ዘፈቀድከ ወተወክፎ መምህሩ። ወእምዝ ሶበ ሰአለ ኅበ እግዚአብሔር በብካይ ብዙኅ ተርጎወ ልቡናሁ ወተምህረ በሐፂር ዕለት መጻሕፍተ ብሉይ ወሐዲስ ወተሠይመ ዲያቆነ።<sup>27</sup>

... Yared, the poet and hymn writer, who was like unto the Seraphim. This man was a kinsman of Abba Gideon a priest of ‘Aksum, .... When this Abba Gideon began to teach the blessed Yared the Psalms of David, he was unable to keep him with him for many days at a time, and then when he beat him, and made him to suffer pain, he fled into the desert and took up his abode under a tree. And he saw a worm (caterpillar ?) which was climbing up the tree, and when it had climbed up half way it fell down upon the ground; and this it did many times, because of the difficulty of climbing the tree. And when Saint Yared saw the perseverance (?) of the worm, he repented in his soul and returned to his teacher and said unto him, “Forgive me, O father, and dispose of me as thou wishest.” And his teacher, a spiritual man, received him, and having asked God with tears He opened the thoughts of Yared’s understanding, and he **learned in one day the Books of**

<sup>26</sup> የፍልስፍና ትምህርት፣ ገጽ 123

<sup>27</sup> መጽሐፈ ስንክሳር፣ በግእዝና በአማርኛ፣ ከመጋቢት እስከ ጳጉሜን፣ ገጽ 285-286

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

**the Old and the New Testaments;** and then he was made a deacon. Now in those days<sup>28</sup>”

St. Yared is one of the giant scholars of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church. He was learning the same lesson for years, but was not able to succeed. However, after the turning point, which we had discovered in the story, he was humble and very open to grasp knowledge. If it was the external world that helped him to acquire the knowledge, it was the same external world that was there for years when Yared could not succeed. It seems that as Socrates helped that unlearned man to acquire knowledge, the worm here, also helped Yared.

Finally, Rennes Decartes also argues that there is perfection and justice in our mind, but these cannot be found within this world. When we see something imperfect, we know the perfect form of that thing even if its perfect form is nonexistent in this world. So, how did we know its imperfection? Or, how did we know that it is imperfect? It is because there is knowledge of its perfect form in our mind.<sup>29</sup>

## 1.1.3.2. Allegorical Interpretation

The type of interpretation that the Alexandrian school used to interpret the Bible was the allegorical interpretation. It was firstly used by a Jewish scholar called Philo who existed both before and after the birth of Christ, and used the allegorical method to interpret the Old Testament books of the bible and some Jewish literature. He knew both Greek and Greek philosophy and used to live in Alexandria. He tried to dig deep into the mysteries of the Old Testament using a Platonic way of study. As a result, the Alexandrians became more familiar with the Platonic philosophy and allegorical method of interpretation.<sup>30</sup>

The word “Allegory” came from the Greek words “alla” and “agoreuo”, meaning “other” and “proclaim”, respectively. It refers to a mystical or hidden meaning beyond the words that are

---

<sup>28</sup> Synaxarium, The Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church; Translation of Sir E. A. Wallis Budge; Printed by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Debre Meheret St. Michael Church Garland, TX USA; P 503

<sup>29</sup> የፍልስፍና ትምህርት፣ ገጽ 122-123

<sup>30</sup> የእግዚአብሔር መንግሥት ታሪክ በምድር ላይ (ጠቅላላ የቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ) አንደኛ መጽሐፍ፣ ቀ/ዶ/ር ምክረ ሥላሴ ገ/አማኑኤል፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ 2000 ዓ.ም. ፣ ገጽ 209 ፣ አባቶችህን ዕውቅ (ነገረ አበው)፣ ዲያቆን አቤል ካሳሁን፣ 2012 ዓ.ም.፣ ገጽ 240

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

seen clearly. The scholars of this interpretation, when interpreting texts, travel into a deep way in their minds or meditate a lot to grasp the hidden meaning of the literal sentences. They leave or go beyond the meanings that can be perceived through the sense organs. And so, we can see the clear contribution of rationalism here.

Paul Tillic, a contemporary American philosopher and theologian, on his book that elaborates Christian thought starting from the beginning to recent years, describes allegorical thinking together with Origen's teaching on meanings of scripture:

“The basic authority for Origen was Scripture. He introduced the famous distinction between three meanings of the Scripture. (1) The *somatic*, literal or philological sense. Everybody can understand the somatic sense (from Soma, meaning ‘body’); it is identical with the literal historical meaning. (2) The *psychic* or moral sense. The moral sense means the application of the biblical text to our situation, its existential application to our selves. (3) The *pneumatic* or spiritual sense. It is understandable only to those who are perfect, not in the moral sense but in the mystical sense. There are some cases in which the biblical text has only a mystical meaning; then this coincides with the literal sense. Ordinarily, however, the mystical sense has to be distinguished from the literal meaning. The mystical sense is to be found through the allegorical method; this is a method of finding the hidden meaning behind the texts.”<sup>31</sup>

## 1.2.School of Antioch and Empiricism

The city of Antioch was founded in the third century before Christ by Seleucus Nicator, one of the heirs of Alexander the great. It was the third capital city of the Roman empire. Antioch was under the administration of the Greeks and also the Romans, as a result, making the city to be the center of the ancient Greek literature and wisdom and also Roman cultures. The Jews also used to live in Antioch, in the boundary of their religion and culture. Antioch was also the first city to accept Christians out of Jerusalem, with their new emerging culture. These Greek, Roman,

---

<sup>31</sup> A History of Christian Thought, From Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism; Paul Tillich; A Touchstone Book Published by Simon and Schuster; P 57-58

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

Jewish and Christian philosophies and cultures, together with the Semitic culture of the natives made Antioch a multi cultural global center.<sup>32</sup>

The philosophers of Greek, the Politicians of Rome, the Rabbis of Judaism and the Apostles of Christianity used to live and teach their thoughts in the city. These thoughts contributed to the catechetical school of Antioch, which was founded by Lucian, who was a known scholar with his both philosophical and biblical knowledge, but condemned later because of his teachings that were against Christianity. He was also the teacher of the well known heretic priest Arius.<sup>33</sup>

The school of Antioch is best divided into three periods, the early school, the middle school and the late school. **The early School** (170 – early fourth century) : The earliest author known of this period is Theophilus of Antioch. Then there is a gap of a century and in the first half of the fourth century there are three known Antiochene authors: the best known is Eusebius of Emesa; other representatives are Acacius of Caesarea and Theodore bishop of Heraclea. **The middle School** (350 - 433): This period includes at least three different generations: Diodorus of Tarsus, which among his disciples, the best known are John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia. The main figure of the third generation was Nestorius, who has been condemned in 431 A.D. **The late School** (after 433): After the Council of Ephesus (431), which is the church's second council by which Nestorius was condemned, the school of Antioch, lost its prestige.<sup>34</sup> However, after the Council of Chalcedon (451), the Antiochian school became the sole theological school within Eastern and Western Christianity, where the Oriental Orthodox adopted the Alexandrian School of Theology. Apparently only two later authors are known: Basil of Seleucia and Gennadius of Constantinople.<sup>35</sup>

## 1.2.1. Empiricism and Literal Method of Interpretation

Literal interpretation is the method of interpretation that the school of Antioch used to apply in order to study the bible. This method of interpretation has been contributed by empiricism. Empiricists argue that the source of knowledge is the external world which is perceived by the

---

<sup>32</sup> የእግዚአብሔር መንግሥት ታሪክ፣ ገጽ 219

<sup>33</sup> Ibid;

<sup>34</sup> Cross, Frank Leslie; Livingstone, Elizabeth A., eds. (2005). "Antiochene theology". The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church; Oxford University Press. P. 79.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid;

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

sense organs. Every type of knowledge is grasped from the outside. If we take, for example, colors, we cannot think of green, red, yellow, blue or any other color, within our mind, without observing them from the outside world. Man, without observing the external world, is a white paper – tabula rasa.<sup>36</sup>

A mirror cannot reflect something that is not in front of it. The mind is just like a mirror, which cannot show any knowledge within itself, unless it perceives something with the sense organs.

The English philosopher, an empiricist, John Locke said that the only thing that the mind does is compiling and organizing the things perceived by the sense organs, and using them create or invent something new, but not more than that. It cannot do anything without something perceived. Lock says that if we can bring out knowledge only within our mind, without any use of the external world, there would have been types of knowledge that the learned and the unlearned, the baby and the adult, the civilized and the uncivilized reach and understand without any difference.<sup>37</sup>

Bernard Russell, another great philosopher, described this argument of John Locke, on his book called ‘History of western Philosophy. “Locke” may be regarded as the founder of empiricism, which is the doctrine that all our knowledge (with the possible exception of logic and mathematics) is derived from experience. Accordingly the first book of Essay is concerned in arguing, as against Plato, Descartes, and the scholastics, that there are no innate ideas or principles. In the second book he sets to work to show, in detail, how experience gives rise to various kinds of ideas. Having rejected innate ideas, he says:

“Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store, which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer in one word, from experience: in that all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself.”<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> የፍልስፍና ጉምህርት፣ ገጽ 111-113

<sup>37</sup> ዝኒ ከግሁ

<sup>38</sup> History of Western Philosophy; Bernard Russell; Book II, Chap. I, sec.

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

The other English philosopher, David Hume also argues that we cannot explain about colors to a born – blind person and make him/ her understand. We also cannot do the same thing about sound to a born – deaf person. They must have to perceive something from the external world to understand.<sup>39</sup>

This empirical type of view is also observed on Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church's tradition of interpretation. For instance, when interpreting a verse in the book of Romans, chapter 10 verse 14, which is read as:-

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? **and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?** and how shall they hear without a preacher?”

In interpreting this verse, the Ethiopian Tradition puts it as follows:-

“ወባሕቱ እፎ ይጸውዕዎ እንዘ ኢየሱምኑ ቦቱ።

ነገር ግን ሳያምኑበት እንደ ምን ይለምኑታል፤ (ሐተታ) እስራኤል ቢሉ አምነው እንዳላመኑ ስለ ኾነ ለአሕዛብ ቢሉ የተመቸ።

ወእፎ የአምኑ በዘኢይሰምዑ።

ያልሰሙትንስ እንደ ምን ይለምኑታል፤ (ሐተታ) ለእስራኤል ቢሉ ሰምተው እንዳልሰሙ ስለ ኾነ ለአሕዛብ ቢሉ የተመቸ።

ወእፎኑ ይሰምዑ ዘኢሰበኩ ሎሙ።

ያላስተማሯቸውንስ እንደ ምን ይለምኑታል፤ (ሐተታ) ለእስራኤል ቢሉ አስተምረዋቸዋል እንዳላስተማሯቸው ስለ ኾኑ ለአሕዛብ ቢሉ የተመቸ<sup>40</sup> -

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?

<sup>39</sup> የፍልስፍና ትምህርት፣ ገጽ 114

<sup>40</sup> የቅዱስ ጳውሎስ መልእክታት አንድምታ ትርጓሜ በግእዝና በአማርኛ፣ ገጽ 84

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

This is told for the gentiles as they haven't believed at all, and not for the Israelites, as they are believers, but acting as a non believer.

And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?

This is also told for the gentiles as they haven't heard of God, and not for the Israelites, as they have heard of Him, but act as they haven't.

And how shall they hear without a preacher?

This is again told for the gentiles as they haven't been preached at all, and not for the Israelites, as they have been preached, but act as haven't been preached.”

Therefore, we can be sure that there is an empirical thought, which claims that knowledge of God is perceived by hearing, seeing and the likes, in the church. This method of interpretation is a direct interpretation of scriptures and does not go beyond the literal meaning of the words written. It only discusses the front line meaning of passages and is not interested in mystical or hidden meanings. Therefore it is clear that literal method of interpretation is methodologically the contribution empiricism.

The literal method of interpretation and the Antiochean teaching has been followed by the western world, while the east is mostly under the influence of the Alexandrian school. As the literal interpretation is empirical and mostly focuses on the perceivable part of a study, it focuses on the Historical Jesus – Manhood of Jesus – regarding Christology; and the western Christianity, as a result of this, mainly focuses on the manhood of Christ and criticizes the mystical tendency of the east. Let us see the following argument from Paul Tillic:-

“The west and the school of Antioch protested against this tendency in Alexandrian theology. One of the first theologians of this school was Theodore of Mopsuestia. The Antiochean school has definite characteristics which distinguish it from the school of Alexandria, and which make this school the predecessor of the emphasis on the historical Jesus in modern theology.

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

- (1) The school of Antioch had a strong philological interest and wanted an exact interpretation and emphasis on the historical picture of Christ. In this way it anticipated the historical criticism developed in the modern period.
- (2) The school had a rational tendency – just as liberal theology also had – in the sense of Alexandrian philosophy.
- (3) The Antiochean theologians also had strong ethical personalistic – instead of mystical – ontological – interests, just as Rome and the stoics had”<sup>41</sup>

Tillic, as a western Christian philosopher, believes that the literal method of Antioch together with the political power of Rome, has saved the human picture of Jesus Christ.

“Antioch, in alliance with Rome, saved the human picture of Christ in its religious significance. Without Antioch the church would probably have lost entirely the human picture, and the historical consciousness of the West would not have been able to develop.

“Antioch defended the church against the Monophysites for whom the human character of Christ was swallowed up in divinity and who also gave rise numerous magical and superstitious ideas. Thus, Antioch paved the way for the Christological emphasis of the West.”<sup>42</sup>

But, this Alliance of Antioch and Rome did not take them to a victory over Alexandria, as the author is concerned:-

“Thus we see here two allies: Rome, with her empirical, personal, and historical interest; Antioch, having the same interest, but using it for philological studies and philosophical considerations. This alliance of Rome and Antioch might have led perhaps to a full victory of the Antiocheans over the Alexandrians. But this did not happen. For Rome had more of a political than a theological interest. Rome was the great center of the Church

---

<sup>41</sup> A History of Christian Thought, From its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism; Paul Tillich; A Touchstone Book Published by Simon and Schuster; P 81

<sup>42</sup> Ibid; P 81-82

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

and as such it did not want to surrender Christianity on account of a theological formula.<sup>43</sup>

## 1.3. Criticism

As we have elaborated it in the above paragraphs, there are three theories, in epistemology, regarding the source of knowledge. Two of these, Empiricism and Rationalism, have been already discussed. The third one is Criticism.

Criticism is a theory in theory of knowledge that claims the source of knowledge is not only the external world as the empiricists claim, or it is not only the mind as the rationalists claim. But, both the external world and the mind are the sources of knowledge.<sup>44</sup> The external world and the mind cooperate harmoniously to deliver us the knowledge that we get.

Many philosophers have supported this theory, but the most influential in defending and teaching the theory was Emmanuel Kant.<sup>45</sup> He said that Knowledge is bringing together or merging together the things or states that were separated apart, so that they can give one type of sense.<sup>46</sup>

For example, the following words cannot be knowledge by themselves:-

A. heat, separation, bodies

But if we say the following, it may be considered as knowledge:-

B. Heat separates bodies.

The first example (A) has three words. All heat, separation and bodies are perceived from the external world. But, in the second example (B), we find the three words brought together to give some sense. Here, we came to know that these words have relations, and their togetherness gave us the knowledge that heat separates bodies. This act of merging the

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid; P 83-84

<sup>44</sup> የፍልስፍና ትምህርት፣ ገጽ 125-126

<sup>45</sup> ዝኒ ከማሁ፣ ገጽ 126-127

<sup>46</sup> ዝኒ ከማሁ

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

words together is the function of the mind. The three things were found from the outside world. When the mind found these words from the external environment, it used its natural ability and merged them to give knowledge.<sup>47</sup>

Yemane Gebremariam, a former philosophy instructor of the Ethiopian Church, differentiates the above mentioned examples as Analysis and Synthesis.<sup>48</sup> A thing, from which a new idea or lesson could not be found, cannot be considered as knowledge. For instance calling a “circle” as a “round” does not add any knowledge. This type of explanation is termed as analytic. Analysis is the elaboration and investigation of something in relation to what it is and what it is made up of.

However, it is synthesis which formulates knowledge rather than analysis. Synthesis is not like calling a “circle” as a “round”, but it is like defining a thing: “The earth is round”. This type of elaboration adds knowledge.

---

<sup>47</sup> ዝኒ ከማሁ

<sup>48</sup> የፍልስፍና ትምህርት፣ ገጽ 129

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.THE INFLUENCE OF THE ALEXANDRIAN SCHOOL ON EOTC

In the first chapter, we have seen the historical backgrounds, methods of interpretation, known scholars of the two schools together with the theory of sources of knowledge which are rationalism, empiricism and criticism. In this chapter, we shall focus on the influence of the school of Alexandria on the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

#### 2.1.Introduction of Christianity to Ethiopia

Knowledge of God has a long history in Ethiopia, which extends even before the introduction of Christianity. Ethiopia accepted Judaism and made it the religion of the state at about 1000 B.C. with the help of its known Queen of Sheba<sup>49</sup>. Therefore, Ethiopian Christianity has some elements of Judaism, which makes it a little different from other Christianities.

The introduction of Christianity to the country was without a bloodshed and martyrdom. This was because of its flow from top to bottom, administratively, or from the palace to the laymen. During the process, a special role was played by the Alexandrian Coptic Church. Athanasius, the greatest figure of ancient Christianity and Alexandria, ordained Frumentius, who migrated to Ethiopia with his brother Aedisius, as the first bishop of Ethiopia. History states that the two youngsters came to Ethiopia following their relative Meropius, who was a Greek philosopher, and who aimed to go to India, and was killed in the middle of the journey leaving the two youngsters as captives to his killers, who then brought them to the Ethiopian king, who then liked them.<sup>50</sup>

“Frumentius who was already an Ethiopian citizen was given an order from the

---

<sup>49</sup> History of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church; Part 1; Lule Melaku (Asst. Professor); Addis Ababa; 2008; p.16

<sup>50</sup> Ibid; pp 48-49

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

monarch to travel to Alexandria, the Holy See of Saint Mark, to report the faith of the Ethiopians. The Patriarchate of Alexandria in Egypt was the nearest Christian center to nominate a bishop for the confirmation of the Church of Ethiopia. Since then the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church was under the Coptic Patriarchate of Alexandria until 1958.”<sup>51</sup>

Here, simply by the use of the historical briefing, we can estimate that the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church’s theological philosophy is influenced by the Alexandrian school of thought, and as its base had been the Judaistic practices, it can also be estimated that Judaism has some influence on the theology and formulation of knowledge of the Church.

## 2.2.Scholars and Their Teachings accepted from Alexandria

The Coptic church influenced the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church administratively, especially in the case of ordination of priests, which is one of the most important mysteries in all orthodox churches. The Coptic Church shares many teachings and saints with the Ethiopian church.<sup>52</sup>

From the patriarchs of ancient Christianity, the five patriarchs of Alexandria were very influential, in terms of both scholastic activities and authority. These are Dioscoros, Alexander, Athanasius, Cyril and Timothy.<sup>53</sup> From these patriarchs, the three are believed to write three of the fourteen types of anaphora that the Ethiopian church uses.<sup>54</sup> Athanasius and Cyril are also believed to fight against the heretic teachings of two scholars, Arius and Nestorius, who were disciples of the Antiochean school.<sup>55</sup>

As we have seen it in the previous chapter, the Antiochean school, as it is methodologically related to empiricism, focuses on knowledge that is perceived by the sense organs. When coming to the nature of Christ, the school firstly focuses on His Manhood, as it can be seen,

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid; pp 50-51

<sup>52</sup> Ibid; p 51

<sup>53</sup> የቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ፣ ቁጥር 1፣ ቀሲስ ዶክተር ሰሙ ምትኩ እና መ/ር ችሬ አበበ፣ ገጽ 114-132

<sup>54</sup> መጽሐፈ ቅዳሴ፣ ከቀድሞ አባቶች ሲወርድ ሲዋረድ የመጣው ንባቡና ትርጉሜው፣ ገጽ 306፣ 413፣ 448

<sup>55</sup> የቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ፣ ቁጥር 1፣ ቀሲስ ዶክተር ሰሙ ምትኩ እና መ/ር ችሬ አበበ፣ ገጽ 101

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

heard and touched; then comes to the Godhead of Christ which cannot be perceived by the sense organs. Arius, being an extremist from this school, neglected the Godhead of Christ and said that he was a creature. He claimed that as a creation Son is not a self-existent eternal being. He must have a beginning. According to Arius although the Son “born outside time... prior to His generation He did not exist” and “there was a then when the Son was not”.<sup>56</sup>

Athanasius who disagreed with this view and answered that the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit are of the same essence, and Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect man, had also took the main initiative to the formulation of the orthodox creed<sup>57</sup>, which made him to be called as “The Nicene<sup>58</sup> Champion of Orthodoxy”<sup>59</sup>.

In another council, Nestorius, who was the fruit of the Antiochean school was condemned because of his teaching that briefs that the one who was born from Virgin Mary, as all the women give birth to a human, is a man, and Mary is called as Anthopotokos, which means ‘Man bearer’. The Alexandrian patriarch of the then time, Cyril, defended this teaching by saying that Mary is a God bearer, ‘Theotokos’.<sup>60</sup> This teaching of Cyril is clearly stated in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church’s dogmatic books:-

“ወሶበሂ ንቤ ከመ ይእቲ ወላዲተ አምላክ ኢይባዕ ኑፋቄ ውስተ ልብክሙ ከመ ንጽሕት ድንግል ወለደት መለኮተ ዕሩቀ እንበለ ትስብዕት አላ ወለደት ቃለ እግዚአብሔር ዘተዋሐደ ምስለ ሥጋ ወኢነአምር ከመ ይእቲ ወላዲተ አምላክ ዘእንበለ በዝንቱ አምሳል ባሕቲቱ ወእምነትሂ በትስብእቱ ይመርሀነ ጥንተ ትስብእቱ እንበለ ኑፋቄ ወከመዝ ንሕነ ነአምን ከመ ድንግል ቅድስት ኮነት ታኦዶስስ ዘውእቱ ወላዲተ እግዚአብሔር ብሂል ወሶበ ወለደቶ ለነ መንክረ ለዋሕድ ክርስቶስ በተሣትፎቱ ደመ ወሥጋ ከማነ።<sup>61</sup> -

(Even if we say that she is the one who gave birth to God, don't be skeptical putting in your

<sup>56</sup> Dogmatic Theology; Fr.Dr. Jossi Jacob, unpublished; p 36

<sup>57</sup> This creed has been stated in Chapter one, under the title “Rationalism and the Allegorical method of Interpretation”

<sup>58</sup> Nicaea was a city somewhere in Asia, where the first council in Church history was held, because of the debates of heretic Arius and the Church, especially the Alexandrians.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid; p 37

<sup>60</sup> የቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ፣ ቁጥር 1፣ ቀሪስ ዶክተር ሰሙ ምትኩ እና መ/ር ቸሬ አበበ፣ ገጽ 25

<sup>61</sup> ሃይማኖተ አበው፣ የጥንት አባቶቻችን ሃይማኖተ፣ በግእዝና በአማርኛ፣ ተስፋ ገብረ ሥላሴ፣ 1982 ዓ.ም.፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ ገጽ 277

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

hearts that the virgin gave birth to divinity which is separated to flesh. She gave birth to God the Word, who is united with the body and soul. We do not say that She gave birth to God, unless it is with the mystery of Miaphysis. Our belief, that says He became Man, teaches us without doubt His Manhood, like us, since He was united with soul and body; When She gave birth to Christ in a wonderful way, we believe the Virgin is Theotokos, which means God bearer.)”

## 2.3.Faith, Reason and Knowledge

### 2.3.1. Faith and Reason

Some people think that faith and reason cannot be aligned together and faith within itself does not have a place for reason. Even some consider religion or faith as a state of mental illness, for it cannot be elaborated with the perspectives of reason.

“Faith cannot move mountains (though generations of children are solemnly told the contrary and believe it). But is capable of driving people to such dangerous folly that faith seems to me to quality as a kind of mental illness”<sup>62</sup>

Others also detach faith from reason with their own considerations and describe it as a worthless debt that enslaved humanity by separating it apart from a very useful thing, which is reason. These kinds of people think that people came to faith when they are in a state of lack of the ability of reasoning. Such a writer once explained that faith is a useless thing which became contagious among people as the result of absence of reason.<sup>63</sup> These types of arguments seem to be accurate unless one knows that faith and reason could go together and make their intersections in many perspectives which can be elaborated in the thoughts of the Ethiopian Church, which may be referred as influenced by the Alexandrian school of thought.

A writer in the Church says that Faith is the basis for reason:

---

<sup>62</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1998, p. 357

<sup>63</sup> Faith with Reason, p.25, Joseph R. Farinaccio; Bookspecc Publishing, Pennsville, New Jersey, 2002

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

“የአመክንዮ መሠረቱ እምነት ነው። ... አመክንዮ በራሱ እምነትን የሚቃወም አይደለም። ስለ ምንም ነገር ከማሰባችን አስቀድሞ እምነት አለ። ማለትም ቀድሞ የተመሠረተ ርእዮተ ዓለምን መነሻ በማድረግ አመክንዮን እንጠቀማለን። የትኛውም አመክንዮአዊ ድምዳሜ ቀድሞ ከተያዘ እምነታዊ ግምት መነሻን ከማድረግ ውጪ መሆን አይችልም<sup>64</sup> -

(Faith is the basis for reason. ...Reason by itself, does not contradict faith. There is faith before we think of anything. That is, we use reason based on formerly formulated worldview. Any rational conclusion cannot be out of the pre guess/hypothesis with faith.)”

In reconciling the seemingly controversial thoughts of faith and reason the same writer claims:-

“አመክንዮ እና እምነት የሚጣሉ ባሕርያት የሏቸውም። ነገር ግን ሰው የሁለቱን ግንኙነት በአግባቡ ካልተረዳ፣ የተጣሉ መምሰላቸው ሰውም ከእውነት መለየቱ የማይቀር ይሆናል። አመክንዮ አቅም ሆኖ ከፈጣሪ ለሰው የተሰጠ ቢሆንም እርሱን መቆጣጠር እና በአግባቡ መጠቀም የተቀባዩ የሰው ድርሻ ነው። እምነት (ሃይማኖት) ደግሞ ምንጩ አምላካዊ መገለጥ ብቻ ነው። የሁለቱን ግንኙነት ስናስብ የአመክንዮ አቅጣጫው ከሰው ወደ እግዚአብሔር፣ ከምድር ወደ ሰማይ፣ ከሚታወቀው ወደ ማይታወቀው፣ ከተሰጠው ወደ የሚሰጠው ሆኖ ይታያል። በሌላ በኩል ደግሞ ሃይማኖት ከእግዚአብሔር የተገለጠ እንደ መሆኑ አቅጣጫው ከእግዚአብሔር (ከፈጣሪ) ወደ ሰው (ፍጥረት)፣ ከልዑሉ ወደ ትሑቱ ሆኖ ይታያል።<sup>65</sup> -

(Reason and faith do not have a contradicting nature. However, If man does not understand the relationship between them, it is obvious that they seem to be contradicting and man detaches from truth. Reason is a capacity given from the creator to man, but it is the duty of man to control it and use it properly. the source

<sup>64</sup> ማሰባሰብ፡ የኦርቶዶክሳዊው ነገረ መለኮት መቅድማዊ ነጥቦች፣ ዲያቆን ሚኪያስ አስረስ፣ ገጽ 4-5

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

of faith (Religion), in its turn, is only the revelation of god. When we think of the relationship between the two, it is shown that the direction of reason is from man to God, from earth to heaven, from the known to the unknown, from the given to the one which is going to be given. While in other words, as faith is one revealed from God, it is seen that its direction is from God (Creator) to man (creation), from the very high to the very low.)”

Therefore, these two do have their own ways which make them not to collide for a single purpose. But further, they do have a cooperation point. When reason aims to discover the wisdom in the heavens, it must cooperate with faith, the writer says. And since reason cannot be separated with knowledge, whether it is earthly or heavenly, it is always there with faith. By faith wisdom is revealed within the mind, and that wisdom exists with reasoning. The revelation of wisdom, may not use the sense organs, it just needs faith.

“አመክንዮ ወደ ልዕልና (ወደ ከፍተኛው) እንዲደርስና የበለጠው ዕውቀት ጋር እንዲደርስ ሃይማኖት (መገለጥ) ከላይ መጥቶ አመክንዮን ወደ ልዕልና ማውጣት አለበት። አመክንዮ እስከሚያየው ደመና ድረስ እንጂ ከዚያ በላይ ስላለ ምስጢር ማወቅን ቢፈልግ ከሃይማኖት ጋር መተባበርን መፈለግና መናፈቅ አለበት። ... ሃይማኖትና አመክንዮ እየተደጋገፉ እስከ ሰማይ ቢደርሱም ከዚያ በላይ ልዕልና ያላቸውን ምስጢራት አመክንዮ ሊገልጽ አይቻለውም። ነገር ግን አመክንዮ ጠፋ ማለት አይደለም። እንደውም አመክንዮ ከልቡና (ከዕውቀት) የማይለይ በመሆኑ በፍቅር በሚቀርብ ምስጋና ሃይማኖትን (ማመንን) ለልዑል አምላክ ሲያቀርብ ይኖራል።<sup>66</sup> -

(Faith (Revelation) should come down from above and take reason up to the very high in order for reason to reach to the peak (to the highest) and to the better knowledge. It is up to the clouds it can see that reason can know, if it seeks to know the mystery beyond that, it should seek to cooperate with faith. ... Even if faith and reason cooperate to reach the heavens, reason cannot unveil higher mysteries alone. But this

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

does not mean that it is perished. Surprisingly, as reason is non-separable from mind (knowledge), it would be there delivering faith (faithfulness) to the highest God, with praise that is delivered with love.)”

All the explanations brief that faith and reason are not opposites of each other but have cooperation. And it should be known that faith has been always stated to come first.

“አዘዘኑ ቅድመ ከመ ንእመን ወእምዝ ናእምር<sup>67</sup> -

(He ordered us firstly to have faith and then to know)”

## 2.3.2. Knowledge

A passage in the epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians reveals something about what knowledge is:

“Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.<sup>68</sup>”

In describing this, we find the following narration:

“ዕውቀት ሰው በአፍአዊ ሕዋሳቱ አይቶ ብቻ የሚረዳው (የሚይዘው) አይደለም። ዕውቀት አፍአዊ ዐይን ካየው በላይ ወደ ማይታወቀው ዐይንንና ሕዋሳትን ወደ ፈጠረው መሄድ ይገባዋል - ዐይን ካየው በሕዋሳትም ከሚታወቀው ሌላ ወደማይታወቀው ቦታ መሄድ ሃይማኖትን (እምነትን) ይጠይቃል። ... እግዚአብሔር

---

<sup>67</sup> ተልሚድ፣ ረድአ እንጦንስ

<sup>68</sup> Ephe. 1:16-19

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

ድርሻ አለው...<sup>69</sup> -

(Knowledge is not something that is seen by the sense organs and understood (grabbed). Knowledge has to go beyond the actual eye sees, to the unknown one, who created the eye and the other sense organs. To go to the unknown place, beyond the eye sees and the sense organs know, faith is required. ...God plays a roll.)”

This makes it different from the definition that science gives to knowledge, as it gives it a boundary within this life.

“Secular Anthropology starts with defining a human person as merely a biological organism with unique numerical identity and then worries itself how a person identity can remain the same over time given environmental and envoluntary influences along with ravages of disease and aging (Gnosiology: Barry Nenfeld, p.4)”

There is also an important interpretation in the Church about the verses in the Gospel of Mathew, which shows that the source of knowledge is not from the flesh or the sense organs but from God, who reveals it in our mind. The apostle peter here, showed Jesus that he has the knowledge of who Jesus is; And Jesus spoke about the source of that knowledge: “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”<sup>70</sup>

“ወአውሥኦ ስምዖን ጴጥሮስ ወይቤ አንተ ውእቱ ክርስቶስ ወልደ እግዚአብሔር ሕያው፤ ወአውሥኦ እግዚእ ኢየሱስ ወይቤ ብፁዕ አንተ ስምዖን ወልደ ዮና፤ እስመ ኢክስተ ለከ ዘሥጋ ወደም። አላ አቡየ ዘበሰማያት።”<sup>71</sup>

If flesh and blood did not reveal it to Peter, then it is sure that he did not get that knowledge from the external world through his perception. The knowledge is revealed

<sup>69</sup> ማሰያስ፣ ገጽ 6

<sup>70</sup> Mathew 16;16-17

<sup>71</sup> ወንጌል ቅዱስ ዘእግዚእ ወመድኃኒ ኢየሱስ ክርስቶስ፤ ተስፋ ገብረ ሥላሴ፣ ገጽ 211

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

within him.<sup>72</sup>

There are two types of knowledge according to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. These are “አእምሮ ጠባይዓዊ - Knowledge of nature/essence” and “አእምሮ መንፈሳዊ - Knowledge of Spirit”. The first is a type of knowledge that has been given when being created. It is innate and is given at birth. It helps man to know what good is and what bad is. This is totally the opposite of John Lock who said that man is like a white paper – tabula rasa – when given birth.<sup>73</sup> The second is earned after properly using the first and with prayer and good deeds.<sup>74,75</sup>

### 2.3.3. Is philosophizing or investigating forbidden in faith?

John Damascene, one of the greatest thinkers of the middle age of Greek Orthodoxy, and an accepted scholar in the Ethiopian Church said that philosophy is the love of wisdom and God is the real wisdom; therefore, loving God is the real philosophy.<sup>76</sup> What he meant to say here is that faith precedes knowledge and with faith, philosophy can be practiced in the Church.

A believer is always encouraged to investigate and philosophize with faith. The one who stopped investigating with his mind and discerning within his heart is considered as the one who got offended away from faith. An ancient book in the Ethiopian Church, called “ተልሚድ - Telmid” that is named after the disciple of Alexandrian scholar Cyril clarifies this as follows:

“እንግዲህ በሃይማኖት ለሚቃረኑን ... መልሳችሁ ምን ይሆናል? ሃይማኖት ማለት ያለመመራመር ማመን ነው ማለት ያድናችኋልን? ወይስ እንዴት መመለስ እንዳለብን

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

<sup>73</sup> See Chapter One

<sup>74</sup> ሦስቱ መጻሕፍት መነኮሳት፣ (አረጋዊ መንፈሳዊ ድርሳን ዕሥራ ወንምስቱ)፣ ተስፋ ገብረ ሥላሴ ዘብሔረ ቡልጋ፣ ገጽ 139

<sup>75</sup> There are also other terminologies for knowledge gained from revelation and through perception which would be described in chapter three.

<sup>76</sup> St. John Damascene writings, 1958, p.11

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

አናውቅም ትሏቸዋለችሁ? ከዚህ ምን ያድናችኋል? መጽሐፍ ለሚጠይቋችሁ መልስ ይኸውም በእናንተ ዘንድ ላለው የመዳን ቃል መስጠት እንድትችሉ ሁል ጊዜ ተዘጋጅታችሁ ኑሩ (1ኛ ጴጥ. 3:15)፤ ዳግመኛም ከእናንተ መካከል በሃይማኖት የደከመ ቢኖር አበርቱት ተራዳትም ብሏል (ሮሜ. 14:1)። በሐዋርያው ቃል በማመካኘት በሕሊና ከመመራመርና በልብ ከማስተዋል (ከማወቅ) እንድትሰናከሉ አንሻም።<sup>77</sup> -

(For those of you opposing us in faith ... what is your answer? Does it save you to say that faith is believing without investigation? Or, do you say that you don't know how to be back? What saves you from this? The book says be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear (1<sup>st</sup> pet. 3:15); and again, among you him that is weak in the faith receive ye and help him (Rom. 14:1). Taking the words of the apostle as a reason, we don't want you to get offended from investigating in your thoughts and discerning (knowing) in mind.)”

The book asks why it is said that a belief should be carried on without investigation. With this action, meaning having faith without investigation, no one could get happy except the one who is of weak heart and lost his/her mind.

“እኛ ከአባቶች መጽሐፍና በሕይወት ያሉ መምህራን ለእውነት ሲተባበሩና በኢየሱስ ክርስቶስ ማመን እንደሚገባ በማመን የተመሰገነች ሥጋዊን በመታመን የቀናች ሃይማኖትን ሲያቆሙ ከደረሰባቸው የበዛ መከራና ስቃይ፤ ሃይማኖትን ለማቅናትና ስለ እርሷም በመመራመር (ወጎሠሣ በእንቲአሃ) ከመንበርና ከሹመታቸው በደረሰባቸው ስደት ተረዳን። እንግዲህ ተመራምረው እውነትን በማግኘታቸው የሆነባቸውንና እነርሱን ያገኛቸውን ካወቅን ስለ ምን ያለመመራመር ማመን ይገባል ይባላል? (እፎኑ ይደሉ ከመ ይትባሃል ሃይማኖት ዘእንበለ ሐተታ) በዚህም ተግባር ልቡ ከደከመና አእምሮው ከጠፋ ሰው በቀር ማንም ደስ አይሰኝም።<sup>78</sup> -

(We understand from the books of the fathers and from the scholars who are still in

<sup>77</sup> ተልሚድ/ረድኦ እንጠንስ/

<sup>78</sup> ዝኒ ከማሁ

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

life, and from the pain and sufferings they faced when they cooperate for truth and stand by the Faith blessed in believing in faith in Jesus Christ, and praised in having trust in the incarnation; and also from their exile from their Holy Sees and authorities for shaping the Faith and investigating (digging deep) about her. Hence, if we understand what they had faced and what they had encountered for they had been investigating and had found the truth, why is it said that one should believe without investigating? No one rejoices with this act except that whose discernment is weakened and whose mind is lost.)”

The following narration also tells us that in faith or religion, investigation comes after belief.

“ሃይማኖት ተቀብለው (አምነው) የሚያውቁት እንጂ አውቀው የሚቀበሉት ወይንም የሚያምኑት አይደሉም። ከአመኑና ከተቀበሉት በኋላ ግን ለማወቅና በራሱ ለመመርመር ሥልጣን መቀበል ይቻላል። ‘ለተቀበሉት ሁሉ ግን በስሙ ለሚያምኑት ለእነርሱ የእግዚአብሔር ልጆች ይሆኑ ዘንድ ሥልጣንን ሰጣቸው፤ እነርሱም ከእግዚአብሔር ተወለዱ እንጂ ከደም ወይም ከሥጋ ፈቃድ አልተወለዱም’ እንዲል (ዮሐ. 1:13)። ቅዱስ ጳውሎስም ‘ሁላችን የእግዚአብሔር ልጅ በማመንና በማወቅ ወደሚገኝ አንድነት...’ (ኤፌ. 4:13) በማለት ማመን ከማወቅ በፊት እንደ ሆነ አስረድቷል። ቅዱስ ጴጥሮስም ‘እኛስ አንተ ክርስቶስ የእግዚአብሔር ልጅ እንደ ሆንህ አምነናል አውቀናልም’ ሲል የመለሰው ለዚህ ነበር (ዮሐ. 6:69)።<sup>79</sup> –

(Faith is something that is first accepted (believed) and then known and not vice versa. Once after believing and accepting it, it is possible to gain power/authority to know and investigate. ‘But as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.’ (Jn. 1:12-13). St. Paul also described that faith precedes knowledge, by saying ‘Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God’ (Eph. 4:13). And this was why St. Peter also

<sup>79</sup> ብርሃኑ አድማስ (ዲ/ን)፣ የትምህርት ሃይማኖት መግቢያ፣ 2012 ዓ.ም.፣ አምስተኛ ዕትም፣ አሳታሚ ማህበረ ቅዱሳን ኅትመት አገልግሎት

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

answered ‘And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God’ (Jn. 6:69).)’”

This is also witnessed by Cyril:

“For they say they believe and know, joining both together. For one must both believe and understand .... But putting faith first, then they bring in knowledge ..., as written, if you not believe, neither shall ye understand (Isa. 7:9). For simple faith having been fore-told in us, as a kind of foundation, knowledge is afterwards built up upon it by degrees (Eph. 4:13)”<sup>80</sup>.

We can see how investigation is very important in the following passage. God created the angels and hid Himself from them. This was because He wanted them to investigate who they are, from where they came from and who created them.

“ኔታ መላእክትን በነገድ መቶ፣ በከተማ ዐሥር አድርጎ ፈጥሮ ተሠወራቸው። ባሕርይ ረቂቅ እንደ ሆነ ለማጠየቅ (ለማስረዳት)፣ ካልሹኝም (ካልፈለጉኝም) አልገኝም ሲል። መላእክትም አእምሮ አላቸውና ተመራመሩ። ‘እምአይቴ፣ መጻእነ፣ ወመኑ ፈጠረነ፣ ለሌኩ እምነበ ርእሰነ ወሚመ እምካልዕ - ከየት መጣን? ማንስ ፈጠረን? ከራሳችን (በራሳችን) ተፈጠርን ይሆን? ወይስ ከሌላ (ተገኘን/ተፈጠርን)?’ ብለው። ዲያብሎስን ከሁሉ አልቆት (አብልጦ) ፈጥሮት ነበርና ወደ ላይ ቢያይ ድምጽ አጣ፣ ወደ ታች ቢያይ ሁሉ ከበታች ሆኖ አየ፣ ... ‘እኔ ፈጠርኳችሁ’ አላቸው። ... ‘እኛ ከበታችን ያሉትን አልፈጠርናቸው ... ፈጥረህ አሳየን’ አሉት።<sup>81</sup> -

(God created the angels classifying them in hundred families and ten cities, and hid himself. This is to show that his nature is abstract and that he is not found until he is searched (needed). For they have mind, the angels investigated; ‘Where have we come from? Who created us? Have we created ourselves by ourselves? Or, have we been found from another?’ For He has created the devil at the highest level, he found nothing when he saw above him and saw all when he looked below him; ... ‘I created

<sup>80</sup> Cyril, Jo.6:69, Pussy, I.455  
<sup>81</sup> ወንጌል ቅዱስ፣ ንባብና ትርጓሜው፣ መቅደም፣ ገጽ 13።

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

you’ he said. ... ‘We have not created those under us..... Create and show us’ they answered.)”

Here, we can ask some important questions: How did they used to investigate or philosophize while they are the first creature and where there are no more creatures which are yet to be created within the coming five days? It is certain that the investigation is within their minds as there is no enough creation to be perceived. Therefore, those who were blessed to know God are those who investigated within their hearts, without any empirical action and exposed the knowledge of God from their mind.

The next sentence clarifies how investigation is very important in faith. Those who did not care to investigate or those who ignored to know who they are and from where they came, have perished.

“ሳይመራመሩ የቀሩ (መላእክት) በአየር ቀርተዋል።<sup>82</sup> –

(Those (angels) who had not been investigating have been lost in the air)”

## 2.4.Method of Theology – Apophatism

The east and west, as we have seen it in the previous chapter, do not follow the same approach in theology. The west is cataphatic while the east is apophatic in approach. Let us see what we mean by these words.

### 2.4.1. Cataphatic approach

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), an Italian scholastic philosopher and theologian of 13<sup>th</sup> century prepared a more cataphatic and academic platform for the western theology. Thus the medieval western theology became an intellectual and philosophical exercise stand far from the pastoral tasks of the Church.<sup>83</sup> Hans Kung<sup>84</sup>, a catholic theologian of 20<sup>th</sup> century comments on Aquinas’ theology and its method:

---

<sup>82</sup> ዝኒ ከማሁ

<sup>83</sup> Fr. Dr. Jossi Jacob, Comparative Theology, unpublished, p.4

<sup>84</sup> Hans Küng was a very radical Swiss Catholic Theologian of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

“Thomas Aquinas’ theology, unlike more contemplative monastic theology of the church fathers and still that of Augustine, is quite essentially a rational university theology, composed by professors in the schools, and proposed basically not for the people and pastoral care, but for students and colleagues in theology. All the works of Aquinas are thoroughly sealed with scholastic approach to learning. They are all fully composed in Latin, all are very clear, compact, concise, and dense but impersonal and monotone. Because their approach is consistently analectic with sundry divisions and subdivisions and subdivisions, with edged definitions of concepts, and formal distinctions, with objections and answers with all the means of grammar, dialectic and controversies and with deep theological acumen. There is colossal use of highly developed and often over developed scholastic skill. With this style, Thomas created a new Philosophical and theological synthesis for the new time, brilliant, constructed with methodological rigour and academic mastery, of an exceptional unity. He paved the rational basis for theology by highlighting the use of reason in theology. This was his hermeneutical and methodological foundation”<sup>85</sup>.

The whole of the western theological world continued to be in the Thomistic legacy until the emergence of Protestantism. Protestantism emerged as a breakthrough in the milieu of legalistic mediaeval theology of the Catholic Church. The movement of reformation in the Catholic Church has successfully identified some of the problems of then Catholic Church, but pathetically failed in introducing a balanced approach to rectify the serious issues in the theological standpoint of the western theological world.<sup>86</sup>

The cataphatic approach is also known as positive or affirmative theology. The Cataphatic way tries to define the theological truths using logical and rational theories. Reason plays greater role than the scriptural guidelines in theologization in the cataphatic approach. It tries to define the divine self-revelation using human language and knowledge and to affirm the definitions and ideas as if they are perfect conclusions on theological affairs. Such a trend prevents the understanding of theology as an enquiry everlasting. It will rather end up in conclusions within

---

<sup>85</sup> Hans Küng, *Great Christian Thinkers* (London 1994) 107.

<sup>86</sup> Fr.Dr. Jossi Jacob, p.5

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

the limits of human intelligence and reasoning capacity. It also tries to get answer for every questions regarding theology. It is rather speculative and philosophical than spiritual and mystical.<sup>87</sup>

## 2.4.2. The Appophatic Approach

It is the theological methodology of the Eastern ecclesiastical tradition. This approach is also called negative theology. The basic principle behind this approach is that the divine mysteries are beyond human perception and we cannot make definitions or theories regarding it. It explains the faith in a mystical way and makes a series of negations while learning theology.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, as a church found in the eastern section, has an appophatic approach in theology. Let us take some examples from the Church's writings, that focus on the birth of God the Son from God the Father, which is considered as a mystery beyond investigation, analysis, definition (cataphatism) or logic:-

“በመንክር ግብር ዘኢይትነገር ወኢይትሐተት ኮነ ዝንቱ ልደት ወኢይክል ልቡና ዕጻለ እመሕያው ያእምር ልደቶ ዘከመ እፎ ውኡቱ<sup>88</sup> - (This birth occurred in a great mystery which is beyond words or investigation. Human mind cannot know how His birth is.)”

“ወልደቱስ ለወልድ እምኣብ ዘኢይትረከብ ወኢይትከሀል ተናግሮቱ እስመ መንፈሳዊ ውኡቱ እንበለ ተጎሥሦ፡ እስመ ለመንፈሳዊ ኢይክል ሥጋዊ ረከብቶ ወኢይደልዎ ይትጎሥሥ በእንቲአሁ።<sup>89</sup> - (The birth of the Son from the Father is not possible to be investigated or told. Since it is beyond investigation and it is impossible for the tangible one to know and investigate the abstract, One cannot be able to investigate His business.)”

“እፎኩመ ይትከሀለነ ናእምር ዘከመ ተወልደ ወልድ እምኣብ ወከማሁ ንእመን ወንለቡ እስመ ቃል ተወልደ እምኣብ ዘእንበለ ተጎሥሦ<sup>90</sup> - (How is it possible for us to know how the Son is begotten from the Father? Let us simply believe and know that the Word is

<sup>87</sup> Ibid

<sup>88</sup> ሃይ. አቢ. ዘፈላታዎስ፣ 105:8። 78፣ 475።

<sup>89</sup> ሃይ. አቢ. ዘኃ. 13፣11፣ 78፣ 40

<sup>90</sup> Ibid

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

begotten from the Father without saying how?)”

“(ድንግል) አምነት ዘእንበለ ተነሥሦ ከመ ውእቱ ቃለ አብ<sup>91</sup> - ((The Virgin) believed without any doubt that He is the Word of the Father.)”

“ዘኢይትነገር ልደቱ እምኔሁ<sup>92</sup> - (His birth from Him is non investigative.)”

“እፎ ንክል ንነጽር ኩሎ ምሥጢረ ቅዱስ በትሱብእት ዋሕድ ቃል<sup>93</sup> - (How is it possible to know the mystery of becoming Man of the word of the Father who do not have an elder or a younger.)”

These examples also give us a witness that there is knowledge which is beyond the perception of our sense organs. The birth of the Son from Virgin Mary is also expressed as being beyond understanding.

Once up on a time, the apostles asked Mary, how she did give birth to God. As She started telling them, an angel came suddenly and everybody fell except Mary because of his frightening appearance. This is because they were not matured enough to know the mystery of the birth of Christ from her, as She is.<sup>94</sup> However, how she learned it was still hidden, as it is not by perception of the senses.

Even if this Mystery has been revealed to some extent to Virgin Mary, but not to any other creature, it is again beyond any creature:-

“ወኢይትብሀል በእንተ ዝንቱ ተዋሕዶ እፎ ኮነ እስመ ውእቱስ መልዕልተ እፎ - ስለዚህ (የመለኮትና የትሱብእት) ተዋሕዶ እንዴት ሆነ? አይባልም፤ እንዴት ከመባል በላይ ነውና<sup>95</sup> -

(Therefore the unity (of divinity and flesh) is not asked ‘how did it happen’, for it is beyond

<sup>91</sup> ሃይ. አበ. ዘአትና.፣ 28:20፣ ገጽ 86::

<sup>92</sup> ሃይ. አበ. ዘኤጲ. 54:10፣ ገጽ 177::

<sup>93</sup> ሃይ. አበ. ዘቂ. 79:76፣ ገጽ 331::

<sup>94</sup> ውዳሴ ማርያምና ቅዳሴ ማርያም ንባቡና ትርጓሜ፣ ትንሣኤ የመጻሕፍት ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት፣ 1983 ዓ.ም.፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ ገጽ 76-77

<sup>95</sup> ተልሚድ (ረድኦ እንጦንስ)፣ ገጽ 244::

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

how?)”

“በእጩ ይትከሀል ይበልዎ ለተዋሕዶተ አምላክ ቃል ምስለ ሥጋ ዘከመ ዝንቱ ኮነ ወበአምሳለ ዝንቱ ተከውነ። ...እስመ ለገብርኤልኒ ወሰማርያም እግዝእትነ ኢተክህሎሙ ይሕትቱ እንዘ ይእቲ ወላዲቱ ወውእቱኒ አብሳሬ ትሰብእቱ ...። ወባሕቱ ሐተሙ ነገሮሙ በአንቀጸ ፍጻሜ ኢይሰአኖ ለእግዚአብሔር።”<sup>96</sup> -

(How is it possible to describe the unity of God the Word and flesh; How is it possible to say ‘it happened this way’? ... For Gabriel and for our Lady, Mary, for She is His Mother and for he is the one who is telling the good news of God becoming Man, they even could not investigate it... but they concluded their conversation by saying ‘there is nothing impossible for God’)

## 2.5. Allegorical Interpretation

As we have seen it clearly in the previous chapter, the allegorical method of interpretation is a typical Alexandrian method of interpretation. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church uses this method throughout its interpretations of the bible, besides the literal Antiochean method.<sup>97</sup> In using allegory, it is clear that the interpretations given by the scholars are not perceived by the sense organs. For example, if we take the story of the Ark of Noah and the people who were there at the time, in the book of Genesis<sup>98</sup>, firstly keeping the historical interpretation in mind, we find the following interpretation using the allegorical method:-

“ሀ. መርከብ የሥልጣን እግዚአብሔር፣ ኖኅና ቤተሰቡ የጻድቃን ብሊት፣ በውጪ የነበሩት የኃጥአን ብሊት ምሳሌ።

ለ. መርከብ የእመቤታችን፣ ኖኅ የጌታ፣ በቀኝ ያሉት በእመቤታችን ቃል ኪዳን

<sup>96</sup> መጽሐፍ ልቡና፣ ገጽ 154

<sup>97</sup> የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ ክልደተ ክርስቶስ እስከ ፳፻ ዓ.ም. (2000)፣ ገጽ 204

<sup>98</sup> Gen. 8:19-20

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

ያመኑ፣ በግራ ያሉት በእመቤታችን ቃል ኪዳን ያላመኑ ምሳሌ።

ሐ. መርከብ የመስቀል፣ ኖህ የጌታ፣ በቀኝ ያሉት የፈያታዊ ዘዋውን፣ በግራ ያሉት የፈያታዊ ዘጸጋም ምሳሌ።

መ. መርከብ የጥምቀት ምሳሌ፣ ኖህና ቤተሰቡ የጥሙቃን፣ ሦስት ክፍል መሆንዋ ጥምቀት በሥላሴ ስም ነውና።

ሠ. መርከብ የቤተ ክርስቲያን ኖህና ቤተሰቡ የምእመናን ሦስት ክፍል መሆንዋ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ሦስት ክፍል ናትና።

ረ. መርከብ የትንሣኤ፣ ኖህና ልጆቹ የሙታን ምሳሌ፣ ሦስት ክፍል መሆንዋ በኩረ ትንሣኤ ክርስቶስ በሦስተኛው ቀን የመነሣቱ ምሳሌ ነው።<sup>99</sup> -

(A. The Ark is the symbol of the Power of God; Noah and his family are the symbols of the righteous people of the Old Testament; those who were outside are the symbols of the sinners of the Old Testament.

(B. The Ark is the symbol of our Lady; Noah of the Lord; Those who were at the right are symbols for those who believe in the covenant of our Lady; and those on the left for those who did not believe in the covenant of our Lady.

(C. The Ark is the symbol of the Cross; and Noah of the Lord. Those on the right are symbols for the right side malefactor; and those on the left for the malefactor on the left side.

(D. The Ark is the symbol for Baptism and Noah and his family for those who got baptized; The Ark's three partitions for baptism is undergone in the name of the Trinity.

(E. The Ark is a symbol for the Church and Noah and his family for the believers and the three parts of the Ark for the Church's three parts of service.

<sup>99</sup> የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ ከልደተ ክርስቶስ እስከ ፳፻ ዓ.ም. (2000)፣ ገጽ 204-205

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

(F. The Ark is a symbol for resurrection and Noah and his family for death; and its three parts for Christ has risen from death in the third day.)”

## 2.6. Existence of God witnessed by Rational Thought

In the teachings of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the existence of God is proved in different arguments. Two of these arguments that show knowledge of existence of God is proved without the use of the perception of the sense organs, are seen in the following examples:-

### 2.6.1. Witness of the ‘Nous’<sup>100</sup> (የሕሊና ምስክርነት)

The nous (ሕሊና) is an ethical part found in the nature of man. To describe it more in an example, the eye can know what is good and what is evil by seeing things. Just like the eye, the nous (ሕሊና) knows what is good and what is evil, with its natural ability and without any perception of the senses.<sup>101</sup>

The book of Maccabees, which is accepted in the Ethiopian Church, and not known in most churches witnesses the above consciousness in the following speech of a king, who did not know the laws of God, but came to understand it because of the reproach of his nous, for he has brought suffering to the Jews and robbed treasures from their temple, which was considered as a right act of conquering by his time.

“ስለዚህ ባለሟሎቹን ሁሉ ጠርቶ ከዓይኖቹ እንቅልፍ እየጠፋና ልቤም እየደነገጠ ነው። በሥልጣን ዘመኔ በጣም ቸርና ተወዳጅ የነበርኩት እኔ ለምን አሁን እንዲህ ያለ ታላቅ ጭንቀት ደረሰብኝ ብዬ ራሴን በጠየቅሁት ጊዜ በኢየሩሳሌም የፈጸምኩትን በደል ማስታወስ ጀመርኩ። የብሩንና የወርቁን ዕቃዎች የወሰድሁትና የይሁዳ ሕዝብም እንዲፈጅ ትእዛዝ ያስተላለፍኩት ያለ ምንም ምክንያት ነበር። ይህ አሁን በባዕድ ሀገርና በጭንቀት የመሞት ዕድለ ቢስነት ያጋጠመኝ በፈጸምኩት በደል ለመሆኑ እርግጠኛ ነኝ።<sup>102</sup> -

<sup>100</sup> Not to call it mind. As ‘mind’ seems to feet ‘አእምሮ’, I called ‘ሕሊና’ as ‘nous’.

<sup>101</sup> ትምህርተ መለኮት፣ ከዓሥራት ገብረ ማርያም፣ 2005 ዓ.ም.፣ ገጽ 16

<sup>102</sup> 1ኛ መቃ. 6:10-13

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

So he called in all his friends and said to them: ‘Sleep has departed from my eyes, and my heart sinks from anxiety. I said to myself: Into what tribulation have I come, and in what floods of sorrow am I now! Yet I was kindly and beloved in my rule.’ But I now recall the evils I did in Jerusalem, when I carried away all the vessels of silver and gold that were in it, and for no cause gave orders that the inhabitants of Judah be destroyed. I know that this is why these evils have overtaken me; and now I am dying, in bitter grief, in a foreign land.<sup>103</sup>”

The king did not learn what he did was wrong, from the laws he learned and knew using his sense organs, but from his innate nature. This witness is considered as a witness of the existence of God, for He is believed to put this feeling in our nature. This type of knowledge of the evil and good, can be found in any person whether he is blind or not, deaf or able to hear, dumb or speaking, or with or without any sense.

Verses in the book of Romans have been interpreted in the same way, in the Church:

“አሕዛብኒ እለ አልቦሙ ሕግ ይሠርዑ ሎሙ ሕገ ወየሐግጉ ሎሙ ለሊሆሙ።። ወይገብሩ ዘበሕጎሙ።። ወያሬእዩ ገቢረ ሕግ እንዘ ጽሑፍ ውእቱ ውስተ ልቦሙ፤ ወይትወወቅ እምግባሮሙ፤ ወያርሰሐስሐሙ ልቦሙ፤ ወይቀልዮሙ።።<sup>104</sup>

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts<sup>105</sup>, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;”

## 2.6.2. Natural Leaning of Man (የሰው ልጅ የተፈጥሮ ዝንባሌ)

In his nature man is a dependent being. Even if he fulfils all his previous wishes he tends to wish for another. This shows that he is always vacuous and needs a helper by which he

<sup>103</sup> <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/1maccabees/6> - (last retrieved - July 20, 2022)

<sup>104</sup> የቅዱስ ጳውሎስ መጽሐፍ ንባቡ ከነ ትርጓሜው፤ ትንሣኤ ዘጉባኤ ማተሚያ ቤት፤ 1988 ዓ.ም.፤ አዲስ አበባ፤ ገጽ 32-33

<sup>105</sup> This ‘heart’ is the same contextually with the word I used - ‘nous’, here.

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

depends on, in order for his openings to be filled.<sup>106</sup>

“ለዚህም ነው የአቴና ሰዎች አምላክ እንደሚያስፈልጋቸው ተፈጥሯቸው አስገድዶአቸው ማምለክ ሲፈልጉና አምላክን በትክክል ማወቅ ሲከብዳቸው <ለማይታወቅ አምላክ> የሚል ጽሑፍ ጽፈው ማምለክ የጀመሩት፤ ቅዱስ ጳውሎስም ይህን ከተመለከተ በኋላ <የማይታወቅ> ያሉትን አምላክ አስታወቃቸው። ሐዋ.17:22-32። ከዚህም ጋር በታሪክ ያለ አማልክት የሚኖር ሕዝብ እንደሌለ ማወቅ ያስፈልጋል።<sup>107</sup> -

This is why the people of Athens, after being forced by their own nature, that they need a god, when they needed to worship and did not have the right knowledge about God, they started worshipping after they wrote by saying ‘For the unknown God’; After seeing this, St. Paul let them know who they called the ‘unknown’ God. Act. 17:22-32:: With this sense, it should be known that there is no crowd in history that lives without gods”

The act of the people of Athens shows that their heart just told them to worship, without being moved by any external factor.

So far, we have seen how the Alexandrian school of thought and rational source of knowledge contributed to the theology of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. Now, in the next chapter, we shall see how the school of Antioch influenced the Church.

<sup>106</sup> የትምህርት ሃይማኖት መግቢያ፣ ገጽ 32

<sup>107</sup> Ibid; P. 32

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. THE INFLUENCE OF THE ANTIOCHEAN SCHOOL ON EOTC

We have situated the debate in chapter one and seen the influence of the school of Alexandria on the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, in chapter two. Here, the main concern of this chapter, in this thesis, is to show the influence of the school of Antioch in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. As the school of Antioch is one of the most influential schools of early Christianity, and as it is the place where many known scholars have been flourished in, its influences in EOTC and other churches is very great.<sup>108</sup> Here, we will narrow the theme to concepts related to theory of knowledge. Therefore, contributions related to empiricism and perceivable knowledge in the church would be the typical concern of this chapter.

To elaborate the ideas, we will select some themes from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and try to show the Antiochean and Empirical elements within the concepts they carry in.

The influence of the Antiochean thought and the contribution of the method of empiricism on the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church is clearly visible as we shall observe it in the coming pages of this chapter. Empirical method of interpretation, especially describing the existence of God using the creation is a very known method. The phrase “እግዚአብሔር በፍጥረቱ” which means “God ... by His creation” is a title of most scholars or books that tell the dogma of the existence of God<sup>109</sup>, as we may clarify it later.

As that of the Alexandrian scholars, the Antiochean scholars have also contributed a lot in the formation of the theology of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. From these scholars, St. John Chrysostom is the one who is repeatedly mentioned in the books of

---

<sup>108</sup> የቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ በዓለም መድረክ፣ አባ ጎርጎርዮስ፣ 1978 ዓ.ም.፣ ገጽ. 70-80

<sup>109</sup> ተንክተም፣ ገጽ ፣ ተጎሥሥ፣ ገጽ

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

interpretation and in aspects of shaping one’s life, for example, with reproach<sup>110</sup>.

In ancient and medieval times of the church’s history, we can find that many books have also been translated from Arabic to Ge’ez, which is the church’s official and ancient language of worship. From such Arabic books, we can find that many came from Syria, where its capital city, Antioch, is the center of academics and theology, the school of Antioch being the center for the whole process.<sup>111</sup>

Even if it is clear that the administrative relationship between the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church is not as historical and very close as that of the Church’s direct administrative relationship with the Coptic Orthodox Church, we do not have to expect the same thing in scholastics and teachings. To elaborate more, the Ethiopian church’s direct relationship, as stated in chapter two, helped her to bring more books from Alexandria. The import of more books and religious leaders from Alexandria, helped the the Alexandrian influence to be vast on the method of interpretation in EOTC. The Syrian/Antiochen church also had such an influence as that of the Coptic Church. This is due to the nine saints who brought many books to Ethiopia and due to the method of interpretation commonly used by Ethiopians and Syrians, i.e., Typological method of interpretation.<sup>112113</sup>

These above mentioned arguments are proved here, in this chapter, where the influence of the School of Antioch is tangibly expressed and sources of knowledge of the mysteries of God are described as empirical, by which the use of the perception of the sense organs is huge.

## 3.1. The Method of Interpretation – “አንድምታ”

“አንድምታ” means “One More”. The Ethiopian method of interpretation of scriptures could

<sup>110</sup> ተግሳጽ ወድርሳኑ ዘቅዱስ ዮሐንስ አፈወርቅ

<sup>111</sup> የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ ከልደተ ክርስቶስ እስከ ፳፻ ዓ.ም. (2000)፣ ገጽ 194-195

<sup>112</sup> As the Alexandrian Church had a direct relationship administratively with the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Syrian Church also had a direct administrative relationship with the Indian Orthodox Churches. የበረሃ ምንጮች (ማላንካራውያን) መካኘን ፣ ገጽ

<sup>113</sup>

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

go up to thirteen meanings, for a single verse, using this word – አንድም - One more. For such an elaboration this method of interpretation uses two words. But it is not known which word is for literal interpretation and which one is for allegorical interpretation:

“በኢትዮጵያ ቤተ ክርስቲያን የአንድምታ ትምህርት ቤት ቅዱሳት መጻሕፍትን ለማብራራት የሚያገለግሉ ሁለት ቃላት አሉ። እነርሱም ትርጓሜና ፍካሬ ናቸው። ነገር ግን የትኛው ለነጠላ ትርጓሜ፣ የትኛውም ለአንድምታ ትርጓሜ እንደሚጠቅም ውሳኔ የለም። ሁሉም በሁሉ ይነገራሉ። ይሁን እንጂ የአማርኛው ቅዱስ መጽሐፍ ብዙ ጊዜ ትርጓሜን ሲጠቀም፣ የግእዙ ቅዱስ መጽሐፍ ፍካሬን ይጠቀማል<sup>114</sup> -

There are two words in the Ethiopian Church’s “Andimta” school that are used to explain holy books. These are ‘Tirguame’ and ‘Fikare’. But there is no decision for which is used for literal interpretation and which is for allegorical interpretation. All is spoken for all. However, the Amharic holy book uses ‘Tirguame’ while the Ge’ez holy book uses ‘Fikare’.”

To see the meaning of a text in the Andimta, let us take one example from the verses in the bible and let it be the text with most numbers of Andimta (13). It is in the sixth chapter of the book of Revelation, which is read as follows: “ወርኢኩ ናሁ ይወፅእ ፈረስ ጸዐዳ፣ ወዘይጸዐኖ ቀስተ ያጸንፅ ወወሀብዎ አክሊለ። ወወፅእ ከመ ይማፅ፣ ወሞዐ - And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.”<sup>115</sup>

Here, the verse has been interpreted 13 times in the Andimta and the word “ፈረስ ጸዐዳ - white horse” has been stated as the symbol of many things. For example, in the first Andimta the horse is the time of the false messiah. Its whiteness is the symbol of the happiness of the Jews. In the third Andimta the horse is the symbol of the sun and its bightness is symbolized by the whiteness. And in the coming interpretations of the same word in the Andimta, the horse becomes Adam and its whiteness the purity of Adam. It

<sup>114</sup> የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ ክልደተ ክርስቶስ እስከ ፳፻ ዓ.ም. (2000)፣ ገጽ 174  
<sup>115</sup> መጻሕፍተ ሐዲሳት ሠለስቱ፣ 2007 ዓ.ም. ፣ ገጽ 385-387

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

again, symbolizes the age of the fathers, Augustus Ceasar, Tiberius Ceasar and some others. As the horse is stated as conquering and victorious in the verse, Augustus Ceasar is symbolized by him as victorious because of the birth of Christ in his reign. Similarly, the Crucifixion of Christ for a victory over death and Satan and for the salvation of the world has occurred in the ruling time of Tiberius Ceasar.<sup>116</sup>

A question may be raised here. If the horse is the false Messiah for one interpreter and the sun for the other and Adam, Augustus, Tiberius and some more for some others, isn't the truth subjective? No, it is not. The horse symbolizes the false Messiah, without losing being a symbol of the others. It is at the same time the symbol of all for all scholars. And for now, there are 13 different Andimta interpretations for it, but for the future, there may be a revelation for the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> and more. This is why the church's scholars say that the word of God is new everyday. Interpretations might seem controversial and subjective but they are not and are in a line with the church's truth. “ይጣላል ቢሉ አይጣላም” - Does it contradict? No, it does not” is a known phrase that the Andimta uses to show the seemingly controversial and subjective verses do not contradict each other and are connected to a one objective truth.

### 3.1.1. The Upper House and the Lower House

There are two types of interpretations in the Ethiopian Andimta tradition. These are “ላይ ቤት” and “ታች ቤት”, meaning, the “Upper House” and the “Lower House”, respectively. Both of these interpretation houses are found by the known Andimta scholar Esdros (around 1716 Eth.Cal.). The scholar was the then master of the Andimta school. Many great scholars were taught by and graduated from him. Then one day, after being the master of the school for many years, he went to the islands of lake Tana, to search for more knowledge from books<sup>117</sup>.

There, he read over 300 books and advanced his knowledge of Andimta. He then went to his school and called his former students, which were already masters of other schools by

---

<sup>116</sup> Ibid;

<sup>117</sup> Ibid; 194-195

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

then, so that they could share the new knowledge. Most of them came back to him and enjoyed the new expressions, while some refused by saying “ንሕነሶ ኢተወለድነ እምዘመታ - We were not born from adultery”, considering the new knowledge as adultery<sup>118</sup>.

Therefore, the new school which was found after the scholar read those books and called his former students was named as the Lower House, while the school of those who kept the former type of interpretation was named as the Upper House. However, there is no significant difference between the teachings of the schools, except that the Lower House adds more examples and clarifications to the known interpretation.<sup>119</sup>

For instance, on the question “Why does God made the Gospel writers four? And not three or five?” the Lower House explains fourteen examples, as a reason, by which each example has a fourfold thing. However, the Upper House, does not use these examples. There is also a story on the arguments and debates of these schools, by which, once, a scholar of the Upper House came to his house, saw four bar salts in a corner. He then suddenly called his wife and said “Please hide those four bar salts, if they get exposed to the eyes of the Lower House scholars, they would have been lost”<sup>120</sup>.

We may understand at least two things, from all these narrations. Firstly, the knowledge that became the reason for the formation of the latter school was perceived by the sense organs, empirically. The tirelessness of the scholar Esdros, to read more than three hundred books, and grab something clearly witnesses it. Secondly, the Lower House of Andimta interpretation is known for its empirical analysis, as it is clearly told that everything, for example the bar salt, that the scholars of this school see is added on their knowledge of Andimta. They add knowledge by perceiving through the sense organs.

Additionally, adultery is initiated by seeing or encountering others. The refusal of the Upper House scholars to come and learn the new perceived knowledge was expressed as

---

<sup>118</sup> Ibid; PP 194-195

<sup>119</sup> Ibid;

<sup>120</sup> Ibid;

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

adultery, as it was gained because of Esdros's encounter of more books, other than those which were revealed to the former scholars, within their minds. It seems that the former knowledge was considered as a wife by whom all the scholars of Esdros were born from him (as husband) and that former knowledge (as wife). When he went and brought the later knowledge, while keeping the first, the upper house scholars symbolized it as cheating on a wife and go to another woman. Therefore symbolizing those who were born from the combined knowledge as children of adultery, they said that they were not born from adultery.

However, it should be known that all Andimta students now learn interpretations of both houses. This is because the thirst of knowledge. A disciple of either of the Upper or Lower houses, when finishing his part of study in his school, used to go to the other school and listen to how the scripture used to be interpreted. This helped to the oneness of the houses and the development of Andimta interpretation. History also witnesses that a master named Aleka Weldeab, a multilingual scholar, after reading six hundred more books, he redesigned the Andimta books and added more interpretations to them.<sup>121</sup>

### 3.2.Revelation and Interpretation

We can say that revelation is a communication between God, the absolute infinite Person and human beings limited and finite persons. In the process of revelation the infinite person God came down and used finite things, language and methods of communication to make the revelation real and fruitful. The revelation becomes fruitful and meaningful when it communicates the idea of God to the limited capacity of humanity. As one human person can be known through his words and deeds, God also reveals His self through the words and deeds while being both transcendent and immanent.<sup>122</sup>

“Revelation is the basis and content of Christian faith. Apart from God's self revelation there would be no knowledge of God and no Christian faith. In other words we can say, what God has revealed about himself constitute the content of our knowledge and faith.

---

<sup>121</sup> Ibid;

<sup>122</sup> Dogmatic Theology; P 11

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

The 'revelation' refers to both the act of revealing and the content of what is revealed.”<sup>123</sup>

Revelation is through nature and scripture. Ephrem the Syrian claims that nature (universe) and Scripture are two great fountains of revelation. He explains incarnation of God as the key to open those fountains. Creation is the outcome of the spoken word of God and Scripture is the word of God recorded in human Languages. Incarnation is the ultimate self-revelation of God into the history. Incarnation is the perfection of all revelations. It can be called the crown of revelation.<sup>124</sup>

Scholars classify the revelation into two, general revelation and special revelation. Revelation through nature and history is considered as general, and God’s revelation personally to prophets and to specific saints is called as specific.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, one can understand that if the revealed truth is recorded in books, grabbed from nature, and is touched and heard and seen through the incarnation, then the knowledge gained is empirical and literal.

The revealed truth can be understood through the experience and interpretation. In order to understand and comprehend the divine truth of revelation, human beings have to depend on their empirical experience. The revelation and revelational experience are to be interpreted in an understandable manner to humanity. Through the revelational experience and interpretation a version of revelation or revealed truth which is understandable to humanity originates. That should be totally loyal to and in line with the absolute truth. In that process is the need of human reason and interpretation.<sup>126</sup>

“Reason is man’s quest for truth, but revelation is God’s revealing Himself. In logic reason is all important, but in theology reason is used to understand the divine revelation. Reason enables man to distinguish between right and wrong. Revelations do not minimize the importance of reason or reject it. On the contrary they sharpen reason.....Interpretation is primarily the understanding of the revelation using reason.”<sup>127</sup>

---

<sup>123</sup> Ibid;

<sup>124</sup> Ibid;

<sup>125</sup> የነገረ መለኮት መግቢያ፣ መምህር ግርማ ባቱ፣ የካቲት 2012 ዓ.ም.፣ ገጽ 78

<sup>126</sup> Dogmatic Theology; P 12

<sup>127</sup> Ibid;

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

## 3.3. Transcendence and Immanence

St. Ephrem the Syrian has said that there is a chasm between the creator and creation. He emphatically locates the divinity on the far side of this ontological chasm, while all angelic beings belong, together with corporeal ones, to the side of creation. Linked to this consciousness of the inability of any created thing to cross this chasm to the creator is an awareness that the intellect that has knowledge of something must be greater than the object of its knowledge. God is transcendent. Anyone who claims that it is possible to know (and so describe) God is at the same time implying that the human intellect is capable of ‘containing’ God, the uncontainable.<sup>128</sup>

“Whoever is capable of investigating, becomes the container of what he investigates; a knowledge which is capable of containing the Omniscient is greater than Him, for it has proved capable of measuring the whole of Him. A person who investigates the Father and Son is thus greater than them.”<sup>129</sup>

Ephrem symbolized the chasm by the parable of Dives and Lazarus in the Gospel of Luke chapter 16. In the parable, there was a chasm between the righteous and the sinners and when the sinner begged a drop of water from a righteous one, Abraham told him “ወምስለ ዝንቱ ኩሉ ፀድቑ ዓቢይ ይክልኣነ ማዕከሌነ ወማዕከሌክሙ፤ ከመ እለሂ ይፈቅዱ ይጎልፉ እምሰፊ ኢይክሃሉ መጸኢ ጎቤክሙ። ወእለሂ መንገሌክሙ ኢይዕድወ ጎቤነ - And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.”<sup>130</sup>

The verse “He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies” from Psalms 18:11, is also interpreted in the Andimta to describe the transcendence of God:-

“ወረሰየ ጽልመተ ምሥዋሮ ... ሰው ሲሆን ባሕርዩን የማይመረመር አደረገ - He made darkness his secret place... while becoming Man, He made His essence/nature

<sup>128</sup> Luminous Eye; p 26

<sup>129</sup> Faith 9:16

<sup>130</sup> ወንጌል ቅዱስ፣ ገጽ 463

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

uninvestigatable.”<sup>131</sup>

The chasm between God and the creation can be crossed only one way, when God comes and reveals himself to the creation. “God is hidden, except in so far as He allows Himself to be revealed”<sup>132</sup>. Therefore, God is also immanent. He makes Himself as near as no one is to Man; He became Man.

“Who will not give thanks to the hidden one, most hidden of all, who came to open revelation, most open of all, for He put on a body, and other bodies felt Him –though minds never grasped Him”<sup>133</sup>

His immanence is stated as follows in one of the Ethiopian poetic expressions:

“እመሂ ሕይወተ ወሞተ ሥጋ ትሁቦ

እምርእሰየ ለርእሰየ እስመ አንተ ትቀርቦ”<sup>134</sup> -

Whether you give me life or death you know what is better for me, for you are more near to me than I am to myself. ”

This poem clearly shows that it is believed that God is very near to the whole creation, even if he is uninvestigatable and hidden. He is even more near to one individual than that individual is near to himself, even if, he cannot see or touch Him. So, He is Immanent even if He is transcendent.

## 3.4. Empirical witness of Existence of God

We have seen that God’s existence is witnessed through the nous and natural leaning of man, in the previous chapter. In this chapter we shall see how it is witnessed empirically, in

---

<sup>131</sup> መዝሙረ ዳዊት ትርጓሜ፣ ገጽ 110

<sup>132</sup> Luminous Eye; P 27

<sup>133</sup> Faith; 19:7

<sup>134</sup> በቃል የተነገረና የተዋረሰ የሊቃውንት ቅኔ። (An orally told poem of scholars)

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

the church's teachings.

### 3.4.1. Nature

If we clearly observe it, nature witnesses the existence of God.<sup>135</sup> There are many narrations in the Ethiopian Church's scriptures that argue how the entire nature tells about God, for those that are truly observing them.

The Bible also is one source for claiming that nature has something to add on the previous knowledge of humans. The book of Job says "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee. Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind"<sup>136</sup> This is explained in the Ethiopian interpretation as follows:-

“ተሰአሎሙ ለእንስሳሂ ለእመ ይነግሩክ፣ ወለአዕዋፊ ሰማይኒ ለእመ ያየድዑክ፣ ተናገራ ለምድር ለእመ ትፌክር ለክ፣ ወለእመ ይነግሩክ ዓሣተ ባሕር፣ ሙኑ የአምር ዘንተ ኩሎ ከመ ዕደ እግዚአብሔር ገብረ፣ እስመ ውስተ እዴሁ ነፍሰ ኩሉ ሕያው ወመንፈስ ኩሉ ሰብእ”<sup>137</sup>

In explaining this verse the interpretation book explains that as food enters the body through the throat, knowledge enters the body through the ear:

“ጆሮ ነገርን ይለያል፣ ጉሮሮ የእህል ጣዕም ያውቃል፣ የነገር ጣዕም በጆሮ፣ የእህል ጣዕም በጉሮሮ እንዲሉ፣”<sup>138</sup> -

The ear differentiates words (knowledge), while the throat knows the taste of food. As it is said, The ear for the taste of words, and the throat for the taste of foods.”

Other books of interpretation also explain nature as the sources of knowledge of God:

<sup>135</sup> የትምህርት ሃይማኖት መግቢያ፣ ገጽ 30

<sup>136</sup> Job 10:7-10

<sup>137</sup> አርባአቱ መጻሕፍት ብሉያት፣ መጽሐፈ ጦቢት፣ የዲት፣ አስቴር፣ ኢየብ፣ ገጽ 56

<sup>138</sup> Ibid;

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

“ሰማያት ይነግራ ስብሐተ እግዚአብሔር፣ ወግብረ እደዊሁ ያየድግ ሰማያት፡፡... የእጁን የቃሉን ሥራ ሰማያት ይነግራሉ፤ ያስተምራሉ፡፡ አንድም፡ ሰማያት ግብረ እደዊሁ ይነግራ ወያየድግ ስብሐተ እግዚአብሔር ብለህ ግጠም፣ የእጁ የቃሉ ሥራ የሚሆኑ ሰማያት ጌትነቱን ተአምራቱን ምስጋናውን ይነግራሉ፣ ያስተምራሉ፡፡ አሁን እነሱ ግእዛን ኑሯቸው የሚናገሩ ሁነው አይደለም፤ ተዘርግተው በመታየታቸው ሰው ጌትነቱን ተአምራቱን ምስጋናውን የሚናገር ስለሆነ ሰማይኒ ይነግር በአስተርእዮቱ እንዲል፡፡<sup>139</sup> -

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. The heavens declare and teach the work of His Words and Hands. One more, the heavens which are the works of His Hands and Words, declare and teach the praise and the Lordship of God. It is not by speaking human languages, that they declare and teach, But, as they are seen surfaced as a ceiling, man speaks His praise; As it is said the heaven speaks by its visibility.”

This is why it is believed that God never left Himself without witnesses, and he put His witnesses in nature, where everyone can see what he does:-

“ወጎደጎሙ ለኩሎሙ አሕዛብ ይሉሩ በግዕዙሙ በዘቀዲሙ መዋዕል፤ እንዘ ኢየጎድግ ርእሶ ዘእንበለ ሰማዕት፤ ወይገብር ሠናይቶ፣ ወይሁብ እምሰማይ ዝናመ ወያክርም በበዓመት፣ ወያፈሪ፣ ወያሠምር ከመ ያጽግበነ ወያስተፍሥሐ ልበነ<sup>140</sup> -

Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

When interpreting the verse “And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not”<sup>141</sup> the Ethiopian scholars connect it with knowledge. Knowledge here is symbolized by light, and ignorance by darkness. On the Andimta interpretation, while

<sup>139</sup> መዝሙረ ዳዊት፣ ንባቡ በግእዛ መሉት ጎርጎሜው ከነአንድምታው በአማርኛ፣ ገጽ 124-125

<sup>140</sup> መጻሕፍተ ሐዲሳት ሠለስቱ፣ 2007 ዓ.ም.፣ ኢ.አ.፣ ገጽ 116-117

<sup>141</sup> Jn. 1:5

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

interpreting this verse, there are three names stated to show what their source of knowledge was. Abraham and Mosses the black were stated because they gained knowledge from nature.

“በሥነ ፍጥረት ተመራምረው ያወቁት ዕውቀት በሥዋሬ ያለ ምስጢርን ይገልጻል።<sup>142</sup> ... በሥነ ፍጥረት ተመራምረው ያመኑ ብዙ ናቸው። ከዚያው ግን ከቀደሙት ሰዎች አብርሃም ከኋላ ሰዎች ሙሴ ጸሊም። ... በሥነ ፍጥረት የሚመራመርን ሰው ድንቁርና አያገኘውም። ... ስንኳን ሊያገኘው አይደርስበትም-  
143

A knowledge that is known after investigating nature reveals a hidden mystery... There are many who believed because of their investigation on nature... From all these, Abraham, from the far historic time, and Mosses the Black from the near historic time, can be mentioned... Ignorance cannot find a man that investigates with nature... cannot even get near him.”<sup>144</sup>

### 3.4.2. The Argument from Efficient Cause and Design

Thomas Aquinas, a Roman Catholic philosopher and theologian of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, presented five arguments to prove the existence of God.

“**The Argument from Motion:-** He argues that since everything that moves is moved by another, there must thereby exist an Unmoved Mover. **The Argument from Efficient Cause:-** The sequence of causes which make up this universe must have a First Cause. **The Argument to Necessary Being:-** Since all existent things depend upon other things for their existence, there must exist at least one thing that is not dependent and so is a Necessary Being. **The Argument from Gradation:-** Since all existent things can be compared to such qualities as degrees of goodness,

<sup>142</sup> ወንጌል ቅዱስ፣ መጋቤ ሐዲስ ቃለ ሕይወት በዛ የመካኒ ነገሥት ግምጃ ቤት ማርያም የሐዲሳትና የሊቃውንት ምስክር መምህር፣ 2013 ዓ.ም.፣ ጊሩተ ድንግል ማተሚያ ቤት፣ ገጽ 584

<sup>143</sup> ተነሥሥ፣ ገጽ 161

<sup>144</sup> One can read how these men came to know God through investigating nature from many books. The story of Abraham is narrated on the book of Genesis, and that of Mosses on Synaxarium of the month of Sene/June 24 - ስንኳን ሊያገኘው አይደርስበትም፣ 24፣

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

there must exist something that is an Absolutely Good Being. **The Argument from Design:-** Also named ‘**The Teleological Argument**’ – The intricate design and order of existent things and nature processes imply that a Great Designer exists.”<sup>145</sup>

From these five arguments the second and the last arguments are our focuses now.<sup>146</sup> The second one tells us that everything in nature is caused by another cause, and using this cause and effect relationship, we can travel back to the first Uncaused Cause, which is God. This argument is seen in the philosophy of an Ethiopian philosopher named Zarayakob.<sup>147</sup> Once upon a time, he separated himself from humans and being alone, started reading and praying the Psalms. He suddenly stopped praying when he doubted whether his prayer is heard or not, or whether there is someone hearing or not. He asked:-

“መኑ ወሀበኒ እዝነ ከመ አስማዕ ወመኑ ፈጠረኒ ለባዌ፣ ወእፎ መጻእኩ ከነ ውስተ ዝንቱ ዓለም፣ ወእም አይቱ መጻእኩ፣ ... ወመኑ እንክ ፈጠረኒ፣ ለልዩኒ በእዴየ ተፈጠርኩ፣ ወባሕቱ ኢሀሎኩ ሶበ ተፈጠርኩ ... እስማበት ዘንድ ማን ጆሮን ሰጠኝ? ማን አስተዋይ አደረገኝ? ወደዚህ ዓለምስ እንዴት መጣሁ?... ከቶ ማን ፈጠረኝ? ለራሴ በእጅ ተፈጠርኩን? ግን ደግሞ በተፈጠርኩ ጊዜ አልነበርኩም (ራሴን ለመፍጠርም ቀድሜ መፈጠር አለብኝ)<sup>148</sup> —

Who gave me ear, so that I can hear with it? Who made me perspicacious? How did I come to this world?... Who just created me? Did I created myself with my hand? But, I was not there when I was created (I had to be pre-created to create myself).”

He is alone asking questions. There is no one to answer for him. Realizing this, he started to answer to his questions. “If I say that my parents created me, I had to go and search for who created them. If I search like this behind my parents, grandparents, great grandparents and so on, I would reach those first parents who were not begotten like us, but in a different way. Then I can find who created them. He, the one who created them created everything,

<sup>145</sup> <https://philosophy.lander.edu/intro/aquinas.shtml> (last retrieved Aug. 4, 2022)

<sup>146</sup> These arguments are arbitrarily selected as the researcher got some texts in the EOTC that seem similar to the thoughts explained in them.

<sup>147</sup> ተኅምህሮ፣ ገጽ 164

<sup>148</sup> Ibid

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

and He listens to my prayers”. After this, He returned to his prayer<sup>149</sup>. This is a typical similar argument with that of Aquinas’ second argument.

Another scholar asks:

“በምንት ይትዓወቅ ከመ ሀሎ ፈጣሪነ - ፈጣሪያችን እንዳለ በምን ይታወቃል? -

How is the existence of our Creator known?”<sup>150</sup>

Then he answers his question with the same argument:

“ይትዓወቅ በግብሩ። እስመ አበዊነ ወእማቲነ ኢሠዐሉ አዕይንቲ ወአእዛኒ ወአእዳዊነ ወእገሪነ፤ ዳእመ ዘርዑ ዘርዑ ሥጋሆሙ ውስተ ማኅፀን ጸባብ ...። እመሰ አልቦ ውእቱ እምኢተሥዕልነ፤ እስመ ኢይሠዐል ሥዕል እንበለ ሠዓሊ፤ ወኢይጸሐፍ መልክዐ ፊደል እንበለ ጸሐፊ፤ ወኢይትሐነጽ ሕንፃ እንበለ ሐናዒ፤ ወኢይትዓነም ልብስ እንበለ ዐናሚ፤ ወኢይትገበር ግብር እንበለ ገባሪ፤ ወበዝ ይትዓወቅ ከመ ሀሎዘፈጠረነ፤ (የፈጣሪ መኖር) በሥራው ይታወቃል። አባቶቻችንና እናቶቻችን ዓይኖቻችን፤ ጆሮቻችን፤ እጆቻችን፤ እግሮቻችን፤ ሕዋሳቶቻችን ሁሉ አልሳሉልንምና (አልፈጠሩልንምና)፤ ዘሮቻቸውን በጠባብ ማኅፀን ዘሩ እንጂ፤ ...። እሱ ባይኖርስ ባልተሣልን ነበር፤ ሥዕል ያለ ሠዓሊ አይሣልምና፤ የፊደል መልክ ያለ ጸሐፊ አይጻፍምና፤ ሕንጻ ያለሐናጺ አይታነጽምና፤ ሸማ ያለ ሸማኔ አይሸመንምና፤ ሥራ ያለ ሠሪው አይሠራምና፤ በዚህ የፈጠረን እንዳለ ይታወቃል።<sup>151</sup> -

It is known by His work. Our fathers and mothers have not created for us our eyes, ears, hands, legs and all our organs; but they put their race in narrow wombs... If He were not there, we would have not been created; as there is no picture without a painter, a letter without a writer, a building without an engineer, a garment without a weaver, a work without a worker. With this, we know that there is someone who

<sup>149</sup> Ibid

<sup>150</sup> ሃይማኖት አበው ዘጉንዳጉንዶ፤

<sup>151</sup> Ibid;

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

created us.”

Regarding design argument, a scholar of the church claims the following:

“...የፍጥረትን አኗኗር ... ብንመለከት ብዙ የምንማረው ነገር አለን። ለምሳሌ አራዊት በቀን ሰዎች በሌሊት ለምን አልሠለጠኑም? በሳይንሱ እንደሚታመነው ሰውና አትክልት ወይም ዕጽዋት ምንም ስምምነት ሳይፈራረሙ የሰውን የተቃጠለ አየር (CO2) አትክልት የአትክልትን ደግሞ (O2) ሰው እንዴት መጠቀም ቻለ? ስንል ይህን ሁሉ ሥርዓት የዘረጋና በኪዳን ያጸና አንድ አምላክ መኖሩን እንድናምን እንገደዳለን።<sup>152</sup> -

If we observe how the creatures live, we may learn a lot from it. For example, why do beasts be active on day time and humans on night time? As it is believed in science, Humans and plants, without signing any agreement, exchange air; humans give their burned air (CO2) to plants and that of plants (O2) is used by humans. How did this happen? This shows that there is One God who designed all these things and hold it unfailling with covenant.”

These all show that the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church’s theology has also been influenced by the Antiochean literal theology; and as a result, there are many witnesses that source of knowledge in the church is also Empirical, side by side to being rational.

### 3.5. Typological interpretation

Besides to the two mentioned types of interpretation, there is another type of interpretation called Typological interpretation. This type of interpretation was firstly considered as the sub-type of Allegorical interpretation, but later it is mentioned alone. Because of this, the Alexandrians used it sometimes as part of the Allegorical interpretation, But, the Antiocheans are known for the usage of it. The Antiocheans, criticizing the other types of Allegory, namely, the Figurative and Narrative Allegories, appreciate only this one from

<sup>152</sup> የትምህርት ሃይማኖት መግቢያ፣ ገጽ 30

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

the Alexandrians.<sup>153</sup>

Typological interpretation can be considered as an identity of Syrian and Ethiopian Church scholars. I can say that Saint Yared from the Ethiopian church and Saint Ephrem the Syrian from the Syrian church can be mentioned as prominent examples.

Typological interpretation is a type of interpretation that connects two narrations or actions from different texts (mostly one from the Old Testament and the other from the New Testament) and connect them revealing that the first is the type of the other. Let us see the following narrations from saint Ephrem the Syrian who connected Adam's and Eve's Clothes from the leaves of fig tree with Christ's salvific work and Mary's clothe.

“Eve in her Virginity put on leaves of shame,

But Your mother, Lord, in her virginity

Has put on a robe of glory

That encompasses all people,

While to Him who covers all

She gives a body as a tiny garment.”<sup>154</sup>

And,

“When Adam sinned and was stripped of the glory in which he had been clothed, he covered his nakedness with fig leaves. Our Saviour came and underwent suffering in order to heal Adam's wounds and to provide a garment of glory for his nakedness. He dried up the fig tree (Mathew 21:20-21) in order to show that there would no longer be any need for fig leaves to serve as Adam's garment, since Adam had returned to his former glory, and so no longer had any need of leaves or ‘garments of skin’”<sup>155</sup>

---

<sup>153</sup> አባቶችህን ዕውቅ፣ ገጽ 241

<sup>154</sup> Nativity 5:4

<sup>155</sup> Commentary on the Diatessaron 16:10

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

In the first text, Eve's robe of disgrace (made from leaves of the fig tree, as a result of nakedness from glory), from the book of Genesis was compared with the second Eve's, that is Mary's, Robe of Glory from the New Testaments. In the second text Adam's cloth from the leaves of the fig tree, which was mentioned in the book of Genesis was connected with the drying of the fig leaves in the Gospel of Mathew.

This type of interpretation is repeatedly seen in EOTC's texts. The prominent figure of the Church, St. Yared, said the following:-

**“ወካዕበ ይቤ በአፈ ዳዊት ቡሩክ ዘይመጽዕ በስመ እግዚአብሔር ብርሃን ዘመጽኦ ውስተ ዓለም ዘያበርህ ላዕለ ጸድቃን -**

As it is foretold in the words of David, Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord; The light that came in to the world and shines on the blessed”<sup>156</sup>

Here, St. Yared connected two verses from the Old Testament and the New Testament. On Psalms 117:26, David the Psalmist said “Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord”. He took this verse and connected it with John 8:12 “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”. So, according to St. Yared's typological interpretation, the one that was to come in the name of the Lord is Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world.

Fortunately, this kind of typology is all over the church's service. Everyday, in the liturgy of the church, “**ምስባክ** - Misbak” of the day is read (chanted) from the Psalms, and the day's gospel from the four Gospels is also read. Both tell and preach about the concept of the day. All readings of the day are typologically connected. For example, two weeks from Christmas is a fiest called “**ብርሃን** - Light”. The main concept on this day is preaching that the world before the coming of Christ was dark, and everyone lives in darkness, longing to see the light, that is Christ. The birth of Christ is like the coming of light to this world. The Ethiopian scholars (especially St. Yared) typologically connected the verses which tell that Christ is light that came

---

<sup>156</sup> ድን ዘብርሃን

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

to make the world bright, from the Old Testament and the New Testament together, and put them on the day's service.

**“ምስባክ ዘብርሃን - ፈኑ ብርሃነክ ወጽድቀክ፤ እማንቱ ይምርሃኒ ወይሰዳኒ ደብረ መቅደስክ ወውስተ አቢያተክ እግዚአ (መዝ. 42:3)**

O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. (Psalms 42:3)”

And the day's Gospel is John 1:1-19, which has the following texts in it:-

“...And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light..”

Therefore, we can understand that the Old Testament people like David begged for the light to come. The light is Christ Himself. We understand this from the typological interpretation of the church. The above example is just one example from worship of a day. This has been put for all the rest 354 days of the year. This is a reason to appreciate the church's capacity of typological interpretation and how its service is carefully, intellectually and most of all spiritually designed.

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. CONCLUSION

We have seen, in the previous chapters, that the schools of Alexandria and Antioch have different approaches to knowledge. The method of thought of the Alexandrian school was contributed by a Platonic philosophy, as it taught, as a result, that the source of knowledge is mostly not engaged with the external world. Contrarily to this rational philosophical approach of the Alexandrians, the school of Antioch, highly using in its methods of expression an Aristotelian empirical philosophy, was more related to the thought that claims the sense organs, together with the external environment, as the sources of knowledge.

We also have seen that the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church had been influenced by these ancient schools, in the formulation of its doctrines through the ages. And in here, we shall critically analyze what the real source of knowledge in the church is. Is it the external world that is perceived through the sense organs, so that we can say that the school of Antioch has more influence or is it the mind itself, so that we can say that the school of Alexandria has more influence?

#### 4.1. Judeo-Christian Tradition and Worship

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has some different aspects from other Christian churches. One reason for this is that the church is as ancient as it is rooted in both the Old and the New Testament traditions. Therefore, it is even before the Christian schools of Antioch and Alexandria existed that the church had worshipped God.

As it is mentioned in the second chapter, Ethiopia accepted Judaism in the pre Christian era. When Christianity was introduced, it was introduced to people who already knew about God. Then the Christianity that was developed was a Judeo-Christian type, which had some

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

important traditions from the Old Testament. Therefore, the Christianity in Ethiopia is different to Christianity introduced to the gentiles, especially in worshipping practice.

A live example for this is the Ark in every church building.<sup>157</sup> Worship is centrally practiced with the irreplaceable usage of the Ark. There is no Christian church except the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church that uses an Ark in the center of Worship. This shows the Judeo-Christian nature of the Church.

When we talk about the source of knowledge, we have to take in to considerations that the two schools are not the only influencers of the church's knowledge and practice. The church existed even before the schools. However, as any Christian church, the influence of the two schools here also is visible.

## 4.2. Theory of knowledge and Criticism in the Church

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, as we have seen it in the previous chapters, gains its knowledge from the surrounding environment or creation in general, and from revelation in the mind. Therefore, we may term the source of knowledge in the Church as criticism. The following text clarifies this thought:

“በስብከትም ይሁን በጉባኤ የተገኘ እምነት 'ሃይማኖት ሰሚእ' ሲባል በመገለጥ የሚገኘው ደግሞ 'ሃይማኖት ርእይ' እንደሚባል አበው ይነግሩናል<sup>158</sup> -

As the fathers tell, a faith that is gained from a preaching or a synod is called as 'Faith of hearing' while a faith that is gained from Theophany<sup>159</sup> is called as 'Faith of revelation'”

Here, faith is similarly stated as knowledge, because the author then speaks about the two types of knowledge; the knowledge that is gained from nature and the knowledge that is gained from spirituality or prayer.

<sup>157</sup>

<sup>158</sup> ተነሥሎ፣ ገጽ 161

<sup>159</sup> Theophany means revelation

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

“...አእምሮ መንፈሳዊ አእምሮ ጠባይዐዊ የሚባል አብነት አለ። አእምሮ ጠባይዐዊ በተፈጥሮ የሚሰጥ ዕውቀት ሲሆን አእምሮ መንፈሳዊ ቅዱሳን በእምነትና በጸሎት የሚደርሱበት የዕውቀት ደረጃ ነው<sup>160</sup> -

... There is a lesson called ‘Knowledge of Spirit’ and ‘knowledge of nature’. Knowledge of nature is a knowledge that is given naturally, while knowledge of spirit is a state of knowledge that saints reach by faith and prayer.”

When it is said here knowledge of nature, one should know that it is different from knowledge that is gained from the surrounding environment or from the creatures. Knowledge of nature means knowledge of essence. Therefore, In the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, there are three types of knowledge. The first knowledge is that which is perceived from the external environment through the sense organs. The other two are ‘knowledge of spirit’ and ‘knowledge of nature/essence’, as we have clearly stated them in the above quotation.

The Ethiopian Andimta interpretation states knowledge of nature/essence and knowledge that is gained from nature while interpreting the fifth verse of the first chapter of gospel of John, as we have mentioned it in chapter 3. Here is the full text:

“...በሥነ ፍጥረት ተመራምሮ የሚያውቁት ዕውቀት በሥዋሬ ያለ ምስጢርን ይገልጻል። ... በሥነ ፍጥረት ተመራምረው ያመኑ ብዙዎች ናቸው፤ ከዚያው ግን ከቀደሙ ሰዎች አብርሃም ከኃላ ሰዎች ሙሴ ጸሊም። ...በአእምሮ ጠባይዐ ተመራምሮ የሚያውቁት ዕውቀት በሥዋሬ ያለ ምስጢርን ይገልጻል። እንደ አባ ማቴዎስ፤ በሥነ ፍጥረት ተመራምሮ በአእምሮ ጠባይዐ ዐውቆ፤ ምግባረ ትሩፋት ሠርቶ በቅቶ ከመዓርገ ነጽሮ ደርሶ<sup>161</sup> -

A knowledge that is known after investigating nature/creatures reveals a hidden mystery... There are many who believed because of their investigation on nature... From all these, Abraham, from the far historic time, and Moses the Black from the near historic time, can be mentioned... Ignorance cannot find a man that investigates

<sup>160</sup> ተነሥሆ፣ ገጽ 161

<sup>161</sup> ወንጌል ቅዱስ ንባቡና ትርጓሜው፣ ገጽ

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

with nature... A knowledge that is known after investigating through the knowledge of nature/essence reveals a hidden mystery, just as seen by Abba Mathewos. He investigated nature/creatures, gained knowledge with his essence, led ascetic life, reached great levels of holiness, reached the level of Theoria<sup>162</sup>...”

Abraham and Mosses the black came to know God after investigating nature. We will not get back to this idea as we have cleared it on the previous chapter. But, there is some interesting fact about the third person mentioned, which is Abba Mathewos. It is said that he firstly investigated nature or the surrounding environment, like Abraham and Mosses the black, and then used his knowledge of essence/nature. It is also witnessed on the quotation that this knowledge of nature/essence reveals a hidden mystery. In other words, Abba Mathewos gained knowledge both empirically and rationally, while the former two are mentioned to know only empirically.

Using the sense organs to perceive something from the environment and synthesizing it with the mind has been defined above as Emmanuel Kant’s theory of criticism. As heat, separation and body are grabbed from the outside environment and synthesized within the mind to form the knowledge that says “heat separates bodies”, we can say the following using the church’s language: Something is grabbed from investigating nature/creations and using “አእምሮ ጠባይዕ - Knowledge of nature/essence”, it is synthesized to acquire knowledge.

“አእምሮ መንፈሳዊ - knowledge of spirit” is something different. It is acquired through faith and prayer.<sup>163</sup> It is beyond reason and is a revealed truth from God as a reward of strength of faith and prayer. It is the type of knowledge acquired when the unseen is seen. This level of seeing the unseen is not through the ordinary eye, but it is through the eye of the heart, which we previously mentioned as nous. And the whole process is called as theoria – vision of God.<sup>164</sup>

---

<sup>162</sup> Theoria is a greek terminology that means vision of God.

<sup>163</sup> አረጋዊ መንፈሳዊ (25ኛው አንቀጽ) ፣ ገጽ 139

<sup>164</sup> ኦርቶዶክሳዊ መንፈሳዊነት፣ ዲ/ን ሕሊና በለጠ፣ ገጽ 58

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

In the above quotation, this thought is slightly mentioned in Abba Mathewos' knowledge of nature/essence. “እንደ አባ ማቴዎስ፤ በሥነ ፍጥረት ተመራምሮ በአእምሮ ጠባይፅ ዐውቆ፤ ምግባረ ትሩፋት ሠርቶ በቅቶ ከመዓርገ ነጽሮ ደርሶ ... He investigated nature/creatures, gained knowledge with his essence, led ascetic life, reached great levels of holiness, reached the **level of Theoria**.” This description clearly tells us that the mentioned person reached to have “አእምሮ መንፈሳዊ - knowledge of spirit”. And it is easy to conclude that, according to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, one has firstly to use the first two to acquire this knowledge of spirit.

### 4.3. Which School has the most impact?

It has been shown that both the Alexandrian and Antiochean schools have many positive impacts on the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church's theology. To investigate which school has the most impact, we have to see the formulation of some of the basic teachings of the church. As the center of Christianity is Christology<sup>165</sup>, we shall see briefly how Christology is formulated in the church with respect to our concept. Concept of the Holy Trinity shall also be briefly explained.

These above mentioned studies are the basic studies in the church's theology. A new convert is firstly expected to learn both of these and witness in order to be baptized and be a new member of the church.<sup>166</sup> Firstly the new convert should learn the nature of God and the five pillars of the church, which are Mystery of the Holy Trinity, Incarnation of God the Word, Baptism, Eucharist and Resurrection.<sup>167</sup> The last four are directly connected with Christology and the last three with the life of Christians, as well. The convert should firstly learn these and secondly other doctrines, and then comes to repentance before being baptized.<sup>168</sup> Therefore, we shall see the above mentioned concepts briefly, together with some historical facts, to compare the influence of the two schools on the Ethiopian church.

---

<sup>165</sup> The study of Christ.

<sup>166</sup> ፍትሐ ነገሥት ንባቡና ትርጓሜው፣ ገጽ 24-28

<sup>167</sup> ነገረ ሃይማኖት፣ ሳሙኤል ፍቃዱ፣ ገጽ 84-86

<sup>168</sup> ፍትሐ ነገሥት ንባቡና ትርጓሜው፣ ገጽ 24-28

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

## 4.3.1. Mystery of the Holy Trinity

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the teaching of the One Triune God. God is One and is at the same time Three. One in Nature, Divinity, Will, Authority, etc..., and Three in Personhood and Names.<sup>169</sup> In the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, this teaching is well developed by symbols, and these symbols are believed to be taught by the scholars of both of the two ancient schools.<sup>170</sup>

There is also an explanation of the One Triune God, which is called as “ኩነታት - States”. This explanation claims that God the Father has the State of Heart, the Son has the State of Word and the Holy Spirit has the State of Breath. As words and breath come out of the heart and as the three together, form one person, the Son and the Spirit come out of the Father and still, the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity are One.<sup>171</sup> Words are audible and breathes are felt, but thoughts in hearts could not be known, until breathed or spoken out. The thought in heart is totally unknowable by itself. Similarly, God became to be known with His Word, and His Spirit’s works. Or He revealed His mysteries in hearts of the Chosen. This might be good example that shows that the Ethiopian church combined the empiricism of Antioch and the rationalism of Alexandria.

The Antiochean school used to mainly focus on the second Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Son/Word, who incarnated and became Man.<sup>172</sup> As a result, He became seen, tangible, audible and perceived by the sense organs. This might be why most scholars of Syria/Antioch focused more on Christology and its symbols. Ephrem the Syrian is a good example of this.<sup>173</sup>

The Ethiopian Church here is well rich in having the teachings of both the schools.

---

<sup>169</sup> ነገረ ሃይማኖት፣ ሳሙኤል ፍቃዱ፣ ገጽ 118

<sup>170</sup> One of these symbols is the sun. The sun has three things, but is still one. It has light, heat and its form (round body). The three things are symbols for the three persons of Holy Trinity and the oneness of the sun is a symbol for the Oneness of the Holy Trinity.

<sup>171</sup> ነገረ ሃይማኖት፣ ሳሙኤል ፍቃዱ፣ ገጽ 93-99

<sup>172</sup> ነገረ ሃይማኖት፣ ሳሙኤል ፍቃዱ፣ ገጽ 125

<sup>173</sup> Luminous Eye; Sebastian Brock; PP

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

## 4.3.2.Christology

Christology is the center of Christianity.<sup>174</sup> It is the core of the teachings of every Christian sect. The differences between the forms of different Christian sects is their difference in teaching of Christology.

The Ethiopian Christology is Myaphysite<sup>175</sup> Christology, which was taught by the Alexandrian Cyril of the council of Ephesus.<sup>176</sup> This is different from that of the Chalcedonian Churches’<sup>177</sup> teachings. Their Christology is called as Diaphysite Christology<sup>178</sup>.

“According to St. Cyril of Alexandria, in the incarnation, the eternal Word took to Him and made His own, human flesh animated by a rational soul. The union between the word and this humanity is a true and real union. He proposed the famous Christological expression *Miaphysis tou Theou Logou sesarkomene* (‘One incarnate nature of God the word’). It is a phrase accepted by both Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian Churches as Orthodox. There is only one *hypostasis* and ‘nature’ (*physis*) existing independently in the real order, the Word incarnate.”<sup>179</sup>

Myaphysite Christology has been formulated beautifully by Cyril of Alexandria. The Ethiopian Christology fully accepts and teaches this teaching of Cyril. Even the name of the Church “ተዋሕዶ - Tewahedo” stands for the word Myaphysis. The identity of the Church is even Cyrilian, who was a great scholar from Alexandria.

---

<sup>174</sup> Handouts of Fr. Dr. Jossi; unprinted

<sup>175</sup> This means one incarnate nature of God the Word. It claims that there is one incarnate nature in Christ, from two natures.

<sup>176</sup> Myaphysite Christology; Mebratu Kiros; pp

<sup>177</sup> Those who accept the Council of Chalcedon, explained in 4.3.3.

<sup>178</sup> This theory claims that there are two natures in Christ; The divine and Human nature.

<sup>179</sup> Dogmatic Theology (unpublished); Fr.Dr. Jossi; p 39-40

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

One of the main books of Scholars in the Ethiopian Church is “**ሃይማኖት አበው** - Faith of the Fathers”. The Myaphysite theology of Cyril is clearly mentioned on the book, as the teaching of the church.<sup>180</sup>

Another interesting fact is that another scholar from Antioch was the defender of this Cyrilian Christology. The name of this scholar is **ሳዊሮስ ዘአንጾኪያ** - Severus of Antioch<sup>181</sup>. He is also one of the scholars mentioned on the church’s Christology and on the previously mentioned book of the scholars.<sup>182</sup>

### 4.3.3. Historical facts

History witnesses that both Alexandrians and Antiocheans (Syrians) were dominant in the early ages of the Church.

The first three universal synods<sup>183</sup> of the universal church has been led and dominated by the Alexandrians. The first Council, in Nicaea, in 325, Alexander was the head and Athanasius was the main speaker, while both were from Alexandria. In the second Council, in Constantinople, in 381, the Alexandrian Timothy was the head. In the third Council in 431, in Ephesus, Nestorius the Antiochean was condemned and the dominant feature was Cyril of Alexandria. The fourth Council was in Chalcedon in 451, where the Alexandrian Dioscoros was attacked and Alexandrians were exiled.<sup>184</sup> The Western Churches and Eastern Orthodox Churches, which accept this fourth council, count up to ten and more universal councils.<sup>185</sup>

The Ethiopian church, together with the other Oriental Orthodox Churches, that include the Alexandrian and the Syrian Orthodox Churches, only accept the first three councils excluding the Council of Chalcedon and the later others.<sup>186</sup> They even call the fourth council

<sup>180</sup> **ሃይማኖት አበው ዘቅዱስ ቁርሎስ፣ ገጽ**

<sup>181</sup> Severus of Antioch; p

<sup>182</sup> **ሃይማኖት አበው ዘሳዊሮስ ዘአንጾኪያ፣ ገጽ**

<sup>183</sup> Councils

<sup>184</sup> **የቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ በዓለም መድረክ፣ አባ ጎርጎርዮስ ፣ የሸዋ ሊቀ ጳጳስ፣ ገጽ 157-158**

<sup>185</sup> **የቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ በዓለም መድረክ፣ አባ ጎርጎርዮስ ፣ የሸዋ ሊቀ ጳጳስ፣ ገጽ 161-168**

<sup>186</sup> **የቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ በዓለም መድረክ፣ አባ ጎርጎርዮስ ፣ የሸዋ ሊቀ ጳጳስ፣ ገጽ 147**

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

as the council of dogs.<sup>187</sup> This historical fact shows the dominance of the Alexandrians on the ancient churches.

The other thing that should be stated is that the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church had been under the administrative authority of the Alexandrian Coptic Church for about 1,600 years until the 1950s. All the patriarchs of the church were sent to Ethiopia from the Coptic Church. The church was totally dependent on the Coptic Church, in order to ordain priests and have bishops.<sup>188</sup>

As the result of this type of dependency, many books were brought from Alexandria and translated into Ge'ez.

However, the same is true to the case of Antiocheans. While the Alexandrians were superior administratively, the Antiocheans also had great connections with the EOTC with regard to spiritual life and teachings. This had its basis on the migration of the nine saints to Ethiopia.

The nine saints migrated to Ethiopia because of the decision of the council of Chalcedon. They opposed the decision, which was supported by the then authorities; As a result they could not live where they were having the faith that opposes the the council. There fore, they came all the way to a country that has the same faith with them selves – Ethiopia. Side to side to their contribution in teaching and evangelizing services together with the Ethiopian saints, they translated many books to Ge'ez, from Syriac, Greek and Hebrew, including books of the Holy Bible.<sup>189</sup>

The nine saints came from areas like Constantinople, Antioch, Minor Asia and Ceasaria. All of these areas are somehow under the influence of Antioch. They speak both Greek and Syriak. It is believed that they translated most books from Syriak; To prove this, Lule Melaku says that most commonly used and important words like “ቁርባን፣ ሃይማኖት፣ ምጽዋት”<sup>190</sup> are Syriak words directly transliterated to Ge'ez.<sup>191</sup>

---

<sup>187</sup> የቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ በዓለም መድረክ፣ አባ ጎርጎርዮስ ፣ የሸዋ ሊቀ ጳጳስ፣ ገጽ 160

<sup>188</sup> የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ፣ ሱሌ መላኩ፣ ገጽ 167-174

<sup>189</sup> የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ፣ ሱሌ መላኩ፣ ገጽ 28-34

<sup>190</sup> Eucharist, Faith (Religion) and alms

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

The nine saints translated the most important books of the church, the Bible, books of scholars like St. John Chrysostom and St. Cyril of Alexandria, Books of Monks, The book of St. Anthony, prepared by St. Athanasius, and many many more. Therefore, Lule said “With the Ethiopian Eunuch, the news of Christianity was heard, With Frementius, Ordination of priesthood, the tool for performing every mysteries of the Church, was introduced, and with the nine saints books for guidance of the layman and performing church services were translated”.<sup>192</sup>

Here it seems that the Antiochean influence regarding the teachings is far better than the Alexandrian one. The Alexandrians were limited to their contribution to the ordination of priesthood and administrative superiority, but, books and teachings were numerously translated by the syriak based saints.

#### 4.3.4. The Sources of the Andimta Commentary

The Ge’ez Andimta commentary has four different sources. These are:- The Coptic Church, The Syrian Church, The Greek Church and Ge’ez Writings.<sup>193</sup> This shows that the Ethiopian Church Andimta commentary has Coptic (Alexandrian), Syrian (Antiochean) and Greek elements together with the domestically developed knowledge of interpretation, which is in Ge’ez. Let us see some examples of the Andimta books that are translated from Coptic and Syrian sources<sup>194</sup>:-

- A. **Commentary of the Pentateuch<sup>195</sup> by John Chrysostom:-** This book was firstly translated from Greek to Arabic, by a Coptic scholar, and then to Ge’ez.
- B. **Commentary on Mathew, translated from Arabic to Ge’ez;** Severus of Antioch and John Chrysostom from the Antiochean side and Cyril of Alexandria, Athanasius, Dydimus the Blind, Theofilus of Alexandria, Timothy and others from Alexandrian side are mentioned in this commentary, as their teachings made it up.

---

<sup>191</sup> የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ፣ ሱሌ መላኩ፣ ገጽ 32

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, P 34

<sup>193</sup> የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ ከልደተ ክርስቶስ እስከ 2000 ዓ.ም.፣ ገጽ 182

<sup>194</sup> Ibid;pp 182-183

<sup>195</sup> The five books of Mosses.

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

C. **Ibnn Teyb's Commentary of the Gospels:-** This Commentary is firstly written in Arabic by a Coptic scholar called Ibnn Teyb.

We can see so many names of the Alexandrians here. However, both schools have contributed scholars whose thoughts are still alive and whose works are used in the Ethiopian church.

Finally, it is obvious to conclude that the Antiochean thought is more near to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in all aspects except geographically and administratively. This does not mean that it has no element of the Alexandrian thought, but it is more influenced by the school of Antioch, while holding the teachings of both schools.

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

## REFERENCES

- ጎርጎርዮስ (አባ)፣ የቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ በዓለም መድረክ፣ 1978 ዓ.ም.፣ አዲስ አበባ
- ...፣ የቅዱስ ጳውሎስ መጽሐፍ ንባቡ ከነትርጓሜው፣ ትንሣኤ ዘገባኤ ማተሚያ ቤት፣ 1988 ዓ.ም.፣ አዲስ አበባ
- ...፣ መጻሕፍተ ሐዲሳት ሠለስቱ፣ ትንሣኤ ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት፣ 2007 ዓ.ም.፣ አዲስ አበባ
- የማነ ገብረማርያም፣ የፍልስፍና ትምህርት፣ ብርሃንና ሰላም ቀዳማዊ ኃይለሥላሴ ማተሚያ ቤት፣ 1954 ዓ.ም.፣ አዲስ አበባ
- ተልሚድ፣ ረድኦ እንጦንስ
- አቤል ካሳሁን (ዲ/ን)፣ አባቶችህን ዕውቅ (ነገረ አበው)፣ 2012 ዓ.ም.፣ አዲስ አበባ
- መዝገበ ጸሎት
- ገሠሠ ፋሬስ፣ ሐመረ ክርስትና በመዋግደ ፍልስፍና፣ 1998 ዓ.ም.፣ መቀሌ
- ላእክ ማርያም ወልደ ኢየሱስ (ሊቀ መዘምራን) ፣ መጽሐፈ ስንክሳር ከመጋቢት እስከ ጳጉሜን፣ ትንሣኤ ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት፣ 1993 ዓ.ም.
- ምክረ ሥላሴ ገ/አማኑኤል (ቀ/ዶ/ር)፣ የእግዚአብሔር መንግሥት ታሪክ በምድር ላይ (ጠቅላላ የቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ) አንደኛ መጽሐፍ፣ 2000 ዓ.ም. ፣ አዲስ አበባ
- ...፣ መጽሐፈ ቅዳሴ፣ ከቀድሞ አባቶች ሲወርድ ሲዋረድ የመጣው ንባቡና ትርጓሜው፣ ትንሣኤ ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት፣ 1988 ዓ.ም.፣ አዲስ አበባ
- ሰሙ ምትኩ (ቀሲስ ዶክተር) እና ቸሬ አበበ (መ/ር) ፣ የቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ ቁጥር 1
- ሚኪያስ አስረስ (ዲያቆን)፣ ማስያስ፣ የኦርቶዶክሳዊው ነገረ መለኮት መቅደማዊ ነጥቦች፣ 2013 ዓ.ም.፣ አዲስ አበባ
- ...፣ ወንጌል ቅዱስ ዘእግዚእነ ወመድኃኒነ ኢየሱስ ክርስቶስ፣ ተስፋ ገብረ ሥላሴ ዘብሔረ ቡልጋ፣ 1988 ዓ.ም.
- ... ፣ ሃይማኖተ አበው፣ የጥንት አባቶቻችን ሃይማኖት፣ ተስፋ ገብረ ሥላሴ ዘብሔረ ቡልጋ፣ 1982 ዓ.ም.፣ አዲስ አበባ፣
- ...፣ ሦስቱ መጻሕፍተ መነኮሳት፣ ተስፋ ገብረ ሥላሴ ዘብሔረ ቡልጋ፣ 1982 ዓ.ም.፣
- ብርሃኑ አድማስ (ዲ/ን)፣ የትምህርተ ሃይማኖት መግቢያ፣ አሳታሚ ማኅበረ ቅዱሳን ኅትመት አገልግሎት፣ 2012 ዓ.ም.፣ አምስተኛ ዕትም፣ አዲስ አበባ
- ...፣ ውዳሴ ማርያምና ቅዳሴ ማርያም ንባቡና ትርጓሜ፣ ትንሣኤ የመጻሕፍት ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት፣ 1983 ዓ.ም.፣ አዲስ አበባ

# SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

- ...፣ የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ ክልደተ ክርስቶስ እስከ ፳፻ ዓ.ም. (2000)፣ 2000 ዓ.ም.
- ዓሥራት ገብረ ማርያም፣ ትምህርተ መለኮት፣ 2005 ዓ.ም.
- ስምዖ ኮነ (ሊቀ ሊቃውንት)፣ ተንከተም፣
- በአማን ነጸረ፣ ተኅሥሥ፣ 2014 ዓ.ም.
- ዮሐንስ አፈወርቅ (ቅዱስ)፣ ተግሣጽ ወድርሳን
  
- መኮንን ኃብተሚካኤል፣ የበረሃ ምንጮች (ማላንካራውያን)፣ 2013 ዓ.ም.፣ አዲስ አበባ
- ግርማ ባቱ (መምህር)፣ የነገረ መለኮት መግቢያ፣ የካቲት 2012 ዓ.ም.፣
- ...፣ መዝሙረ ዳዊት ትርጓሜ፣ ተስፋ ገብረ ሥላሴ ዘብሔረ ቡልጋ፣ 1982 ዓ.ም.፣ አዲስ አበባ
- ...፣ አርባአቱ መጻሕፍተ ብሉያት፣ መጽሐፈ ጦቢት፣ ዮዲት፣ አስቴር፣ ኢዮብ፣ ትንሣኤ ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት፣ 1998 ዓ.ም.፣ አዲስ አበባ
- ቃለ ሕይወት በዛ (መጋቤ ሐዲስ፣ የመካነ ነገሥት ግምጃ ቤት ማርያም የሐዲሳትና የሊቃውንት ምስክር መምህር)፣ ወንጌል ቅዱስ፣ ኂሩተ ድንግል ማተሚያ ቤት፣ 2013 ዓ.ም.፣
- ሃይማኖተ አበው ዘጉንዳጉንዶ
- ሕሊና በለጠ (ዲ/ን)፣ ኦርቶዶክሳዊ መንፈሳዊነት፣ 2009 ዓ.ም.፣ አዲስ አበባ
- ...፣ ፍትሐ ነገሥት ንባቡና ትርጓሜው፣ ትንሣኤ የመጻሕፍት ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት፣ 1990 ዓ.ም.፣ አዲስ አበባ
- ሳሙኤል ፍቃዱ፣ ነገረ ሃይማኖት(ዘኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ) ፣ 2003 ዓ.ም.፣ አዲስ አበባ
- ሉሌ መላኩ፣ የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ፣
- ...; School of Alexandria; Wisdom School of a Thousand Years; St. Mary and Archangel Michael Coptic Orthodox Church; Houston, TX
- J. Quasten
- E. A. Wallis Budge (Sir); Synaxarium, The Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church; Printed by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Debre Meheret St. Michael Church Garland, TX USA;
- Creighton J.E. Studies in speculative philosophy, 1925. Renn A. W., History of English ... in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 1906, -- Robertson J.M., Rationalism, 1912
- Paul Tillich; A History of Christian Thought, From Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism; A Touchstone Book Published by Simon and Schuster
- Cross, Frank Leslie; Livingstone, Elizabeth A., eds. (2005). "Antiochene theology". The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church; Oxford University Press
- Bernard Russell; History of Western Philosophy; Book II, Chap. I, sec.
- Lule Melaku (Asst. Professor); History of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church; Part 1;; Addis Ababa; 2008

## SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

---

- Jossi Jacob (Fr.Dr.); Dogmatic Theology; unpublished
- Richard Dawkins, The Selfish Gene, Oxford University Press, New York, 1998
- Joseph R. Farinaccio; Faith with Reason; Bookspecc Publishing, Pennsville, New Jersey, 2002
- St. John Damascene writings, 1958,
- Cyril, Jo.6:69, Pussy, I.455
- Jossi Jacob (Fr. Dr.); Comparative Theology; unpublished
- Hans Küng; Great Christian Thinkers (London 1994) 107
- Sebastian Brock; Luminous Eye
- Mebratu Kiros (Rev., Dr.); Myaphysite Christology;
- Severus of Antioch;
- Ephrem the Syrian (St.); Faith
- <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/1maccabees/6>
- <https://philosophy.lander.edu/intro/aquinas.shtml>