

## **BITU OF ETHIOPIA AND HIS HERESY**

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### **Abstract**

*Bitu is the only heretic of Ethiopian origin whose name and thoughts were mentioned in the Māṣḥāfā mēṣṭir (Book of Mystery), which provides extensive assertions in response of various heresies of individual heretics and religious sects from the perspective of Oriental Orthodoxy. His heresy relates to eschatology and severely contradicts some of the main concerns that the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church believes and teaches regarding eschatological doctrine. St. Giyorgis of Gaśśəčča (1364-1424 A.D), one of the scholars of his time and author of several theological and hymnal books, including the Māṣḥāfā mēṣṭir has disputed against him in public at the court of King Dawit II (1382-1413 A.D). The homily he later composed in response of Bitu's heresy reflects the main points of the debate. Correspondingly, the Vita, composed by later hagiographers to commemorate his apostolic mission, virtues, and scholarly achievements, gives important information on the background and end of the dispute. In a way, the story shows the dispute resolution and justice system of the time. Though, in present Ethiopia, little is known about Bitu's identity and beliefs. The purpose of this article is to deal with the story and end of the controversy based on the witnesses of the sources mentioned earlier and related references. The eschatological teachings of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church are also briefly discussed to provide a better understanding of the controversy.*

**Key words:** Bitu, Eschatology, *tənsae mutān*, St. Giyorgis of Gaśśəčča

## I. The eschatological doctrine of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

As one of the oldest churches in the world, the faith and ecclesiastical traditions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church are based on biblical verses and apostolic successions.<sup>1</sup> Like the other member churches of Oriental Orthodoxy,<sup>2</sup> it recognizes the canons and decisions of the first three ecumenical councils - Nicea (325 A.D), Constantinople (381 A.D), and Ephesus (431 A.D).<sup>3</sup> The main dogmatic issues, which it maintains unchanged and teaches constantly, are briefly mentioned in the Creeds, which it uses as confessional statements during liturgical and sacramental services.

Two different creeds are known in the Church. The first is known as the Creed invented by the Apostles, while the second is the Creed known in almost all Christian churches as written by the Nicæan Fathers, to which some statements were added by the one hundred and fifty Church Fathers at the Council of Constantinople. The Church equally recognizes them as essential definitions of the faith. They are recited interchangeably in the celebration of the liturgy (śəratā qəddase, v.32; Anaphora of Nicene fathers v.1, Aymro, 1970: p.100, 133).

Both creeds deal with eschatological doctrine and declare at least the following four core points:

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1 Aymro (et.), 1970: 105; *Abba Gorgoryos*, 1981: 99.

2 A religious group of Orthodox Churches that segregated from the western and eastern Churches after the council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D that involves six autonomous Churches namely: The Alexandrian Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Malankara Orthodox Church of India, the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Eritrean Orthodox Church. (OXDCC: 1193).

3 Aymro (et.), 1970:116.

- the second coming of the Lord<sup>4</sup>
- the resurrection of the dead<sup>5</sup>
- the last judgment<sup>6</sup>
- the eternal life that will be conferred to the righteous.<sup>7</sup>

These concepts are discussed in detail in the lesson called "*Məstirā tənśāe mutān*" (Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead), the last part of "*'amməstu 'a 'əmada məstir*" (The Five Pillars of Mystery). According to the lesson, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basis for the resurrection of the dead. Just as He rose from the dead with an incorruptible body, every human being will be resurrected with a new body that neither dies nor decays again, on the day Jesus Christ returns in glory.<sup>8</sup> The resurrection has two features; for the righteous, it is *tənśāe za-la-həywat* (resurrection for a life) and for the sinners, it is *tənśāe za-la-dayn* (resurrection for torment).<sup>9</sup>

This is not, however, a declaration that propagates two different acts or types of resurrection; it is one and the same resurrection expressed in two different ways since it presents two incompatible

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- 4 "ዳግመ፡ ይመጽእ፡ በሰብሐት፡ ይኩንን፡ ሕያዋን፡ ወሙታዮ" (He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead) Creed of the Nicene Fathers v.7; Lusini, in *EAE*: 2005: 380.
  - 5 "ወንሴ፡ ትንሣኤ፡ ሙታን፡ ወሕይወተ፡ ዘይመጽእ፡ ለዐለመ፡ ዐለም" (we await the resurrection of the dead) Creed of the Nicene Fathers v.10.
  - 6 "ወካዕበ፡ ነአምን፡ ትንሣኤ፡ ሙታን፡ ጻድቃን፡ ወኅጥአን፡ ወዕለተ፡ ኩነኔ፡ አመ፡ ይትፈጸይ፡ ኩሉ፡ በከመ፡ ምግባሩ" (we also believe in the resurrection of the dead, the righteous, and the sinners on the Day of Judgment, when everyone will receive either his reward or punishment, according to his deed) Creed of the Apostles v. 41.
  - 7 Creed of the Nicene Fathers v.10.
  - 8 (1 Chor 15:42-45).
  - 9 These two terms are widely known and frequently used within the Ethiopian Christian community. They are of course taken from Christ's statement "An hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth, those who did the good (deeds) to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil (deeds) to a resurrection of judgment" (Jh 5:29).

fortunes, on the one hand, life, prestige and the heavenly kingdom for the righteous, who will rise clothed with a shining robe of light<sup>10</sup> and stand at the right hand of the Lord's throne, and on the other hand, death, torment, Gehenna<sup>11</sup> for the sinners, who will rise clothed with darkness and stand disgracefully at the extreme left of the Lord.

This will happen after the right judgment of the Lord. He will proclaim His final judgment explicitly before God the Father,<sup>12</sup> accompanied by the heavenly angels.<sup>13</sup> At His first coming into the world, He came in a humble state, but later He will come in His divine glory and proclaim His judgment, saying to the righteous, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father," and to the wicked, "Depart from Me, you accursed ones".<sup>14</sup>

Based on the testimony of the Revelation of John, Archbishop Matewos (1926-2000 A.D) confirms that this will take place on Mount Zion (1967: p. 133). His argument agrees with St. Yared's hymn "‘ama yənāggəs wāld bā-dābrā šəyon kəflənni dəngəl ‘əqum bā-yāman" (When your son reigns at the Mount Zion, O, (holy) Virgin help me to stand at the right) (Ziq zā-yākkatit kidanā-məḥrāt).<sup>15</sup>

In *Tā'mmārā 'Iyyāsus* (the book of miracles of Jesus) *qāramyo* (Golgotha) is specifically mentioned to be the place where the Judgment is executed. The statement says: "And I will set the throne

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10 (Mt 13:43)

11 A Greek originated place name which is equal with the Hebrew 'Geyhinom', with the Arabic 'Jahānnam' and Gə'əz 'Gahānnam'. The place is a valley where human sacrifices had been offered for Moloch, located south of Jerusalem not far from the city. It was considered as the example of the final place of torment, which is appointed by the Lord for the sinners. In this case it refers to this place of punishment. According to Ethiopian tradition it is defined as Hell, Hades, place of torment, deepest valley of darkness, sea of fire where its worm will not die, and its fire will not be quenched (Is 66: 24; Mt. 5: 30; Rev. 20: 19; OXDCC 1997: 657; Kidānawald 1955:304).

12 (Mt 10:32-33)

13 (Mt 25:31)

14 (Mt 25:34, 41)

15 Tənśa'e zāgubā'e, 1993: 141.

of My glory in the place where the Jews crucified My body" (Miracle 66).<sup>16</sup>

This is however not contrasting since according to the accounts of biblical scriptures, Mount Zion is the hill in Jerusalem where king David built his ancient city<sup>17</sup> and Golgotha is its northern part. Besides, the name refers to the entire territories belonging to the conceptualized Israel (Harrel, 1977: p. 194).

No one will remain unawakened; every person, whether buried in the grave or eaten by the beasts, will participate in the resurrection. Men will be resurrected at the age of thirty and women at the age of fifteen. There will no longer be any physical differences between them. The wicked will mourn, but no one can support anyone. Everyone will be resurrected with their good or bad deeds and receive the Lord's judgment. In this context, the church calls the resurrection *tənsāe za-gubāe* (resurrection of the congregation).

As for the actual day and time when this will happen, the Church firmly believes that no one knows except the Lord Himself, following the Bible verse said by Jesus Christ: "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven" (Mt 24:36). Although many Church scholars, relying on the testimonies of various patristic writings, do claim that the Lord will come on Sunday at midnight, in the month of *Māgabit* (March/May) in the year of John,<sup>18</sup> it is not yet known which Sunday, which *Māgabit* and which year of John (Hiruie, 2016, p. 170).

About Sunday, *Tā'mmərā 'Iyyāsus* denotes that it is the day by which the world was made and will pass away and the day of Jesus' resurrection (Miracle 77).<sup>19</sup>

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16 *Tənsā'e zāguba'e*, 2001: 204.

17 2 Sam 5:6

18 According to the Ethiopian calendar (*Baḥrā ḥāssab*), there is a circle of four years; the years are called after the names of the four evangelists Mathew, Mark; Luke and John. Based on the result of the calendric calculation, each year takes its designation. Thus, the name of each evangelist is used as the name of Ethiopian year once in four years.

19 *Tənsā'e zāguba'e*, 2001: 244.

Moreover, the second coming of the Lord and His divine judgment is an event planned by God, which realizes the end of the world and earthly life as well as the beginning of a new eternal life and the emergence of the new heaven. It is considered the basis for all virtues and spirituality since the believers subject to the Lord both bodily and spiritually just to inherit His heavenly Kingdom. If there were no such hope of being rewarded with eternal life, there would be no one who makes a sacrifice in terms of faith and integrity (Aymero, 1970: p.134-135).

In order to remind the faithful incessantly of these last things, the Church dedicates three different periods of the year in which the eschatological concerns are preached continuously. These are the 3rd week of *šomā nābiyat* (fasting time of the Prophets), the 5th week of *šomā 'Iyyāsus* (Lent), and the Ethiopian 13th month called *Ḵagumen*. The first two periods are both designated '*Dābrā zāyt*' (Mount of Olives). It is assumed that in the service rite of the Church, this designation was originally used by St. Yared, the Ethiopian psalmist (505-571 A.D) when he composed his great collection of hymns (*Dəg<sup>wa</sup>*).

He may have used this name to make an obvious connection between the dedication and the original story, for Jesus Christ taught his disciples about his second coming and judgment on the Mount of Olives.<sup>20</sup>

## II. Bitu

The only written sources that provide real information about the stories and philosophies of Bitu are the *Māšhāfā məštīr* (Book of Mystery) of *Abba Giyorgis za-Gaśśəčča* (1364-1424 A.D) and the vita written in his memory by a certain *Wāldā'ab*. The information contained in both sources, however, does not go into detail about his background. Rather, they focus on his terrible character and heretical teachings.

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20 (Mt 24-25)

The vita claims that he was a magician and practiced magic. It also says that he constantly talked with demons. In fact, this cannot be proven today by any investigation. We also have no convincing reason to deny it. So, what we can do is to accept it as information in terms of our general understanding, because in the Ethiopian context such a practice is nothing unusual that surprises us. As is evident from many Ethiopian hagiographies, the crucial opponents of the saints who spread Christianity and Christian traditions throughout the country were magicians and Idol worshippers believed to be working under the guidance and with the power of demons.

In this regard, the king of the magicians, whose guards violently beat Saint Tāklāḥaymanot (1207-1306 CE) in Belat until his body was shattered because of their brutal chastisement, and the magician Sārīti and her brother Bāwwa, who afflicted Saint Qāwṣtos (1207-1335 CE), may be quoted as examples.<sup>21</sup>

It may be to shrewdly notify this point that St. Giyorgis stated in his book “I suppose about him that he is an incarnated Satan and a demon that became human.”<sup>22</sup>

He also states about his personal behaviour that he was haughty, who neither respects people nor accepts the advice and request of friends, a harassing and aggressive person who causes quarrels. Again, in both sources, it is reported that he was a hypocrite and a ruthless person. With his cunning, he controlled the hearts of King Dawit II (1382-1413 AD) and the royal families. He had been his supporter until his death. The following statement by St. Giyorgis indicates this: “The king roars loudly like a lion for his help; even if he finds him (guilty), he could not do anything bad against him.”<sup>23</sup>

About his education, the vita says: “The king loved him and knew nothing of his terrible deeds. (However) he thought that he was a scholar of the scriptures.”<sup>24</sup> This expression indicates that Bitu was considered by the king and some other people to be one of the great

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21 Gādlā Tāklāḥaymanot chap. 35; Hiruie 2014: 83, 188.

22 Hiruie 2008: 90

23 Ibid: 91

24 Ḥāylāegzi’ə (et.): 2011: 67

scholars of his time, although the hagiographer did not consider him to be an educated man. Of course, he might not have been a scholar, since he made big mistakes based on a single reading, but one can imagine that he had at least a trivial knowledge of the biblical scriptures. For not only to believe, but also to deny, it is necessary to have a basic knowledge of the subject to be discussed.

In this point, St. Giyorgis's approach is different from that of the hagiographer. He does not deny that he knew the holy scriptures. Explaining his education and knowledge, he admits that Bitu corrupted the right concepts of biblical verses and mislead his fellow men, not because of lack of knowledge, but because he wanted to please Satan in his unorthodox thoughts and dishonesty. The statement is as follows: "Do you think that Bitu does not know the books of the prophets and Apostles? No, he knows well; but he works diligently to please Satan, for even Satan is not the one who does not know the commandment of the Lord, but he is the one who opposes His commandment" (Māṣḥāfā məṣṭir 10:4).<sup>25</sup>

### III. Bitu's heresy

The unorthodox views and teachings of Bitu recorded in both written documents are unambiguously connected with the eschatological concepts of the Christian Church. He did not totally deny the resurrection of the dead like the Sadducees<sup>26</sup> and the Gnostics.<sup>27</sup> His statement says "The Father will not come to judge the living and the dead. Only the Son will come apart from the Father."<sup>28</sup>

The vita asserts that his misinterpretation of the biblical verse: "For not even the Father condemns anyone, but He has given the authority to condemn to the Son" (Jh 5:22) led him to this conclusion.<sup>29</sup> It seems that he did not deny the divine glory of the Father or His

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25 Hiruie 2008: 91.

26 Members of the anti-pharisees Hebrew religious party who say, 'there is no resurrection' (Mt 22:23).

27 Eleine H. Pagels 1974: 276.

28 Ibid, Ḥayläægzi'ə (et.): 2011: 67.

29 Ibid: 68.



existence at all. However, he established a hierarchy among the divine persons and considered the Father as a king who sends his ambassador who has full power and authority to accomplish all governmental functions. This implies that Bitu did not recognize the presence of the Father at the courtyard where the living and the dead are finally judged.

According to the interpretation of St. Giyorgis, Bitu has made at least two crucial failures with this statement, apart from denying the presence of the Father at the courtyard and His involvement in judging the dead.

1. He despatched the equality and coexistence of the Father and the Son. Because he introduced a hierarchy between them, exemplifying the Father as a sender and the Son as a messenger.
2. He dispersed the regime of the Trinity. The dogma of the Church demonstrates that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are three in names and persons but one in Godhead, divine nature, regime and sovereignty. In contrast, Bitu revealed sovereignties of different level belonging to the Father and the Son. He also excluded the Holy Spirit from this most important divine action.

It is supposed that Bitu had had an opportunity to secretly spread his teaching within the Christian community until his heresy became publicly known. His intimacy with the king and some other executives helped him to work diligently for its spread. St. Giyorgis affirmed this in his statement: "And Bitu was like his father Satan; he works hard to deceive the faithful, because Satan's deceiving is weaker than Bitu's deceiving."<sup>30</sup>

#### **IV. A debate at the court of King David II**

The hagiographer's report provided in the hagiography regarding the personal communication between St. Giyorgis and Bitu affirms that the first action of the saint, as soon as Bitu's thoughts were heard, was to have private conversations to defend the orthodox eschatological

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30 Hiruie 2008: 91.

thoughts and to keep him in faith. He endeavoured to convince him not to deny the presence of the Father in the court where the last judgment will take place and to accept the teachings of the Church based on the prophetic and evangelical statements of the prophets and apostles. However, his efforts were not crowned with success, because Bitu relied too much on his own views and wanted to maintain them.

Then both went to King Dawit and presented themselves to him for debate. Giyorgis presented several Bible verses confirming the Father's presence at the Last Judgment and the divine authority He shares with the Son. Two of the verses he mentioned in the debate were: "Everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven" (Mt 10:32-33) and "If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay" (1 Pet 1:17). He finally appealed to the king so that Bitu should not continue to deceive the faithful with his unorthodox teaching.

To defend himself, Bitu presented the biblical statement: "The Father does not condemn anyone, but he has given His Son the authority to condemn" (Jn 5:27). According to the interpretation of St. Giyorgis, this statement denotes the equality of the Son with the Father in divine glory and that the Jews who denied His incarnation (His divine nature) will later be accused by Him before the Father for their skepticism. He also explained the reason why the Father will not accuse them that the Father was not incarnate, nor was He denied by the crucifiers like the Son.<sup>31</sup> To clarify his point, St. Giyorgis added the prophecy of Daniel: "Behold the Son of man came and sat next to the Ancient of the Days and to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom" (Dan 7:13-14), and Christ's statement "For as just the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes" (Jh 5:21) as supplementary evidence.

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31 This maybe corresponds with the verse, "We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from." (Jh 9:29).

Regarding the second evidence, it is so evident that he interpreted the two decisive phrases 'He raises the dead' and 'gives life' as to mean He will directly engage in the execution of judgment.

Furthermore, he mentioned Christ's statement that talks about the accusation of the crucifiers "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope" (Jh 5:45). With this regard, he asks "If the Father will not come with His Son, how Moses can accuse his people to the Father for their disbelief in the Son of God?" (Māšḥāfā məšṭir 10:16).

As is clear from the report, Bitu lost himself in the debate, since he was unable to challenge his opponent's argumentative interpretations, yet, not sorry on his own misinterpretation and misleading of the faithful. Fortunately, he was not punished because the king decided that such a profound theological controversy should be conducted and judged in the presence of a bishop rather than pronouncing sentence.<sup>32</sup>

It is genuinely supposed that this unanticipated act of the king was done out of the expectation of St. Giyorgis and his enthusiastic fellow Christians and has disappointed them. For it was a customary act of kings to execute judgment on the loser if he was found guilty

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32 The Egyptian bishops who were consecrated to Ethiopia during the reign of King Dawit II were *Abuna Sālama II* (1350-1390 A.D) and *Abuna Bārtālomewos* (1391-1438 A.D). The hagiographer did not specifically mention which one it was. However, according to the accounts in the *Vita*, Abune Bartalomewos was said to have been the bishop in Ethiopia when Bitu's controversy took place because he revealed his heresy during the last years of King Dawit. According to the narrative of the *Vita*, the king had St. Giyorgis thrown into prison for Bitu's false accusation. Sometime later he died and was succeeded by his son King Tewodros (+1413). The *Vita* testifies that the saint was deeply saddened by his death and wept, remembering that he was a great believer who loved St. Mary very much. In his short reign (not longer than nine months), King Tewodros released Saint Giyorgis and appointed him head of the clergy of the empire (*kahnatā-Dābtāra*) Ḥāylāegzi'ə (et.): 2011: 73-74; Marrassini, in *E Ae* 4, 2010: 488; Lusini, in *E Ae* 1, 2003: 487-88; Taddese, 1974: 508.

after such an open debate.<sup>33</sup> The saint's statement "The king roars loudly like a lion in support him; even if he finds him (guilty), he could not do anything bad on him" (Māṣḥāfā məšṭir 10:4) signifies his

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33 The vita deals with the same religious controversy happened a couple of time earlier. The story says that there was a certain Jew (most likely an Ethiopian who had not converted to Christianity). He asked permission to debate with the Christians at the royal court, swearing to them either to become a Christian if they could answer his questions and make him believe, or to convert them into Judaism if they could not. King Dawit vehemently called a council and gathered the High priests and scholars. The Jew presented his question as follows: "You call Jesus 'the Son of God'. It is written in your gospel that He went to Bethany and asked the people "Where did you burry Lazarus?". He asked for He did not know where he was buried. If He were God or the Son of God, He would not have had to ask people, because God knows everything and needs no help. So how can you call him the Son of God?" This time, St. Giyorgis was on his sickbed but joined the council since the king insisted him to join. He responded him back in question "Who said in Paradise, Adam, where are you? Who said to Abraham, where is Sarah? Who said to Satan, where did you come from? Who said again "Who will deceive Ahab?" Was it not God? or do you say somebody else? The Jew kept silence since he could not defend himself. Hence, the crowd realized that he was denying that Christ is the Son of God and the incarnated God. Finally, he immediately received his punishment. Ḥāylāegzi'ə (et.): 2011: 65-67. We also recall that some identical stories occurred in later historical periods. For example: during the reign of Emperor Zār'aya'qob (1434-1468 A.D), the Stephanites (Dāqiqā-'əṣṭifa) who refused to kneel down to the Holy Virgin and the Cross were punished as soon as the session was released. During the reign of King Fasil (1632-1667 AD), the Jesuit missionaries led by Paez were expelled from Ethiopia after being publicly defeated. Likewise, those accused of the condemned *śost lādāt* (triple birth) doctrine were severely punished with the decision made in the Boru Meda Council in the presence of Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-1889 A.D) and Menilik II (1889-1913 A.D). Tekletsadiq: 1960: 262-65; *Abba Gorgoryos*, 1981: p. 49, 61; Ficquet in *EAE* I: 2003: 609.

disappointment in the king's action. He may have considered this as partiality toward Bitu.

Finally, before dismissing the court, King Dawit announced that he was giving both parties three days and ordered his officials to summon the bishop, abbots, high priests, scholars, and priests to the assembly.<sup>34</sup>

## **V. The affliction of St. Giyorgis and the sudden death of Bitu**

The strong challenge by St. Giyorgis revealed during the debate at the royal court and his own inability to defend himself through clever arguments or convincing Bible verses and theological interpretations like St. Giyorgis scared and unsettled Bitu. Therefore, he decided to secretly pursue St. Giyorgis instead of preparing himself for the final debate or apologizing.

As soon as he returned home, he composed a letter in the name of St. Giyorgis, saying, "I, Giorgis, have written this letter to the bishop; dear father, the king has denied the faith. You shall not come to the court nor answer him" and sent it to the bishop. At the same time, he sent his envoys working for money to the king with the copy of this letter. They informed him that St. Giyorgis accused him of denying the faith.

The king trusted them when he saw the letter written to the bishop in the name of St. Giyorgis and became very angry with him. Thereupon he gave orders to his soldiers to arrest and punish him. They detained him and punished him until his blood was spilled on the ground and some of his teeth were torn out.

However, the case was ended by the unforeseen death of Bitu. Before the day set for the final debate, he was found dead in his home. The saint considered his sudden death as an intervention of the Lord to protect the church and the faithful (Māṣḥāfā mēšīr 10:22).

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34 Ḥāylāegzi'ə (et.): 2011: 71.

## VI. Conclusion

The dogma of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church professes the equality, coexistence and unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; they are three in person, but one in essence, will and authority. This doctrinal statement prevents any thought of actual separation and distinction in the Trinity. It is obvious that the basis of this definition of faith is based on Bible verses such as “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (Jh 6:38).

According to the Church’s doctrine, the ground of the divine judgment is in fact the will of the Holy Trinity since the Son Himself stated “For this is the will of the Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believe in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day” (Jh 6:39); “To sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those whom it has been prepared by My Father” (Mt 20:23).

One of the hymns composed by St. Yared to be sung on Dābrā zāyt Sunday testifies that the Father is also a judge on the last day. It says: “May the Father have mercy on us and keep us from the death of sin, for he is the giver of life and the Lord of the Sabbath” (šomā dæg<sup>wa</sup>, p. 94).

This is exactly the version of the biblical verse “My judgment is true, for I am not alone, but I and the Father who sent Me” (Jh 8:16).

From these points of view, it cannot be surprising if the Church excommunicates Bitu and his philosophy, which excludes the Father from the execution of the judgments and introduces hierarchies between the divine persons. It completely undermines the eschatological thoughts of the entire Christian churches.

In addition to the biography of Bitu and his heresy, the entire story deliberately shows the status of the church in the Middle Ages, the challenges it faced, the methods of dispute resolution and the royal court system, and the experience of justice. This is undoubtedly important in developing our understanding of past Ethiopia and the paths it went through. It is therefore recommended to pay adequate attention to such witnesses hidden in the valuable written documents.

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