

+ NICOLAS  
Archbishop of Aksum

# CHURCH'S REVIVAL

Emancipation from 1600 years guardianship

FREE CHURCH IN FREE STATE

*achieved*

*by*

HIS MAJESTY

HAILE SELASSIE 1st

EMPEROR OF ETHIOPIA

COSTA TSOUMAS & CO. PRESS  
CAIRO

This book is given to me by Archbishop  
Nicolas of Aksum.

+ NICOLAS  
Archbishop of Aksum



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[www.ethiopianorthodox.org](http://www.ethiopianorthodox.org)



**St Frumentius**  
**(Abba Salama, Kassati Birhan)**  
**The Illuminator of Ethiopia**

*Egiggu Retta*



TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
BLATEN GUETA HEROUI

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**HIS MAJESTY HAILE SELASSIE 1st  
EMPEROR OF ETHIOPIA**  
2 November 1930 — Day of His Coronation

CHURCH REVIVAL  
achieved  
by  
HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY  
HAILE SELASSIE I<sup>ST</sup>



The celebration of the Coronation's Jubilee of His Majesty, the Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie I, reminds to all who did follow, during this period, the developments Ethiopia has realized. many momentous historical events, which have seriously influenced the fate of this old-aged Country.

These events lead to various aspects concerning Ethiopia's life. Their achievement due to the creative and reformative breath, this great Sovereign has inspired to His people and to His country, in fighting firmly against thousand of difficulties and reactions of every kind as well from inside as from outside.

However all these difficulties and reactions were overrun and yielded by His unshake and firm will and His keenwitted ways of dealing with all problems of His country.

But we must also recognize that the hand of God, who rules the destiny of mankind, has protected Him in many cases and guided Him to settle many problems with success. God has blessed the imperial efforts to push and sustain the Ethiopian People on the road of progress: God is also enabling Him to fulfil the high mission He is entrusted with on the African territories.

Between the great achievements, which could naturally influence the social, moral and spiritual evolution and the development of the Ethiopian People and Country, are the successful endeavours of H.I. Majesty to alter the status of guardianship of the Church and His urge to provide for Ethiopia: **"A free church in a free State"**.

This question has been resolved with well-known Imperial ways and His ability in diplomacy. To-day the Ethiopian Church may be proud that she obtained an emancipation status and she is going ahead to become an autocephalous Church.

The dependency of the Ethiopian Church on the jurisdiction of the Alexandria Church has a long history. It begun at 340, since Ethiopia has been converted by St. Frumentius, whose name has survived among the Ethiopian People as Aba Salama, Kassate Birhan (the father of peace and the Illuminator) and received her first bishop from Alexandria.

It was quite natural, that at the first days of her conversion, the Ethiopian Church would be put under the guardianship of Alexandrian Church.

But owing to the christological quarrels and the decree held by the IVth Œcumenical Council in Chalcedon (451), the eastern Christendom has been perturbed. This perturbation ended in Egypt with the disruption and the appearance of two churches, that of **Melkites**, and that of **Jacobites**. The first is to-day known under

the name of Orthodox, and the second under that of Coptic <sup>(1)</sup>

Both these Churches in Egypt, the Melkite (Orthodox) and the Jacobite (Coptic) claimed the allegiance of the Ethiopian Church and her guardianship.

The friendly relations and the political collaboration existing then between Constantinople and Aksum brought the Ethiopian Church closer to the Orthodox (Melkite Church) than to the Coptic (Jacobite). In such assertion's support the historical evidences are not lacking.

But during the VIIth century happened serious events changing the political situation in Egypt and in all Middle East. Ethiopia, consequently has been secluded, so that no more touch with the Mediterranean Christendom. This seclusion brought it fatally and involuntarily into the arms of the Jacobite (Coptic) Church in Egypt. And as since the conquest of Egypt by the Arabs the head of the Church in Ethiopia become traditionnally appointed by the Coptic Patriarch, and elected among the Coptic Clergy, thenceforth the Ethiopian Church has been surnamed **Coptic**.

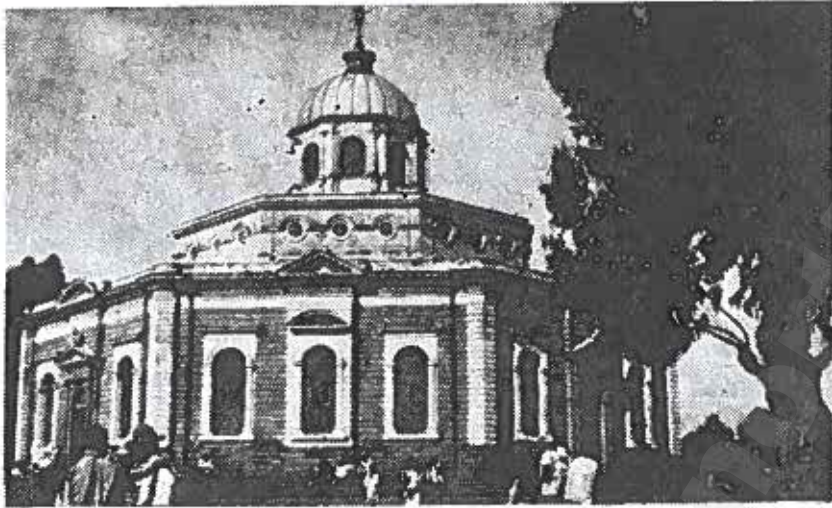
It is mistake to call the Ethiopians, from the religious point of view, Copts, as many people do, for although their Church receives its head from the Coptic Church, it is a distinct national Church, in which the spirit of the nation has found intense expression. Who call the Ethiopian Church **Coptic** ignore the history of the Christian Faith in Ethiopia, so much as the genuine national spirit of the Ethiopian People.

The Ethiopian Church is a special and "sui generis" branch of the ancient eastern Church; she has her own traditions and some particularities distinguishing her from the Coptic Church. She is formed and evolved during the long period of her seclusion from the Greco-Latin Christian Mediterranean world, on the basis of her national traditions. During this long and obscure period of seclusion the only existing contact with the outside was the Ethiopian Monastery in Jerusalem, this small port hole, through which she was communicating with the outer world. But the main link was the Coptic bishop elected among the monks of the Monastery of St. Anthony, since the conquest of Egypt by the Arabs, and sent to Ethiopia as her Archbishop. Always the Ethiopian Church had one bishop and, often, long periods have elapsed after the death of one of them, before the competent Civil and Ecclesiastical authorities in Egypt could be informed and another Abuna arrived. <sup>(2)</sup>

(1) The Orthodox Church in Middle East has been by the opponents surnamed **Melkite** (royalist) because it was believed that she was following rigorously the faith and doctrine admitted by the king (Malek) of Constantinople, whereas the surname of **Jacobite** has been applied to the body of Churches split up from the Greco-Latin Christian world, after the Chalcedonian Council, in Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia, and organized there by Jacobus Baradaïus. This surname of Baradaïus is from the fact, that this ascetic organizer of the monophysite Churches had a horse-cloth (burda'ta), as his whole wardrobe and furniture; half sufficed for his clothing, and the other half for his bed.

(2) Abuna (lit. "our father" the Ge'ez title; Abbatatchin in Amharic) denotes bishop and not metropolitan, and confusion was caused when more bishops were consecrated, since they also were abunas.





St. George's Cathedral where the Coronation Ceremonies took place on November 2nd, 1930.



Archbishop Bassilios and other Bishops, among whom Mgr. Nicolas of Axoum of the Greek Orthodox Church.

This bishop was only the link of the dependency on the Ethiopian Church no more, and the representative of the Coptic guardianship.

This guardianship had many phases and various vicissitudes. Our statement has not the intention to evaluate how much Ethiopia had gained or lost from its association through the Abunas with the Church of Alexandria. It is difficult to say; except at rare intervals that Church had little to give to her daughter!

An undeniable, however, fact is that the Ethiopian People through his representatives, so in Church as in State, tried to shake this guardianship, or to release from it completely, or at least, to alter its terms. From the moment that Ethiopia was feeling herself ripe in freedom and independency and she was keeping and sustaining them, she was also feeling herself ripe for the emancipation of her Church and for its freedom. The long dependence on Alexandria was surprising in view of the strong nationalist feeling of Ethiopians. A general heartfelt desire lulled each Ethiopian: "**A free Church in a free State!**"

We shall pass over the periodical manifestation of this desire, either under the form of betterment of the terms of this foreign ecclesiastical guardianship, or that of the complete emancipation.

Who ever followed closely and impartially the development of the Ethiopian People, either from the political or the ecclesiastical side, will certainly remember the endeavours of the Emperor Johannes on the ecclesiastical field. Johannes was believing that the submission of the Ethiopian Church, as daughter, to her mother, the Alexandrian Church, had been justified in the earliest days, but very soon the daughter Church became much greater in numbers and different in geographical extent than the mother; even the limitation upon the number and the jurisdiction of the bishops was a serious handicap in such an immense country, especially as there have been interruptions in the continuity of the Abuna's office. Moreover the spiritual vitality of the Alexandrian Church showed very naturally fluctuations during a partnership of many centuries.

For these reasons the Emperor Johannes, at the death of Abuna Athanassios, seized the opportunity to increase the number of the bishops and to organize the Church. He was also determined to apply to other eastern Churches, if the Coptic Church should refuse His desiderata<sup>(3)</sup>. The claim of Johannes corresponded, as we have seen, to a real need. The result of the dispute, after the threats Johannes has uttered, four Coptic bishops have been appointed. At this moment this number has been decided proportionally to the number of the four Evangelists.

One bishop was destined for Tigré, beside the Emperor, one for Shoa, one for Codjam, the fourth was reserved for the fourth kingdom, which Johannes was intending to establish for His son;

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(3) The threats of Johannes explain why Johannes has applied to GEORGE, King of Hellenes (Greece), and to Sophronius, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria; unfortunately we have nothing to justify their silence to these appeals!

that has not been realized, because the prematured heroic death of Johannes.

At the days of Menelik, from these bishops only Abuna Mathaios survived. He stood for many years faithful to his mission and devoted to the Emperor Menelik. The short reign of Lij Iyasu and the disorders roused then have evidently proved the salutary prestige of an Abuna aware of his high mission.

But the ecclesiastical question concerning the guardianship of the Alexandrian Church was raised acutely after the death of Abuna Mathaios. It has been envisaged resolutely and firmly by the new star risen in the national horizon of Ethiopia. His Majesty the Emperor, Haile Selassie, then Regent — Crown Prince, under the name Ras Tafari Makonnen, took this matter in His strong hands.

The grandeur of the Sovereigns and the Leaders of the People and the success of their efforts depend upon the degree they are representing the ideals, the yearnings and the needs of the people trusted to their leadership and their responsibility.

In His program of reforms and organization of the state the Regent at that time, and actually the Emperor, set down the secular problem of the Ethiopian Church.

Since the origin, the State has been considered in Ethiopia as the defender of the Faith and of the Church. The Emperors and the Negus at their time have much contributed to the expansion of the Christianity in the country. They protected it even outside of Ethiopia. Such was the case of the heroic expedition of El-Asbeha to the Felix Arabia (Yemen) A.D. 524 for the protection of the Christians there and the vengeance of the blood poured abundantly by the fanatic Jewish-Arab leader, Dhu-Nawas in Najran (4).

The beneficent activity of the Negus in favour of the Christian religion joined closely and strongly the Church to the State. Between them a link of gratefulness has been created; it was not a slavish submission as by misunderstanding some observers suppose and pretend wrongly. Such link of gratefulness manifested by mutual help and close collaboration between Church and State existed in Byzantium; also there, it has been misunderstood. Wherever there is a national Church, there is a close collaboration. That is characteristic in the East. The western conception adapts itself uneasily to such understanding; in western countries the Church has been some time hindering the freedom of the peoples and was unfavourable to their progress in science and in other aspects of the culture.

Therefore those who criticise the Eastern peoples and their Churches are certainly wrong in doing so. Of course, the attempt of ecclesiastical reformation made by the Emperor met many oppositions as well inside as outside of the country. The Emperor was meeting such oppositions, since the beginning on His political

(4) The Greek Orthodox Church celebrates on October 24th the memory of Arethas and his followers martyred then in Najran.

activity; but He kept His patience and perseverance; moreover He was knowing the ways to realize His reformatory program through all its aspect successfully. He was assisted by wise advisers. Among others He had His enlightened Minister of Foreign Affairs, of well-remembered memory, Blaten Gueta Heroui.

After the death of Abouna Mathaios, Ethiopia claimed the consecration of national episcopacy with a national Archbishop on head. Of course, the abolition of the secular regime, as was the 1600 years guardianship, provoked not only protests but some hard reactions. The opposition mobilized all the conservative elements; but the unbending will of His Majesty neutralized them; He knew how to guide the helm through the rocks and the reefs and to manoeuvre prudently to bring it safely into the port.



The Epiphany. The Archbishop is praying in presence of His Majesty the Emperor.

The main argument of the Reform was that Ethiopia is a Christian kingdom with a population of more than 12,000,000 inhabitants. The country has been converted since the IVth century A.D. But from this conversion can't follow that the Ethiopian Church must be administrated by one single chief and this one being elected and appointed from abroad, with a well-known insufficiency and limited authority, ignoring the customs and the language of his flock, as well as the traditions of the Ethiopian Church and Country. Moreover that was not reasonable neither Christian and non in any way justifiable!

The argument of the opposition was the apocryphal canon of the Œucumenical Council of Nicea (325) forged in the view to

support the maintaining the guardianship of the Alexandrian Church and eternizing her jurisdiction upon Ethiopia. (5)

It was even believed that this spurious canon had been confirmed as of the agreement in 1268 between Takla Haymanot, the saintly head of the Monastery of Debra Libanos and the representatives of the Solomonian line which he had helped to restore.

The reaction had recourse to many ways; but the Emperor, being confident in His diplomatic ability and avoiding systematically the rough settlements and the "coup d'état," handled the problem with deep wisdom and followed His method and tactics to gain the cause step by step.

The discussions of three years held then ended to the **compromis** of 1929. The Ethiopian Church consented to receive the new Archbishop from Alexandria, but Alexandria had been charged with condition *sine qua non* to consecrate four Ethiopian Bishops, a fifth increased their number, when the Patriarch Johannes during his visit to Addis Ababa ordained the Itchegé Severus (1930).

The consecration of five Ethiopian bishops provoked in the Coptic Church fears, that this national episcopacy might push the Ethiopian Church towards the independence by consecrating either a new Archbishop, or other more bishops. In order to quell the crisis roused in Addis Ababa and in Cairo and to avert these fears, the Ethiopians consented to an express condition to abstain from such consecrations.

Afterwards followed the national peripeteia of Ethiopia (1936-1940). The Italian occupation broke the link between the Ethiopian

(5) It is the 42nd canon of Abraham Echelensis version. It prohibits to the Ethiopian to elect a Patriarch; their spiritual chief should only have the right to the title of **Catholicos** and will remain under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Alexandria.

The canon says:

\* The Ethiopians could not create, nor elect a Patriarch; moreover their bishop will be submitted to the Patriarch keeping the Alexandrian see.  
 \* Nevertheless this bishop will be beside them regarded as Patriarch, and will be called **Catholicos**. He would not be thence, as the other Patriarchs, entitled to consecrate Archbishops, as he has no the honours nor the powers of a real Patriarch; should a council be held in Rum (Greco-byzantine) territory and the Patriarch of Antioch present, he would keep the seventh place after the Primate of Seleucia; and if he would be authorized to elect Archbishops in his province, he could never elevate to this rank an Ethiopian.

The Fatha-Negast registered the canon as a fundamental one!

This canon reveals a more recent date than the period, when the Council of Nicea took place (325). At this date, indeed, Ethiopia had no bishop and St. Frumentius had only just began the conversion and it was but later that he related the good results his missions had realized, to St. Athanasius already Archbishop of Alexandria, when he was elected and consecrated as bishop of the new converts in Aksum.

On the other hand this apocryphal canon implies numerous episcopacy existing already in Ethiopia and that their Archbishop is prone to rid himself of the suzerainty of Alexandria. Moreover it implies that the Patriarchal dignity was coming into full force at that time, whereas such was not the case at the time of Nicean Council.

This spurious canon could not been brought before the end of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century, and it might have been forged by some Syro-Copto-Jacobite Synod.

and the Coptic Church. As in Dodecanese the Italian policy was not tolerating the dependence of the Greek Orthodox Church there, on the Œucumenical Patriarkate in Constantinople, and consequently, she was pushing the Dodecanesian episcopacy to create an *autocephalous* Church, so in Ethiopia this policy had more reasons to not tolerate the dependence of the Ethiopian Church on that of Copts in Egypt.

Before the occupation of Ethiopia the Italian administration in Eritrea was tolerating the dependence of the Eritrean Church on the Coptic and refused her dependence on the Archbishop in Addis Ababa, even being non Ethiopian; but once Ethiopia has been occupied and both Ethiopia and Eritrea were under their control, the Italians tried to break the link of the Coptic Church with



The Archbishop Basilios, Abouna Theophilos and Mgr Nicolas of Axoum officiating

Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Italian policy was aware of the heartfelt yearning of the Ethiopians. The Ethiopian People is in love with the freedom; he requires it in the State; he requires it even in the Church.

At the first years of the occupation, the Italians asked to rock the nationalist feeling of the Ethiopian to sleep, if not to stifle it. They tickled the Ethiopian yearning to obtain *autocephalous* i.e. independent Church. By a "coup d'état" the Ethiopian Church had been proclaimed autocephalous. At the head of this new Church, Abuna Abraham (6), the surviving bishop from the five

(1) The bishops Petros and Mikael had been executed by the Italians; Severus was dead and the indifference saved bishop Isaak.

bishop of the ancient regime, had been promoted as the first autocephalous Metropolitan of Ethiopia: his successor had been Abuna Johannes (1940); at this short time many bishop were consecrated.

Of course this coup d'état gave vent to the indignation and the protests in Cairo. The new ecclesiastical status had been disowned. The new Archbishop, the new-ordained bishops, all their deeds fell under the *anathema*.

New status appeared in the Ethiopian Church: if it was not canonical in due form, at least in the main, it was responding to the Ethiopian heart!

After the delivrance of Ethiopia, on May 1941, and the return of His Imperial Majesty to His Capital, the ecclesiastical question turned different way. His Majesty the Emperor met many problems to settle. Among them was a ecclesiastical one. But as it has been said, although His Majesty could impose sovereignly His will or consent to the new regime as "*fait accompli*," He preferred the painless operations and the settlement of the questions by the pacific ways and negociations. He applied so in this matter, His diplomatic ability: in spite of His numerous occupations in political, economical and military problems of the reborn Ethiopia, He did omitted to pay exceptional attention to the settlement of the ecclesiastical question, as it appeared after the status the Italian administration had realized.

Cairo showed some intransigence and inconciliability referring to the long established status and the apocryphal canon of Nicea; on the other hand Addis Ababa opposed resolutely her claims invoking justice and the evolution of the country and asserting that this famous canon of Nicea was forged intentionally.

Discussions among the competent authorities croached the question in Cairo as well as in Addis Ababa. Among Addis Ababa and Cairo many official documents were exchanged respectively. Delegations crossed one another between Egypt and Ethiopia. The negociations approached their end: but suddenly, at the last moment a new complication appeared. The Emperor stand firm in His claims. He was trusting in the fair and Christian views of the Ethiopian Church. He did not follow the exemple of Henri VIIIth of England, in his querell with the Pope Clement VIIth, for the realization of His project. He was convinced that, sooner or later, the views of His Church would succeed. They were rightful, Christian and canonical. Even though genuine canons were against them, He could invok the evangelical saying: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for Sabbath"! (Mark 2: 27).

The Ethiopian People would, by no means more, consent to return to the former status of guardianship. Above all, this status had been abolished during the Italian occupation. During the discussions and the conferences some extremist elements made their appearance; they claimed the settlement by cutting the gordian knot. With great calm the Emperor was directing the rousing currents and with a high wisdom He bent the intransigent irreconciliability of all the opponents.

The agreement signed on July 13th, 1948, in Cairo, by the Coptic Patriarkate and the Ethiopian delegation ended the discussions and negociations of many years. Accordingly to this agreement it had been recognized to the Ethiopian Church to have five bishops consecrated by the Patriarch himself immediately, and others to follow later, according to the needs of the Church, consecrated by the Archbishop in Ethiopia. The Archbishop Kyrillos was to be reinstated on the Ethiopian Church see; but his successor would be elected between the Ethiopian bishops, endowed with the power and the right to consecrate bishops, as many as the Ethiopian Church may be in need of but always with the knowledge of the Patriarch.

Indeed, when the Archbishop Kyrillos died, on October 1949 the electoral assembly composed by representatives of the Church and of the State appointed the Bishop Bassilios for his succession. The ceremony of His ordination had been held in Cairo on January 14th, 1950.

Since her conversion, at 340 A.D., for the first time, did the Ethiopian Church had her national Archbishop assisted by national bishops chosen among the Ethiopian clergy.

This unprecedented event in history of the Ethiopian Church



Archbishop Bassilios pronouncing his sermons in the presence of Their Majesties after his ordination.





was celebrated with the warmest enthusiasm. The arrival of the new Archbishop, Mgr Bassilios, from Cairo to Addis, was a triumphal entry to Ethiopia, as well in the airport, as in the Imperial Palace. He was received with military honours and gun salutes; the people uttered his joy by crying and singing in the roads. In the Palace was prepared the investiture's ceremony; in the Hall of the throne Their Imperial Majesties were standing to receive the new Primate of Ethiopia; at their left, were the members of The Imperial Family, the High Officials of the State and the Ministers; at their right, were the heads of the Diplomatic missions in Ethiopia and the representative of the Greek Orthodox Church, Mgr Nicolas Archbishop of Aksum. The ceremony was impressive greatly. Their Imperial Majesties received the Archbishop on the threshold of the Hall. In appendix we are publishing the speeches of this ceremony. That day was an epochal one in the history of the country. The Emperor was very proud; His perseverance and His prudence created this day. God has also blessed it. It was a joyful day for all the Ethiopian People. The past generation dreamed it. The Ethiopian People obtained national episcopacy; he obtained national Archbishop and above all he obtained a Free Church in free State.

The firmness, the wisdom, the perseverance coupled with the confidence in God were crowned with high success !

The repeal of a 1600 years lasting guardianship, the emancipation of the Church, the acquisition of national episcopacy with a national Archbishop at head, all happy result of 25 years efforts, had been achieved by His Majesty the Emperor Hailé Slassié Ist, celebrating this year the Jubilee of His happy Coronation.

The new ecclesiastical status is more than an autonomy ; it is almost a *ut ce ph a l o u s* i.e. independent status *DE FACTO*, if not yet *DE JURE*.

The new Archbishop Bassilios is a most sympathetic Prelate among the Ethiopian clergy. He distinguished himself by his good heart, his kindness and his intense zeal over the Ethiopian Church. His pastoral solicitude is the spiritual, moral and social progress of the Church. He is aware conscientiously of her mission. Although he does belong to the old generation nevertheless, he is progressist.

During the national peripeteia, he followed His Majesty the Emperor as a levite faithful to the Church, to the Country and to the Emperor. He was representative of the indomitable and unyielding spirit of the Ethiopian clergy against the aggression. The Ethiopian clergy must be proud; he gave to the Church and to the Country many new martyrs; Abuna Petros, Abuna Mikael and the hecatombe of Debra Libanos and Mengasha are as some high titles of honour and pride for the Ethiopian Church and the Ethiopian People.

When the struggle for the deliverance of Ethiopia from the enemy started, the priest, at that time, Abba Bassilios, followed the Emperor in the battlefield. And as in former time Aaron was stretching up his hands to the heaven, in prayer for Moses, fighting against Amalikitites, so Abba Bassilios was stretching up his hands

towards heaven, in prayer for the Emperor fighting against the aggressors in Ethiopia. He blessed the Flag of the Liberty when His Majesty was to hoist it in Omedla.

God has blessed the faith of His servant and the devotion to the Emperor and to the Fatherland. At the discussions about the emancipation of the Ethiopian Church, the Itchegé Bassilios has well plaid his part. Therefore, when the time came, the Lord elevated him to the highest rank in the Church. He became the first national Archbishop of the Ethiopian Church.



Martyr Bishop Abouna Petros with  
Mgr. Nicolas of Axoum in 1931.

The Archbishop Bassilios is profoundly aware of the hard duties and the responsibilities the new regime is shouldering on him. He is enjoying the high support of his progressist Emperor; with such a support and with his faith to God, whose power is made in wickness, he turned his hands with all his heart to organize the Church in Ethiopia. He is assisted by 13 bishops; he knows the evangelical saying: "Neither do men put new wine in old wine-skins..... but they put new wine in fresh wine-skins and both are preserved." (Math. 9: 17)

He is taking care of the creation a new staff for the administration of the reborn Ethiopian Church. His aim is to form new clergy synchronized with the other Ethiopian youth who is going full gallop in every side of culture.

Above the high support he is enjoying, he has among his helpers His Grace the Bishop of Harar, Mgr Theophilos, as his right hand. He is trying to assure for the Ethiopian Church the place she is worthy of, among the ancient Eastern Churches.

He has many means at his disposal; he has the zeal; and above all he has the creative breath of the Great Emperor Haile Selassie Ist, the maker of the Free Church in free State.

This Church, which became free after 1600 years since her conversion, is one of the brightest and memorable achievements of this Great Emperor.

The coming generations will remember with deep gratitude this Emperor, just as all the Christian Churches remember the Great Constantin. The Eastern Orthodox Church honours Great Constantin up to date as a peer of Apostles.

Is Hailé Selassie Ist not worthy of a such gratitude and honour ?

+ **Nicolas**

Greek Orthodox Archbishop  
of Aksum



**SPEECHES MADE AT THE INVESTITURE'S  
CEREMONY OF THE FIRST NATIONAL  
ARCHBISHOP OF ETHIOPIA HIS EMINENCY  
MGR BASSILIOS HELD IN THE IMPERIAL  
PALACE ON JANUARY 19th, 1951**

**THE ARCHBISHOP SPEAKS**

“Your Imperial Majesty,

“First of all, it is my privilege to extol Almighty God for choosing me to be the first Ethiopian Archbishop, following the successful achievement of authority for the Ethiopian church.

“Ethiopia, which enjoys the reputation of being one of the first nations to be Christianised, has reached this exalted status through the agencies of her combined material and spiritual wealth. As moral strength reinforces bodily frailty, so are the spiritual and material forces complementary to each other.

“Ethiopia has a record of continued faith in God, from the time of the Old Testament to the New. This devotion to God has with favourable reception from the Church as well as the Government.

“During the reigns of the pious Kings, Abraha and Atsbaha, the torch of light of Christ was held aloft by St. Frumentius. As a result of this, Frumentius, a pioneer of the movement, was known as the “torch-bearer.” Thus, Frumentius is an apostle who found the Ethiopian people eminently prepared to assimilate the teachings of the Gospel.

“Likewise, Abraha and Atsbaha’s names were also associated with ‘light’, since the light of Gospel penetrated into the country during their reigns.

“Once, Histewa Lehindekie, a traveller to Jerusalem, believed in Christ, according to the prophetic saying, although he had never seen the latter. So has Ethiopia been a firm believer, according to the saying: ‘Blessed are they who believe in me, without needing to see me to believe.’

“Since the adoption, by Ethiopia, of the New Testament in succession to the Old Testament, the Government repeatedly demanded the right of having an Ethiopian Archbishop and Bishops.

“However, since the time was not ripe, the Ethiopian church waited under the traditional administration. For some time, when unfortunate circumstances crept in, it continued its work through divinely appointed Ethiopian Bishop. For example, the Great Apostle, Abuna Teklehaimanot, was an Ethiopian chosen by God for the post.

"When I recall the life history of Abuna Teklehaimanot, I am reminded of the contribution made towards the progress of the Ethiopian church by Your Imperial Majesty's ancestor, Atse Yikuno Amlak. Besides this, the Ethiopian church will never forget the kind turns rendered to it by the Ethiopian Rulers.

"Comparing Your Imperial Majesty's work with that of Your ancestors, David and Solomon, Your service to the Ethiopian church emerges out to be of paramount importance. It is a tribute to Your Imperial Majesty's patient and persistent efforts that the Ethiopian church has secured its right without disconnecting the existing ties in the spiritual realm.

"St. Paul has said: "...and let us run with patience the race that is set for us." Following this motto, Your Imperial Majesty has exercised admirable patience in Your present achievement.

"As God said to Abraham, "I am your shield, and your reward shall be very great," so God has fulfilled your ambition because of your magnanimity. The Ethiopian Church therefore, always prays for the longevity of Your Imperial Majesty.

"On this occasion we remember the Ethiopian spiritual Martyrs Abuna Petros and Abuna Mikael who sacrificed their lives during the enemy occupation of the country, with an equanimity of mind making no distinction between life and death, sweetness and bitterness, heaviness and lightness remembering your Imperial Majesty's service to the Ethiopian church and conscious of the reward of sacrifice, they discharged their duty.

"We remember calling at the Imperial Palace on July 22, 1948, following the consecration of Ethiopian bishops. Your Imperial Majesty then said: 'It is necessary that the greatness of Ethiopia and her civilizational development must go side by side with her spiritual greatness.' This spiritual growth is now seen having obtained this great spiritual right.

"The agreement reached between the Ethiopian and the Egyptian Orthodox churches, without any friction in the existing spiritual bonds, has prompted the great happiness we entertain now. In this connection, I would recall, in the presence of Your Imperial Majesty, the reception accorded to me by His Grace Yosab II in Egypt as a mark of sharing our mutual joy.

"Your Imperial Majesty has accomplished a memorable task in the spiritual realm of this country. We are aware that, in proportion to the growth of the church, the responsibilities become heavier.

"May God bring to fruition the effort which has been expended in this task. May God bless Your Imperial Majesty and Your lineage. May God's mercy and protection be with Ethiopia, our country. AMEN !"

**HIS EXCELLENCY  
BITWEDDED MAKONNEN ENDELATCHOU  
THE PRIME MINISTER SPEAKS**

"Your Imperial Majesty,

"Permit me, Your Imperial Majesty, to express my profound felicity upon having the honor of delivering this speech on the occasion of a great historical achievement.

"To-day, the long-cherished desire and aim of the Ethiopian Church has been crowned with success. She has obtained the happiness and honor worthy of her antiquity.

"Following the example of Ethiopian Kings who devoted particular care toward the Church from its infancy, Your Imperial Majesty always has supported the Ethiopian Church on an unshakeable altar of honor. It is possible, therefore, to say that His Imperial Majesty has been as fortunate as were Abraha and Atsbha.

"Realizing, the necessity of an autonomous church for an independent country, Your Imperial Majesty laid the foundation for achieving this aim twenty years ago. This aim has now achieved that independence which is appropriate to the world-renowned name of the Ethiopian Church.

"In planning any kind of work, there are two things which must be considered. These are: the beginning and the end. But these things are natural gifts of Your Imperial Majesty. Therefore, no important task begun has been left unfinished during Your reign.

"Your Imperial Majesty,

"In order to enable Your people to share the fruits of modern civilization without destroying their traditional practices, and knowing that the only means of bringing to Your people a high standard of life is education, Your Imperial Majesty has devoted most of Your precious time to this cause. And the fruits of this effort may be seen in the fact that already educated young men are today participating directly in the big task of modernizing Ethiopia.

"By impressing upon the minds of children that any kind of education and knowledge is useful only when practiced in the fear of God, Your Imperial Majesty has given such advice on many occasions in the past. This counsel of witness of conscience is leading youngsters in the proper direction.

"As Your Imperial Majesty has said, Man's civilization can only be permanent and constructive if it is sustained by a deep faith in the Creator, a civilization lacking in faith and duty can only prove to be a destructive one. Examples have repeatedly occurred

in history. Man, through the instrumentality of his education and wisdom, has become able to know and make profound scientific researches and to master his environment. But it is only through spiritual faith and creative work that man can come to know himself.

"The present international situation presents evidence that if man avoids and neglects the doing of benevolent deeds, all his education, wisdom and wealth cannot save him from trials and distress.

"Your Imperial Majesty sees clearly two parallel courses in Your people's advancement. One is that of material civilized advancement. The other is the people's spiritual advancement. And as Your Imperial Majesty always thinks also of the country's freedom, honor and life. He has found the way of securing autonomy for the Ethiopian Church during our present brief historical epoch, thereby achieving and opening a new era in the spiritual history of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Church and the Ethiopian people.

"Moreover, this great goal has been achieved, through the wisdom and patience of Your Imperial Majesty, without disrupting the age-old spiritual ties between the Ethiopian and Alexandrine Churches. Inasmuch as the right demanded by the Ethiopian Church has been granted through mutual consent, this will serve to strengthen still further the existing amity.

"Your Imperial Majesty,

"Your submission of Your achievements to God Almighty, and contemplating the worthiness of Your efforts, aided by the strong belief that everything can be done through the will of God, contributes much to the greatness of Your life's history.

"Inasmuch as happiness brought through effort and work is of everlasting value, so Your Imperial Majesty's work will forever be recognized by this quality. As it has been said, 'Anyone who begins any work with the help of God, will accomplish his work by the help of God.'

"Long live Your Imperial Majesty!

"Long live Her Imperial Majesty!

"Long live the Imperial Family!

"Long live Ethiopia!"

## HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR CROWNS THE CEREMONY BY HIS SPEECH

*We are thankful to God at the nomination of an Ethiopian to be the Archbishop of Ethiopia, which accomplishment We consider to be of the highest importance of all that We have done, during Our reign, for the benefit of the Ethiopian church.*

*The effort, undertaken several years ago, and the path We have had to travel since, for the gradual attainment of complete authority for the Ethiopian church, have been too arduous to be forgotten.*

*At last, the work willed by God has been accomplished, and He has given Our independent nation a church, endowed with authority, which ranks among the free churches of the world. This accomplishment, which has taken place during Our reign, constitutes a matter of pride for Us as well as for Our people. The monarchs of Our ancestry earnestly desired and hoped to witness this event; and God has enabled Us to see realized the hope, strengthened by faith.*

*Our congratulations go to Your Grace that you are the first Ethiopian to be entrusted with such a high and sacred duty during Our reign. An era of increased mutual respect and cordiality has opened between the Ethiopian and Egyptian Orthodox churches.*

*Our thanks are due to His Holiness Yosab II, of the Holy Seat of St. Mark, who consented to bring this matter to a settlement, in the light of God's inspiration; We are happy to remark that this ecclesiastical evolution, effected in Our age, points to our common good luck.*

*Spiritual power is the eternal guide, in this life and the life after, for man who ranks supreme among all creatures. Led forward by spiritual power, man can reach the summit destined for him by the Great Creator.*

*In Your Grace is vested the responsibility for the contribution of the Ethiopian church, for its part, towards giving the remedy for, and the spiritual comfort to the wounds caused by the evil in the world. Moreover, in particular, the duty is yours for giving guidance to the Ethiopian people for their benefit in their terrestrial as well as celestial lives.*

*We earnestly hope that God grant you strength and His Grace to help you discharge the heavy duties that you shoulder.*