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THE FORMATION OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN ETHIOPIA  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE WORK OF  
THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN MISSION

BY

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Dedicated to the bambino  
who so faithfully amused my wife while  
she typed the final draft

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
INTRODUCTION	
A. The Problem Stated . . . . .	1
1. The Problem Stated and Explained. . . . .	1
2. The Problem Delimited . . . . .	2
B. The Study Justified. . . . .	3
C. The Method of Procedure . . . . .	4
D. Sources for the Study . . . . .	5
I. THE HISTORY OF ETHIOPIA'S CHURCH AND PEOPLE--THE HERITAGE OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH	
A. Introduction . . . . .	6
B. The History of the Ethiopic Church. . . . .	7
1. Background for Christianity . . . . .	7
a. The Queen of Sheba. . . . .	7
b. The Falashas--Jewish Influence in Ethiopia . . . . .	9
c. The degeneration of Jehovah Worship . . . . .	11
2. The Earliest Beginnings of the Ethiopic Church . . . . .	12
a. The Ethiopian Eunuch . . . . .	12
b. Frumentius and Aedesius . . . . .	14
3. Struggles with the Mohammedans and Papists . . . . .	19
a. Mohammedan Influence in Ethiopia . . . . .	19
b. Contact with Portugal. . . . .	25
c. Papal Civil War in Ethiopia. . . . .	28
4. A Brief Description of the Ethiopic Church Today . . . . .	33
a. Doctrine . . . . .	33
(1) General Doctrines . . . . .	33
(2) The Sacraments . . . . .	35
(3) The Canon of Scriptures . . . . .	36
b. Practices. . . . .	37
C. The People of Ethiopia Today. . . . .	38
1. The Tigrinyans, Amharas, and Shoans. . . . .	38
2. The Gallas . . . . .	39
3. Other Tribes in Ethiopia . . . . .	40
D. Summary. . . . .	42
II. CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD AN EVANGELICAL AWAKENING FROM 1815-1945, EX CLUDING THE WORK OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN MISSION	
A. Introduction . . . . .	45
B. The Early Planting of the Seed . . . . .	47
1. The Church Missionary Society. . . . .	47
2. The Mission to the Jews. . . . .	54
3. Contributions of the British and Foreign Bible Society and Various Other Translators . . . . .	61
C. The Contributions of the Twentieth Century Toward the Establishment of an Evangelical Church . . . . .	67

Gift of Author

26966

May 6, 1949

1. The Small Missionary Societies . . . . .	67
2. The Larger Societies . . . . .	69
3. The Effects of the Italo-Ethiopian War on the Evangelical Missions. . . . .	74
D. Summary . . . . .	76

III. THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EVANGELICAL CHURCH

A. Introduction . . . . .	79
B. The History of the United Presbyterian Mission in Ethiopia	80
1. Beginning of the United Presbyterian Mission in Ethiopia . . . . .	80
2. Growth of the Mission up to the Time of the Italo-Ethiopian War. . . . .	84
a. History of the Development of the Sayo Station . . . . .	85
b. History of the Development of the Gore Station . . . . .	93
c. History of the Development of the Addis Ababa Station . . . . .	96
3. The Effects of the War on the Mission. . . . .	99
a. The Effects of the War on the Property and Staff . . . . .	99
b. The Effect of the War on the Native Converts. . . . .	102
4. The Post-war Program of the United Presbyterian Mission. . . . .	106
C. Summary . . . . .	109

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION . . . . . 111

BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . . 116

## INTRODUCTION

THE FORMATION OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN ETHIOPIA  
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THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN MISSION

INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem Stated

1. The Problem Stated and Explained

This thesis is an historical survey which will attempt to present to the reader the events in the history of Ethiopia which led to the establishment of an independent evangelical church. This thesis will also include the establishment of an evangelical church.

The church organizations that are considered to be evangelical and Christian in this thesis are the church organizations that have resulted from the work of such missionary societies as the Evangelical National Missionary Society of Sweden, The Hermannsburg Evangelical Lutheran Mission, The London Mission for the Jews, The London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, The Church Missionary Society, The Sudan Interior Mission, and The United Presbyterian Mission--all missionary societies that work for the salvation of the souls of men, through the gospel of Jesus Christ. The one aim of the evangelical mission is to preach Christ and the atonement of the cross, and is not an attempt to impose a legalistic or esoteric system on the people to whom it goes.

By independent evangelical church is meant an evangelical church that is independent of the state church of Ethiopia, the

Ethiopic Church. "The independent evangelical church" will be used as a general term to describe all evangelical Christians in Ethiopia. This body of evangelical Christians in Ethiopia is the true Church of Christ, made up of several small evangelical church organizations. One of these small churches that is a member of the independent evangelical church will receive special treatment.

By gathering together pertinent events in Ethiopic history, it is hoped that the reader will see the need for an evangelical church, and at the same time have a history of the development of the evangelical church in Ethiopia.

## 2. The Problem Delimited.

It will not be the purpose of this paper to record a complete history of the Ethiopic Church, or of the nation. The purpose of this paper is to show enough of the background of Ethiopia's history to give the reader a basis for understanding the history of the evangelical church.

Events in history tend to shape the thinking of a people for a considerable number of years later. Much of the thought of the people of Ethiopia has been molded by events that have transpired in its past history. For this reason the mission of the Roman Catholic Church in 1500 and 1600, though not evangelical in the true Christian sense, must be considered because of the repercussion it had in Ethiopian attitudes towards all foreign enterprises in their land. It will be seen that the attitude of the people towards the evangelical missionaries was largely the result of their past experience with the Roman Catholic missionaries.

The old established Ethiopic Church is believed to have been evangelical early in its history. Today, however, it has become cold spiritually, with no evangelical outreach. For this reason the distinction is made between the Ethiopic Church and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church. One is dead, the other growing and living.

The early beginning of the evangelical movement in Ethiopia is rooted in the ancient church and the endeavors of evangelical missionaries with that church. To take this into account, some attention must be given to the missionary efforts of all the evangelical missions in Ethiopia since the entrance of the first evangelical missionary.

#### B. The Study Justified.

The fact that there is a church in Ethiopia is general knowledge throughout the literate world. On the other hand, very few people know that there are independent evangelical churches in Ethiopia which are bringing the Gospel to the people of Ethiopia in their vernacular.

It is intended that this study will not only serve to enlighten the reader to the fact that there are evangelical churches existing in Ethiopia, but that it will give the prospective missionary to Ethiopia an historical background that will enable that person to appreciate better the conditions under which the evangelical Christians exist in that land.

This study will also give an account of the efforts of Protestant missionaries in their struggle with an ancient and dead church. By a study of missionary history in a land that is dominated by a dead state church the problems of missionary work under opposition can be seen.



The adequate consideration of all protestant missionary work in Ethiopia would be too extensive for the nature of this study. For this reason special attention will be given to the work of the United Presbyterian Mission in Ethiopia. This mission is the earliest, and one of the strongest missions established in Ethiopia in the twentieth century. The work of this mission will serve as a fair example of the work carried on by other evangelical missions.

The work of this mission will be given special attention for two reasons: the availability of source material on the evangelical church developed by the United Presbyterian Mission, and the close relationship between the writer and the United Presbyterian Mission.

#### C. The Method of Procedure.

No problem is understood without a background knowledge of that problem. The first chapter will give the necessary background in understanding the evangelical church in Ethiopia by a brief survey of the history of Ethiopia, dealing chiefly with the ecclesiastical side. And to better understand the peoples with whom missionaries to Ethiopia will find themselves working, some information about the different tribes will be given, along with some information about a few of their customs.

The second chapter will be an historical survey of the evangelical Christian missions in Ethiopia which contribute to the development of an evangelical Christian church in Ethiopia, and a reform movement in the Ethiopic Church.

The third chapter will deal specifically with the work and

history of the United Presbyterian Mission. This chapter will show the contribution of the United Presbyterian Mission to the establishment of an independent evangelical church. As a further aid to the prospective missionary to Ethiopia, special attention will be given to the policy of the United Presbyterian Mission in this chapter as an example of a working mission policy in Ethiopia.

#### D. Sources for the Study.

The early history of Ethiopia is vague and there is a scarcity of authentic primary sources. The sources for the first chapter are primarily historical surveys, a great share of them written by men who have traveled in the country, and who have studied the Ethiopian manuscripts. Since this study is not primarily concerned with the history of Ethiopia, it is felt that a more adequate treatment of this phase of the study can be had from secondary sources.

The sources for the remaining units of this study will be the private journals of the early missionaries and the books written by later missionaries. In the unit devoted to the work of the United Presbyterian Mission, the Triennial and Annual Reports of the Board of Foreign Missions of the United Presbyterian Church, private letters, and articles written by missionaries in church periodicals will be the source material.

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORY OF ETHIOPIA'S CHURCH AND PEOPLE----

THE HERITAGE OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH

## CHAPTER I

### THE HISTORY OF ETHIOPIA'S CHURCH AND PEOPLE---

#### THE HERITAGE OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH

##### A. Introduction

In order to understand the situation which developed into the formation of an evangelical movement in Ethiopia, a survey of the background history that contributes to the thought of the people must be made.

Ethiopia is a mixture of peoples, and has been such for thousands of years.<sup>1</sup> Today Ethiopia, of all the African kingdoms, has retained its independence for the longest period of time. And with that independence Ethiopia has nourished its own brand of Christianity.<sup>2</sup> We read of this long period of hibernation:

"Until the discovery of Abyssinia by the Portuguese, and the landing of priests and soldiers at Arkeeko, under the pretence of bringing succour against the Turks, the church and people of Abyssinia were shut up in their mountains, far away from the rest of Christendom, isolated and barbarized indeed, yet preserved from that highly organized corruption which overspread the West, and from those less magnificent but equally corrupt systems which grew, ripened, and decayed within the churches of the East."<sup>3</sup>

To understand the Ethiopian, one must understand his history and the history of his church. And to understand the consciousness of the Ethiopian, some knowledge of the various tribes and their customs must be had. The purpose of this chapter is to acquaint the reader

. . . . .

1. Walter F. Adeney, The Greek and Eastern Churches, p. 616.
2. Africa, Its Geography and Topography, Wesleyan Methodist, January 1868.
3. Africa, op. cit., p. 242.

with Ethiopia's general ecclesiastical history, and at the same time give enough of the secular history to enable the reader to understand the present situation. Added to this will be a brief survey of the people themselves to acquaint the reader with the inhabitants of Ethiopia.

## B. The History of the Ethiopic Church

### 1. Background for Christianity

Our Christian faith finds its roots in the very heart of the Old Testament. The Christianity of any nation is rooted in the Hebrew faith.

Ethiopia, unlike the Western nations of Europe, has a history of Judaism all its own. Therefore, the real history of Ethiopia's Church starts back when Jehovah worship was introduced in the land.

#### a. The Queen of Sheba

In I Kings 10:1 is found this early reference to Ethiopia.

"And when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of Jehovah, she came to prove him with hard questions."

It is interesting that the purpose of the visit was for intellectual reasons more than for diplomatic reasons. And it might be observed here that this is typical of the Ethiopian, as Bishop Samuel Gobat, Missionary for the Church Missionary Society, found him in 1830.<sup>4</sup>

. . . . .

4. The reader is referred to Bishop Gobat's Journal of three year's residence in Abyssinia. Most of the discussions that Mr. Gobat carried on with the priests were on points of doctrine. See p.55 for an example.

The thirteenth verse of the tenth chapter says,

"And King Solomon gave to the Queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, besides that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own land, she and her servants."

This makes it quite plain that the intercourse between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba was friendly and that the latter did not return to her land empty-handed. Thus we have the Biblical basis for the tradition that Ethiopia was once a Jewish nation.

The record of this visit of the Queen of Sheba to the courts of Solomon is the first reference available to the history of Ethiopia outside of Ethiopia's own manuscripts, which many scholars believe are inaccurate and unreliable.<sup>5</sup> The record found in I Kings 10:1-13 and II Chronicles 9:1-12 is in God's Holy Word and is an indisputable fact.

Some critics say that Sheba is not the present-day Ethiopia because of the difference in the name. Sheba, according to the Westminster Dictionary of the Bible,

"... was a country and people of Southwestern Arabia, well known from its own records and classical geographers."<sup>6</sup>

By referring to the map, it is easily seen that Sheba is not a part of present-day Ethiopia. But it is certain that the Ethiopian kings claim descent from Solomon through the Queen of Sheba.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, no one is quite sure which theory to believe. It is known, however, that the land on either side of the Red Sea was at one time

. . . . .

5. Stuart Bergsma, The Rainbow Empire, p. 230.

6. Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, Revised Edition, p.550.

7. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 200.

referred to as Ethiopia. And since Sheba was located across the Red Sea from Ethiopia, it is believed that during the reign of Solomon, the kingdom of Ethiopia extended to both sides of the Red Sea.<sup>8</sup>

Ethiopic literature gives a detailed account of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon's courts. The Ethiopic name of this queen was Queen Makada.<sup>9</sup> And according to this literature, she bore a son by Solomon, the son resembling the great Israelitish monarch in features and mental ability. According to the Kebra Nagast, in which this version of the story is found, the son of Queen Makada was sent back to Jerusalem to learn the law of Jehovah and the wisdom of his father. This he did. And when it came time to return to Ethiopia, he managed to steal the sacred Ark of the Covenant. This was accomplished by substituting an ark so similar to the real one that the priests of the temple never missed the real one. This ark was taken back to Ethiopia, where the worship of Jehovah of Hosts became the national religion. And ever since that time, the monarchs of Ethiopia claim to be descendants of Solomon.<sup>10</sup>

b. The Falashas-Jewish influence in Ethiopia

It is evident that this Ethiopian account of the Queen of Sheba was made up by some imaginative Ethiopian scribe. It is inconceivable that any foreigner would be able to go into the Holy of Holies and make off with the Ark of the Covenant. It is apparent that this part of the story was a fabrication to strengthen the faith of the Ethiopian proselytes.

. . . . .

8. Adeney, The Greek and Eastern Churches, p. 616.

9. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 195.

10. Bergsma, op. cit., pp. 194-199.

In the light of this it is interesting to note that at this very day there is a tribe of Jews in Ethiopia. They are the Falashas. These people adhere to the Mosaic laws and have the canonical books of the Old Testament in their possession along with some of the apocryphal writings. But the Falashas never heard of the Talmud, which fact is an indication of their early migration to Ethiopia. They are the only body of Jews in the world in whose worship an altar and sacrifices are the chief features.<sup>11</sup>

One is inclined to believe the traditions of the origins of the Falashas, since they themselves claim that they came over to Ethiopia at the time Solomon was on the throne in Israel.<sup>12</sup> However, there are indications that they in truth are exiles. The name "Fala" in Ethiopic means "Exile."<sup>13</sup>

Bishop Gobat, in his journals on his travels in Ethiopia, said that a priest of the Ethiopic Church informed him that the Falashas came to Ethiopia after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.<sup>15</sup> It is not known for sure when and if any exiles came over from Israel, but the Falashas themselves claim they received their religion from Solomon. And it is believed that others came during the times of the Jewish troubles.<sup>16</sup>

. . . . .

11. Light and Darkness in East Africa, pp. 142-143.
12. Gobat, op. cit., p. 121.
13. Light and Darkness, op. cit., p. 143.
14. Gobat, op. cit., p. 110.
15. The Talmud began to come into existence during the Babylonian exile. See Talmud, Schaff-Hertzogg Religious Encyclopedia.
16. Africa, Journal of the Royal United Service Institute, p. 512.



The fact that the Ethiopic language has a greater number of Hebrew words in its vocabulary than Arabic indicates that it at one time was under strong Israelitish influence.<sup>17</sup>

Even the present-day Ethiopians, though calling themselves Christians, show the marks of this Hebrew influence. For to this day they practice circumcision and observe the Sabbath, besides observing the Christian Sunday. Thus they observe two days of rest a week. The laws of Moses are observed regarding meats, and Jewish influence can be seen in this custom that is quoted from the Journal of The Royal United Service Institute:

"In slaying their cattle, too, the beast must be thrown down with its head turned to Jerusalem, and its throat cut while the Christian words, 'In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,' are pronounced."<sup>18</sup>

It is interesting to notice in this connection that Bishop Gobat reports a number of occasions when Ethiopians were seeking to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem. This veneration of the Holy City today has the marks of Jewish influence.<sup>19</sup>

c. The degeneration of Jehovah Worship

The Falashas and the customs and language of Ethiopia today give ample evidence that at one time Jehovah worship was the religion of quite a large number of Ethiopians. But as the parent faith in Judah became corrupt through contact with foreign tribes and faiths, so the worship of Jehovah in Ethiopia became corrupted. Since, like their

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17. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist, February, 1868, p. 146.

18. Africa, Journal of the Royal United Service Institute, p. 523.

19. Gobat, op. cit., p. 57.

brethren in Israel, the Jews of Ethiopia believed in witchcraft, seers, possession by the devil and sorcerers,<sup>20</sup> it did not take long for the primitive animism of neighboring African tribes to work its way into the religion of Ethiopia. Before the Queen of Sheba went to Israel, the religion had been a vague mixture of sun-worshiping, tree-worshiping, and serpent-worshiping. And not too many decades after Judaism had been introduced to Ethiopia the influence of these pagan cults began to corrupt the form of Judaism. Knowledge of Jehovah soon degenerated to primitive animism. Only the Falashas, the most ascetic of the Jehovah worshipers, remained in any likeness of the former state of Ethiopian Judaism.<sup>21</sup>

## 2. The Earliest Beginnings of the Ethiopic Church

While the Falashas were continuing their Hebraic way of life in Ethiopia, a babe was born in Bethlehem of Judea. He was the long sought after Messiah, yet the Falashas had not even looked for a Messiah.<sup>22</sup> While this Babe grew to manhood, Ethiopia remained asleep in its high mountains, undisturbed by the rest of the world.

### a. The Ethiopian Eunuch

According to our New Testament record, Ethiopia was supposed to have had Christianity introduced to it at an early date. The record in Acts 8:27-28 states:

"And he rose and went. And behold, an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a minister of Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of all her

. . . . .

20. Same as note 18.

21. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 200.

22. Gobat, op. cit., p. 309.

treasure, had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah."

Philip explained the passage that he found the eunuch reading, and according to the account in Acts<sup>23</sup> the eunuch was converted and baptized and returned to Ethiopia. From this account, it is presumed by many that Christianity was introduced into Ethiopia by the eunuch. But the observation must be made here that nowhere in the Acts 8 account is there any mention of evangelistic efforts on the part of the Ethiopian eunuch after he returned to his own land.

In fact there are few scholars who believe that the Ethiopian eunuch mentioned in Acts was an Ethiopian from the land that is called Ethiopia today.<sup>24</sup> The eunuch is believed to be the treasurer of a Queen Candace, who ruled the Island of Meroe in the Nile River. The fact that he came to Jerusalem to worship indicates that he was a Jew or Jewish proselyte. The Wesleyan Methodist for February 1868, in quoting Pliny, says of Queen Candace,

"They say that a woman named Candace reigns there, that being the name borne by the queens of this country for many years past."<sup>25</sup>  
Hist. Nat. 6:35.

The records available concerning the Island of Meroe do indicate that there were queens by the name of Candace that reigned approximately at the time of Acts.<sup>26</sup> However, there are no records of a Queen Candace in Ethiopian history.<sup>27</sup> For this reason it is believed that the eunuch of Acts 8 was from Meroe and not from the land that is called Ethiopia today.

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- 23. The Acts of the Apostles, chapter 8, verses 26-40.
- 24. Gobat, op. cit., p. 322.
- 25. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist, February 1868, p. 142.
- 26. Adeney, op. cit., p. 617.
- 27. Same as note 25.

There is mention of a Christian community in Meroe that was over-run in the time of the Moslem invasions. Some influence from this community may have been introduced to Ethiopia, but it is unlikely.<sup>28</sup>

Dr. Bergsma implies such by this statement:

"Those who maintain that the ancient Kingdom of Meroe in what is the Sudan today, included all that the ancients termed Ethiopia, are wrong. The portion covering Meroe is called Media Ethiopia on Ptolemy's map, but was only a part of a far more extensive country called Ethiopia."<sup>29</sup>

And the Wesleyan Methodist, in spite of the fact that Eusebius believed Ethiopia was converted by the eunuch,<sup>30</sup> maintains that this was not true Christianity, but a Judaistic form of it which was not successful.<sup>31</sup>

This foregoing discussion indicates the improbability that Ethiopia was converted by the eunuch of Acts 8. This is strengthened further by the observation that Walter F. Adeney,<sup>32</sup> Dr. Bergsma,<sup>33</sup> Samuel Gobat,<sup>34</sup> The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine of February, 1868,<sup>35</sup> K. S. Latourette,<sup>36</sup> and The Ethiopian Review,<sup>37</sup> all attribute the conversion of Ethiopia to the work of Frumentius and Aedesius in the fourth century.

b. Frumentius and Aedesius

The conversion of Ethiopia came about in the following way,

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28. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist, February, 1868, pp. 142-143.
29. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 193.
30. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 203.
31. Africa, op. cit., p. 144.
32. Adeney, op. cit., p. 144.
33. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 204.
34. Gobat, op. cit., p. 321.
35. Africa, op. cit., p. 142.
36. K. S. Latourette, The History of the Expansion of Christianity, Vol. I, p. 230.
37. Ethiopian Review, Vol. II, No. 12, Vol. III, No. 1, July-August, 1946.

as first reported by Rufinius in his church history.<sup>38</sup> The story is that a rich merchant from Tyre in Syria,<sup>39</sup> Meropius by name,<sup>40</sup> took his two young relatives,<sup>41</sup> Aedesius and Frumentius, to explore India. This is supposed to have taken place around 330 A. D.<sup>42</sup> On this trip they stopped at a port on the African side of the Red Sea for water. The people in these parts had recently revolted against Rome, and fearing the members of the expedition to be Romans, killed Meropius and all his exploring party, sparing only Aedesius and Frumentius because of their youthful age.<sup>43</sup>

The youths were taken to the Royal Court, where they served as cupbearer and keeper of the rolls. They had made an impression on the Ethiopians by their calm behavior during the time their companions were being slaughtered. The account says that the youths were found sitting under a tree reading the scriptures.<sup>44</sup> This indicates that they brought with them a copy of the Holy Scriptures. And since Frumentius was keeper of the rolls, he was most influential among the learned in Ethiopia.

These young men were filled with the zeal of the Holy Spirit and began to organize churches among the Greek and Roman merchants residing in the country. Thus the first evangelical missionaries to Ethiopia went to the foreigners in the land, and not the natives.<sup>45</sup>

When the king died, the young men were set at liberty, but

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38. Adeney, op. cit., p. 617.  
39. Ethiopian Review, op. cit., p. 9, col. 1.  
40. Adeney, op. cit., p. 617.  
41. No one knows whether they were sons or nephews. See Adeney, p. 617.  
42. Gobat, op. cit., p. 321.  
43. Adeney, Ibid, p. 617.  
44. Adeney, Ibid, p. 617.  
45. Adeney, Ibid, p. 617.

they remained in the capital as advisers upon the request of the Queen. Frumentius and Aedesius returned to their own land when the prince became old enough to rule his kingdom for himself. That these youths were of deeply religious character is indicated by the fact that Aedesius became bishop of Tyre, where he told the story of their sojourn in Ethiopia to Rufinius. And Frumentius went to Alexandria to urge Athanasius to appoint a bishop for Ethiopia.<sup>46</sup>

Ethiopian tradition says that the king who took Aedesius and Frumentius into his court was Ezana. And the inscriptions at Axum, which was the capital of Ethiopia in the fourth century, give strong support to these traditions. King Ezana and his followers were worshipers of the sun and moon gods. There are inscriptions containing invocations to the sun and moon gods, and the coins of that time contain the sun and the moon.<sup>47</sup>

That King Ezana became converted by Aedesius and Frumentius is indicated by the fact that the later inscriptions of this king contain prayers addressed to EGZIA-BHER, the word in ancient Ethiopic that is the only word used for God-Jehovah. And the later coins of that king's reign contain the cross instead of the sun and the moon.<sup>48</sup>

However, the Ethiopian Chronicles have no mention of Ezana's being the first Christian king. Instead, Abreha Atsbeha is recorded as the first Christian king of Ethiopia. This could very likely be the new name of the king which he took when he became a Christian. It is the custom for Ethiopians to change their name if an important event

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46. Adeney, op. cit., p. 618.  
47. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 204.  
48. Bergsma, Ibid., p. 205.

in their life occurs. Witness the modern change from Ras Tafari Makonen to Hailie Selassie when the present emperor was coronated.<sup>49</sup>

The important thing is that whether the king's name was Exana or Atsbeha, the king became Christian, and Ethiopia was wide open for the Christianizing of its peoples.

When Frumentius approached Athanasius of Alexandria on the subject of appointing a bishop for Ethiopia, he was told that there was no other man that was more suited for this post than himself. Frumentius was then ordained Bishop of Axum in Ethiopia.<sup>50</sup> In Ethiopia Frumentius was given the title "Abba Salama," "Father of peace," and sometimes he was addressed as "Revealer of the light."<sup>51</sup> Thus from the very beginning the Ethiopian Church has been closely connected with the Alexandrian Church.

Constantius wrote to the king of Ethiopia to have Frumentius replaced by Theophilus, an Arian, but this letter was ignored and Ethiopia was spared the trials of the Arian controversies.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, Frumentius baptized subjects and ordained clergymen and built churches. No accurate knowledge is available as to the extent to which Christianity flourished at this time.<sup>53</sup> Worship of the true God became prevalent during the lifetime of Frumentius and Aedesius in spite of the idol-worshipping Arabs and the serpent-worshipping Ethiopians.<sup>54</sup>

The Ethiopian Church remained on cordial terms with the

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49. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 206.

50. Adeney, op. cit., p. 618.

51. Bergsma, Ibid., p. 206.

52. For the contents of the letter, see Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, P. Schaff, H. Wace, 2nd Series, Vol. IV, pp. 250-251.

53. Gobat, op. cit., p. 322.

54. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist, February, 1868, p. 143.

Alexandrian Church and has always received its bishop or "Abuna" from the Alexandrian Church.<sup>55</sup>

In 451 A. D., Ethiopia threw her lot in with the Alexandrian Church and severed connections with the rest of Christianity as a result of the Council of Chalcedon. Many monks from Syria and Asia sought refuge in Ethiopia after the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon. They brought with them monasticism, which came to remain and flourish in Ethiopia, and it still remains today. The most important contribution of these monks was the translation of the Scriptures into Geez or Ethiopic. By the end of the sixth century the entire Bible and many of the books of the Apocrypha were available in Geez, the Ethiopian language of that day.<sup>56</sup> It is observed by some writers that this translation of the Bible came too late. The Epistles of St. Paul were put into the hands of the people at too late a date to counteract the Judaizing tendency of that Church.<sup>57</sup> And since the Ethiopic Church sided with the Alexandrian Church, their tenets of faith are like those of the Coptic Church, monophysite in character.<sup>58</sup>

After the sixth century, Ethiopian Christianity was almost entirely cut off from the rest of the world. The Egyptian Church was under pressure from the Moslem invaders, and Ethiopia was isolated and left to fend for herself. Being left in her isolated mountains, it was impossible for the once flourishing faith to keep from becoming corrupt.<sup>59</sup>

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55. Gobat, op. cit., pp. 322-323

56. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 208.

57. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, February, 1868, p. 144.

58. Adeney, op. cit., p. 619. See also Gobat, op. cit., pp. 288-299.

59. Adeney, Ibid., p. 619.



Ethiopia became a lone outpost of Christianity surrounded on all sides by either pagans or Moslems. Intercourse with the rest of the Christian world was almost completely cut off. And for almost a thousand years Ethiopia became a lost nation.

### 3. Struggles with the Mohammedans and Papists

#### a. Mohammedan Influence in Ethiopia

From the time that the Saracens came to power in Egypt till the entrance of the Portuguese into Ethiopia, Ethiopia was unknown to Europe. There were over one thousand years that the Ethiopic Church had to fend for itself, as the Wesleyan Methodist states it:

"Until the discovery of Abyssinia by the Portuguese, and the landing of priests and soldiers at Arkeeko, under the pretence of bringing succour against the Turks, the church and people of Abyssinia were shut up in their mountains, far away from the rest of Christendom, isolated and barbarized indeed, yet preserved from the highly organized corruption which overspread the West, and from those less magnificent but equally corrupt systems which grew, ripened, and decayed within the churches of the East."<sup>60</sup>

In spite of the fact that the Ethiopic Church was practically isolated, and Egypt, the land of the mother church,<sup>61</sup> was overrun by Moslems, the leaders of the Egyptian Church still maintained their control over the Ethiopic Church with jealous tenacity. This jealousy caused the Alexandrian Church to neglect its duty of appointing a new "Abuna" when one was needed in Ethiopia. As a result the organization of the Church of Ethiopia fell apart. And when a metropolitan was appointed to the Ethiopic Church, it made little difference to the Egyp-

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60. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist, March, 1868, p. 242.

61. Called the Mother Church because the Arch Bishop of Ethiopia is always appointed from the Egyptian Church.

tians whether he was suited for the post or not. It was quite often the case that the "Abuna" was more ignorant than the priests he consecrated. The greed for power on the part of the Egyptian Church, which was a minority in Egypt, caused the decay of the Church in Ethiopia. Another reason for decay is the fact that at an early date the Ethiopic Church fell into a heresy which deprived them of the benefits of the atonement. This spurious doctrine of Christ found entrance between the time of the Moslem invasion of Egypt and the first correspondence with the court of Portugal.<sup>62</sup>

To establish power over the Ethiopic Church, the Egyptians capitalized on the profound respect the Ethiopians had for the Council of Nicea in 325 A. D., and entered a pseudo-canon, the "Fetha Neghest," which denied the Ethiopic Church the right to elect its own bishops.<sup>63</sup> And even though the Ethiopians were isolated by the closing of the port of Adulus by the Arabs,<sup>64</sup> and the wiping out of the Nubian Christians by the Moslems,<sup>65</sup> they remained dependent upon Egypt for their "Abuna." He was the sole tie between the Egyptian Church and the Ethiopian Church.

Although the Moslems did not conquer Ethiopia, the fact that they conquered Egypt and weakened that Church, makes the Moslems indirectly responsible for the decay of the Ethiopic Church at first.

Later on the Moslems invaded Ethiopia itself. A long war ensued, and it seemed as if the last stronghold of Christianity in

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62. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist, March, 1868, pp. 238-242.

63. Ethiopian Review, op. cit., p. 9, col. 2.

64. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 208.

65. Adeney, op. cit., p. 620.

Africa would fall to the Moslems. This was narrowly averted by the act of the Ethiopian King's acceptance of the faith of Islam. This caused the Moslems to give up the object of their "holy war." The Ethiopian king was Mohammedan in outward appearance, but nothing at heart, and this permitted his subjects to continue in the faith of their fathers.

At this time a woman by the name of Judith Esther became queen of the Falashas. She made a league with an anarchial Christian group called the Zagwe. Together they overthrew the Solomonian line of Christian kings. They destroyed the Holy City of Axum and tried to obliterate every trace of Christianity in Ethiopia. Churches were burned, and ancient libraries were destroyed. And for a while Ethiopia was under the terrible rule of the Zagwe Dynasty.

Once again the Moslems commenced an invasion of Ethiopia's mountains. This invasion, which threatened the whole land, caused the civil strife between the Solomonian and Zagwe Dynasties to stop. The throne was ceded to the Solomonian King and Ethiopia united once again to repel Islam. In the action of seceding the throne to the Solomonian line, the "Abuna" took an active part. He was clever enough to have a third of the land of Ethiopia given to the Church. Once again the clergy came into power in Ethiopia.

The fourteenth century brought renewed invasion by the Moslems. For all their fanaticism, they were evenly matched by the Ethiopian army, and were unable to enter Ethiopia. But by 1527 the Turks arrived with firearms, and in many instances proved more than a match for the Ethiopian army. The hordes of Islam were able to ravage the country, burning churches and destroying Scriptures. Many became Mos-

lem under the threat of the sword. Even though the land was under the heel of Islam, the Solomonian kings maintained their court and kept up the fight so that Islam never gained complete control of Ethiopia.<sup>66</sup>

During these trying times in Ethiopia a few Europeans found their way into the country. They were always made prisoners at large by the royal court so that the Ethiopians could benefit by the skills of the Portuguese, who for the most part comprised this foreign element. In the reign of Zera Yacob, 1434-1468, Francesco Banco Leone, a Venetian painter, was detained in Ethiopia to paint scenes in the Ethiopian churches. And in the reign of King Alexander of Ethiopia, Corvilhao went to Ethiopia, where he was detained to build churches.<sup>67</sup> The Portuguese earned a reputation for their art in building churches, and were recognized as church builders as late as 1830, when Samuel Gobat visited that land.<sup>68</sup>

In 1490 Corvilhao tried to communicate with Portugal,<sup>69</sup> and a Portuguese expedition to the Congo heard tales of Christians in Abyssinia. This news caused John II of Portugal to become interested in sending an expedition to Ethiopia to find out the truth about the Ethiopians.<sup>70</sup> At this same time the hard-pressed Ethiopian rulers heard of the power and zeal with which Portuguese sea captains were punishing the Moslems in the Red Sea. The Ethiopians determined to seek an alliance with Portugal in order to vanquish their Moslem enemies.<sup>71</sup>

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66. Bergsma, op. cit., pp. 209-212.

67. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist, January, 1868, pp. 516-517.

68. Gobat, op. cit., pp. 29-210.

69. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist, January, 1868, p. 517.

70. Gobat, Ibid., pp. 324-325.

71. Africa, Ibid., p. 517.

The Mohammedans, by cutting off Egypt from Ethiopia, and by subjecting Ethiopia to years of ceaseless warfare, did not gain a foothold for Islam, but succeeded in greatly reducing the strength of the Ethiopian Church. It paved the way for even more superstitions to be incorporated in the church, leaving it spiritually dead. Mohammedan ideas were not incorporated because of the fierce hatred the Ethiopians built up against Islam. Anyone of suspicion was thought to be a Moslem spy and consequently anything that hinted of Islamic origin was shunned.<sup>72</sup>

b. Contact with Portugal

With the rediscovery of Ethiopia by the Portuguese, it once again comes into the stream of history. This part of Ethiopian history could be dwelt upon with great detail because there are numerous sources, and it is well-known in Europe. However, that is beyond the scope of this paper, whose purpose is to give the background for the growth of the evangelical church. Therefore, this part will be dealt with generally, showing only enough of the details to enable the reader to understand the attitudes that grew out of this period.

Queen Helena, distressed at the defeats the Ethiopians were suffering at the hand of the Moslems, sent Matthew, a monophysite Christian, to the court of the King of Portugal in 1513. The Portuguese looked upon this as a golden opportunity to seize Ethiopia for themselves, and thought up schemes to subjugate the country. In the meantime a Portuguese armada was acting in a pirate fashion in the Red

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72. In one instance the Portuguese expedition to Ethiopia was attacked because they were mistaken for Moslems. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist, August, 1868, pp. 709-712.

Sea, molesting Arab commerce and punishing Moslems when there was opportunity. But no immediate help was sent to Ethiopia.<sup>73</sup>

The Portuguese landed at the Port of Massowah with the intention of sending emissaries to the court of King David. Among them was Alvarez, a priest, whose chronicles give quite reliable details concerning the sojourn of this Portuguese mission in Ethiopia.<sup>74</sup>

Alvarez mentions finding exquisite church structures, carved from a single rock, at Axum. This first Portuguese mission was received with honor by the people of Ethiopia, but little did they know the consequences of this mission. The implications of this first mission were aptly described by this quotation from the Wesleyan Methodist of August 1868:

"It is sad to know that the man whose feet the women of Abyssinia wash, and whose life and property the men of the princes of Abyssinia are protecting, is only a pioneer of a treacherous invasion that has done more to depress and to destroy the nation than either Mohammedan or pagan could accomplish."<sup>75</sup>

The first Portuguese mission experienced some difficulty in obtaining an audience with King David because it came without gifts and equipment with which it was to assist in the war against the Moslems. After persuading the Emperor that he was a Christian, Rodrigo de Luna, the leader of the party gained an audience. This meeting ended in friendship and the young Emperor was greatly impressed by the Portuguese. On November 6, 1521, Rodrigo showed the Emperor how the Mass was performed. This marks the date of the first Romish Mass in the court of the Emperor. In the meantime Alvarez, the priest, began to

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73. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist, January, 1868, pp. 518-519.  
74. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist, July, 1868, p. 602.  
75. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist, August, 1868, p. 712.

give the Emperor instruction in the Roman Catholic Doctrine. Of this instruction the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine says:

"Satan did not more thoroughly persuade Eve of the virtue of the material fruit than did Alvarez persuade the simple Abyssinian of the virtue of those material signs, making them supercede, rather than symbolize, the thing that should be signified. The essential truth and living grace brought into the world by Jesus Christ, and conveyed to men by virtue of His atonement, were not set forth by Alvarez, but only the symbolic representation of the history, without a syllable of the teaching and Gospel of the Savior."<sup>76</sup>

Alvarez taught the Emperor that the head of the Church was in Rome. Although King David desired to make an alliance with the King of Portugal, he was told that no alliance would be made unless all of Abyssinia would become Roman Catholic. Nevertheless, King David sent a letter to Portugal in 1524 indicating his desire for an alliance, and requesting artificers and mechanics.<sup>77</sup> But King David died without seeing aid from Portugal. Mohomet Gran overran his country and forced the royal family to seek refuge in the mountains.<sup>78</sup>

In 1544 John II of Portugal sent Christopher de Gama to Ethiopia. De Gama defeated Gran and his Turkish hordes, who had been subjugating Ethiopia to terror and destruction. This act on the part of Portugal obligated the King of Ethiopia. Soon afterward, Jesuits were sent to the court of Ethiopia to commence the task of subjugating all of Ethiopia to Rome. Many Ethiopians were converted to the Roman Catholic faith. Soon the Jesuit priests grew in power and began to demand that their church be given one third of the land. In the meantime Claudius became Emperor, and he had the good sense to refuse the de-

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76. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist, September, 1868, pp. 801-802.

77. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist, September, 1868, pp. 802-807.

78. Gobat, op. cit., p. 326.

mands of the Jesuits. To counteract this move, the Jesuits encouraged the people to revolt against their emperor, accusing Claudius of heresy. In defense, Claudius wrote his "Confession of Faith," which is very similar in content and thought to the "Apostle's Creed."<sup>79</sup> Already the influences of the Devil's own envoys are seen beginning to work havoc in what remained of Ethiopian Christianity.

All the efforts of the Portuguese to swing Claudius to their side failed. The more they tried, the more unreasonable he became. Finally Claudius called the Pope a heretic and sent to Alexandria for a new "Abuna." When he had met the new "Abuna," Claudius had Bermudes, a Portuguese who had been declared Patriarch of Ethiopia by the Pope, seized and imprisoned.

Since the situation was not favorable towards Rome, Ignatius Loyola was minded to come to Ethiopia personally. This the Pope did not permit, but instead he sent three Jesuit priests to convert the land to Rome. Rodrigues, one of the three Jesuit priests, managed through underhanded methods to get rid of Bermudes, and thus cleared the way for a new patriarch. New priests arrived in Ethiopia in 1555 and were not cordially received by Claudius. Oviedo, the newly appointed Roman Patriarch, arrived shortly after that and began his overtures to Claudius. He asked the Emperor if he intended to submit to Rome, and received an emphatic "no" for an answer. Next Oviedo began to remonstrate, telling the Emperor not to listen to his mother's advice, and to remember his predecessor's requests to be under the protection of Rome. Claudius answered by saying that he was satisfied

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79. Bergsma, op. cit., pp. 212-213.



with the protection of the Alexandrian Church, and he wrote out a confession of faith for the Portuguese to read.

Oviedo then challenged the learned in Ethiopia to a public dispute on the point. Of this dispute it is said:

"The challenge was accepted; and Claudius, to manifest his zeal for his religion, and perhaps fearing that the sophistry of the Jesuit might puzzle his monks, took a principal part in the dispute; in which, according to the Jesuit historians themselves, he very much foiled the Bishop.

But Oviedo was not to be silenced by public refutation, and determined to try what was to be done by controversy. He accordingly wrote a tract, exposing the errors of the Abyssinian Church; which, when completed, he sent to the Emperor, requesting him to give it a fair consideration. To this the Emperor acceded; for he not only read the tract, but wrote a refutation of every article in it."<sup>80</sup>

His efforts so far proving to be fruitless, Oviedo then declared that all the Church of Abyssinia was anathema, and excommunicated from Rome.

Shortly after that, Nur, son of the King of Adel, seeing the weak condition of Ethiopia, seized upon the opportunity and forthwith began to ravage and plunder the land. Claudius went to meet him in battle and was killed. His death was a great loss to the cause of Ethiopia's Church. His great value to the cause of the Ethiopic Church party is summed up in this paragraph:

"Thus fell a man who, for piety, learning, and moderation, has perhaps had few equals; and who might have obviated, had he been spared, much distress and bloodshed that were permitted afterward to visit Abyssinia."<sup>81</sup>

Adam succeeded Claudius to the throne of Ethiopia. He saw that it was the disunity caused by the Romish emissaries that weakened his country, and he vowed vengeance for the death of his father. Adam seized the land of the church and made all women married to Roman Cath-

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80. Gobat, op. cit., p. 334.

81. Gobat, op. cit. p. 335.

olics renounce their marriage.

Bishop Oviedo and Rodrigues and their colleagues escaped from Adam's wrath to the Bahar Nagash of Tigre. There they persuaded the Bahar Nagash (Sea King), a friend of Rome, to march against King Adam. In the ensuing battle, Adam completely routed the Bahar Nagash and the Portuguese. The Bahar Nagash fled to the Mohammedans, who protected him, but put the Portuguese in irons. Thus the first Jesuit mission to Ethiopia ended in complete failure.<sup>82</sup>

Already we see the ill effect of the Portuguese mission to the land of Ethiopia. It caused great disunity among the people, and weakened the land so that it was ravaged by Moslems and pagan hordes. It was in this period that the fierce Gallas invaded Ethiopia, taking nearly a third of the land and settling in it. These people brought with them all the fierceness of pure paganism. This invasion further barbarized an already barbaric church.<sup>83</sup>

#### c. Papal Civil War in Ethiopia

The Romish fathers, having finally been released by the Mohammedans, urged the governor of Goa to send troops to subdue all of Ethiopia. But this letter was not heeded, and in 1560, the Pope issued a "bull" recalling Oviedo. But Oviedo, not satisfied, wrote to Rome, telling the Pope of gold and wealth in Ethiopia, and the need of troops to subdue it; but this letter also went unheeded. Oviedo was sent back to Rome a complete failure.

When Philip II came to the throne in Portugal, the matter of subduing Ethiopia was again pressed. And soon Anthony Montserrato and

82. Gobat, op. cit., pp. 330-336.

83. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 241.

Peter Pays, Jesuit priests, disguised as Armenian merchants, embarked for Ethiopia. They went by way of Goa, and on their way to Ethiopia were shipwrecked on Arabia and imprisoned for seven years. Meanwhile Abraham de Gregories and an Abyssinian youth set out for Ethiopia. The governor of Tigre discovered them and had them both beheaded on the grounds that they were disguised as Moslems, and as such should be beheaded.

The next attempt was to send Belchior Sylva, a converted Brahmin, with the falsehood that the bishop of Alexandria had acceded to Rome. Belchior Sylva then sent a letter to the Pope asking him to make the bishop of Alexandria submit, but the bishop never would, and Sylva's mission failed.

Peter Pays was finally ransomed and arrived in Ethiopia in 1603. He found the country weakened by civil war, and he immediately began the familiar Jesuit custom of playing one party against the other to the favor of only the Roman Church. However, these tactics were not too successful, and the civil war ended in Susneus' becoming king. The Jesuits then began to put the pressure on him to become a Roman Catholic. The first convert was Ras Cella Chrestos, the brother of the emperor. After this, debates with Ethiopian monks and priests were opened in the presence of the king, and the Ethiopians were all confounded by the clever Peter. This won the Roman Catholics places of honor in the court. At the same time the Ethiopic "Abuna" came and threatened to excommunicate the king and his court. With this victory the Jesuits prevailed upon the emperor to command the death penalty for anyone not believing in the two natures of Christ. The "Abuna"

retaliated by excommunicating all Roman Catholics.<sup>84</sup>

The civil war then began in earnest. The "Abuna" persuaded the governor of Tigre to take up arms against the emperor. In the ensuing battle, Portuguese soldiers killed the aged "Abuna" and routed the Tigreans who killed their own governor.

From that time on, one governor after the other took up the cause of the faith of their fathers and opposed the Romish tactics of their emperor, but to no avail. One by one they were subdued by the emperor's army.

In June 21, 1624, Rome sent a patriarch to Ethiopia, and on December 11 of that year, the Abyssinian Church was forcibly made to submit to Rome. The Roman Catholic party made the emperor declare an edict which involved: (1) that all native priests be forbidden to officiate unless licensed, and (2) all the subjects were to embrace popery. Converted Abyssinian priests were sent out to be missionaries, and were for the most part murdered. The Ethiopians, though apparently in subjection, were far from it.

The Jesuits, now bold because of their newly won power, proceeded to persecute the Ethiopian clergy. Priests were hurled from cliffs, and people refusing to submit to Rome were burned alive in their homes. This was not much different treatment from that which the Ethiopians had received at the hands of the Moslems. The incident that drove them into action was the Jesuit act of digging up the grave of

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84. It must be remembered that the Ethiopic (Abyssinian) Church holds the opposite extreme in believing in only one nature of Christ. They are, strictly speaking, Monophysites. See Gobat, *op. cit.*, pp. 322-323.

the dead Chief Priest of Abyssinia, and indecently hurling the remains over a cliff. This incident drove the Ethiopians into a frenzy of anger at the Romish priests. Their reaction to such treatment was recorded as follows:

"The Abyssinians, on witnessing this act, were confirmed in their abhorrence of the Jesuits and their religion--a religion, said they, that not only persecutes the living with sequestration and death, but denies that reverence and repose to the dead which even heathens and Mohammedans allow."<sup>85</sup>

The peasants of Lasta province, reputedly the best of Ethiopian manhood, rose to a man in revolt. They remained in the mountains of Lasta province and could not be completely subdued by the emperor's army.

In 1630 the Pope sent a letter to Ethiopia proclaiming a jubilee, but it became the butt of many jokes and was not respected by the Ethiopians.

Finally, unable to subdue the Lasta peasants, the emperor was persuaded by the Alexandrian party to draw up an edict of toleration. This proclaimed that: (1) the ancient feasts and festivals should be kept again; (2) the ancient liturgies were to be read again after approval by the Papists; and (3) the observance of the ancient Sabbath was to be resumed. This greatly pleased the Ethiopians and caused the Patriarch to lament, but it was not enough to satisfy the Lasta peasants, who wanted all or nothing.

The Emperor Susneus then sent Ras Cella Chrestos against the Lasta peasants and he was badly defeated. This victory made the peasants bold, and they came out of their mountain 20,000 strong. Then the emperor himself marched against them. In his forces were numerous Galla

85. Gobat, op. cit., p.354.

cavalrymen, hired for the occasion. At first the emperor was not successful against the Lasta peasants. Then the emperor ordered the Gal-las to charge. This completely broke up the Lasta forces and the battle turned into a slaughter, where in one afternoon more than 8,000 of Ethiopia's best manhood perished.<sup>86</sup>

This so incensed the crowned prince that he brought his father to the scene of the battle and said:

"You see, Sire, how many bodies lie here before you'. Whose are these? Are they Mohammedans and heathens? They are to a man Christians--your own subjects, and men endeared to us by the strongest ties of affinity and blood. Those breasts, Sire, instead of lying breathless at your feet, would on a better policy, have been the bulwark of your empire, and terror of the infidels by whose hands they have fallen. But the very heathen and Mohammedans blush at our cruelties, and brand us with the appellation of murderers, and apostates from the faith. Forbear, then, we entreat you, to persevere in a contest which must terminate in the overthrow of your religion and empire."<sup>87</sup>

This so touched the Emperor Susneus that instead of celebrating his victory, he went into mourning. Susneus, grief-stricken over the calamity which he had brought to his land, abdicated the throne in favor of the Crowned Prince Fasiladas. When Fasiladas gained the throne, he banished every Roman Catholic from Ethiopia and sent for a new "Abuna" from Egypt, who arrived in 1635. And from that time on to this present day Ethiopia has distrusted all foreigners. From 1635 until the first protestant missionaries came, Ethiopia was closed to all foreigners, and remained isolated among its high mountains.<sup>88</sup>

The second mission of the Jesuits, though almost succeeding, managed to weaken greatly the government of Ethiopia and further

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86. Gobat, op. cit., pp. 338-361.

87. Gobat, Ibid., p. 360.

88. Bergsma, op. cit., pp. 214-215.

weakened the Church of Ethiopia, which easily fell prey to the surrounding Moslems and pagans.

#### 4. A Brief Description of The Ethiopic Church Today

Previously there have been some intimations as to the nature of the ancient Ethiopic Church. At this time it seems fitting to enlarge a little on the nature of the Ethiopic Church which has existed in that country since the time of Frumentius. Of this church, Dr.

Bergsma says:

"While the Ethiopian Church can subscribe to all the articles of the Apostle's Creed, it remains nevertheless a dead cold church, with a priesthood unconcerned about the masses walking in darkness; those who possess the light direct all the rays to self and care not if their brethren perish. The laity desiring the bread of life are taught to depend on fasts and feasts and holy days and outward forms as a means of salvation and the inner change of life is unknown."<sup>89</sup>

##### a. Doctrine

###### (1) General Doctrines

The Ethiopic Church in doctrine is like the Coptic Church of Egypt. It is monophysite in regards to the person of Christ and holds that the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father. The Ethiopic Church recognizes only the Divinity of Christ. At present there are three parties in Ethiopia that are in continuous dispute over the anointing of Jesus: (1) those that believe that when it is said that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit, it is meant that the Godhead was united with the human nature of Christ, this doctrine being found chiefly in the province of Tigre; (2) the second opinion is found most-

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89. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 235.

ly in Gojam and Lasta provinces, and it is that the Holy Spirit was the means of uniting the Godhead with the human nature in the person of Christ; and (3) the third party, dominating in all the rest of Ethiopia, believes that Christ received the Holy Ghost in the same manner in which others receive Him--as a gift of the Father. This, the most tolerant of all the parties, calls the anointing a "third birth."<sup>90</sup>

To the member of the Ethiopic Church salvation is gained by the rigid keeping of fasts. In short, salvation is gained through works. The saints, of whom there are many in Ethiopia, are petitioned along with the Virgin Mary for added assurance that one will be allowed to enter heaven.<sup>91</sup> There is no purgatory, and confession is made only when the person involved thinks he is dying. The Ethiopians fear that if they confess before they are in danger of dying, the priests will request money for prayers and fasting. Absolution is administered to all when they are dying.<sup>92</sup>

Concerning the Abyssinian type of Christianity, Bishop Gobat came to this conclusion:

"After such a catalogue of errors, it is natural to conclude, as I have found to be the case, that the Abyssinians have no ideas of the most salutary doctrines of Christianity; such as justification by faith; the work of grace; and the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of the children of God: hence it necessarily follows that their morals are very corrupt."<sup>93</sup>

But corrupt as the doctrine of this old church is, it must be commend-

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90. Gobat, op. cit., pp. 288-290.

91. Rev. A. P. Matthew, "The Church of Abyssinia," p. 8, Layman's Bulletin # 76, March, 1936.

92. Bishop Gobat did not discover any belief in purgatory, but missionaries of the 20th century have found it accepted in some regions of Ethiopia. And the fasting that must be done in penance can be done by merely hiring a priest to do it for you. See Gobat, op. cit., pp. 288-299.

93. Gobat, op. cit., p. 299.



ed for the fighting spirit it has kept through the centuries. Although it lacks a sound doctrine, this observation by Dr. Bergsma shows the spirit it contains within itself that is the hope of its revival:

"Surrounded on all sides by paganism and Mohammedanism, it has fought gloriously for the faith, imperfect as that may have been. Ethiopia has been a pool of blood for her faith, yet she would not bow the knee to Mohammed. It is this very fighting quality that is the most hopeful sign for the future of the Church of Ethiopia. If she could fight thus for a faith with so little real vitality of belief, how will she not fight for the faith once the full light of the Gospel breaks forth upon Ethiopia."<sup>94</sup>

## (2) The Sacraments

The Ethiopians have the sacraments of baptism, eucharist, ordination, confession, and extreme unction. Marriage is considered a sacrament, but is seldom received by the Ethiopians. The sacrament of baptism is given to male babies forty days after birth, and to female babies eighty days after birth. Their reason for this is that they believe that Adam did not receive the Holy Spirit till forty days after he was created.<sup>95</sup> This is an example of their misguided belief.

Communion is administered to the infants right after they have received baptism. The total number of communicants is ridiculously small, because adults must have a religiously solemnized marriage in order to partake of the sacramental elements. Most of the communicants are young children and the aged. Sometimes an aged couple, who have lived together most of their life, will go to the Church and receive the sacrament of marriage. This would then permit them to have communion.<sup>96</sup>

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94. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 236.

95. Gobat, op. cit., p. 291.

96. Laymen's Bulletin, op. cit., p. 7.

Marriage is usually a civil affair. Divorce is very simple. It consists merely in division of property and voluntary separation. For this reason Ethiopia reeks with immorality.<sup>97</sup> Priests can be married if they are married before ordination, but they cannot re-marry if they divorce their wife after ordination. This rule is evaded by renouncing the ordination. The priests receive the communion every day, but the laity receive it only on special saints' days. On fast days they celebrate communion at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Of the communion service Bishop Gobat observes:

"The Communion-Service consists in reading some chapters from the Gospels, and in chanting some prayers; the whole being performed in an unknown tongue. They call the consecration of the bread and wine, Melawat, "a change;" but at Gondar I found no person who believed in Transubstantiation. In Tigre there are some who believe in it; and when they are asked how the ungodly and unbelievers can receive Jesus Christ, they reply, that an angel comes to take Him away from their mouths, and they merely eat the bread and drink the wine. It must be a man, and not a woman, that breaks the bread for the Communion. The wine is the juice of dried grapes, with water."<sup>98</sup>

Ordination is obtainable if a man can learn to read a few letters of the alphabet and has enough money to pay the "Abuna" to lay his hands on him.

### (3) The Canon of Scriptures

Dr. Bergsma made this statement about the Ethiopian Scriptures:

". . . The Church of Ethiopia has had in its possession the complete Bible and Apocrypha since the fifth century A. D., as the result of the careful work of the Syrian monks who migrated to Ethiopia at that time."<sup>99</sup>

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97. Africa, Royal United Service Institute Journal, Vol. 12, No. 5, p. 526.

98. Gobat, op. cit., p. 292.

99. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 230.

The degeneration of the Ethiopic Church cannot be blamed on the lack of the complete Bible. The Ethiopic Canon consists of forty-six books of the Old Testament, the same as ours except for III Esdras, IV Esdras, Judith, Tobit, I Maccabees, II Maccabees, the Book of Joseph, and the Ascension of Isaiah. There are twenty-seven books in the New Testament and many apocryphal writings.<sup>100</sup>

b. Practices

Fasting is the essence of religion to the Ethiopian. Altogether there are a total of nine months out of the year in fast days, but rarely are they all observed. The longest fasts are fifty-six days before Easter and forty days before Christmas. Not much is made of Christmas. There are many saints' days, and Easter is the most important day. All Wednesdays and Fridays are fast days. In fasts no animal food is taken.<sup>101</sup>

The Ethiopians, like the Romanists, venerate the saints and worship the Virgin Mary. St. George is the patron saint of Ethiopia.<sup>102</sup>

The Ethiopic Church, as has been observed, has incorporated many Jewish ideas into its religion. Circumcision, the Jewish Sabbath, and the eating of special meats are a few of these.<sup>103</sup>

Perhaps one of the most evil elements of the Church is its monastic system. It is not difficult to become a monk. It is the easiest way for a man with little ambition for work to make a living. All he needs to do is to don the garb of a monk, take the vows and go

100. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 230.

101. Laymen's Bulletin, op. cit., p. 8

102. The general material on the Ethiopic Church has been taken from Bishop Gobat's Journal, pp. 288-299. Any unmarked statement can be referred to this work.

103. Ante, pp. 12-13, and Gobat, op. cit., p. 296.

out and ask alms. There are also nuns. Often monks and nuns live in separate houses in the same settlement. The moral conditions in the monasteries and convents are deplorable.<sup>104</sup> There is one order of monks who followed a reformer who built a monastery on the top of a mountain that has access only by means of a rope. This reform leaned more to Jewish than to Christian ideology, for the bone of contention was the practice of adoration of statues in the churches. It was a reaction against idolatry. These monks are strictly ascetic, and no female of any species is permitted on the mountain.<sup>105</sup>

### C. The People of Ethiopia Today

There are approximately ten million people in Ethiopia today.<sup>106</sup> The first group to be considered, although different in dialect, are grouped together because they are the Coptic Christian people of Ethiopia. Other groups are listed tribally.

#### 1. The Tigrinyans, Amharas, and Shoans

These people are the most well-known to travelers in Ethiopia. They live in the North and West section around the Lake Tzana region. They have been the people most instrumental in shaping the history of Ethiopia.

The Tigrininyans, like their neighbors, are of Semitic descent. They have the strongest Semitic features of all the Ethiopians. For a long time they were the chief civilizing element. They produced

104. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist, July, 1868, p. 606.

105. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist, July, 1868, p. 609.

106. Triennial Report, U. P. Board of Foreign Missions, 1919-1921, p. 203.

cities and literature.<sup>107</sup> The ancient capital of Axum, where Frumentius and Aedesius first brought the Gospel, was for a long time the capital of the province of Tigre. Now it has become a Holy City because of the many ruins in it of monolithic churches.<sup>108</sup>

The Amharas are found mostly to the south of Lake Tzana. But their capital, Gondar, is just to the north of Lake Tzana. The Shoans inhabit the central portion of Ethiopia. There is very little difference between the Amharas and Shoans. They both speak Amharic, which today is the official language. The Shoans are the ruling class today, with their capital at Addis Ababa, which is now the capital of all Ethiopia.

Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia, is a Semitic language. Its grammatical construction is Arabic. Of Amharic, it is said,

" . . . it contains a larger proportion of Hebrew words in its vocabulary than Arabic itself; which is to be accounted for by the familiar use of Hebrew in the country, from the time of Solomon onwards."<sup>109</sup>

## 2. The Gallas

A numerous people inhabiting the plains of southern and western Ethiopia are the Gallas, numbering approximately 4,000,000 souls. They were originally from pagan stock, but now there are many Mohammedans with some Christians among them. Their Mohammedanism is not the

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107. Light and Darkness in East Africa, World Dominion Press, London, 1927, pp. 130-131.

108. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist, February, 1868, p. 143.

109. Africa, Wesleyan Methodist, February, 1868, p. 146.

pure form, but one greatly mixed with animism. They have no acquaintance with Arabic or the principles of Islam. Many are sun-worshippers. These people more readily change their religion.<sup>110</sup>

The Gallas are a comparatively new tribe of people in Ethiopia. They originally lived around a lake in the central part of Africa. For some mysterious reason they migrated to Ethiopia, invading the land about 1542, when Ethiopia was weakened by small-pox and the attacks of Islam. Dr. Bergsma quoted this statement about them by Mr. Markham to show the effect this invasion had on Ethiopia:

"Markham states, 'The invasion of the Galla tribes has had the effect of checking national progress to this day, and of throwing back a once civilized people more and more into barbarism and anarchy.'<sup>111</sup>

Of the ferocious character of the Gallas, Bishop Gobat remarks:

"It is rather dangerous to go among the Gallas, on account of their murderous habits. A Galla, for example, who has not killed any one, is despised by all his acquaintances; and his wife still more so. When the wife goes to get wood or to draw water, the wife of a man who has killed anyone waits for her by the side of her house, and takes her load from her by force, without her daring either to defend herself or even to cry for help; on the contrary, she endeavors to revenge herself on her husband; and he can have no peace in his house, till he brings sure evidence that he has killed a man."<sup>112</sup>

### 3. Other tribes in Ethiopia

Other Mohammedan peoples in Ethiopia are the Danakil and Somali people. They live in the regions closest to the Red Sea and were

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110. Light and Darkness, op. cit., p. 130; see also Gobat, op. cit., pp. 63, 74, and 268.

111. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 241.

112. Gobat, op. cit., p. 268.

overrun by the Moslem armies. These people are more independent and know their religion better than their Mohammedan brethren among the Gallas.

Other tribes inhabiting parts of Ethiopia are the Anynaks, Guragues, Conta, Wellams, and Shankallas. These are negroid people inhabiting the unhealthy, malaria-infested lowlands. For many years these tribes furnished slaves for the Amharas and Tigrinyans. They are a very backward people with a dialect all their own and without any written form.<sup>113</sup> Recently there have been attempts to give a few of these tribes a written language.<sup>114</sup>

Of the dominating tribes of Ethiopia, that great pioneer to Ethiopia, Dr. Lambie says,

"However that may be, the Ethiopians are evidently of true Semitic origin--not negroes as some uninformed persons mistakenly suppose. They are akin to the Arab and the Jew, and are a proud, intelligent people."<sup>115</sup>

And again,

"Let me emphasize again that neither Amharas nor Gallas are negroes, or even of African origin. The Gallas are probably of Hamitic descent. Both Amharas and Gallas seem to have come from Asia."<sup>116</sup>

This might be one reason why Ethiopia has been unique among African kingdoms, refusing to be overrun, and remaining aloof in its mountains.

The Falashas, a Jewish tribe of approximately 150,000 souls,<sup>117</sup> has already been sufficiently dealt with in the first part of this chapter.<sup>118</sup>

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113. Light and Darkness, op. cit., p. 131.

114. Ibid., pp. 157-159.

115. "Ethiopia Stretches Out Her Hands," Dr. Lambie, in Christian Herald, Vol. 58, No. 10, October, 1935, p. 8, col. 1.

116. Christian Herald, op. cit., p. 8, col. 1.

117. Light and Darkness, op. cit., p. 132.

118. Ante, pp. 11-13.

#### D. Summary

It has been the purpose of this chapter to give an adequate background for the reader to understand the situation out of which the Evangelical Church of Ethiopia has grown. The history of Ethiopia's Church and people is the heritage of the evangelical church.

This heritage of the evangelical church has been dealt with in two parts. The first part is an attempt to sketch briefly the history of the Ethiopic Church from its very beginning to the time when the first protestant evangelical missionaries came to that land. This first part has been divided into four sections, the first three deal with the history of the Ethiopic Church, and the last section is a brief description of the present Ethiopic Church.

The first section of the history of the Ethiopic Church deals with the background, or "grass roots" of the Ethiopic Church, which go back to pre-Christian times. An attempt has been made to show that Ethiopia's Christianity has its roots in Judaism. This takes the history of the church back to the time of the Queen of Sheba, when it is thought that the first Jewish influence came into Ethiopia. An attempt was made to show the different views held concerning this early reference to Ethiopia, and to point out that there are definite Jewish characteristics in Ethiopia's Church today that are a carry-over from early Jewish influence. Outside of the Jewish characteristics in Ethiopia's Church today, there is actually a tribe which is still Jewish in its own way. This is even further proof that at one time Ethiopia worshiped Jehovah, the God of Israel. The history is carried from this point through the corruption and decline of Jehovah worship



through contact with paganism, to the time when Christianity was first introduced into Ethiopia.

The consideration of the Ethiopian Eunuch and the real beginning of Christianity in Ethiopia is taken up in the second section of the part on the history of the Ethiopian Church. This shows how the Eunuch was not very likely from the country which is called Ethiopia today, but from the Island of Meroe, where once a Christian kingdom did flourish. And this section shows how the first real entrance of Christianity to Ethiopia came in the fourth century A. D., through the work of Frumentius and Aedesius.

The third section on the history of the Ethiopic Church attempts to sketch briefly the history of the Ethiopic Church from the time that the church became isolated from the rest of Christendom by the Moslems, to its rediscovery by Europeans. This shows that through years of isolation from the rest of Christendom, the Church of Ethiopia grew to be corrupt. But in spite of growing cold and corrupt it remained a lone outpost of Christianity against the surrounding hordes of pagans and Moslems, fighting for its faith with admirable zeal. It was finally the Roman Catholics, represented by Portuguese Jesuits, who invaded Ethiopia and through their methods weakened permanently the church and empire of Ethiopia. The factors from this period that contributed to the further corruption of the Ethiopic Church are: the Moslem invasions, pagan inroads on the Ethiopian Christian communities, and the civil war that was instigated by the Jesuits. The Portuguese gained entrance as protection against the Moslems. The Jesuit quest for power further weakened Ethiopia, permitting surrounding paganism to make its inroads.

The last section is a brief description of the Ethiopic Church today. It is not complete in giving the doctrine or practice, but an attempt was made to show just enough of the doctrines and practices to show the decadent position of the church today. It is a church that is Christian in name only, advocating salvation through works, and whose priesthood is ignorant and unconcerned about the moral condition of its people. The sacraments of the Ethiopic Church are similar in number to those in the Greek Orthodox Church: baptism, eucharist, ordination, confession, and extreme unction. Marriage is a sacrament, but is seldom done through the church and therefore is a little used sacrament in Ethiopia.

The second part in the heritage of the evangelical church is a brief description of the peoples themselves. This shows the dominating peoples to be the Tigrinians, Amharas, and Shoans who comprise the Christians of the Ethiopic Church. The next largest group of people are the Gallas, the tribes that invaded Ethiopia in its weakened condition after fighting the Moslems. The fierce paganism of the Gallas has greatly retarded the growth of civilization and Christianity in Ethiopia. Finally, there is a brief survey of the smaller negroid tribes that occupy the unhealthy lowlands. This describes generally their habitat and religion.

The final view is that of a land inhabited by a mixture of people. Some are totally ignorant, some ignorant with possibilities of great achievement. This is a picture of Ethiopia in its dark age. The time for the dawn of light is here. The age is ripe for reformation. The next chapter will attempt to show the dawning of the light on this land that has had its light hidden under a bushel of formalism and superstition.

CHAPTER II  
CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD AN EVANGELICAL AWAKENING  
FROM 1815-1943, EXCLUDING THE WORK OF THE  
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A. Introduction

From 1635, when the Romish emmissaries were expelled from Ethiopia,<sup>1</sup> to 1829, when the first protestant missionary efforts were inaugurated in that country,<sup>2</sup> Ethiopia was closed to foreigners. The ancient church of Abyssinia discouraged all friendship with Europeans because of the memory of the disturbance caused by the Jesuits.

The effect of the Roman Catholic attempt at subjugating Ethiopia was that of weakening the government to such an extent that there remained little evidence of the Empire when the first missionaries arrived in 1829. The state of the Empire was that of anarchy. Each chieftain sought to enlarge his own domain, and although a nominal king resided in Gondar, little attention was paid to him.<sup>3</sup>

Ethiopia had immersed herself deeper into the lawlessness of anarchy, and spiritually was no more than pagan. This was the state of Ethiopia in the beginning of the nineteenth century. This was the state of Ethiopia when the first grey streaks of the dawn of enlightenment began to battle the darkness that was in the minds and hearts of the people.

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1. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 215.
2. Adeney, op. cit., p. 625.
3. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 216.

The purpose of this chapter will be to give briefly the history of the work of protestant evangelical missions in Ethiopia. This chapter will show that it was the work of evangelical missionaries that brought the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ to that darkened land. This chapter will show that the evangelical missions are each a contribution toward an evangelical awakening in Ethiopia. The United Presbyterian Mission will not be treated in this chapter because it will be given special attention in the next chapter.

For purposes of organization this chapter will be divided into two main sections. The first main section titled "The Early Planting of the Seed, 1815-1900" will give the history of protestant missionary activity in Ethiopia in the nineteenth century. Some of the results are carried over into the twentieth century, but being results of the work done in the nineteenth century, they will be treated in this section. This section will give a brief description of the work of the Church Missionary Society, The Mission to the Jews, and a section on the contributions of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and other translators of the Bible.

The second main section of this chapter will deal with the evangelical protestant missions that started their work in Ethiopia in the twentieth century. This section will be subdivided into three parts, the first part dealing with the smaller evangelical missions, and the second part will deal with the work of the Sudan Interior Mission, the largest evangelical mission in Ethiopia.

The third part of the second main section will indicate the effect of the Italo-Ethiopian war on missions in Ethiopia.

## B. The Early Planting of the Seed

### 1. The Church Missionary Society

In 1825 the Rev. Gobat and the Rev. Kugler arrived in Egypt with other members of the Church Missionary Society.<sup>4</sup> The other members were to remain in Egypt and work among the Copts while Kugler and Gobat were to find a way to enter Ethiopia. It was not till 1829 that Messrs. Kugler and Gobat found entrance to Ethiopia.<sup>5</sup> The procedure of the Church Missionary Society was that of attempting to revive the clergy of the decadent Coptic Church in Egypt with the hope that the revival would have its effect in Ethiopia,<sup>6</sup> since Ethiopia always received its archbishops from the Egyptian Church.<sup>7</sup>

This same procedure is seen in the work of Messrs. Gobat and Kugler. After arriving at the port of Massuah on the Red Sea, they gained a comparatively easy entrance to hitherto hostile Ethiopia. Sebagadis, the governor of the province of Tigre, gave them a friendly reception.<sup>8</sup> At first they had tried to make spiritual contact with the clergy of the Ethiopic Church, but found that they were too corrupt to be contacted in a spiritual way.<sup>9</sup> The clergy were always occupied in fruitless discussions that detracted from the work of these early missionaries.<sup>10</sup> The early discussions that are recorded in Bishop Gobat's journal were mostly with Ethiopic priests. The Bishop

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4. Brown, The History of Christian Missions, Vol. II, p. 312.
5. Brown, op. cit., p. 317.
6. Light and Darkness, op. cit., pp. 169-170.
7. Ethiopian Review, op. cit., p. 9, col. 2.
8. Brown, op. cit., p. 317.
9. Light and Darkness, op. cit., p. 151.
10. Gobat, op. cit., pp. 55-73.

in the summarizing notes of his journal says,

"It is in this religion itself that the seed is to be found for the regeneration of the people of Abyssinia."<sup>11</sup>

This approach was to the Ethiopic Church as a whole, both to priests and the laity. Messrs. Gobat and Kugler settled at Adigrate in Tigre and commenced distributing the four Gospels in Amharic and Ethiopic, along with some of the Pauline Epistles. The priesthood accepted the Gospels in Ethiopic, the dead language of the church, more readily than the Amharic copies that were written in the vernacular.<sup>12</sup> Copies of the Gospel in Amharic were printed and issued by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1824. Prior to that time this Bible Society had printed parts of the Bible in Ethiopic and had them taken by native carriers into Ethiopia. This work began in 1815.<sup>13</sup>

Bishop Gobat, believing that a visit to the capital of Ethiopia was necessary, went there with the view of remaining only for ten days. In the meantime the ever-contending governors again fell into conflict, making the return journey from Gondar, the capital at that time, dangerous. Thus he was forced to stay for six months in Gondar instead of ten days.<sup>14</sup>

It was in this stronghold of the Ethiopic Church that Bishop Gobat made himself so beloved among the Ethiopians that many of them wished to make him their "Abuna," or archbishop.<sup>15</sup> A good description of the type of work Bishop Gobat did is described by William Brown in his

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11. Gobat, op. cit., p. 289.

12. Gobat, op. cit., pp. 73-81.

13. Light and Darkness, op. cit., p. 175.

14. Brown, op. cit., p. 317.

15. Gobat, op. cit., pp. 138-147.

History of Christian Missions. Of Bishop Gobat he says:

"We cannot but here notice, with peculiar satisfaction, the simplicity of Mr. Gobat in his communications with the Abyssinians. He presents in this respect a fine example to Christian missionaries, particularly to such as labour for the revival of Scriptural Christianity among the members of corrupt churches. Though the Abyssinians were ever ready to draw him into an expression of his opinions, and into discussions in regard to the peculiar dogmas of their church, he was not less anxious to avoid the trifling and thorny questions which they were constantly in the habit of bringing forward. His leading object was to bring before them the great truths of the Gospel in their scriptural simplicity; and instead of entering into lengthened or abstract reasonings with them, his practice was to appeal to the Holy Scriptures as the only rule of faith and manners, and to lay before them the plain and simple declarations of the inspired writers in regard to them. Though he was not always able to avoid the foolish questions which they brought forward, yet he did not answer their sophistical statements with any refinements like their own; but usually refuted their errors by quoting some simple yet appropriate passage of Scripture."<sup>16</sup>

The precious Word of God was first distributed by such trusted servants of the Lord as Samuel Gobat and Christian Kugler. They did not wantonly distribute the Word, but endeavored to put it in the hands of people whom they judged were in key positions. Priests were given the Gospel, governors and kings were given copies, and those that truly desired to read and study the Gospel could buy them from the missionaries. This method of distribution went on until the supply was exhausted.<sup>17</sup>

Not long after Samuel Gobat rejoined his colleague, Christian Kugler, in Adigrate, Kugler met with an unfortunate gun accident that eventually took his life.<sup>18</sup> The country at this time became completely disorganized because of the war between the rival governors. Sebagadis, who had received the missionaries in a friendly spirit, was de-

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16. Brown, op. cit., p. 318.  
17. Brown, op. cit., p. 315.  
18. Gobat, op. cit., pp. 264-267.



feated in battle and beheaded. Samuel Gobat had to go into hiding to keep away from the relentless hordes of Oubea, the conquering chieftain. Finally Samuel Gobat received permission from the son of Sebagadis to leave the country, and the missionary efforts were temporarily halted.<sup>19</sup>

About all that was accomplished by this first evangelical mission was the distribution of the Gospels in the vernacular. There is no record in Bishop Gobat's journal of a conversion. Habta Salasse, a Shoan, who became attached to Bishop Gobat during the latter's stay at Gondar, showed a spark of the Christian spirit. He learned to love the missionary and came often to talk about religious matters. At one time he even showed a little missionary zeal himself in that he mentioned several times the desire of going as a missionary to the pagan Gallas in the south. And when offered an opportunity to go to England, he accepted the offer, but said he would rather go to the Gallas as a missionary.<sup>20</sup> No one knows whether there were any souls saved from darkness through this first mission to Ethiopia. Perhaps some were convicted of their sin and led to Christ through the reading of the Word, but there is no record of such.

Bishop Gobat returned to Tigre province in 1834 with Rev. C. W. Isenburg. The country was in the same disturbed state in which Samuel Gobat had left it. The disturbing times produced little interest on the part of the people in either the Amharic or Ethiopic Scriptures. Partly to overcome this difficulty, Mr. Isenburg engaged Deftera Matteos, a learned native, to translate the New Testament into Tigrinyan, the

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19. Gobat, op. cit., pp. 285-319.

20. Gobat, op. cit., pp. 72, 143, 165.

vernacular of that province. The Book of Common Prayer was also translated into Tigrinyan, but the translations were not perfect and were of little influence on the people.<sup>21</sup>

In 1836 Bishop Gobat, due to poor health, departed from the field and was replaced by the Rev. Messrs. Blumhardt and Krapf. Gradually the priesthood of the decadent Ethiopic Church came to realize the purpose of the mission. They exerted their ecclesiastical pressure on Cubea, the governor, to influence him against the missionaries. At first Cubea did not listen to them, but later was forced to ask the missionaries to leave. Cubea changed his policy toward the protestant missionaries because of the arrival of a Frenchman and an Italian priest in 1838. Roman Catholics were feared and hated by the Ethiopians, and since the natives could not distinguish one white face from another, all foreigners were not trusted.<sup>22</sup>

Since the northern territories of Ethiopia were closed to the missionaries, Messrs. Isenberg and Krapf decided to take their mission to the kingdom of Shoa, an independent Abyssinian kingdom to the south of the closed provinces. Accordingly they landed at Zielah on the coast of Africa, and from there made the long, hazardous journey up into Shoa.<sup>23</sup>

In Shoa the missionaries found the king to be selfish. He gave them permission to enter the country supposing that they would be able to teach his people the arts and crafts. He wanted artisans, not

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21. Brown, op. cit., pp. 320-321.

22. Brown, op. cit., p. 321.

23. Isenberg and Krapf, Journals of the Rev. Messrs. Isenberg and Krapf, Missionaries of the Church Missionary Society, Seely, Burnside, and Seely, London, 1843, pp. 1-59.

instructors of the Gospel.<sup>24</sup>

The opportunity for work in Shoa was discouraging to the missionaries. Although the king was cordial and agreed to send boys to the missionaries for instruction, he delayed doing so for as long as possible. Their work at first consisted in much debating and disputing with the priests of Shoa.<sup>25</sup> But finally they got some boys to teach in the ways of Christ. The subjects that were taught were Bible, geography, and later, church history. These classes drew a considerable group of grown men who attended purely out of interest in the subject of geography.<sup>26</sup>

One thing that encouraged Messrs. Isenberg and Krapf was that occasionally they found a copy of the Bible Society Gospels in Amharic that had been distributed in northern Ethiopia. They saw by this wonderful opportunities for the spread of the Gospel. And they were amazed at the great distances the distribution of the Gospels in Tigre had reached. One Amharic Gospel was found in a remote Mohammedan country.<sup>27</sup>

Their stay in Shoa convinced the missionaries, especially Rev. Krapf, that it would be more worthwhile going to the pagan Gallas than to try to revive the Abyssinians. The Abyssinian laymen would receive a reformation, but their priests would not allow it, and there was little hope in reviving the fallen church. The Ethiopic Church had tried to force Christianity on the Gallas, but Mr. Krapf discovered on

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24. Isenberg and Krapf, op. cit. pp. 61-67.

25. Ibid., pp. 169-171.

26. Ibid., pp. 85-87, 248

27. Ibid., pp. 105, 342.

one of his journeys into Galla territories that they were receptive to the Gospel of Jesus Christ when it was taught with the Spirit of Christ. The Ethiopians were too bigoted to receive the Word. They had to question every point. Even though the Gallas hated Abyssinian Christianity they showed great interest in true Christianity; for that reason Mr. Krapf decided to make the Galla tongue into a written language. This he did with the help of a Galla boy. The alphabet used was the Latin instead of Amharic. The stage was being set for the miserable pagan Gallas to take a leading role in the formation of the evangelical church.<sup>28</sup>

Mr. Isenberg returned to England to publish some books he had completed, leaving Mr. Krapf to carry on alone. Mr. Krapf continued teaching and distributing the Scriptures until it became necessary for him to return to Egypt for private reasons. He planned to go to the coast by way of Gondar and Tigre, but due to the still unsettled conditions of those territories he had to return and seek another route. While doing this he was robbed of all his belongings and was extremely fortunate in escaping death and making his way to Massauh, where he was taken in by the French consulate.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, in that same year, 1841, Messrs. John Muhleisen and John C. Muller tried to get into Shoa. They were threatened by the hostile chieftains of the coast, and after their own servants had been murdered, managed to escape with their lives. Messrs. Isenberg and Krapf made several attempts to re-enter Shoa, but the once friendly king had apparently changed his mind and they could not gain admittance to that territory. Finally Mr. Krapf went to Zanzibar

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28. Isenberg and Krapf, op. cit., pp. 175, 193, 200, 202, 241.  
29. Ibid., pp. 400-500.

with the view of reaching the Gallas from there.<sup>30</sup> And thus, to all intents and purposes, the first mission to Ethiopia by the Church Missionary Society had come to an end.

The mission seemed very unfruitful, but it was not unproductive. Mr. Isenberg published a Grammar of the Amharic Language and a Dictionary of the Amharic Language. Besides these he published in Amharic a Spelling Book, Catechism, Geography, Universal History, A History of the Kingdom of God, and a Liturgy of the Church of England. Mr. Isenberg also printed a vocabulary of the Dankali language. Mr. Krapf published the following: Elements of the Galla Language, The Vocabulary of the Galla Language, The Four Gospels, Genesis, Acts of the Apostles, and The Epistle to the Romans, all in Galla.<sup>31</sup>

No fruit appears immediately after the seed is sown. First there must be a sprout, then a leaf then a plant, and then the fruit. This first mission scarcely did more than dig the hole for the seed, but that is necessary for the planting. The Word of God appeared in the vernacular. This alone was a great contribution in a land where that Word had been possessed but darkened through total ignorance of the language.

## 2. The Mission to the Jews

The first period of Christian mission activity in Ethiopia under the Rev. Messrs. Gobat, Isenberg and Krapf was characterized by their attempt to revive the Church of Ethiopia. Dr. Bergsma summed up

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30. Brown, op. cit., pp. 323-326.

31. Ibid., a footnote, pp. 326.

the efforts of this mission in the following way:

"But these efforts directed toward enlightening the spiritually dark places in the Church had ended only in opposition, hardening of the hearts, and finally expulsion of the missionaries from the country in 1838."<sup>32</sup>

In 1854 the Church Missionary Society again sent Dr. Krapf to Ethiopia. He took with him Johann Martin Flad. These men were sent because Theodorus had been crowned King of Kings, and it looked from all outward appearances that he was favorable toward missionary work. The missionaries were sent to interview the King of Kings on the subject of missions, staying in Ethiopia for only a short time. Mr. Flad returned in 1855 and went to Jerusalem to study Arabic and Amharic. In December, 1855, Mr. Flad returned to Ethiopia with three new missionaries, Messrs. Bender, Mayer, and Kienzlein. Mr. Flad was forced to leave again in 1857 because of illness, but when he returned again he came with two new missionaries and a wife.

When they arrived in Ethiopia they were surprised to find the three missionaries they had left there making roads and living like natives. King Theodore had hired them to build roads and make gunpowder, and this the missionaries had to do in order to live, since their meager salary of \$100 a year was not enough to sustain them. Instead of making the natives more friendly, this action on the part of the three missionaries only served to make the natives despise them.

Mr. Flad became interested in the Falashas, and in 1858 he wrote to Bishop Gobat in Jerusalem of the opportunities for work among these people. The Bishop thought that since the Falashas were Jewish they should be ministered to by the London Mission for the Jews. As a

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32. Bergsma, op. cit., pp. 251, see also pp. 48 ante.

result this mission sent out Rev. Henry Aaron Stern, a converted Jew, and in 1859, with Flad's assistance, the mission was established.<sup>33</sup>

Rev. Stern got permission to enter Ethiopia, and after an interview with Theodorus obtained permission to establish a mission to the Falashas. It was while he was on this tour that Rev. Stern gathered the material for his book, Wanderings Among the Falashas in Abyssinia, that later proved to be the reason for his cruel imprisonment.<sup>34</sup> Rev. Stern found that the work of Mr. and Mrs. Flad in the distributing of Scriptures in Amharic was instrumental in removing native prejudice when he arrived on the scene.<sup>35</sup>

The Falashas at first would not listen to the missionaries because they thought the missionaries were like the Christians of the Ethiopic Church, whom they considered to be idolatrous and despised. Mr. Stern found that as a whole the Falashas had higher ethical standards than the Christian Amharas. He presented himself to the Falashas as a white Falasha, since he was a converted Jew. And although he had assured the Abuna of the Ethiopic Church that his mission was only to the Falashas, the rumor soon spread that the Abuna looked with disfavor on the mission. This broke the ice between the Falashas and Rev. Stern. The rumor caused the Falashas to believe in what Mr. Stern had said.<sup>36</sup>

Once the ice was broken, Stern and Flad began to show the Falashas the way of salvation. Any fear on the part of the Falashas was removed when they were assured that no one would be baptized without in-

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33. Bergsma, op. cit., pp. 251-253.

34. Ibid., pp. 254-255.

35. Stern, Wanderings Among the Falashas in Abyssinia, pp. 141-142.

36. Stern, op. cit., pp. 113, 198-200.

struction and satisfactory evidence of Christ's indwelling spirit being present. The Ethiopic priests spread the rumors among the Falashas that the missionaries were come to force them to be baptized into the Ethiopic Church.<sup>37</sup> When these rumors were thus dispelled the Falashas flocked to the missionaries, who taught them that salvation was by grace, and not through works of the law. The story of Christ's sacrifice on the cross noticeably touched many of the Falashas. Even the Falasha priests in many cases were deeply touched, and Debtra Beru and another debtra (teacher) even asked to be baptized. Mr. Stern tells of instances of Falashas walking hundreds of dangerous miles through jungles to get a Bible and to see the man who had brought such good news of salvation. The Falashas were so earnest about obeying the law of Moses, and so concerned about keeping themselves pure, that the news of Christ came as a relief to many of them. When the supply of Bibles was exhausted Rev. Stern reports that it was heart rending to see the sadness come into the faces of those who had walked so far to ask for a Bible, only to be told there were no more.<sup>38</sup>

Mr. Stern never ceased to praise the effect of God's Word. In a tribute to the work of Bishop Gobat and former missionaries concerning the Ethiopic custom of Tescar,<sup>39</sup> he writes:

"Within the last few years, through the circulation of the Scriptures in the vernacular tongue, more enlightened views have been diffused amongst the people, and many now openly ridicule the idea that the indecent debauch of depraved ecclesiastics can advance the happiness of departed spirits."<sup>40</sup>

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37. Stern, op. cit., pp. 205, 256-257.

38. Ibid., pp. 211-212, 242-244, 248, 258, 260, 263.

39. Tescar is an Ethiopian feast to commemorate the deceased. Literally, the widow has to support the local church for twelve months.

40. Stern, op. cit., pp. 182.



The former missionary efforts having failed to revive the Ethiopic Church, it was Mr. Stern's hope that by evangelizing the Falashas the Christian Amharas would be revived. And it seemed to be God's will for it to be brought about in this way. When the Falashas began to ask to be baptized and asked for Bibles, the Amharic (Christian) priests began to study their Bibles.<sup>41</sup>

When permission to preach the Gospel to the Falashas was obtained from the "Abuna," it was understood that the converted Falashas would be counted as Christians and as members of the Ethiopic Church.<sup>42</sup> In this way there would be an infusion of true Christianity into the old church that would revive it. Concerning this Mr. Stern says:

"The only obstacle to be apprehended is the intolerant spirit of the hierarchy. It is true, the Archbishop solemnly promised that if we formed congregations of Jewish believers, they should not be obliged to conform to the rules and rites of his own community, but that they should have toleration without schism--and liberty of worship without separation from the Church.

This anomalous union may perhaps be designed by an all-wise Providence to produce that moral and spiritual reformation, which every other effort has hitherto failed to achieve; but it may also raise the slumbering demon of persecution, and subject the newly-gathered converts to a baptism of fire, and a trying and sifting ordeal of their faith."<sup>43</sup>

After this first tour through Ethiopia to select the site for the mission, Mr. Stern returned to England. In his absence Mr. Flad carried on the work among the Falashas. In 1860 Messrs. Bronkhorst and Josephsohn came out under the London Mission to the Jews to work among the Falashas. Mr. Flad, though still under the Church Missionary Society, took charge of the work of the mission to the Jews, and shortly

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41. Stern, op. cit., p. 300.

42. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 253.

43. Stern, op. cit., p. 301.

after that was nominated as a missionary under the London Mission to the Jews.

This mission began to take root. Houses were built, and Bibles were distributed, and the gospel was preached. In 1862 the first-fruits were twenty Falashas that received baptism. The Scottish Missionary Society sent Messrs. Staiger and Brandies to open a station near to where Mr. Flad's station was located. This work also bore fruit among the Falashas.

Mr. Stern returned to Ethiopia with Mr. and Mrs. Rosenthal, but in the meantime King Theodore's attitude towards foreigners took a turn for the worse and turned against all missionaries. Mr. Stern was beaten and imprisoned for having written some true but unpleasant references about King Theodore. The other missionaries were all in turn imprisoned except for those occupied in road building and making gunpowder. While the missionaries were imprisoned, Mr. Flad was sent to England to ask the Queen for mechanics and artisans in exchange for the missionaries. He was forced to leave his wife and children in prison as hostages for his own good behavior.

It was this condition which finally led England to declare war on Ethiopia and send Lord Napier with 32,000 soldiers. Lord Napier's army captured Magdala, Theodore's capital, in 1868, and freed the captured missionaries. In the fall of Magdala, King Theodore committed suicide.<sup>44</sup>

The missionaries all left Ethiopia for a much needed rest when they were released. In 1870 Mr. Flad returned to Ethiopia, but could

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44. Bergsma, op. cit., pp. 218, 219, 254-255.

not gain entrance into the country. The Emperor Johannes, who began to reign in Ethiopia when the English army left, was determined to keep out all foreign missionaries. The Falasha mission had nevertheless born fruit and there were fifty converts. Many of these converts felt the compulsion to preach the gospel to their neighbors. Three of the more promising Falashas had been taken to St. Christoma Institute in Switzerland when Magdala fell, and when they returned they preached the gospel with effectiveness.

Once again the corruptness of the Ethiopic Church is seen. When these educated Falasha converts distributed the Gospel in the vernacular and preached salvation through faith, the jealous priests, afraid for their own positions, incited persecution against the Falashas, and Mr. Stern's prediction came true.<sup>45</sup>

In 1873 Mr. Flad again went to Ethiopia with the intention of securing permission to oversee the work. With him he brought three more Falashas that had been educated in Switzerland and 1700 Bibles and Bible portions. King Johannes would not permit the Amharic books to be brought in to Ethiopia, and he sent Mr. Flad out of the country with no doubt in his mind that he would not be welcomed back again.

After this a persecution of the Falashas followed. But in the persecution the church grew under the leadership of Alaka Michael Arwagi. When the supply of Bibles ran out, more were smuggled in, so in spite of persecution the number of converts among the Falashas grew. By 1910 Argawi wrote the society that since 1860 between 17,000 and 18,000 Falashas had been baptized.<sup>46</sup>

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45. Ante., p. 58.

46. Bergsma, op. cit., pp. 254-260.

By 1932, when Dr. Bergsma published his book, the Falasha Christians were still witnessing for Christ. The son of Johann M. Flad still carried on the work of the mission, but from his headquarters in Switzerland.<sup>47</sup>

Mr. Stern's prediction<sup>48</sup> concerning the Falashas came true. They did serve as an influence in reforming the decaying Ethiopic Church, and they were persecuted by that church. By this example it is evident that the way open for the evangelizing of Ethiopia is through the minority peoples, that is, the Falashas and Gallas and others who are not bound by the bigoted priests of the Ethiopic Church. It is through the evangelizing of the minority that influence will be brought for the evangelizing of the majority. The effect of the evangelizing of the Falashas on the Ethiopic Church shows that to be true.

### 3. Contributions of the British and Foreign Bible Society and Various Other Translators

The Bible is the Word of God, and it is the means whereby men come to know the Lord Jesus Christ and are saved. At this point some mention must therefore be made of the work of the Bible Societies.

Ethiopia has had the blessing of a complete Bible in the vernacular ever since the Council of Chalcedon.<sup>49</sup> Yet it is a shame that so little was done with it. By the time the first Europeans entered Ethiopia after the Mohammedans had isolated it from the rest of Christendom, the Church was already corrupt and its leaders ignorant.<sup>50</sup>

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47. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 260.

48. Ante., p. 58.

49. Ante., p. 18.

50. Ante., pp. 23-28.

They failed to translate the Bible into the vernacular when the existing translation became dead.<sup>51</sup> This transition in the language began about the year 1500 and was completed in about 1700. The Church, the trustee of the Word, instead of trying to make a translation into the vernacular, opposed every effort to do so. The laity were kept in ignorance of the Bible.<sup>52</sup>

In order that a revival might be started in Ethiopia, it was essential that the Bible be once again put into the hands of the common people. Amharic and the Galla language were the vernacular of Ethiopia, and remain so today except for a few dialects found in some of the isolated tribes,<sup>53</sup> that are different from Galla and Amharic. With the Ethiopic Church opposing the translation of the Bible into the vernacular, who was there that would oppose the Church and make a translation?

The Lord moves in mysterious ways. It was indicated in the last chapter that the superstitious Ethiopians believed they would be blessed if they made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.<sup>54</sup> In the early nineteenth century there was an Ethiopian monk, Abba Romi, in Jerusalem who, being a scholar in Ethiopic literature, sought further veneration through the long pilgrimage to Jerusalem. But alas he became sick and was in the sacred city, penniless, and friendless. He was resigning himself to an ignominious death when suddenly help came from an unexpected quarter.

Monseur de Cherville, the French Consul at Cairo, had become interested in Ethiopia and was looking for ways to interest Europe in

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51. Ante., pp. 23-28.  
52. Ante., pp. 36-37.  
53. Ante., pp. 40-41.  
54. Ante., p. 11.

Ethiopia. He thought he could interest Europe by having one of the most well-known books in Europe translated into the living Ethiopian language (Amharic). He decided that the Bible was the most well-known book, but who was there that was capable of translating it into Amharic? Abba Romi was the only man found to have the necessary qualifications. The French Consul took the sick monk into his care and nursed him back to health. Monseur de Cherville offered to pay the man a regular salary while he was doing the work, but the monk insisted on doing the job for nothing more than his keep.

It took ten years for Abba Romi to translate the entire Bible into Amharic. These valuable manuscripts came into the possession of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1820. In 1823 the four Gospels were published and in 1840 the entire Bible. There have been revisions of Abba Romi's Bible, but his translation is still the basic structure of the Amharic Bible that is used in Ethiopia today.<sup>55</sup>

The translation of the Bible into Galla was in part completed by Mr. Krapf.<sup>56</sup> But the Galla dialect he used was that of Southern Shoa and did not come into great use. This Bible was published in 1841 with the help of a Galla by the name of Berk.<sup>57</sup>

The Galla translation that is most widely used today is that of an escaped Galla slave boy called Onesimus Nesib. He was rescued from slavery by the Swedish Evangelical Mission. Onesimus was a bright boy and learned all he could in the Swedish mission school. The Swedish mission then sent him to Sweden for further education, and there, after

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55. Bergsma, op. cit., pp. 261-263.

56. Ante., p. 53.

57. Bergsma, p. 266.

a course of study, he received the Swedish diploma of teacher. On returning to his native land Onesimus saw that the greatest need of his people was the Bible in Galla. He started to work to translate the Bible. The New Testament was published in 1893 and in 1899 the complete Bible was published.

The Scriptures published by the British and Foreign Bible Society for Ethiopia are the following: The Amharic Bible, first edition published between 1840 and 1844; and Ethiopic-Amharic diglot Psalms and Four Gospels, prepared in this form at the request of Emperor Menelik II in 1894.

Prior to the Amharic version of the Bible the Society printed an Ethiopic New Testament. The first edition was published between 1826 and 1830.

Other Galla dialects into which the Bible or portions of the Bible have been translated besides that of Dr. Krapf and of Onesimus are: Ittue, the dialect around Harar in Eastern Shoa, translated by Hailu, a freed Galla slave; a central Galla translation by Dr. J. L. Krapf and two natives; and Southern Galla or Bararetta, published between 1878 and 1904 by the United Methodist Free Churches Mission.

In Eritrea a native named Stefanos made a translation of the Gospel of Mark into Bogos, an Eritrean dialect, in 1882. Other translations into Eritrean dialects were made by Pastor Roden (New Testament in 1902) and Pastor Sundstrom (Psalms and Isaiah), both of the Swedish Evangelical Mission. The British and Foreign Bible Society revised these publications to make them uniform with each other. A complete New Testament was published in Tigrinya by Kark Windquist of the Swedish Evangelical Mission. The Tigrinyan version by Deftra Matteos, supervised by

Mr. Isenberg,<sup>58</sup> apparently was never published by the British and Foreign Bible Society.<sup>59</sup>

Besides translations of the Holy Scriptures, Amharic versions of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and some of Spurgeon's sermons have been printed. Dr. Bergsma, in speaking of the Honorable Belatin Gheta Heroui, an Ethiopian scholar who has collected a large library, said this about the hope of a religious revival in Ethiopia:

"It is to be fervently hoped that the evangelical Christian Church which is just coming into being, with a reformed Church of Ethiopia, will have born in its midst those who will write Ethiopia's Christian literature as only an Ethiopian can for his own people."<sup>60</sup>

The effect of publishing the Bible in the vernacular can be seen in what happened to a certain Mohammedan Chief named Sheikh Zacharias who lived in a district called Belessa in Northeastern Ethiopia. This Mohammedan Sheikh had a vision of Christ and although he had never met a missionary began to pray to Him. The Lord answered his prayers by making it possible for the Sheikh to come into the possession of an Amharic Bible. This took place at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>61</sup>

The Bible that came into Sheikh Zacharias' hands was an Amharic Bible, published by the British and Foreign Bible Society, and distributed by Pastor Cedarquist, that pioneer missionary to Ethiopia for the Swedish Evangelical Mission. Sheikh Zacharias was a scholar and knew his Koran as all good Mohammedans should, but for the sake of the truth, he compared the Bible with the Koran in a thorough study, and in doing so was convicted of his sin and soundly converted to Christ.<sup>62</sup>

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58. Ante., p. 52.

59. Bergsma, op. cit., pp. 265-267.

60. Ibid., p. 267.

61. Ibid., p. 263.

62. Light and Darkness, op. cit., p. 156.



Now Sheikh Zacharias felt the urge to preach Christ crucified, but he knew that in doing so he would be persecuted, and perhaps killed by his Mohammedan brethren. While wrestling with this problem he had a vision of angels that told him, "Fear not, Zacharias, I will be with you."<sup>63</sup>

Zacharias did go out and preach Christ crucified. His preaching was so effective that in the first year he converted over 1,000 Moslems to Christ. Sheikh Zacharias was persecuted, but not by the Mohammedans. Dr. Lambie points to the reason of his persecution, which again shows the corrupt state of the old Ethiopic Church:

"The Coptic Christians tried to induce him to become one of them, but he would not do so, because he could not find authorization for their ritualistic worship and veneration of saints in the Bible. He preferred to regulate his life by the plain Word of God. In consequence, he incurred the opposition and enmity of the Ethiopian Church as well as that of his former co-religionists."<sup>64</sup>

In 1907 Sheikh Zacharias was brought before Menelik II in Addis Ababa for a public disputation with the leading Moslem sheikhs. He justified his faith so well that the great Menelik gave him written permission to convert the Moslems. At Addis Ababa he came into contact with some evangelical Christians and was baptized, taking the name of Noaje Kristos. Following his baptism Noaje returned to Sakota, where he first learned of Christ from his Bible, and taught Christ crucified for the rest of his life. In 1915-1916 it was reported that he had a following numbered in the thousands.<sup>65</sup>

When Sheikh Zacharias died, Yusef (Joseph) became his successor. The written permission that Sheikh Zacharias or Noaje Kristos had received

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63. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 263.

64. T. A. Lambie, A Doctor Without a Country, p. 227.

65. Light and Darkness, op. cit., pp. 156-157.

ed from the Emperor was no longer honored and a severe persecution followed which resulted in the scattering of Noaje's disciples, with many falling away from the faith. But Yusef their leader went to Addis Ababa, where he succeeded in getting the pioneer missionary Dr. Lambie to intercede for him. Another written permission was granted by the present Emperor, Haile Selassie.

Yusef returned to his flock with a quantity of literature from the Nile Mission Press and a promise that sometime in the future missionaries would come to his aid. Even though Dr. Lambie later visited Sakota, where this little colony of evangelical Christians lived, no missionaries ever came because of the Italo-Ethiopian war that soon swept over that area. Yusef was later martyred and now the little band of Christians have been almost completely decimated.<sup>66</sup>

This account is sufficient to show the power of God's Word when it is allowed to be in the hearts of men. This is one contribution of the British and Foreign Bible Society toward the creating of an evangelical church in Ethiopia.

### C. The Contributions of the 20th Century Toward The Establishment of an Evangelical Church

#### 1. The Small Missionary Societies

At the turn of the century the mission to the Jews in Ethiopia was still functioning, but with no missionaries on the field. There was no active missionary in Ethiopia from 1868 to 1905.<sup>67</sup> This section will

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66. Lambie, op. cit., pp. 227-229.

67. Bergsma, op. cit., p. 268.

deal with the missionary societies that were established and made their contribution in the twentieth century.

In 1904 the Evangelical National Missionary Society of Sweden, which had been established in Asmara, Eritrea, since the latter part of the nineteenth century, gained entrance to Ethiopia. Pastor Cedarquist began with evangelistic and educational work in Addis Ababa. He was followed by Dr. and Mrs. Soderstrom in 1920. The mission which had by that time been confined to the capital branched out. At Nakamte a hospital was established and pastoral and educational work was started. Another station was opened at Nedjo, where pastoral and clinical work was conducted.

Other small missionary societies that have come to Ethiopia and opened stations there in the twentieth century are the Hermannsburg Evangelical Lutheran Mission, with stations at Addis Ababa and Lalloshallota in Eritrea, and the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, with a small work in Addis Ababa.<sup>68</sup> Another small Swedish society was the Bibeltrogna Vanner. It maintained a school for boys and a school for girls at Addis Ababa, and at Harar this mission maintained a forty-bed hospital and carried on evangelical work.<sup>69</sup>

Although these missionary societies are small, they have made their contribution toward the evangelical movement in Ethiopia. In looking over this list it is observed that Addis Ababa, the capital of modern Ethiopia, is the center of missionary activities, and has been since the turn of the century. The Swedish National Evangelical Mission has made

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68. Bergsma, op. cit., pp. 268-272.

69. Ibid., pp. 271-272.

its contribution in translating books into Galla and Amharic.<sup>70</sup> Besides translating the Bible into the vernacular, these small societies administered to the sick and preached the Gospel. Even though these societies are small, they have made their contribution toward the religious awakening in Ethiopia. A notable example of this is Sheikh Zacharias. Who knows how many others like him are to be found in the mountains of Ethiopia?

## 2. The Larger Societies

Although the Roman Catholic Mission was the first modern mission to gain admission to Ethiopia<sup>71</sup> in the twentieth century, it will not be considered because of the nature of its doctrine and missionary methods.

The first of the larger evangelical missions to be established in Ethiopia was that of the United Presbyterian Church in North America. This phase of the development of the evangelical church will be given special attention in the next chapter.

Dr. Thomas A. Lambie, M. D., the pioneer missionary of the United Presbyterian Mission, who was responsible for opening the way for that work in Ethiopia, is also responsible for bringing the Sudan Interior Mission to Ethiopia. After the George Memorial Hospital had become a growing concern, Dr. and Mrs. Lambie looked toward the south, where thousands of pagan Gallas had never heard of Jesus Christ. Feeling the call to open new mission stations to the south, Dr. Lambie wrote to the secretary of the mission board,

70. Ante., pp. 63-64.

71. According to Dr. Bergsma, they came to Ethiopia in 1903, pp. 269-270.

"Now that we have the money for the hospital, I regard it as a fait accompli, and we ought to be thinking of advancing into those southern areas."<sup>72</sup>

Unfortunately the United Presbyterian Church did not have the resources available for opening new mission stations in the south at that time.

This did not prevent Dr. Lambie from answering the challenge of southern Ethiopia. The next step he took after establishing the George Memorial Hospital in Addis Ababa is nicely summed up in the following:

"At that time he was brought into touch with Mr. Alfred B. Buxton and Rev. George W. Rhoad, both of whom were greatly interested in Ethiopia. After days of discussion and prayer, these three men felt convinced that God was calling them to launch out upon a new work for Ethiopia in dependence upon Him. Thus it was that Dr. Lambie resigned from the United Presbyterian Mission, and the Abyssinian Frontiers Mission was formed."<sup>73</sup>

The Abyssinian Frontiers Mission was organized as a faith mission. There was no regular financial income comparable to that in an established denominational missionary society. It was no easy matter for Dr. Lambie to resign from the United Presbyterian Mission, but he felt it right to take this venture in faith as his own words testify:

"To us had been given the vision; without us the people and their needs would not be known. Unless we were willing to sacrifice something, they would never hear."<sup>74</sup>

The independent existence of the Abyssinian Frontiers Mission was short lived. In the summer of the year of its formation, the Abyssinian Frontiers Mission joined forces with the Sudan Interior Mission, which was looking for a new field to open in East Africa. The Sudan Interior Mission, though itself a faith mission, is international in char-

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72. Lambie, op. cit., p. 162.

73. E. R. Rice, Eclipse in Ethiopia, and its Corona Glory, pp. 17-18.

74. Lambie, op. cit., pp. 164-165.

acter with representatives in Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia, and has a large number of friends in all of these countries.<sup>75</sup>

Dr. and Mrs. Lambie returned to Ethiopia to pioneer new mission stations for the Sudan Interior Mission. Their return was not as welcome as they had anticipated. The regent was not as cordial as he had been, and there seemed to be a strained feeling in their conversation. Dr. Lambie had been on very cordial terms with the regent in previous years. Dr. Lambie explains in his own words the reason for this strained relationship:

"The Coptic Church party was bringing pressure to bear upon him to prevent the entrance of more missionaries in the country. He was still only regent, while actually the head of the country was the Empress--the illegitimate child of Menelik, and his own distant cousin. She was being constantly told by the priests that Ras Tafari was an enemy to the faith and would spoil their religion by letting in the foreign teachers."<sup>76</sup>

When Dr. Lambie discovered the cause of this feeling he had to meet the high priest of Ethiopia to persuade him that the mission would not interfere with their church. While Abuna Matthew had been living, there existed an understanding with the Ethiopic Church and the missionaries. Now the situation was different since Abuna Matthew had died and a new Abuna had taken his post. Dr. Lambie relates what went on in the meeting with the high priest and his court, and the course taken as a result of it:

"They met in a poorly lit room adjoining the Empress' palace, and

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75. Lambie, op. cit., pp. 162-169.

76. Lambie, op. cit., p. 170. Notice how the memory of the Portuguese Jesuits' action in Ethiopia (ante. pp. 23-33) caused the priests to distrust all foreign missionaries as a corrupting influence to their own form of religion.

they seemed determined to disagree with everything we said. We tried to placate them, but it was no use.

They asked us about saintly mediation, but we quoted, 'One God, one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.'

'Yes,' they said, 'but we have other books of equal authority with the Bible, and they say that we must believe in the saints as intermediaries.'

In vain we protested that we had no wish to attack or harm their Church, but were going to the Mohammedans and pagans in the south; whatever we said made no difference. The verdict was determined on in advance. We were not permitted to go. We must not go. Besides, Lent was upon them (Abyssinian Lent is almost twice as long as in Europe and America), and they could not be bothered hearing anything more about this matter until after Lent. This would put us almost into the rains and would make an expedition nearly impossible. It seemed like an impasse.

We quietly went ahead with our preparations, buying mules and having saddle-pads made and getting everything shipshape for departure, and when at last everything was ready we received our permission to depart. The passport read that we were permitted to 'take the air,' or take a constitutional, or words to that effect. The Prime Minister told me confidentially not to ask permission; we could quietly visit a town, and if some good opening occurred we might slip a mission station into it without making a fuss and probably everything would be all right. His Highness wanted to help us, but not openly."<sup>77</sup>

Once again forces of evil and darkness that had invaded the Ethiopic Church sought to prevent the light from spreading in the land. But there is no checking of the Divine Light.

Dr. Lambie set out on his surveying expedition as he had planned. It resulted in the establishment of a station at Soddu in Wallamo province. On this expedition the governors of the provinces all seemed to have been former acquaintances or former patients of Dr. Lambie. As a result this expedition was highly successful, having the cooperation of the governors. Several other mission stations in the south were started.

Unexpectedly the governors changed their minds. When the missionaries were just completing the finishing touches on their new stations they were told to get out, or not to preach the gospel until further notice. Word had reached the priests in Addis Ababa that the missionaries

77. Lambie, op. cit. pp. 170-171.

were starting new missions. Dr. Lambie hastened to Addis Ababa to once again try and convince the Ethiopic Church that the missionaries were not attacking their church. Through the grace of God permission to maintain the stations already started was granted. The work continued and prospered.<sup>78</sup>

By 1935 there were stations at Soddu, Duramay, Jiran, Hoseina, Yerga Alam, and Darassa, all in the south among the Galla tribes. In Shoa there were stations at Addis Ababa and Marako. In the north there were new stations at Debra Markos and Lalibela.<sup>79</sup> These two stations in the north are among the Christians of the Coptic Church. The Sudan Interior Mission was invited to the sacred city of Lalibela by the governor of Lasta province. The way this province was opened to the Sudan Interior Mission is best related in Dr. Lambie's own words:

"One day I called upon Ras Kassa, who is one of the great princes of Ethiopia, to ask him for a contribution for the leprosarium at Addis Ababa. 'No,' he said, 'I will not give you anything for Addis Ababa, but if you go up north to my country and build a hospital at Lalibela, I will give you land and three thousand thalers.'

'But Your Excellency, that country is all Amharic Coptic Christian and our work has been with the Mohammedans and pagans.'

'It does not matter. They need you up there just as much as the pagans; they are Christian in name only. Also there are many Mohammedans. If you like, I will put my offer in writing.' This he proceeded to do at once."<sup>80</sup>

After this meeting Dr. Lambie made a special trip to see about the choosing of a location for the mission station that was to be started in Lalibela with the approval of the home board. There was considerable opposition from the Coptic priests, who resented the presence

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78. Lambie, op. cit., pp. 171-184.

79. Lambie, Abayte! Ethiopia's Plea, A record of missionary beginnings in Ethiopia with special reference to the S. I. M., pp. 20-21, 27.

80. Lambie, A Doctor Without a Country, p. 213.



of foreign missionaries in their sacred city of Lalibela. The site was chosen and preparations to build were made when the threatened opposition of the Ethiopic Church took shape. No station could be built because according to Ethiopic law no foreigner could own land. This problem was finally solved by Dr. Lambie's act of renouncing his United States citizenship and becoming a citizen of Ethiopia. Thus in spite of opposition from the Ethiopic Church, mission stations were built among the Amharas.<sup>81</sup>

The Sudan Interior Mission, of all the mission societies in Ethiopia, has reached the most varied groups of Ethiopia. Not only has it brought the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the pagan Gallas in the south, but it has also brought it to the Mohammedan and superstitious Christians in the north.

### 3. The effects of the Italo-Ethiopian war on the evangelical missions

The direct results of the Italo-Ethiopian war on the smaller missions, such as the Swedish National Evangelical Mission, and The Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society, was that they were forced to stop all their work in Ethiopia and leave the country.<sup>82</sup> The Sudan Interior Mission was slowly squeezed out of Ethiopia by the Italian government's policy of expropriating the property of the mission and not allowing missionaries to re-enter Ethiopia.<sup>83</sup>

Before the members of the Sudan Interior Mission had to leave their stations in Ethiopia they saw the start of a general native revival,

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81. Lambie, A Doctor Without a Country, p. 213.

82. *Ibid.*, pp. 250.

83. *Ibid.*, pp. 250-252.

as is described by Dr. Lambie:

"In the Jimma area there were daily alarms, but, on the whole, less disturbance than in other places, and our missionaries were not molested; and even in the midst of great uncertainty a revival broke out among the natives, as, indeed, occurred also at Wollamo and Addis Ababa."<sup>84</sup>

After the missionaries of the Sudan Interior Mission were forced to withdraw there was no news about their converts until January 6, 1942, when Dr. Lambie received the good news of a tremendous revival around Wallamo and Kambatta provinces. When the missionaries withdrew there were only two churches, but now there were seventy functioning churches in the same area. This was truly an indigenous evangelical church that was forming in that area.<sup>85</sup>

Another report given to Dr. Lambie late in 1943 by Rev. G. W. Playfair, who went to investigate the Sudan Interior Mission Stations after Italy was defeated, gives the following data concerning the evangelical movement:

"(a) The movement is big and has 155 churches, with a rough estimate of fifteen to twenty thousand followers.

(b) The movement is wide, i.e., not confined to one section, but province-wide and reaching into other tribes, i.e., Sidamo, Kambatta, and Walamo.

(c) It is a highly spiritual movement, a living, loving, witnessing church, . . .

(d) It is a full-orbed movement, taking in every age, class, and sex; old men, middle-aged, women, young and old, and children. In every other movement I have seen start, the majority have been the youth, but in this movement those over twenty to eighty years of age predominate.

(e) All are striving to learn to read the Word of God in Amharic, the only language in which they can at the moment find the Word of God."<sup>86</sup>

In effect, the Italo-Ethiopian war caused an indigenous evangelical church to rise in Ethiopia. The war caused a revival among the

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84. Lambie, op. cit., p. 249.

85. Lambie, op. cit., pp. 170-171.

86. Lambie, Boot and Saddle in Africa, pp. 155-158.

native Christians that had been converted by the missions, and their zeal for Christ resulted in an evangelical church.

Each mission had its own revival among the converts it had made. The result of the revival was the formation of several evangelical groups in Ethiopia.<sup>87</sup>

#### D. SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter has been to give a brief history of the growth of protestant evangelical missions in Ethiopia from the time of the entrance of the first evangelical missionary to that country up to the days after Ethiopia regained its freedom from Italy. This chapter also showed how the work of the evangelical Christian missions finally led to an indigenous evangelical church in Ethiopia.

The chapter was divided into two main sections. The first section dealt with the history of evangelical missions in Ethiopia in the nineteenth century. This first main section was divided into three parts. The first part dealt with the work of the Church Missionary Society in Ethiopia. It tells how the first evangelical missionaries to Ethiopia attempted to start a revival in the dead Ethiopic Church. These missionaries sought to start the revival through the distribution of the Bible in the vernacular, and by disputations with the priests of the Ethiopic Church. This mission was eventually forced from Ethiopia by the priests of the Ethiopic Church. Another attempt of the mission was in Shoa, but it too failed after a few years mainly because of the

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87. Lambie, A Doctor Carries On, p. 172.

unsettled condition of the country, but it lasted long enough for the missionaries to make some valuable language studies and translations that were invaluable to later missionaries.

The second part of the first main section was concerned with the mission work among the Falashas, the Jewish tribe in Ethiopia. This mission was called the London Mission for the Jews. The brief history of this mission tried to show how the mission to the Falashas was more successful than the mission to the dead Ethiopic Church. It also showed how an evangelical movement among the minority moved the majority closer to an evangelical reform.

The third part of the first section attempted to summarize briefly the valuable contribution of the British and Foreign Bible Society and other translators of the Bible, to the development of an evangelical church in Ethiopia. Although this first section was concerned with the contributions toward an evangelical church in the nineteenth century, a brief description of a revival that occurred in the twentieth century was included in this part because it was through the contributions of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and missionaries in the nineteenth century that Sheikh Zacharias was converted and started his evangelical movement. This account concerning Sheikh Zacharias was given to show the effect of the contribution of the Bible in the vernacular toward an evangelical church.

The second main section of this chapter dealt with the contributions of the missionary societies that came to Ethiopia in the twentieth century. The United Presbyterian Mission was not included in this chapter because it will receive special attention in the next chapter.

The second main section was divided into three parts. The first part dealt with the contributions of the smaller missions, showing briefly the program of each mission in its efforts toward the establishment of an evangelical church.

The second part of the second section dealt with the contributions of the Sudan Interior Mission, which is the largest mission in Ethiopia. A brief description of the development and program of this mission was given.

The third part of this second section dealt with the effects of the Italo-Ethiopian war on the missions in Ethiopia. For the most part the mission mentioned in this section is the Sudan Interior Mission. The emphasis on the Sudan Interior Mission in this part was because of the scarcity of material on the effects of the war on the other missions. It was seen that the war caused an indigenous evangelical movement which ended in numerous evangelical churches where missions had previously planted the seed of the Word of God.

The next chapter will deal with one particular evangelical church that is a result of the work of one of the larger evangelical missions in Ethiopia.

CHAPTER III

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AND ITS  
CONTRIBUTION TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EVANGELICAL CHURCH

## CHAPTER III

### THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EVANGELICAL CHURCH

#### A. Introduction

In the preceding chapter the contributions of the various evangelical Christian missions in Ethiopia were traced from the beginning of evangelical missionary activity in Ethiopia until the Italo-Ethiopian war, when all evangelical missionary work was temporarily interrupted.

The purpose of this chapter is to show how the United Presbyterian Mission in Ethiopia contributed directly to the establishment of an evangelical church in Ethiopia. In order to show how this was accomplished, a brief history of the establishment and outreach of the United Presbyterian Mission in Ethiopia will be given. This is necessary in order to give the reader a background knowledge for the growth of the evangelical church in the area occupied by the mission. This history will be given in four parts. The first part will show how the United Presbyterian Mission became established in Ethiopia. This part will also show the immediate need of the people to whom the United Presbyterian Mission went. The second part of the history of the United Presbyterian Mission will trace the growth of the mission up to the Italo-Ethiopian war, when all evangelical missionary activity was brought to a standstill. The third part will deal briefly with the effects of the Italo-Ethiopian war on the program of the United Presbyterian Mission. This will show the reasons for the policy adopted at that time by the United Presbyterian Mission which led to the formation of an inde-

pendent church. The fourth part of the history will deal briefly with the post-war activity of the United Presbyterian Mission in Ethiopia.

## B. THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN MISSION IN ETHIOPIA

### 1. The Beginning of the United Presbyterian Mission in Ethiopia

The beginning of missionary activity in Ethiopia by the Foreign Board of the United Presbyterian Church in North America has its roots in the long range goal of the United Presbyterian Mission in Egypt. Bearing in mind the fact that the Ethiopic Church has strong ties to the Coptic Church in Egypt,<sup>1</sup> it is interesting to note the program the United Presbyterian Mission in Egypt followed the year after King Theodore was defeated at Magdala.<sup>2</sup> The following statement in the Triennial Report of The Foreign Board of 1919, 1920, and 1921, indicates the ultimate goal of the United Presbyterian Mission in Egypt:

"In 1869 the General Assembly took the following action:  
! \* \* \* that the Assembly recognize Abyssinia as an extension of the Egyptian Mission, and that the board be directed to take steps for the occupancy of that field by means of the force now in Egypt, with the addition if necessary, of a medical missionary from this country."<sup>3</sup>

By this statement it is evident that the United Presbyterian Mission had planned at an early date to start missionary work in Ethiopia.

However, it was not until a much later date that the United Presbyterian Mission came to Ethiopia. Dr. Lambie, who pioneered the mission station at Nasir on the Sobat River,<sup>4</sup> was to be the pioneer for

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1. Ante., p. 17.

2. Ante., p. 59.

3. Triennial Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1919-1921, p. 4.

4. Lambie, A Doctor Without a Country, pp. 57-71.



this new venture of the United Presbyterian Mission.

While Dr. Lambie was at Nasir, a Major James McEnery, on his way to the outpost of Gambeila,<sup>5</sup> stopped at the mission station and in the course of his visit offered to attempt to obtain a place for the mission in Abyssinia. Six weeks later Dr. Lambie received a wireless message from the major saying that the governor of Western Abyssinia wanted the missionaries to go there. The governor of Western Abyssinia even offered to build the missionaries a house if they would come.

The Foreign Board of the United Presbyterian Church gave Dr. Lambie permission to carry out a preliminary exploring trip and the Sudan Government invited Dr. Lambie to come to Khartum and discuss plans for this trip.<sup>6</sup>

The trip to Ethiopia was started after a vacation in Egypt. Dr. and Mrs. J. Kelly Giffen and Mr. Ralph McGill from the United Presbyterian Mission in Egypt went with Dr. Lambie, his wife and family, to Gambeila, where the British Army major had prepared a place for them. The three men, Doctors Lambie and Giffen, and Mr. McGill, left their families at Gambeila and went on a preliminary exploring trip to the top of the plateau. After this preliminary trip, Dr. Giffen and Mr. McGill returned to Egypt with their families.

Dr. Lambie then set about the task of moving his family and belongings by mule back up the escarpment into Ethiopia. After an overnight trip Dr. Lambie and his family arrived at the town of Sayo in Ethiopia. Before Dr. Lambie and his wife could settle in their new station, they had to make a trip to Assua to meet the governor who had invited them to

. . . . .

5. By consulting the map observe that Gambeila is on the border of Sudan and Ethiopia.  
6. Lambie, op. cit., p. 122.

come to Ethiopia.<sup>7</sup>

The reason the governor of Western Ethiopia invited Dr. Lambie to come and open a mission station in Ethiopia is given in this statement by Dr. Lambie:

"The influenza was bad that year in Abyssinia and took a great toll of life. This had made the governor eager for a doctor in his country."<sup>8</sup>

A beautiful hill-top outside of Sayo was chosen for the site of the mission station and work was started in building a house. In the meantime Dr. Lambie lived with his family in Sayo and served the sick people of that town.

Sayo is in Western Ethiopia, not far from the Sudan border. This part of Ethiopia is in the territory inhabited by the Gallas.<sup>9</sup> These poor people are today the serfdom of Ethiopia, doing the labor for the ruling Amharas. For this reason they are poor. They also were pagans and had no way of knowing Jesus Christ. It was this great challenge that confronted Dr. Lambie when he came to Sayo. The Foreign Missions Handbook for 1920 sums up Dr. Lambie's expedition to Sayo in this way:

"In 1869 our Mission in Egypt planned to enter Abyssinia, but for some reason the plan was not carried out. Just half a century later in 1919, an urgent call came to the missionaries at Nasser to open a station in that land. And Dr. Lambie with his family has gone to test its possibilities as a mission field. They are stationed temporarily at Sayo on the lofty central plateau. The whole church will await with eagerness their report."<sup>10</sup>

In 1920 the new station at Sayo was considered just an exten-

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7. Lambie, op. cit., pp. 123-130.
8. Ibid., p. 130.
9. Ante., p. 39.
10. Foreign Missions Handbook, 1920, p. 94.

sion of the Sudan Mission. In 1922 the General Assembly formally accepted Abyssinia as a mission field of the United Presbyterian Church of North America.<sup>11</sup> The following statement gives the reason for the creation of Abyssinia as a new field:

"In view of the difference in the problems to be met in Abyssinia and the Sudan, and in view of the distance between the two fields we recommend that Abyssinia be created a separate mission field as soon as the Foreign Board can make the necessary adjustments."<sup>12</sup>

Dr. and Mrs. Lambie were not in Sayo more than two years before they were joined by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Russel and a registered nurse, Miss Ruth Beatty.<sup>13</sup> These brave souls constituted the personnel of the first protestant mission station to be established in Ethiopia in the twentieth century outside of the work of Dr. Cedarquist of the Swedish Evangelical Mission. This aged saint died in the same year that Dr. Lambie arrived in Ethiopia.<sup>14</sup>

One of the first fruits of this early United Presbyterian missionary activity in Ethiopia was the conversion of blind Gidada. Dr. Lambie was the first missionary to minister to this unfortunate Galla beggar. Dr. Lambie says of him:

"One of the early converts was blind Gidada, a poor beggar who was wonderfully converted at a beggars' meeting we organized for the poor, halt, maimed, and blind. What a change it made in his life. He was educated afterwards, and is now an evangelist to his own people, reading the Bible in the Braille type and even using a typewriter."<sup>15</sup>

Of the desirability of Sayo as a mission station Dr. Lambie said:

. . . . .

11. Triennial Report, 1919-1921, p. 8.
12. Ibid., p. 37.
13. Lambie, op. cit., p. 134.
14. Ibid., pp. 126-127.
15. Ibid, p. 133.

"Sayo seemed very desirable for a mission station. There was such great need everywhere that it was hard to determine where the need was greatest."<sup>16</sup>

Dr. and Mrs. Lambie spent the first two years on the Sayo station getting it settled. Let Dr. Lambie himself describe the work and conditions they met:

"The next two years were spent in building up the station and getting work started. Having no helpers, the burdens we carried were very great. The people were quite suspicious of us at first, but little by little they began to thaw out, and what encouraged us most was that there seemed to be a real hunger for the Word of God.

The Amhara rulers had not come to Western Abyssinia in any very large numbers until quite recently. Perhaps it was their advent that helped us. The natives saw that the Amharas were not animistic pagans like themselves, but called themselves Kristieyan, and the doctor and his wife called themselves Kriestieyan, too, although quite different from the Amharas. Perhaps something in this intrigued the people; whatever it was they came to us in overwhelming numbers to hear the old, old story of Jesus and His love."<sup>17</sup>

This is a brief account of how the United Presbyterian Mission in Ethiopia got its start. The rest of the history of this mission is a history of rapid expansion at the onset, and of slow consolidation of the ground gained.

## 2. Growth of the Mission up to the Time of the Italo-Ethiopian War

After Dr. Lambie spent three years at Sayo, it was time for him to return to America for his furlough.<sup>18</sup> Dr. Lambie, in leaving Ethiopia, did not retrace his steps but trekked through Ethiopia by way of Gore to Addis Ababa, where he and his family took a train to the port of Jibuti, and there embarked on a steamship to America. This trek proved to be very profitable to the mission. At Gore Dr. Lambie pur-

. . . . .

16. Lambie, op. cit., p. 132.

17. Ibid., pp. 132-133.

18. Ibid., p. 134.

chased land and established the title for the property of the mission. When he reached Addis Ababa he was invited by the regent to open missionary work there.<sup>19</sup>

a. History of the Development of the Sayo Station

The station at Sayo began to develop. In 1922 Mr. and Mrs. Duncan C. Henry came to Sayo. The force at Sayo then consisted of two industrial missionaries and a trained nurse.

In those days, before an evangelistic missionary was appointed to Ethiopia, the evangelistic work was carried on by the industrial and medical workers. After Dr. Lambie went to America for his furlough, Miss Ruth Beatty, R. N. was the only medical worker in Ethiopia. In spite of the constant demand for medical work, Miss Beatty found time to conduct evangelistic meetings. And even in the absence of an ordained missionary on the field, church services were held every week. The report on the work at Sayo, the first station in Ethiopia, had this to say concerning the work carried on there for the first three years:

"Preaching services have been regularly carried on and already the beginnings of a school have been made. There is every promise for the development of this work as rapidly as the Church in America will rise to its opportunities."<sup>20</sup>

In the triennial report for 1922 to 1924 progress was reported at the Sayo station. In this three year period Rev. Bruce B. Buchanan and Dr. and Mrs. Paul E. Gilmore joined the force at Sayo, easing the burdens of the force already there. With a physician and an ordained

. . . . .

19. Triennial Report 1919-1921, p. 205.

20. Ibid., p. 205.

man on the station, the medical and evangelical work made definite steps forward.<sup>21</sup> The coming of more missionaries enabled them to open schools for boys and girls and for men and women, so that they could learn to read and write. The results of this work was that 132 confessed new faith in Christ.<sup>22</sup>

The evangelistic program at Sayo during the years 1922-1924 consisted of the following: (1) meetings with hospital in-patients, (2) family prayers with house servants, (3) weekly meetings with beggars, and (4) Sabbath services. Nearly 1,500 people were reached each week. The most encouraging part of the evangelistic program at Sayo is reported as follows:

"One of the most encouraging things about the work as we look into the future is this interest manifested in reading and studying the Bible. Better than that, some of them are beginning to grasp the great message of God's Word. They are coming to understand scripture, not only in mind but in heart."

Evidence of the effect of God's Word on the hearts of the people is that a Bible woman began teaching the Bible among the women of Sayo. She would also visit and teach in the homes of the women who did not come to the meetings.<sup>23</sup>

The evangelistic policy at this time is described as follows:

"The evangelistic policy of the Mission controls its results. Our stated policy has been one of cooperation with and helpfulness to the existing native church and not an attempt to start an organization of our own."<sup>24</sup>

The reason for this policy is described as follows:

. . . . .

- 21. Triennial Report, 1922-1924, p. 247.
- 22. Ibid., p. 248.
- 23. Ibid., p. 249.
- 24. Triennial Report, 1925-1927, p. 197.

"Persuant to the policy of the Mission in Abyssinia, we are not at present attempting to form a separate church organization nor to baptize anyone. As soon as we begin that, the persecution will be very bitter, and we are hoping to postpone that time until we have become well established in the country. However, we do not compromise our position on the necessity of a new birth; nor temper our message of the doctrine of salvation by faith in the atoning work of Christ alone; and of the importance of a righteous life with 'works meet for repentance.'"<sup>25</sup>

The blind evangelist that started his work at Sayo deserves special attention. He was converted at one of the meetings for beggars mentioned above. The meetings for beggars were started because the beggars at Sayo had the habit of coming to the mission compound while church services were being held and making a loud noise in order to be paid to keep quiet. An agreement was made with them to meet at a specified time, when the mission would then teach them Bible stories and pay them a few pennies. At these meetings the missionary, Mr. Fred Russel, always questioned the beggars on the particulars of the story told in the preceding meeting. One blind beggar showed remarkable ability to tell the stories. The beggar's answer to the missionary was:

"I can retell every one you have told us since you could speak our language so we could understand. I believe Jesus Christ was sent of God for my savior, and I have told many in the market place of this good news."<sup>26</sup>

That was in 1921. By the next year the missionaries had hired him as an evangelist and this report was made concerning the nature of his work:

"At Birka Badessa, on Mount Lilmo, situated on the carriers route to Gambailla, a blind evangelist has been located temporarily. At a certain hour each day he blows a whistle and twenty or thirty carriers assemble, together with a like number from the village, to hear the Bible stories and to understand his gospel message which the evan-

. . . . .

25. Triennial Report, 1922-1924, p. 243.

26. "Gidada Solon, Blind Beggar Miracle Man," Mrs. Fred Russel, Women's Missionary Magazine of the United Presbyterian Church, January, 1949 p. 273.

gelist testifies is more precious to him now than the regaining of his sight."<sup>27</sup>

In this same period schools for boys and girls were founded. The need for the schools and their great importance in the future development of an evangelical church is seen in this statement made in the report:

"This beginning revealed an insatiable thirst on the part of the Abyssinians, for education and an innate capacity for acquiring knowledge that had not been realized before."<sup>28</sup>

This first success of the mission was not without opposition. Due to opposition from members of the Ethiopic Church the whistle on the mountaintop was temporarily silenced, and for a brief period the schools were closed. This opposition did not last long. It merely interrupted the program.<sup>29</sup> The following statement in the Triennial Report of that year gives the reason why this opposition was short lived:

"It was because of the dire need for medical treatment that the invitation first came to enter Abyssinia. It without doubt is due to the careful, prayerful and sympathetic rendering of help to all classes, including the priests, that prejudices against missionary occupation have been overcome and opposition to the school work set aside."<sup>30</sup>

Through the years the station at Sayo grew. Some years saw more prosperity than others. By 1927 groups of natives were forming gospel teams at Sayo, and by this method were bringing God's Word to the outlying villages near Sayo. In 1927 it is estimated that over 8,000 people heard the gospel message through the gospel teams.<sup>31</sup> The zeal with which these enlightened natives took up the cause of Christ is re-

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27. Triennial Report, 1922-1924, p. 248.  
28. Ibid., p. 250.  
29. Ibid., pp. 248-249.  
30. Ibid., p. 252.  
31. Triennial Report, 1925-1927, pp. 198-199.



vealed in this statement found in the report of 1925-1927:

"This summer a number of our people engaged in Gospel-team work, if such a term may be used for tiny groups of ones and two going into the homes of our neighborhood. Two of our natives were responsible for this little movement. They came stating that a matter was weighing on their hearts. When asked to explain they told of how they ought to be doing more to show others the true Way, Christ. They thought that the plan Christ used, that of having his disciples go out in pairs, might be most worth-while. Encouragement was given them and a group of select workers began to carry the glad tidings quietly into our whole vicinity."<sup>32</sup>

In the three years between 1928 to 1930 the before stated policy of cooperation with the Ethiopic Church had to be altered. In the Triennial Report covering these years, the following statement is found which shows a change in the policy of cooperation with the Ethiopic Church:

"Progress has been made in reaching definite objectives for the work of the Mission. In the beginning we hoped to work entirely in cooperation with the native orthodox church. This plan, however, has not been found practical."<sup>33</sup>

The United Presbyterian Mission, however, was successful to some extent in its aim regarding the Ethiopic Church. The United Presbyterian Mission came to Ethiopia with the following as its goal:

"The evangelistic task of the missionary in Ethiopia is two-fold. The first is the quickening of the ancient Ethiopic Church, and the second, the reaching of the millions who are not in that church."<sup>34</sup>

In respect to the first of these two goals, the following was reported in 1931:

"Since first entering Ethiopia, the missionaries have been hoping and praying that the ancient Ethiopian Church might be revived. The ignorance and bigotry of its priests in general stand sadly in the way of the progress of the gospel. The hearts of the missionaries are now gladdened by an innovation made by the present Patriarch of the

. . . . .

32. Triennial Report, 1925-1927, p. 198.

33. Triennial Report, 1928-1930, p. 175.

34. Annual Report, 1931, p. 131.

ancient Ethiopian Church. He has introduced the teaching of the Bible in the vernacular of the people and by modern methods."<sup>35</sup>

The other goal of the mission showed signs of achievement in the same year as the following statement indicates:

"From Western Ethiopia came encouraging reports of the response of the people to the gospel. A particular note of encouragement is the information concerning indigenous development. In the villages, people are being inspired to gather their own groups for worship and to organize their own little schools and provide the buildings."<sup>36</sup>

With the reform movement started in the Ethiopic Church, and the beginning of an evangelical church taking shape, the mission had to adopt a new policy, one that would provide for the growth of the native evangelical church.

By 1927 the school work at Sayo was more advanced. Other subjects, such as mathematics and geography, were introduced into the curriculum of the schools. More stress was made on the teaching of Amharic, and more Amharas were attending the mission school. The girls were taught the elements of sanitation and home nursing.

The medical work at Sayo was carried on through the years, even though at times the station was without a doctor, and was even without a nurse for a period of five months. During this time the trained native assistants carried on with the work.<sup>37</sup>

In the period between 1928 to 1930 at Sayo there was an average attendance of over two hundred in the church and Sabbath school. The school system had expanded to having five "outstation schools." These

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35. Annual Report, p. 13.

36. Ibid., p. 14.

37. Triennial Report, 1925-1927, p. 199.

were little outposts of light conducted by natives trained in the school at Sayo. The school at Sayo was ordered closed once in 1929, but it reopened soon afterward. In that year the teaching of Geez, the ancient language of Ethiopia, was begun in the schools at Sayo. This step was taken in order to qualify the mission school boys for the priesthood of the Ethiopic Church. Geez was taught in such a way that the students would understand its meaning. The boys were aided in their learning by the Geez-Diglot version of the Bible, made by the British and Foreign Bible Society.

In this period the gospel teams were active and made numerous treks to the surrounding territory. More Bibles were sold, and there was noticeable growth in spite of the fact that a church building had not yet been built.<sup>38</sup>

Problems of discipline began to arise among the native Christians, which were in turn settled by the native leaders. The following is an example of native discipline:

"For a while some of our native residents grew careless in attendance, but the native council, composed of seven of the older men, took things in hand and enforced compulsory attendance. We were glad they did this, for surely all our people ought to attend if not prevented by illness. One of our native friends said: 'It is not right to steal God's time.'"<sup>39</sup>

In 1931 the world depression began to be felt even in Ethiopia. But in spite of that, blind Gidada still preached to the porters on the trade route and the gospel teams reached over 8,000 people again in the surrounding territories. The natives began to awaken to the value of education and were building their own schools in outlying

. . . . .

38. Triennial Report, 1928-1930, pp. 182-185.

39. Ibid., p. 182.

villages.<sup>40</sup>

In 1932 blind Gidada was out with the gospel teams on week-days and preaching at the Sabbath services in Sayo. That year also marked the beginning of the work on the Jean Orr Memorial Hospital, which was completed in 1933.<sup>41</sup> This hospital maintained a full-time evangelist. In all that year it was estimated that 25,000 people in the province of which Sayo is a part were reached by the gospel teams.<sup>42</sup> The type of people to whom the gospel teams preached is described in this statement from the Annual Report of 1933. Of the gospel teams it says:

"Theirs is the opportunity to preach the Word to many of the lost and point out the true gospel to scores of unfortunate folks who are Christians in name but who have no idea of what it means really to be Christian. There are thousands of this type of people who have been baptized by the old church, yet who need salvation in Christ Jesus just as truly as their pagan brothers."<sup>43</sup>

This is a picture of the growth of the mission station at Sayo. The program consisted of medical and educational activities, evangelistic training, and industrial work. As soon as possible native evangelists were sent out. In 1935, when the Italo-Ethiopian war started, the disturbed condition of the native population made it unsafe for foreigners to remain in the provinces. At Sayo the four missionary dwellings with two hundred acres of land, a combined schoolhouse and church, a store-room and work-shop, and the Jean Orr Memorial Hospital had to be abandoned to the care of the loyal natives. The report for that dark year read:

. . . . .

40. Annual Report, 1931, pp. 132-137.  
41. Annual Report, 1932, p. 87, and Annual Report, 1933, p. 77.  
42. Annual Report, 1933, pp. 75-77.  
43. Ibid., p. 75.

"To a considerable extent the work of our Mission in Ethiopia has been interrupted. Some missionaries removed to Egypt and the Sudan and in doing so conformed to the advice of the United States Department of State, while others remained to render valuable service chiefly in medical and relief work."<sup>44</sup>

This brings the history of the Sayo station up to the Italo-Ethiopian war. The effects of this conflict at Sayo are dealt with in another section.

#### b. History of the Development of the Gore Station

The second missionary station opened in Ethiopia was the station at Gore. Dr. Lambie was the first to visit this city, the largest city in Western Ethiopia, and was able to secure property for the mission on this first visit.<sup>45</sup>

In 1924, with funds provided by Messrs. W. P. Fraser and C. M. Kefover of Pittsburgh, Rev. and Mrs. Shields and Mrs. Ruth Lobaugh Walker established the work at Gore. In addition to these, Dr. Naglesbach, a German doctor, cared for the medical work at the station until an American doctor could be sent.

The program these missionaries started consisted of medical work, in which everything from rifle wounds to leprosy were treated. The medical work was done along with Bible reading to the patients by a native evangelist. A school program was started for boys. The acquisition of more property in addition to that already in their possession made facilities for the opening of the school possible. Later in the same year a girls' school was started.

Women's meetings were held for the women of the community, and

. . . . .

44. The 77th Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1936, p. 4.  
45. Ante., p. 84.

regular Sabbath services were held for the whole community every week. In about three years the attendance of the Sabbath services grew from sixty to two hundred. In addition to these services, a special service was held for the lepers.<sup>46</sup>

By 1927 the station at Gore consisted of three pieces of property conveniently located around the market place. One piece had a residence for missionaries, the second contained another residence, and a school converted from warehouses made of stone with zinc roofs. The third piece of property contained the medical facilities of the station. An operating room was in the process of construction with funds supplied by the nephew of Ras Tafari, the regent of Ethiopia. The work at Gore was greatly helped by the attitude of the governor, Ras Nade, and the chief priest.

Outside village work was started at Gore between 1925 and 1927, with gospel teams bringing the message of Christ to people who are one hundred percent pagan. This was done mostly by the school boys.<sup>47</sup>

The evangelistic problem is different from that at the Sayo station as is disclosed in this statement of the report of that year:

"Irregular attendance presented a great difficulty. The problem is to keep those who come, but in a trading city such as Gorei, with its constantly shifting population, with carriers and caravans constantly coming and going, this is quite a difficult thing. There has been a definite organization built up however, which, though small, has formed a nucleus around which to work and upon which to build."<sup>48</sup>

During the years the most pressing problem was the lack of an ordained missionary at the Gore station. Rev. Shields was sent to Addis

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46. Triennial Report, 1922-1924, pp. 242-245.  
47. Triennial Report, 1925-1927, pp. 190-193.  
48. Ibid., p. 192.

Ababa and for a number of years the station was left in the hands of lay and medical missionaries. Even in the medical work there were times when only a nurse remained at the station to carry on.<sup>49</sup>

By 1930 the station was able to report a slow but steady growth in church membership. The station was still in need of an ordained missionary. The educational work had to be reorganized because of the coming of a government school at Gore.<sup>50</sup> By 1931 the attendance at the boys' school was poor because of the competition with the government school, but the school for girls flourished.<sup>51</sup>

Because of the numerous lepers around Gore, in 1931 the Board of the United Presbyterian Mission agreed to try to open a leper asylum near Gore.<sup>52</sup> So far this has not been accomplished; it is a goal that has not yet been reached.

In 1931 there was still the great need for an ordained missionary at Gore. The church services averaged eighty-six in attendance, a little less than previous attendance. Whenever a convert wished to be baptized it was necessary for him to go to the old Ethiopic Church to have the sacrament administered. This was always done at the cost of a few coins or pieces of salt given to the priest. The women's meetings that year were showing progress. The native women were learning to pray, something unheard of for women in Ethiopia.<sup>53</sup>

In 1932 persecution by the Ethiopic Church broke out against the mission. The local bishop of the Ethiopic Church imprisoned one of

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49. Triennial Report, 1925-1927, p. 195.  
50. Triennial Report, 1928-1930, p. 180.  
51. Annual Report, 1931, p. 135.  
52. Ibid., p. 136.  
53. Annual Report, 1932, pp. 85-87.

his priests for teaching in the mission school. The station at that time was entering its fourth year without an ordained missionary. Adding to these troubles three native teachers of the local mission schools accepted government jobs, placing an added burden on an already overloaded teaching staff.<sup>54</sup>

In the next year Gore got an ordained missionary in Rev. C. F. Kenniweg. The doctor, who had occupied the station in the years without an ordained missionary, was Dr. Virgil F. Dougherty. In 1935, when the missionaries were forced by the Italo-Ethiopian war to leave their stations, the two families that had to leave from Gore were Dr. and Mrs. Dougherty and Rev. and Mrs. Kenniweg.<sup>55</sup>

#### C. History of the Development of the Addis Ababa Station

When Dr. Lambie visited Addis Ababa on his way to America for a furlough, he was invited by the emperor to start mission work at Addis Ababa.<sup>56</sup>

The work at Addis Ababa was started in 1923.<sup>57</sup> In that year Dr. Lambie was authorized to build the George Memorial Hospital in Addis Ababa. Funds for this hospital were made available in a fair share by W. S. George of East Palestine, Ohio. He gave the money in memory of his mother. That is how the hospital came to be called the George Memorial Hospital.<sup>58</sup>

Mr. Fred Russel came to Addis Ababa to supervise the building

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54. Annual Report, 1933, pp. 72-73.

55. The 77th Report, The Board of Foreign Missions, pp. 47-48.

56. Ante., p. 84.

57. Triennial Report, 1922-1924, p. 11.

58. Lambie, op. cit., p. 156.



of the hospital. While he was there he demonstrated the use of modern farm machinery to the emperor, who was favorably impressed.<sup>59</sup>

By 1928 the mission property consisted of fourteen acres of gently sloping land outside of Addis Ababa. On this land was the George Memorial Hospital, two missionary dwellings, a girls' school, and several other small buildings, such as stables and sheds. While there were nine missionaries on the station, there were three years when no ordained missionaries were present. This was because Dr. Shields had to leave on account of his health. During his absence, and the absence of an ordained missionary, Rev. E. J. Cheese of the British Legation at Addis Ababa filled in.<sup>60</sup>

The George Memorial Hospital is a ninety-bed hospital, which served both Abyssinians and foreign nationals. In 1926 a Tigrean Christian woman, who had been converted by the Swedish in Eritrea, came to the hospital. She had been imprisoned in Tigre for preaching the gospel. She became the Bible reader for the George Memorial Hospital.

The boarding school for girls that was started when the station opened in Addis Ababa was forced to close in 1927 when the teacher, Miss Florence Davidson, got married.

In this period the mission station in Addis Ababa underwent further trials when the two nurses and a doctor's wife became seriously ill with typhus.<sup>61</sup>

In the three years between 1928 and 1930, the girls' school opened for a brief period and then was again forced to close. In the

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59. Triennial Report, 1922-1924, p. 240.

60. Triennial Report, 1925-1927, p. 188.

61. Ibid., pp. 188-189.

medical side of the picture there were two doctors carrying on the work at the hospital. But up until the last months before 1930 there still was no ordained missionary in Addis Ababa in the United Presbyterian Mission. But Ato Shonie, a native evangelist, carried on at the hospital, and in spite of the absence of an ordained man the evangelistic program was carried on, as is shown in this statement in the report for that period:

"Though there has been no evangelistic man at this station until the last few months of the triennium, there was a nucleus of faithful workers in evangelistic endeavor--an excellent testimony to the efforts of Mr. Fred Russel and Dr. Bergsma. Here is a firm foundation for a future church."<sup>62</sup>

In 1931 the queen furnished funds for opening a school for lower-class girls in Addis Ababa. But in spite of this forward step, the station still suffered from the lack of an ordained missionary. The world depression made it necessary to recall some of the staff of this station. The evangelistic work was carried on by the lay staff members and Guccessa, another hospital evangelist at Addis Ababa. Still another native evangelist went from house to house in Addis Ababa selling Scriptures.<sup>63</sup>

Even though there was no ordained missionary at Addis Ababa, the hospital staff continued to witness to Jesus Christ. An interesting case was that of a man who had been condemned to death by the government for a certain felony. The method of execution in Ethiopia is that of strapping the condemned man in a chair and firing three shots at him through a pasteboard partition from a rifle fixed in a vise. If the con-

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62. Triennial Report, 1928-1930, pp. 176-177.

63. Annual Report, 1931, pp. 32-34.

demned man survives the three shots he is free to live. In this case a man was brought to the George Memorial Hospital who had survived the execution. He had two nasty-looking but not too serious wounds. During his period of convalescence in the hospital he was converted by the native evangelist. When he recovered he petitioned the hospital staff for a Bible that he might go back to his own people and bring them the good news of Jesus Christ.<sup>64</sup>

By 1935, at the start of the Italo-Ethiopian war, the mission station at Addis Ababa contained in property fourteen acres three miles from the center of the city, a hospital, two missionary dwellings, and a girls' school, along with several small buildings. The staff was composed of one medical doctor, two nurses, an ordained missionary, an industrial missionary, and one single woman teacher.<sup>65</sup>

Up to the opening of hostilities in the Italo-Ethiopian war, the United Presbyterian Mission in Ethiopia had slowly grown from one missionary doctor and his wife at Sayo to three fairly well-equipped stations. The work of the missionaries in these stations bore fruit in small but surely mounting numbers of those who accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. This slow growth was rudely interrupted by the war, and, as it has already has been pointed out, many missionaries had to leave their post and flee the country.<sup>66</sup>

### 3. The Effects of the War on the Mission

#### a. The Effects of the War on the Property and Staff

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64. Annual Report, 1932, pp. 84-85.

65. Annual Report, 1936, p. 47.

66. Ante., p. 93.

The Italian invasion of Ethiopia caused a considerable upheaval in the work of the United Presbyterian Mission. Because there was a change in government there was a possibility of a change in the status of missionaries in that country. The policy of the mission in Ethiopia was given in the 78th Annual Report of The Board of Foreign Missions as follows:

"According to our policy and tradition, our missionaries have refrained from any political activity, and have freely offered to every man, from emperor to serf, defender or invader, the benefits of the gospel upon whose mission they are sent."<sup>67</sup>

At the onset of the war the following was reported of the missionaries in Ethiopia:

"According to the teachings of the gospel that they preach, our missionaries now continue to live and serve, in submission and obedience to the government under which they live."<sup>67</sup>

This referred primarily to those missionaries stationed at Addis Ababa. The following statement contained in the same report indicates the course taken by the other missionaries:

"Under conditions that prevail in the provinces after the Italian occupation of Addis Ababa and before they could control the population in other places, it seemed wise for our missionaries to withdraw from the western stations of Sayo and Gore. Since October, 1936, these stations have been without missionaries. It is gratifying to learn that meetings for worship are being continued by the little groups of Ethiopians in these stations as they watch for the return of missionaries."<sup>67</sup>

By the end of 1936 the only missionaries that remained in Ethiopia were Dr. and Mrs. J. A. Cremer, Rev. and Mrs. D. C. Henry, Miss Ruth Beatty, R. N., Miss Marjorie Fought, R. N., and Miss Ruth Nicol. This gallant band remained at their posts in Addis Ababa doing the work of the Lord. As yet there was no question about the hospital and property in Addis Ababa. But at Gore and Sayo the mission property was oc-

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67. The 78th Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1937, p. 8.

cupied by the Italian army.<sup>68</sup>

The 79th Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions made in May 25, 1938 could only report on the Addis Ababa station. No news had reached them from the Ethiopian brethren at Sayo and Gore. The only certain knowledge to be had was that the Italian army occupied the mission property in these towns. There was no way of claiming the property because the only missionary allowed into Ethiopia that year was Mrs. D. C. Henry. She and her children had taken refuge in the crisis and they were allowed to return because Rev. Henry remained at Addis Ababa.<sup>69</sup>

The Italian policy of refusing the missionaries admission to Ethiopia finally led the Board of Foreign Missions to take the action described below in 1938:

"Liquidation of the property holdings of the Board at Sayo and Gore in Western Ethiopia has been instituted by the government. Inability to secure permission for the return of the missionaries to that area has led the Board to cooperate with the authorities in this process of liquidation, and it should soon be completed."<sup>70</sup>

In 1939 the George Memorial Hospital in Addis Ababa was expropriated by the Italian Government. This move forced the missionaries residing on the property to leave. All the missionaries on the staff at Addis Ababa, except Rev. D. C. Henry and family, went to the Sudan, Egypt, or home to the United States. Rev. D. C. Henry and family were very kindly offered the accomodations of Mr. Daniel Alexander's house. He was an aged American negro who had made his fortune in Ethiopia as a blacksmith.<sup>71</sup> Rev. Henry remained in Addis Ababa until Ethiopia had

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68. 78th Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1937, pp. 48-49.  
69. 79th Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1938, pp. 4, 41.  
70. 80th Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1939, p. 13.  
71. 81st Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1940, p. 9.

been liberated by the British army. He had to suffer imprisonment before the British came.<sup>72</sup>

In April 8, 1940, payment arrangements were made with the Italian government for the Sayo and Gore mission property.<sup>73</sup> It looked as if the work of sixteen years by the United Presbyterian Mission was to stop. The result of the Italian occupation on the mission's converts was not at first known because of communication difficulties, but soon the missionaries received heartening news about the seed they had planted in Ethiopia.

b. The Effect of the War on the Native Converts

What remained in Ethiopia where the seed of the Word of God had been planted at Sayo and Gore? Only a few score believers; a few selected elders without ordination. But these few had the Word of God in their hands, and the love of Christ in their hearts. The effects of war and the departure of the missionaries moved the hearts of the leaders of the little band of Christians at Sayo to despair. For instance it is said of the blind evangelist at Sayo:

"For many hours he lay upon his bed and wept; God had forsaken him and his fellow-believers. Then he prayed. Finally his tears and prayers brought peace to his heart as God told him to rise to his feet and be to the people the messenger of His truth in Christ Jesus."<sup>74</sup>

In the 80th Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions these heartening words concerning the little band of believers were written:

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72. 82nd Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1941, p. 11.  
73. 81st Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1941, p. 9  
74. Foreign Missions Handbook of the United Presbyterian Church, 1947, pp. 3-4.

"The investment in life which our church made in Western Ethiopia over a period of twenty-six years continues to bring spiritual dividends in a divine ratio. With evidence of good will on the part of Italian officials the native Christian leaders at Sayo conduct preaching regularly in several centers assembling hundreds of worshippers each Sabbath. A leader of the Christian community has traveled to Addis Ababa for instruction and for fellowship with missionaries and fellow-Ethiopians in the capitol. The conservation and development of every spiritual value in this truly indigenous church movement is properly the concern of the Mission and Board and a subject calling for the earnest prayer of the entire church."<sup>75</sup>

The Board saw the movement of the natives toward the development of a truly indigenous native church. It was therefore eager to assist the native leaders into forming their own church. Through Rev. D. C. Henry in Addis Ababa the Board was able to do this, for in the next annual report by the Board of Foreign Missions this heartening statement appears:

"The entire membership of the Church in America will rejoice in the marvelous growth and development in the indigenous Ethiopian Church within the past year. Repeated requests on the part of groups of believers worshipping in and about Sayo led to the ordination into the gospel ministry of a leader of their own choice who had, over a period of trial, commended himself also to the missionary staff in Addis Ababa. This initial step in ecclesiastical organization has made possible the admission of more than five hundred people into the Church as baptized members. God's blessing so very evidently accompanied the evangelistic work of the blind elder, Gidada, that he also was ordained into the teaching ministry of the Church at a later date."<sup>76</sup>

This organization resulted in the formation of a new church body, which was considered a branch of the United Presbyterian Allegheny Presbytery. The name given the new church was "Evangelical Bethel."<sup>77</sup>

The ordained leaders of this new church, Mamo Chorka and

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75. 80th Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1939, p. 13.  
76. 81st Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1940, pp. 9-10.  
77. Ibid., p. 10/

Gidada Solon, the blind evangelist of Sayo, with the help of Hada Nessi, a middle-aged Bible woman, visited many villages of Wallega province and baptized many who had previously been reached by the members of American, German, and Swedish missions.<sup>78</sup> The two ordained men had received permission to preach from the Italian government.<sup>79</sup>

In 1940, when Italy entered the second World War, the Italian government in Ethiopia imprisoned Mamo Chorka and blind Gidada Solon. The cruelties at the hands of their captors would make an interesting book in itself. The men narrowly escaped execution at the hands of the guards when the British forces liberated them. The Italians had arrested the men because they were the leaders of the Bethel Church at Sayo, and in stress of war the Italians became suspicious of all native gatherings.<sup>80</sup> The Italians forbade meetings of "Evangelica Bethel," but in spite of that Gidada Solon found little groups still meeting for worship when he was released from prison by the liberating British forces.<sup>80</sup>

The liberating of Ethiopia by the British once again made it possible for missionaries to go to Ethiopia. With the return of the missionaries the Board still saw the importance of leaving the native church independent. During the war, in the absence of the missionaries, and not being permitted to hold their meetings on the mission compound, where the Italian army was quartered, the natives built their own churches.<sup>81</sup> In 1940 the two Ethiopian pastors and Rev. D. C. Henry were dismissed from the rolls of the Allegheny Presbytery and formed the

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78. Foreign Missions Handbook, 1947, pp. 4-5.

79. 81st Annual Report, op. cit., p. 10

80. Foreign Missions Handbook, 1947, p. 5; 82nd Annual Report, p. 11.

81. Ibid., p. 5.



Presbytery of Ethiopia.<sup>82</sup>

In 1941 Dr. Dougherty was instructed by the Board to visit the stations of Sayo and Gore. The report that Dr. Dougherty gave to the Board after this trip led the Board to decide to leave the Ethiopian Church an independent church. The reason for this is seen in the following report:

"Of greatest significance for the future cause of Christ in Ethiopia has been the testimony of Ethiopian Christians during the years of Italian occupation and the months when the whole country was a battlefield. Both pastors in the Sayo area, the Rev. Mamo Choroka and the Rev. Gidada Solon, suffered long periods of cruel imprisonment on false charges which had no basis in fact other than their travel from village to village as preachers of God's Word. But many others have shown an equal zest and fortitude, for Dr. Dougherty wrote after his trip to Sayo:

'Instead of one organized congregation and a few preaching places which we had five years ago, the native evangelical church now has seven organized congregations and some twenty-five other preaching places.'<sup>83</sup>

From the report quoted above it is apparent that the Italian occupation and the forced absence of missionaries was the boost needed to launch the Bethel Evangelical Church of Ethiopia. The zeal of the native leaders was effective in the hands of the Holy Spirit in enlarging the band of believers in Ethiopia. For this reason the general meeting of the mission in 1943 resolved to continue the Evangelical Church in Ethiopia without organizational ties to the church in America. And as for the goal of the Mission the following resolution leaves no doubt:

"Adoption of the goal of a single Evangelical Church in Ethiopia, which church would include in its fellowship all Christians whose conversation has stemmed from, and whose spiritual life is nurtured by, various evangelical missions."<sup>84</sup>

The first steps towards this goal was an Evangelical Church

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82. 82nd Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1941, p. 11.

83. 83rd Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1942, p. 12.

84. 85th Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1944, p. 8.

Conference at Lakemti in January, 1946. At this conference steps were taken to form a United Evangelical Church of Ethiopia. It was also agreed that training for candidates for the ministry should be accelerated.<sup>85</sup>

As for the United Evangelical Church in Ethiopia, developments in the second conference of evangelical Christians led them to adopt the following resolutions: (1) that the need for ministers is acute and action must be taken to solve the problem as soon as possible, (2) there needed to be common church standards, and because of the first two points, (3) the conference decided on a Federation of Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia rather than a union.<sup>86</sup> The Bethel Church is a part of this federation. The native church that achieved its independence under trial is now an independent evangelical church officially known as "The Bethel Evangelical Church."<sup>87</sup>

#### 4. The Post-war Program of the United Presbyterian Mission in Ethiopia

When the British army and its allies liberated Ethiopia from the Italians, the Board of Foreign Missions was still in the process of selling its property at Sayo and Gore to the Italian Government. When it became apparent that the Italians would not be able to pay or to occupy the mission stations, the Board closed negotiations with the Italian government and ordered reoccupation of Sayo and Gore by missionaries as soon as possible. At the same time steps were taken to regain possession of the George Memorial Hospital at Addis Ababa.<sup>88</sup>

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- 85. 87th Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1946, p. 9.
- 86. 88th Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1947, p. 10.
- 87. 89th Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1948, p. 10.
- 88. 82nd Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1941, pp. 11-12.

On January 31, 1942, Emperor Haile Selasse was restored to his throne and immediately the Mission Board asked him for permission to reopen the mission stations. In response to this Haile Selasse agreed to permit the reopening of mission stations, but laid down the following conditions under which mission activity in the empire was to be conducted: (1) all plans for future developments on the part of the missionary societies in Ethiopia are first to be submitted to the Minister of Interior for approval by the government; (2) consent of the government must be obtained before missionary society could undertake activity in new areas; (3) missions are to cooperate with the government in medical, educational, and agricultural work; and (4) the missionaries are to abstain from taking part in any political activity.<sup>89</sup>

At this time the regular missionary staff for the Ethiopian stations was scattered from the Sudan to the United States. The only ones immediately available were medical missionaries temporarily serving in the Sudan. Rev. Henry, who remained in Addis Ababa through the war, was appointed by the government to head the government school for boys and girls in Addis Ababa. This further weakened the available missionary staff.<sup>90</sup>

By 1943, however, more missionaries had returned to the stations in Ethiopia and the task of reorganizing the disrupted work began.<sup>91</sup> In the same year the government of Ethiopia announced the new policy of dividing Ethiopia into Christian and non-Christian areas, with Addis Ababa an open city. This was done to ease the mounting

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89. 83rd Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1942, p. 10

90. Ibid., p. 11.

91. 84th Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1943, p. 11.

friction arising between the clergy of the Ethiopic Church and the missionaries.<sup>92</sup> Later the non-Christian area of Ethiopia was divided into territories for development by specific missionary societies already having stations in the territory. The territory assigned to the United Presbyterian Mission is an area of 40,000 square miles south of the Blue Nile and west of thirty-six degrees longitude.<sup>93</sup>

A recent step to develop further the work of the mission has been the opening of the station at Maji. The pioneers who opened this station were greatly aided in the building of this new station by the acting governor of Maji, who was formerly one of the boys in the mission school at Gore. The cooperation and assistance experienced from this man are described in the following statement from an account of the opening of the new station:

"You can scarcely realize what it means to have the Director General, acting governor, as interpreter at Evangelical Christian services. Truly one sows and another reaps'. How little the workers in Gore in 1930 knew that Tadessa would be helping the mission to become established in Maji in 1948."<sup>94</sup>

In the opening of new fields, and in the further development of schools and hospitals already in operation, the United Presbyterian Mission is contributing to the growth of the Bethel Evangelical Church, and also to the reform of the old Ethiopic Church.

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92. 85th Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1944, p. 7.

93. 86th Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1945, p. 8

94. Mrs. F. L. Russel, "We Go West in Ethiopia," Women's Missionary Magazine, November, 1948, p. 148.

### C. SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter has been to show the growth of the United Presbyterian Mission in Ethiopia and the contribution the Mission has made to the establishment of an evangelical church.

The history of the United Presbyterian Mission in Ethiopia was divided into four parts. The first part dealt with the beginning of the United Presbyterian Mission in Ethiopia, telling of the marvelous way the doors were opened by an invitation from a governor of Ethiopia who helped tremendously in establishing the first mission station at Sayo. This part also tells of the marvelous way the Holy Spirit enabled Dr. Lambie to secure property for another station at Gore, and to win favor with the regent, Ras Tafari, so that the Mission was invited to build a hospital at Addis Ababa.

The second part on the history of the United Presbyterian Mission in Ethiopia gave the history of the growth of the three mission stations, Sayo, Gore, and Addis Ababa. These stations were treated in this order because that was the order in which they were established. The growth of these mission stations was followed up to the time of the Italo-Ethiopian war.

The third part dealt with the effects of the Italo-Ethiopian war on the Mission. The immediate effect of the war on the property and staff of the United Presbyterian Mission was that the property at Sayo and Gore, and later in Addis Ababa had to be abandoned by the missionaries. The property in turn was expropriated by the Italian government.

The effect of the Italo-Ethiopian war on the converts of the

mission was that of a challenge. Left to themselves the native Christian leaders stood up for Christ and rallied their flock. This resulted in the establishment of more preaching and teaching places in spite of the ever-present threat of the Italian authorities. The courage of the native Christian leaders and their willingness to be led by the Holy Spirit led to the establishing of their own church, independent of the United Presbyterian Church in America. The final outcome of the establishing of an independent church was the establishing of the Bethel Evangelical Church.

The fourth part carries the history of the United Presbyterian Mission from the time of the liberation of Ethiopia to the present day. This showed the Mission plans to help in the growth of the Bethel Evangelical Church by education and by opening new areas to the gospel.

In the beginning the aim of the Mission was mainly that of helping the needy people of Western Ethiopia. There was no intention of establishing an evangelical church. The desire of the missionaries was that the Ethiopic Church might cooperate with them. This plan did not work out and the need of an independent evangelical church was apparent. The Italo-Ethiopian war resulted in the growth of many evangelical groups in and around Sayo. The ordination of the native Christian leaders paved the way to the establishment of the Bethel Evangelical Church.

CHAPTER IV  
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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This thesis was an historical survey which attempted to present the events in the history of Ethiopia which led to the establishment of an independent evangelical church. In the first chapter, The History of Ethiopia's Church and People--the Heritage of The Evangelical Church, a survey was made of Ethiopia's history from the earliest recorded times to the present day. The purpose of this chapter was to give the general knowledge of the background out of which the evangelical church grew. It is with a knowledge of the background of the history of Ethiopia that the problem of establishing an evangelical church in that land can be understood.

The average person with a reading knowledge of the New Testament is of the opinion that Christianity was introduced to Ethiopia by the eunuch mentioned in the eighth chapter of Acts. However, it was seen that a Christian church was not actually established in Ethiopia until the fourth century A.D. This church was established by Frumentius and Aedesius.

The peculiarities of the Ethiopic Church are the result of the following influences, which were dealt with in the second chapter. First, it was from the beginning closely connected with the Alexandrian Church. Second, because of the isolation of Ethiopia from the rest of the world the church in Ethiopia was spared from Arianism, but became corrupt through its own isolation. The isolation of the Ethiopian Church was accented by the Moslem invasions of Africa. Repeated attempts by the Moslems to conquer Ethiopia further weakened the church and government of Ethiopia.



Third, the alliance with Portugal which ended in civil war was another factor contributing to the further corruption of the Ethiopic Church. Fourth, this civil war left the government of Ethiopia so weakened that the pagan Gallas were able to exert their corrupting influence in the culture of Ethiopia.

The different events of history and the movement of human tides left the Ethiopian people the way they are today. The greatest movement of humanity, the Galla invasion, left its permanent mark on the Ethiopian Empire, but the Gallas never mastered the Empire. Today the Gallas are the peasants of Ethiopia, with the Amharas and Shoans as their overlords. The Coptic Christians of Ethiopia, the remnants of Ethiopia's early Christianity, are the Amharas, Shoans and Tigrinyans. Their Christianity has definitely Jewish characteristics, a result of early Hebrew influence. The fact that Ethiopia was once under strong Jewish influence is evident in the Falashas, the black Jews of Ethiopia.

The first protestant missionaries to Ethiopia found it a peculiar mixture of Christians, Moslems, and pagans, with the Christians dominating the scene with their dead form of Christianity. This was the form of Christianity that had the complete Word of God in its possession, but had it in a language unknown by the laymen and not understood by the priesthood. It was a Christianity overridden with superstition, believing only in the divinity of Jesus Christ, and salvation through works in the form of fasting.

The coming of the first protestant missionaries, their objectives and failures, and the struggles of different missions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were studied in the second chapter.

Ethiopia was in the grip of civil war when the first Christian missionaries came. These missionaries came with the express purpose of reviving the Ethiopic Church. But because of the civil war little was accomplished other than the distribution of the Bible in the vernacular. These early Christian missionaries were sent out under the Church Missionary Society. Their chief contribution toward the establishing of an evangelical church in Ethiopia was: (1) the distribution of the Bible in the vernacular, and (2) the compiling of grammars and dictionaries in the Amharic and Galla languages which paved the way for later missionaries.

Although other missionary societies sent missionaries to Ethiopia, the only missionary society that had any effect in the nineteenth century was the London Mission for the Jews. This society concentrated its efforts on converting the Falashas, the Jews of Ethiopia, and did so with a measure of success. The result of this work showed that the minority groups were open to the gospel message, and that by their conversion the Ethiopic Church could be closer toward a reform movement.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of the missionary work of the nineteenth century was the translating and printing of the Bible in the vernacular. It had far-reaching effects toward the establishment of an evangelical church, an example of which is the conversion of Sheikh Zacharias.

The missionary work in Ethiopia was opposed by the Ethiopic Church mainly because of the fear the priesthood had for their own position. They feared lest another civil war would be fomented over a new religion. This fear even carried over into the twentieth century, but was less acute. This opposition by the clergy of the Ethiopic Church

and the unsettled state of the government of Ethiopia minimized the missionary accomplishments in Ethiopia in the nineteenth century.

The twentieth century brought a different type of missionary society to Ethiopia. The experiences of the missionaries of the nineteenth century taught the missionaries of the twentieth century that it was useless to try and revive the Ethiopic Church by a direct approach to that church. The new policy was that of meeting the needs of the people in medicine and education in a Christian spirit that would attract the people to Christianity. The gospel was preached, but to the pagan Gallas and not necessarily the Christian Amharas. With this approach the Ethiopic Church was not threatened nor challenged openly, and the work of evangelizing was permitted to grow. Under the strain of the Italo-Ethiopian war, the work of the missions of the twentieth century bore fruit in the establishment of many different evangelical groups in Ethiopia. This indigenous movement was conducted in the absence of missionaries.

The third chapter dealt with one specific missionary society that was established in Ethiopia in the twentieth century. A brief history of the growth of the United Presbyterian Mission in Ethiopia served as an example of the work carried on in Ethiopia by similar missions in the twentieth century. By the medical and educational work carried on by the United Presbyterian Mission the confidence of the Galla people was won. At first the United Presbyterian Mission tried to cooperate with the Ethiopic Church in order to minimize the threat of persecution by that church. Eventually persecution from the Ethiopic Church came and the policy of cooperation was changed to that of building the foundations of an indigenous evangelical church. In the United

Presbyterian Mission, as in other Christian missions in Ethiopia in the twentieth century, the Italo-Ethiopian war forced the missionaries to abandon their stations. They left their work in the hands of the native evangelists, who proved to be faithful stewards in that they caused the little group of believers to grow. The evangelical church that was formed as a result of the war was called the Bethel Evangelical Church.

The Bethel Evangelical Church, an outgrowth of the United Presbyterian Mission in Ethiopia, is a member of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia. This federation is composed of all evangelical Christian groups in Ethiopia.

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