

Doctrine of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

1. HOLY TRINITY

The formula for the Trinity is this, "Worship we the Father, worship we the Son, worship we the Holy Spirit, three in one and one in three". God is one in Godhead, Three in Persons, in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity has no beginning and will exist for ever without end. In the Trinity there is none that precedes and none that follows; none that is elder and none that is younger, none that is ruler and none that is subject; the Three are One, in all things equal (Jn. 10: 30; 1 Jn. 5: 7.). In nature, in authority, in Lordship, in Godhead, in Divinity, in creating, in saving, in giving, in taking away, in breadth, in fulness, in length, They are One. The eternal and immutable God has been revealed in three co-eternal Persons. The Father is the first Person, i.e. the first hypostasis of the one God, the Son is the second Person begotten of the only Father, the Spirit is the third hypostasis who proceeds from the only Father whom He has as the cause of his own eternal existence. The Spirit is called Spirit because he breathes and is moved of the Father and rests in the Son. He is wholly pure, shining, undefiled, holy, purifying and illuminating and sanctifying the other intellectual and spiritual beings. The dogma of the three separate Persons is inseparable from the dogma of the one God. "There are three that bear witness in the Heaven, the Father, the Logos, and the Holy Spirit, and these three agree in one." (1 John 5:7). "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all, Amen", (2 Cor. 13:13). Back

2. CREATION

Creation is God's handiwork. He is the ruler of the Universe and creator of the Angels. The creation was originally good but was corrupted later. Spirit, life, body and all good proceed from God. He is the creator of the whole world, and so He is the Father, Governor and Lord of all creation (Gen. 1:1; Neh. 9:7; Deut. 32. 6,18; I Chron. 29:12). God is "The Lord, who is a good father"; in His goodness He forgives, as Father He protects and feeds, as Lord He judges. He fills the heaven and earth though not seen by the eye of the flesh, is jealous and takes vengeance, is patient, merciful and gentle, omnipotent, omniscient, glorious, most high, mighty, wise, righteous, good, true, faithful. He has no respect for persons but gives recompense to all according to what they have done. The Lord God created Adam and Eve with freedom to do evil if they pleased and to reject evil and good. Diablos, or Satan, envious of them, planned to separate them from the Lord, and tempted them. They ate the forbidden fruit and were cursed by God and lost the good life they had, and affliction and suffering started as a consequence of their disobedience. Redemption was effected by the second Person dying on the cross. As a conclusion the Church teaches that all that exists was produced out of nothing by God, the world is the work of the Divine Wisdom, God was moved by His goodness to create the world for His glorification. God keeps all created things in existence, and through His

Providence protects and guides all that He has created. Every creature of God is good and there is nothing to be rejected. [Back](#)

3. THE FALL

Originally God's creation was good. "The Lord brought forth all good creation, spirit, life, body and all that is good. But this was "perverted by impure words". Our first parents, before the Fall, were endowed with the favour, benefits and graces of God. They had bodily immortality, freedom from suffering, the knowledge of natural Supernatural truth infused by God. God imposed death as punishment for the transgression of His probationary commandment. Suffering and sorrow are consequences of sin. Adam was perfect in knowledge, which was lost after the sin. Another consequence was subjection to the dominion of Diablos or Satan, and Adam's sin was transmitted to his posterity. [Back](#)

4. INCARNATION

In a paper submitted to the 'Consultation between the Theologians of Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches' held at the University of Aarhus, Denmark, in August 1964, the Very Rev. Like Siltanat Habte Mariam Workineh, Dean of Holy Trinity Cathedral, fully explained the teaching of the Church on Incarnation. Incarnation is a divine mystery. The two natures of Godhead and Manhood are perfectly united and Christ is thus one Person and one Nature from two Natures. Christ is one Incarnate nature of God the Word. After the union it is impossible to speak of Christ as being in two natures. By the union of the nature in the Incarnation the two natures became one nature, the natures being united without separation, without confusion, and without change. Neither of the two natures was assimilated by the other, the properties of the Divine Word were attributed to the flesh and those of the flesh to the Divine Word. The Logos revealed Himself in our flesh and became man like us. He did all things that man does with the exception of sin (John 8:46). And at the same time was truly God. He is God-Man. He is co-equal and consubstantial with the Father in his Godhead. He is perfectly united with us the union being from two modes of life into one. The union of the Word with the flesh took place in the womb of the Virgin Mary. St. John says: "The Word was made flesh...". In the same way we can say that also the flesh was made divine. The attributes of the flesh can be given to the Divine Word and vice versa. However, the properties of each nature are preserved without change after the union. Therefore, we believe that Christ is one Person and one Nature, and thus is both divine and human. We speak of one because of the union. We hold "mia physis", composite nature, one united nature. Again the Lord Jesus Christ is perfect man and perfect God. The word "perfect" closes the door to all quibble and prevarication. We accept both unity and duality in Christ who in acting performed as one. Christ, in whom humanity and divinity were united in one Person and one Nature, was crucified on the cross. The Divine Word without being united with the flesh cannot be crucified, because as God He is beyond suffering. But through the union with the flesh He was crucified and subjected to death. If, on the other hand, only the human body was crucified, He could not save the world. The purpose of the Incarnation was the salvation of man. God sent His only Son into the

world to bring unto Him the lost sheep and He did this by reason of His unspeakable love towards mankind. Back

5. THE ISSUE BETWEEN MONOPHYSITISM AND DYOPHYSITISM

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church considers itself to belong to the One, Holy, Universal and Apostolic Church founded by Jesus Christ. It is holy because its founder, Jesus Christ, is holy; it is catholic because the whole world is its province and because it is universal in time and place; it is apostolic because it was established on earth by the apostles of Christ. The Ethiopian Church belongs to the group of Orthodox Churches wrongly termed "Monophysite" but which prefer the epithet "Non-Chalcedonian". The other members of this family are the Coptic, Armenian, Syrian and Indian Churches. Together with the Roman Catholic Church and the Byzantine Orthodox Church they comprised the One Church for four centuries until the division arose on account of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 which insisted that Christ had the two natures of humanity and divinity. Dyophysites teach that, after the union, Christ retained the natures of divinity and humanity in His one Person in such a way that He ate food, slept, laughed, suffered, walked as man in the human nature, but healed the sick and resuscitated Lazarus as God in the divine nature. Thus He is one Person in two natures of humanity and divinity. The wrongly called Monophysites reject the allegation that they teach one Nature and one Person in Christ. The teaching of the Ethiopian Church may thus be summarized:

1. The Ethiopian Church rejects Eutyches, who is believed to have taught that in Christ the human Nature was absorbed by the divine Nature. Nestorius also is excluded.
2. Dioscorus, whom the Council of Chalcedon deposed, is accepted. But it should be remembered that the Council of 451 did not believe that Dioscorus was a heretic. Dioscorus did not deny the continuance of Godhead and manhood in the One Christ after their union and he agreed with the Council that the teaching which Eutyches was understood to hold was heretical.
3. The teaching of the Ethiopian Church is the faith of the Fathers expounded by the great theologians of the Alexandrine tradition, especially by St. Cyril and his illustrious theological followers. Accordingly the Ethiopian Church maintains that Christ is perfect God and perfect man, at once Unsubstantial with the Father and with us; the divinity and the humanity continuing in Him without mixture or separation, confusion or change. He is one and the same person both in his eternal pre-existence and also in the economy, in which he performs the redeeming work of God on behalf of man, from the indivisible state of union of Godhead and manhood.
4. The Church abides by the formula "The one Incarnate Nature of God the Word", on which St. Cyril of Alexandria increasingly insisted, a formula which was accepted as correct by the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. and which, after the Council of Chalcedon, the Chalcedonian side in the East itself admitted.

5. It is unfair for the Church to be nicknamed "monophysite" by the faithful who accept the Chalcedonian formula of "two Natures in the one Person of Jesus Christ", because the expression used by the non-Chalcedonian side was always miophysis, and never monophysis (mia standing for a composite unity unlike mone standing for an elemental unity). Therefore these churches are best referred to as the non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches.

6. "Tewahido" is the Ethiopian term (meaning "made one") which is the best expression conveying the faith of the Church, since it emphasizes the inseparable unity of the Godhead and manhood in the Person of Christ. The Church's official title is "The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Bete Christian"..

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

8. Proof that we believe in the continuance of divinity and humanity in the One Christ may be illustrated: a) In the Communion we receive the very body and blood of Jesus Christ. These belong to man, humanity, and we know that Jesus Christ is God, divinity. b) The present Liturgy can be used as a criterion of the Church. There it is openly expressed that there is divinity and humanity in Christ. c) The Chalcedonian formula was rejected because it was thought to destroy the one person of Christ and there was no clear distinction between "nature" and "person", person meant nature. d) We believe the Nicene Creed in which the divinity and humanity of Christ are set forth, and in the Creed of the liturgy we declare our belief in the co-equality of Jesus Christ with God the Father, and belief in his having grown like men, yet without sin or evil, and in his having taken flesh from Mary. e) The confession of Faith by the Emperor Claudius declares that Jesus Christ was perfect man and perfect God.

Monophysitism is rejected. It is a question of error in vocabulary, the concepts of Nature and Person not being clear and there being obscurity in philosophical terms such as physis, hypostasis, ousia, prosopon, atreptos, mia, mono etc. As to the two natures of Christ the Dyophysites and non-Chalcedonians are one, it is a matter of interpretation after the union of the two natures. Happily the Dyophysites are currently realizing the position. Back

6. FUNDAMENTAL DOGMAS IN THE NICENE CREED

The following is the Creed said in the Mass, called "Apostles' Creed", the one which the Apostles gave in Jerusalem:- "We believe in one God, Maker of all creation,

Father of our Lord and our God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, because his nature is unsearchable.

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

He is not two or three, and no addition can be made to him, but he is only one, living for ever, because he is not hidden that he cannot be known, but we know him perfectly through the law and the prophets, that he is almighty and has authority over all the creation.

One God, Father of our Lord and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who was begotten before the creation of the world, the onlybegotten Son coequal with him, creator of all the hosts, the principalities and the dominions:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To him, for whose coming all people looked forward, Jesus Christ, who is descended from Judah, from the root of Jesse, whose government is upon his shoulder: to him be the glory, thanksgiving, greatness, blessing, praise, song, both now and ever and world without end, Amen."

Our Church has received and teaches the faith which was formulated at Nicaea. In the Creed or in the name of Nicaea she makes known her faith after this fashion: We believe in one God, in the Lord the Father, who holds the whole world, omnipotent, who created everything visible and invisible in heaven and in earth (Gen. 1, 20; Neh. 9. Rom. 1.20). We believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, the one Son of the Father, who was with Him before the Creation of the world. Light begotten of Light, True God begotten of True God, not created. He is equal with the Father. There is nothing in heaven and earth which exists without Him. Mt. 3,17, In 1. 1,4.

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 THE SACRAMENTS

There are seven Sacraments:- 1)Baptism, 2) Confirmation, 3)Penance, 4)Holy communion, 5) Unction of the sick, 6)Holy orders. 7)Matrimony. The first four are necessary for every believer, the other three are not obligatory for everyone. Matrimony and Holy Orders are very necessary to the church, the first for preservation of mankind, and the second for the performance of the Church Services. Certain prayers are set for each sacrament to ask for the blessing of the Holy Ghost. A bishop may perform any church sacrament, but there must be at least three bishops for the consecration of a bishop (the rule is clear in the Didascalia)in the sacrament of Holy Orders; a priest cannot confer Holy Orders, but he can perform the other six sacraments, a deacon can only help the bishop or the priest in celebrating the sacraments. Laymen cannot celebrate but they participate in their celebration. The blessings got through the sacraments do not depend on the life of the minister; the sacraments do not lose their efficacy if the minister's life is not good, the efficacy is "ex opere operato". It is God who works in ministers (Phil. 2:13). John Chrysostom said that the grace does not depend on the life of the clergy. Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders cannot be repeated when they are validly conferred. A sacrament is not a mere symbol or sign of the New Covenant, no; it is not a mere outward ritual. A sacrament brings real invisible grace to the receiver. Sacraments are the normal channel of the grace which nourishes the believers' supernatural life of faith. Every sacrament was instituted by Christ Himself and it has, besides the invisible grace, an outward sign, visible or audible. Back

8. HOLY COMMUNION AS A SACRIFICE

We believe that this sacrament is an unbloody Sacrifice offered for our salvation. Our Lord said: "This is my blood which is given (Sacrificed) for you" (Luke 22:19, 20). St. Paul (1Cor.10:18-21) gives the proof that the Holy Communion is offered on the altar as a true sacrifice and in Heb. 13:10 he refers to the Christian altar. This sacrifice of the New Testament was foretold in the Old Testament: "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name and a pure offering (or "sacrifice"), for my name shall be great among the heathen" (Mal. 1.11). The Council of Nicaea called the Holy Communion an unbloody sacrifice. All the Church Fathers called it a sacrifice. This sacrifice is the same as that which was offered on the Cross, the Offeror is the same Jesus Christ. The difference between this and that which was offered on Calvary is this: a) On the cross our Lord offered a visible sacrifice, in the Holy Communion it is invisible under the form of bread and wine; b) On the cross it was a bloody sacrifice through shedding of * blood, in the Holy Communion it is unbloody; c) The sacrifice on Calvary was offered for all the race of man once only and in one place, but the unbloody sacrifice is offered continuously, in every place on earth. Back

9. REAL PRESENCE

The Ethiopian Church holds the doctrine of the real presence. The consecrated bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ. Jesus Christ is truly, really and substantially present in the consecrated elements. In the Eucharist we eat the blessed flesh of our Lord and drink His precious blood under the form of bread and wine. As the church Fathers said, "Our, Lord is present in this sacrament, not in type or by way of granting his grace as in the case of other sacraments, but He is truly and actually present. The bread is

changed after prayer into the Lord's very body which was born at Bethlehem from the Virgin Mary, baptised at Jordan, suffered, buried and rose from the dead. Likewise, the wine is changed into the very blood of the Lord which was shed on the cross." We do not take the bread and wine as a mere memorial service in remembrance of the Lord's suffering and death. How the change takes place we do not know and we do not need to know. It is done by the power of God, that is that. It is faith, not science. That old-time, ancient conviction, based on faith in an all-powerful God is still deeply entrenched in our Church . and this basic belief has been left untouched by the changes affecting many churches in the rest of Christendom. Proof of the real presence can be gathered from the Bible. The Lord said: "This is my body... this is my blood"; from the decisions of the early Councils of Nicaea and Ephesus; the writings of the early fathers (Clement, Dionisius, Cyril of Alexandria, Macarius and Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Gregory, Basil and many others); the writings even of Martin Luther who said: "Christ said, 'This is my flesh,' and we can do nothing better than to respect His words". Before Communion the priest declares: "I believe, I believe, I believe and I confess that this is the body and blood of our Lord and our God and our Saviour Jesus Christ". When giving Communion to the recipients he says: "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ", and "This is the precious blood of Christ". As an expression of exterior reverence, when the Sacrament goes around, the people kneel or bow deeply, small and large bells jubilantly ring, incense fills the air. All this clearly indicates that the real presence is the very heart of the worship which the church is prepared to preserve as handed down by the Apostles. The Institution form in the Anaphoras of John Chrysostom and of St. Mark, is: "This is my body... This is my blood" So, from the earliest times to the present day, the Ethiopic liturgy has witnessed to the belief in the doctrine of the real presence. Back

10. THE CONFESSOR OR SOUL FATHER

The practice of confession is strictly personal. The believer chooses a confessor-priest who knows him personally, even intimately, and who is acquainted with and sympathetic to his problems. He is called *yenafs abbat*: the soul-father. As a matter of fact he is the spiritual father of a family. He makes frequent visits to the home and performs services as required. Yearly a man gives to the confessor a gift according to his means. One wishing to confess goes to the house of a Confessor or to the church where they walk aside near the graves and the service is done. When a man is about to die or is departing on an expedition he calls his Confessor and elders and declares his final wishes, for the 'nuzazei' or death-bed declaration of a testament is much stronger when made in his presence although the present Civil Code does not require confessors as witnesses for the validity of a will, and the court may invalidate a testamentary provision made by the testator in favour of the Confessor. Usually a written testament is deposited with the Confessor, who on the fortieth day of Remembrance after death reads it to all concerned. The Confessor may be a member of the family Council. In general the place of the soul-father is of importance in the Ethiopian family. Back

11. APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

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

12. VENERATION OF THE VIRGIN MARY

The Church honors the Blessed Virgin Mary most of all the saints. She is venerated especially for her supreme grace and the call she received from God. It is believed that by the grace of God she committed no actual sin. St. Elisabeth cried and said: "Blessed art thou above all women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. . ." (Luke 1, 39, 45). St. Gabriel said to her: "Be joyful, O thou that art full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou above all women" (Luke 1, 28). So we, receiving and believing these words of the Gospel, honor and praise her as the mother of our Lord, our Lady, a lady blessed, holy, exalted, honored and praised. The Virgin Mother of God has a very special place in the Ethiopian cult, and devotion to our Mother holds the highest place. Ethiopia is known as the country of Mary, her protectress. Among the saints in heaven she is venerated in a special way. She is loved by her Son so dearly that He will grant her every prayer. Because of the mission she received from God, her life is most closely linked with the mysteries of Jesus Christ, and there is no one who has followed in the footsteps of the Incarnate Word more closely and with more merit than she; and no one has more grace and power over the heart of the Son of God, and through Him with the Heavenly Father. Holier than the Cherubim and Seraphim she enjoys unquestionably greater glory than all the other saints for she is full of grace, she is the Mother of God, who happily gave birth to the Redeemer for us. She is a glorified human soul, more perfect and more lovable than any other. She is worthy of the highest place and the most exalted honor that a creature can attain to in heaven, for through God's choosing of her for the destiny of being His Mother, through abundance of grace which He bestowed upon her, and through her fidelity in corresponding with this grace, she has reached a degree of glory which place her higher than God's angels or His other Saints. The Blessed Virgin Mary is constantly referred to in the Liturgy. Special prayer to her in the form of Ave Maria or Hail Mary is recited during the Liturgy immediately before the Lectures (The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Church, by Rev. Marcos Daoud, p. 43). The form in the Ethiopia Liturgy by Mercer, p. 335, is like this: Hail, O Mary, full of grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. Pray and intercede for us with thy beloved Son, That he forgive our sins. Very moving is the prayer of the priest after the reading of the Acts of Apostles. Here it is: "Rejoice, O thou of whom we ask healing, O holy, full of honor, ever-virgin, parent of God, mother of Christ, offer up our prayer on

high to thy beloved Son that he may forgive us our sins. "Rejoice, O thou who didst bear for us the very Light of Righteousness, even Christ our God. O Virgin pure, plead for us unto our Lord that he may have mercy upon our souls and forgive us our sins. "Rejoice, O Virgin Mary, very Queen; rejoice, O pride of our kind; rejoice O thou that barest for us Emmanuel our God. y' We ask thee to remember us, O true Mediatrix, before our Lord Jesus Christ that he may have mercy upon our souls and forgive us our sins." Our Lady is commemorated every month and there are more than thirty feasts of Mary in one year. The name of Mary is the most popular, both for men and women. Innumerable churches are erected in her honour. The Nagara Maryam, or History of Mary, is a collection of stories about her life arranged for the twelve months of the year. There are two collections of homilies to be read on the Festivals of the Virgin, arranged for the different days of the week: the Praises of Mary (Weddase Maryam) and the Organ of the Virgin or Organ of Praises (Arganona Dengel, Arganona Weddase). One of the Anaphoras is called "Of our Lady Mary". Plenty of pictures of the Virgin are to be seen in the churches and Sleeping places. Another important book we have in connection with the Mother of God is called the Wonders of Mary. Ethiopia is a daughter of Mary, her star in peace and war and her last resort in everything. Nothing can be taught to the Church in devotion and honor to the Blessed Virgin. Finally the Church teaches that our Lady was taken to Heaven soul and body where she prays for us until the last Judgement. Back

13. COMMANDMENTS TO BE KEPT

There are commandments which are to be observed, through which the work of our salvation is completed. The keeping of these commandments is equal to the keeping of all the commandments. They are five: 1) The first commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength", containing all our duties towards God and every commandment having any reference to God. (Luke 10: 25-28) 2) The second commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself", contains all our duties towards Christ, who became Neighbor to us, and whom we ought to love as He also first loved us. In this is every commandment referring to Christ. 3) The third commandment, "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye love one another", contains all our duties towards our brethren and the brethren of Christ and every commandment having reference to the Christian Brotherhood (John 13. 34,35). 4) The fourth commandment, "Ye shall love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you", contains all our duties towards the enemies and persecutors of the faith and the teaching of Christ, and every commandment having reference to this order of men (Luke 6:27-28). 5.) The fifth commandment, "All things therefore which you would that men should do to you, do even so to them", contains all our duties to all men whether ill disposed towards us or friendly, and every commandment having reference to them (Matt. 7:12 and Luke 6:13) Back

14. MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Marriage is pure and undefiled, and not unclean, for God created Adam and Eve that they might multiply people. Hence flesh is not impure, for He did not repudiate the body (Ethiopic Didascalia, Translations of Christian Literature, J.M.Harden, p. 147). We

have a sacrament which blesses the state of married people. Marriage which is consecrated and honorable we honor and bless with 'the crown' (i.e. with the marriage service) and with the Eucharist. There is a mass for wedding. Those who pervert nature like the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, and those who practise bestiality shall not escape punishment, for they transgress the law and defile pure marriage. Women must be obedient to their husbands in love and fear, even as the blessed Sarah was obedient to her husband Abraham. And in like manner men must love their wives. It is said, "Love the wife of thy youth, as the hearth loveth the fountains of waters, for she is thine and is with thee at all times, and is a member of thine". (Cf. Prov. 5:18f). Those that marry a third time shall not be reckoned with the flock of the Lord Christ, and those that marry a fourth time, their wantonness is still more abundantly manifested, and they shall find shame and dishonor (The Ethiopic Didascalia, op. cit.) Cases are not rare where after the death of a spouse the other party enters a monastery or a nunnery. Premarital sex relationships are frowned upon.

DIVORCE

The law of the Gospel and the Christian ordinances are One man for one woman and one woman for one man. The taking of another is forbidden, 1 Tim. 3. 2, 1. 6. "What God hath joined together let no man separate", Mt. 9 ,6. "He who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery with Iher, and if a woman divorces her husband and marries another man, she becomes an adulteress", Mk. 10. 11, 12. "Everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of sexual misconduct, makes her an adulteress, and he who marries her who is divorced commits adultery", Mt. 5. 31. 32. St. Paul also said: "But to the married I give commandmentQYet not I but the LordQLet not a woman divorce her husband; and if she divorce him, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband and let not a man leave his wife". (Cor. 7. 10, 11) . Adultery is the only cause for divorce. If the bond is broken, the offenders are automatically barred from receiving Holy Communion. The case of impotence may be considered. Although the Civil Law recognized the Levirate marriage (Deut. 25. 5) it has never been tolerated by the Church. The church recognizes but one wife, and any other female retainer is regarded as a concubine. The Emperor canonically is bound by the same marital laws as those of the priests. Back