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Article

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An ‘Old Amharic’ Commentary on the Nicene Creed

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The text of a Commentary on the Nicene Creed (sälotä haymanot) which forms the subject of this paper appears at the end of a copy of the Psalter and Waddase Maryam belonging to the Ethiopian church at Däbrä Gännät in Jerusalem [MS JE 48 E = MS Dabra Gannat 186].\(^1\) The text was copied and circulated privately by the late Roger Cowley, who also records that material similar in outline but different in detail is contained in the andamta-commentary on the Anaphora of the Nicene Fathers. Versions of the preamble to the Commentary, which describes Arius’ heresy and the events which led to the Council of Nicaea and the drafting of the Nicene Creed, are known from other manuscript versions of the Creed, for instance Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris), Fonds d’Abbadie 101, f. 2r,\(^2\) EMML 2468, ff. 138b–141b,\(^3\) and more recently EMML 7007, ff. 34v–74v.\(^4\)

The text of the commentary and the preamble is in the type of archaic or pre-modern Amharic that is generally called Old Amharic. The use of the word ‘old’ here has been the subject of some debate. The name Old Amharic is used to cover a range of varieties of the language, some of which are indeed old in the sense that they clearly represent an earlier stage of Amharic containing, for instance, some syntactic patterns, grammatical forms and lexical items that have become obsolete in Modern Amharic.\(^5\) Such language is also obviously ‘old’ inasmuch as it is found in manuscript sources that are datable to before the mid 19th century. Alongside this, and perhaps

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\(^1\) Unfortunately, I have not been able to gain access to the original manuscript. The copy of the text used in this article, therefore, is that of Cowley’s transcription.

\(^2\) CARLO CONTI ROSSINI, Notice sur les manuscrits Éthiopiens de la collection d’Abbadie = Journal Asiatique, 1912, 483 (MS 102).


\(^5\) By ‘Modern Amharic’ I refer to forms of Amharic known from the mid-19th cent. to the present day.
not always clearly differentiated from it, a type of language particular to exegesis and commentary on religious texts, such as is covered by the term andâmta, is also generally called Old Amharic. The difficulty about using the epithet ‘old’ in this instance is that this language is still in use today in the highly specialised environment of religious commentary. Of course, such a variety of Amharic is perhaps consciously archaic and maintains at least stylistic or syntactic and some morphological forms that can be found in genuinely Old Amharic of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The language of the present text, however, does not belong to the more archaic varieties such as that described by Cowley in his discussion of the Fragmentum Piquesii and the Tamḥartâ Haymanot, also published and translated by Cowley, or by Getatchew in his edition of an early seventeenth century treatise on the theology of the Trinity. It does not, for example, show any instances of the particle (or copula) -t, which is one of the principal hallmarks of Old Amharic. It also shows occasional hesitation between genuinely archaic forms and modern developments, such as ዓ-ጱጲው-åha alongside ው-በጲለል, equivalent to Modern (standard) Amharic ው-በጲለል. The language does, however, show fairly consistent preservation of laryngals in both initial and medial positions, as in the last example, a feature that may be regarded as typical of genuine Old Amharic.

Content of the Text

The text opens with an extensive preamble, running to over 800 words, in which are described Arius’ heresy and the background to the Council of Nicaea and its Creed, the purpose of which was to put an end once and for all to the Arian heresy. The history of Arius’ conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities in Alexandria is well known, and need not be described in detail here. The events concerning him referred to in the preamble, however, might usefully be explained. Arius, who had been ordained deacon by Peter I, Bishop of Alexandria (†311), was subsequently excommunicated by him after he had attached himself to the separatist church of the followers of

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8 It is of course also possible that dialect features may occur in the text. Whilst the composition of the text itself cannot be ascribed to a particular location, Gondar is well known as perhaps the greatest centre of the andâmta tradition.
Melitius of Lycopolis. Peter’s quarrel with the Melitians arose from the latters’ taking a much harsher line towards those Christians who had lapsed under the persecution of Diocletian, the events of which are also referred to in the preamble. Following Peter’s execution in 311, Arius was recalled to the church and ordained presbyter under Achillas and was promoted under his successor Alexander I, but fell foul of the official line again this time when he sought support for his doctrine in the anti-Alexandrian polemic of the School of Antioch. In 320\(^9\) Alexander I summoned a synod at Alexandria to oppose and condemn the doctrines of Arius, excommunicating him in the following year. In 324, following his arrival in the East, the emperor Constantine I dispatched Hosius of Cordoba to arbitrate in the quarrel between Arius and Alexander, leading to the summoning of the Ecumenical Council at Nicaea the following year. As a result of the Council Arius was condemned and banished. Several years later, in 335, Arius’ friend Eusebius of Nicomedia used his influence to get Arius recalled briefly from exile, but he died suddenly in 336, probably poisoned, whilst in Constantinople, having been banished once again from Alexandria. Such are the historical events of Arius’ life that lie behind the at times rather garbled version in the preamble.

Following the preamble, the text of the Creed itself is analysed phrase by phrase in the Ge\textsuperscript{e}ez version with Amharic translation and commentary. The commentary has appended to it the additions made to the Creed prompted by Macedonius’ heresy. Macedonius I was Bishop of Constantinople who supported the Semi-Arian cause. He died in 362. It used to be the general belief that these additions were made to the Nicene Creed at the Council of Constantinople held in 381, though the circumstances surrounding the addition are now far from clear.\(^{10}\) In any event, the augmented version was confirmed by the Council of Chalcedon in 451, following which, of course, the Ethiopian Church, along with the other Oriental Orthodox Churches, separated from the authority of the main Christian Community.

The nature and extent of the commentary varies from phrase to phrase, sometimes running into a detailed discussion of the theological niceties, and at other times merely being an Amharic translation of the Ge\textsuperscript{e}ez phrase. The format of the commentaries follows the now familiar pattern: the Amharic translation is introduced by the word ይስት ‘it means’. Further discussion and interpretation is indicated by such formulaic constructions as ይስት ለያዝ ‘if one says’, and somewhat less frequently ይስት ወያ ‘if you say to you’, and ይስት ወያ ‘if you say to me’, introducing an explanation-by-disputation discussion of the relevant christological point.

\(^{9}\) Or 318 or 319.
The text of the Creed analysed here differs only in small details from that currently used in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Thus, for example, the opening formula ኤ ከፋስወን ከላስ ማለት-‘we believe in One God, the holder of all things’ is in the modern Creed augmented by ከፋስ ከላስ ከፋስ ‘One God, God the Father’; or, a little later ከፋስ ከፋስ ከፋስ ከፋስ ከፋስ ከፋስ ከፋስ ‘and He was made man of the Holy Spirit and of the Holy Virgin Mary’ in the text is augmented by ከፋስ ከፋስ ‘He was made man and was made flesh’.

Language of the text

Questions of non-standard or archaic language forms are to some extent obscured by probable and possible orthographic uncertainties, such as, for example, ከፋስ ከፋስ for presumed ከፋስ ከፋስ ‘wood’ (rather than being an unpalatalised form); ከፋስ for ከፋስ ‘afterwards’, which occurs elsewhere in the text (rather than an unrounded ከፋስ for ከፋስ; ከፋስ for ከፋስ ‘he will bring him in’ (rather than a putative root variant ከፋስ instead of standard Amh. ከፋስ) and similarly ከፋስ for ከፋስ ‘he took out and’; ከፋስ for ከፋስ (if not representing a regressive assimilation to the vowel a across the ‘weak’ syllable boundary of ከፋስ ; ከፋስ for ከፋስ for ከፋስ more likely represent a morphemic division than a phonetic reality. More problematical is the regular writing the first root syllable of imperfect forms of the verb ከፋስ ‘send’ in the sixth order: e.g. ከፋስ ከፋስ ከፋስ ‘you send away’, ከፋስ ከፋስ ከፋስ ከፋስ ‘when they sent him away’, ከፋስ ከፋስ ‘if I send him away’, and so on. The difficulty of distinguishing first order ከፋስ and sixth order ከፋስ in many manuscript hands may lie behind this.

Such problems aside, prominent features of the language of the text are as follows:

i. preservation of laryngals: especially ከፋስ in root initial and medial position: ከፋስ, ከፋስ, ከፋስ, ከፋስ, ከፋስ, ከፋስ, ከፋስ, ከፋስ, ከፋስ, ከፋስ, ከፋስ, ከፋስ, ከፋስ, ከፋስ, ከፋስ, ከፋስ, ከፋስ, and so on. Whilst there may be an element of orthographic archaism here, it is probable that graphic ከፋስ does represent a real phonemic occurrence here. Initial ከፋስ of verb roots is apparently sometimes preserved in derived forms, though this is much more likely purely orthographic: ከፋስ, ከፋስ, ከፋስ, ከፋስ; it is probably on a par with the not infrequent full writing of the auxiliary in compound tenses: ከፋስ, ከፋስ, ከፋስ, etc., which more probably represent ከፋስ, ከፋስ, rather than hiatus ከፋስ, etc., and thus is more a re-
flection of the underlying morphemic constituents than an accurate rendi-
tion of the phonetic reality, as suggested above.

ii. occurrence of older $ (т, θ) $ where modern Standard Amharic has $: \lambda \tilde{\lambda}, \lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}, \lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}, \lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$, etc.

iii. verbs - fully inflected base and auxiliary in compound tenses (3pl): there are a few instances of 3rd person plural forms of the compound gerundive and compound imperfect in which both constituent elements show full inflexion: $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}, \lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}, \lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$, $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$. There are, however, at least as many counter-examples which exhibit the standard Amharic pattern, such as $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}, \lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}, \lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} (= \lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda})$, etc.

iv. verbs – “short” 1st plural imperfect prefix: the 1st person plural prefix is more usually $-t$ than the $-n$ of standard Amharic: $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}, \lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}, \lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$, etc. Note also from this last verb $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$ with $t$- perhaps influenced by Ge‘ez.

v. verbs - different verbal extension patterns: the following forms occur with different verbal extensions from their corresponding standard Amharic equivalents: $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$ (= $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$), $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$, $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$, $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$ (= $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$, and $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$).

vi. particles - relative prefix $Ԛ$ - with a negative imperfect: $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$ (sole example). Elsewhere $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$ occurs as in standard Amharic: $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$, etc.

vii. particles - ‘object marker’ as $-r$ - when followed by another clitic: $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}, \lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}, \lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$, etc. Counter-examples also occur: $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$, $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$.

viii. lexical items - nouns: $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$ – ‘master’ (standard Amh. $ллп$); verbs: $\lambda \tilde{\lambda} \tilde{\lambda}$ ‘be appointed’ (standard Amh. $ллп$) representing a direct development of Gz. $ллп$ rather than a back-formation from $ллп$; impersonal $ллп$ ‘is not’; pronouns: $ллп$ ‘these’, and prepositional forms $ллп$ ‘from this’ and $ллп$ ‘because of this’; particles: $ллп$ ‘without’ used in an Amharic con-
text; $ллп$ frequently in the sense of ‘to, towards’; and perhaps $ллп$ ‘afterwards’ (standard $ллп$) if this is not an orthographic error.

The translation

In the translation that follows those parts of the text originally in Ge‘ez have been put into italics. In the translation of the commentary the discus-
sion of each phrase has been assigned a separate paragraph for ease of con-
sultation. In the text itself letters that have been obviously inserted later are rendered in superscript. Page breaks in the original text are shown by | .
11 sic, for እፋ-

12 እን-

by assimilation for እን-

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The Meaning of The Prayer of Faith

The reason which led the 300 to write the Prayer of the Faith: if you ask what the reason is that they wrote it, there was in Alexandria a deacon called Arius. He said that the Son was created. When he said of the Son that He was created, Peter, Seal of the Martyrs, excommunicated him from the community of Christians and expelled him. At that time Diocletian was making people worship idols. Churches were closed. Pagan temples were built. When he told everyone to worship idols, Peter, Seal of the Martyrs, himself said, ‘I shall not worship them, nor shall I make others worship them.’ He split the one country into two and held it. Diocletian sent [soldiers], telling them to seize [him] and fetch [him]. When he told them to seize [him] and fetch [him], and they (i.e. Peter’s followers) said, ‘We shall not give up our teacher nor shall we ourselves worship idols, but shall fight,’ he (i.e. Peter) said, ‘Wait, though, Christ My Lord, however, was handed over and indeed died for the sake of mankind’, and so he was arrested. In Alexandria there were priests called Achillas and Alexander. Arius took the priests and officers and said, ‘Though he excommunicated me, let him not die. Intercede for me.’ As for Peter, Seal of the Martyrs, before they were to come for him in the morning he saw in his dream that night Christ as a child, his clothes torn, and grieving bitterly. When he said to Him, ‘What grieves you, My Lord?’, [Christ said,] ‘Arius has rent my garment. Arius says

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13 the text later says 318.
14 Peter I, Bishop of Alexandria, who following Diocletian’s edict of 303 went into hiding to escape persecution, but was eventually arrested and executed in 311 or 312.
15 This presumably refers to the rift in the Christian community between the followers of Peter who advocated leniency towards those Christians who had apostatised under the pressure from Diocletian’s edict of 303, and the more stringent Melitus who refused to accept Peter’s willingness to readmit those who had lapsed.
16 Achillas, Bishop of Alexandria 312–313.
17 Alexander I, Bishop of Alexandria 313–328.
18 the text has ሰԽưophon here, but ሰԽ המוןophon later.
of me that the Son is created. He separates me from my Father. And you will die. When you die, Achillas will be appointed. When Achillas is appointed, he will bring him (i.e. Arius) back in. And God will chastise Achillas. The priests and officers of Alexandria have come and said that he (Arius) told them to intercede for him: he says about you, though you have excommunicated him, you should not die, [and] they should absolve him.’ A man brought him out and made him wait [there]. He said to them, ‘How can you intercede for me? This night [I saw] Christ My Lord as a child, his clothes torn, and grieving bitterly, and when I said to Him, “What grieves You, My Lord?”’, [He said,] “Arius has said of me that the Son is created. He separates me from my Father. And you will die. When you die, Achillas will be appointed. When Achillas is appointed, he will bring him (i.e. Arius) in. And God will chastise Achillas.” They said, ‘If this is the prophecy, why should we intercede?’, and they got up and left. After that Peter, Seal of the Martyrs, died. Achillas was appointed. When Achillas was appointed, he brought him (i.e. Arius) in; he made him a priest who had been a deacon. God grew angry and chastised him. When He had chastised him, Alexander was appointed. When Alexander was appointed, he said, ‘As for Peter, Seal of the Martyrs, when the Light of the World knowingly removed him and sent him from the community of Christians, Achillas revoked [his decision] and when he then brought him (Arius) in, God chastised him.’ He removed him (Arius) and sent him from the community of Christians. He (Arius) said, ‘How should I proceed without scripture? Grant me scripture.’ After that 318 scholars assembled from the four dioceses: from Alexandria, from Rome, from Antioch and from Ephesus. The one that held authority at the time of the assembly was the delegate from Alexandria; at the time of the blessing, the Romans took precedence; they were not set apart. At the time of the mass [it was] Antioch. At the time of censing\(^\text{20}\) [it was] Ephesus.

\(^{19}\) i.e. scriptural support for his case.

\(^{20}\) \(\text{βόης \ ω-\τερ}-\) ‘casting the incense’ – i.e. the censing of the church after communion and during the mass.
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21 reading ԡғ."
They asked him what scripture he had. He said, ‘The Book of Solomon:’

‘Wisdom saith, He created me before the world.’ That which is called Wisdom is indeed Christ. What (other) witness do I need?’ (They said,) ‘Well, since you have said of the Son that He was created, who, then, created us?’ (He replied,) ‘God the Son.’ ‘Whom should we worship?’ [they asked] ‘The Father.’ ‘How then, while He created us, shall we pass Him by and worship the grandfather?’ When they said [this] to him, he said, ‘Worship the Son.’ ‘Rather, you have it written that we should not worship one created: “And worship not a false god. And there is no holy god but me,” it is indeed said.’ They said this and they pressed him on every detail: ‘How then, do you tell us to worship the creature when there is the creator? – when He tells you, “My Father and I are One,” when He tells you, “In the beginning was the word, and the word was one with God” [and] “Let Us make man in Our image and Our likeness.” [The Book of] Genesis indeed means ‘He created’, ‘He begot us.’ Whilst ‘Genesis’ means ‘He created,’ ‘Creation’ –Wisdom saith, “He created me before the world” means, rather, ‘He begot me before He created the world.’ They said this and gave evidence from the Old and New [Testaments], and then expelling him, they banished him. They expelled him and when they banished him he went to Constantine and [he said to him], ‘Intercede for me. [Because] I was in error concerning the text, they have banished me and expelled me.’ [Constantine] said [to them], ‘Do you banish him when he is in error? Rather, bring [him] back and instruct [him]. Then, lest no word be made in response, there is a prophecy about it: Concerning the mercy of the king, says history. What if, rather, for your sake [and] for kindness’ sake we leave him be, saying that he is vindicated in truth [and] a true respondent? But he has no response.’ They said to him (i.e. Arius), ‘May you be excommunicated!’ When they said to him, ‘May you be excommunicated!’, he was wearing at his breast an amulet which said “The Son is created”, …
and he said, ‘I shall not be shaken from this my belief which I hold, [but] let it (i.e. the amulet) be removed for your sakes.’ The three hundred and eighteen scholars excommunicated him. They said, ‘Give us long life,’ and prayed for seven days. After that, when neither evil nor good was revealed to them through joining in prayer, they said, ‘Tomorrow, Incarnation of God, You will arise,’ for it was Saturday evening, the eve of Sunday. In the morning, when he (i.e. Arius) was passing a small house, his entrails spilled forth; as they said, ‘The Incarnation of God will arise, so summon Arius!’, they found him with his entrails spilled forth, suffering and cast down. They struck the stone gong, they sounded the bell and showed him and said, ‘See, then, behold the might of the 300 and the succour of the Holy Church!’ If one asks why He (i.e. God) killed Arius with a death such as this, [it was] so that one might not say that the scholars killed him, rather, in their jealousy, by gagging and smothering [him]. He killed him with a death such as this. The kidney thinks of something, [and] having thought [of it] gives it to the heart. His kidney from which he had the idea that the Son is created he spilled and threw out from amongst his entrails.

A prayer means a message. A vow means a request. Usually if [a man] comes to the king or a noble and shouts ‘Sire! Sire!’, he will say to him, ‘What is it?’, and he will remark, ‘My business is this.’

This is a message of faith. If one knows and repeats this, a tree will seem as the trunk; if one interprets [it], it will seem as the flower. But as for the interpretation, if one lives through the action of it [and] if one fasts thereby, it will seem as the fruit. If, however, one does not repeat it by mouth and knowing [it] in one’s heart rejects [it], it will not profit anything. After that, they defeated Arius. They had him brought back before them and the 300 wrote [this] with one mouth and with one heart.

We believe in One God means: if one says, ‘What is it that made them say “One God”? Is there another god?’, as regards God the prophets are said to have said, ‘Ye are gods and sons of the most high all of you,’ and Moses, too, is said to have said, ‘the God of Pharaoh.’ He, though, did not first bring the Kingdom to man, and afterwards he will not hand it over to man. They said, ‘We believe in One God, the ruler of [man’s] substance and nature.’

God (‘amlak) means Creator. God (‘agzi’abber) means Ruler. But then it is not that one should say that God (‘agzi’abber) rules and God (‘amlak) created; it means that both ‘amlak and ‘agzi’abber are Creator.

24 see fn. 13.
The Holder of all [things] means: they have said, ‘We believe in God who holds everything.’ If one says, ‘What made the 300 say “God who holds everything?”; as regards holding, a king, too, rules [his] land; it is divided up by him. If one holds an object from above, one cannot hold it from within. But just as he has said, ‘Everything is held within His hand, as He showed unto Peter,’ [so] they have said, ‘We believe in One God who holds Heaven with all its appurtenances, and the earth with all its appurtenances, and the sea with all its sand.’

The Maker of Heaven and earth means: they have said, ‘We believe in God who created heaven and earth.’

That which is visible and that which is invisible means: we believe in God who created both that which can be seen and that which cannot be seen. If one says, ‘What is it that can be seen?’, [it means] the sun, the moon, the stars, man, trees; [and that which cannot be seen means] the Kingdom of Heaven which is above the heavens, the Throne of Sabaoth, the Abode of the Angels, [and] beneath the earth, the seas, darkness [and] the winds.

And we believe in One Lord means: if one says, ‘What made them say “in One Lord?” Is there another lord?’ Now, a lord and a nobleman, one calls him a lord if he gives food and drink. But he is not the one who first brought his dominion over man, nor the one who afterwards will hand it over to man; [so] they have said, ‘We believe in One God, the Ruler of [man’s] substance and nature.’

Jesus means ‘salvation.’ If one says, ‘What is salvation?’, it is that which [gives] man freedom from slavery, which saves [him] from the rule of Satan.

Christ means ‘the Anointed King.’ If you say to me, ‘Did that anointing soak Him, did it wet Him?’, He became priest [and] king anointed in body at one and the same time that He became incarnate from Our Lady Mary, flesh of Her flesh, soul of Her soul.

The only Son of the Father means: they have said, ‘We believe in the Son [who is] of one nature.’ If one says, ‘Why then, is there another son?’ As for the Son, Israel, too, was called “My son that is My firstborn.” Also, if one sees a good man, one calls him ‘the son of God.’ ...

\[25\] i.e. the Almighty.
But as for the manner of His birth, as they say in the Mass, “Let it not be said there is a time [at which] the Father begot the Son; nor that He begot Him on such and such a day.” One shall not say, ‘He begot Him at this time, He was begotten at this time.’

*Who is existent with Him from before the world was created* means: ‘existing’, ‘[in a] place.’ If I say to you, ‘He was begotten,’ do not propose to me ‘before’ and ‘after’; They were in one place before the world was created.

*Light of Lights* means ‘begotten [as] the sun of suns.’ As they say, “Of the images that they liken to Him, [each] has a defect in it” – if one likens Him [to something], it is not thus that He should be less than that to which one likens Him, God the Son, who is begotten of God the Father.

*Very God of Very God in Truth* means True God, who is begotten of True God. If one says, ‘Why then, is there a god of untruth? As for God, when one worships idols, too, hewing [them out of] wood and carving [them out of] stone, they are called ‘god’.’ But He [is] the True God, begotten of the True God; they [therefore] say, ‘We believe in One God.’

*Who was begotten and not made* means that if I say, ‘He was begotten,’ do not propose to me like Arius that he was created.

*Who is equal with the Father in divinity* means, He is the same as and equal to the Father in divinity. He is equal in His divinity, and so if you say to me, ‘And what of the rest?’, divinity fulfills everything; divinity is command. Divinity is accomplishment; divinity means He is ruler, He rules over everything.

*In whom everything exists* means everything was created in the Son.

*And without Whom there is nothing* means that without Him no part [even] of a mosquito is created.

*Neither which is in heaven nor which is on earth* means, it is He who created both heaven and earth.

*Who, for our sake, for mankind, and for the sake of our salvation* means, that for us [and] for our salvation He will free us from slavery [and] save us from the rule of Satan.
Descended from Heaven means, because He descended in body, it infers that He descended wholly; He descended, it says of him.

And He was made man of the Holy Spirit and of the Holy Virgin Mary means that He was born of the Holy Spirit and of Our Lady Mary. If you say to me, ‘He arose from Our Lady Mary, [so] what did He bring of the Holy Spirit?’ The Father sent His Son. The Son, obedient, descended. So that the love of the Holy Spirit be not absent, it joined in the womb with the flesh that arose from Our Lady Mary and made [Him] wholly divine. “He constructed a temple for Himself,” as Cyril says.

He became man means that He was fully a young man of thirty years.

And He was crucified for our sake means: if I say to you, ‘He was crucified,’ do not you say to me, ‘It was because He stole and robbed like a thief and like a robber,’ rather He was crucified for us.

In the days of Pontius Pilate means that He was crucified under Pilate, the man from P’ánt’en.

He suffered means that He suffered. If you say to me, ‘Was His illness a sudden fever [or] a stomach pain?’ He was slapped, He was struck [on the head], He was nailed.

And He died means, [as it says ‘And it was calculated for Him.’] as for His death, if you say to me, ‘How did He die?’, when a man issues from his mother’s womb, the spirit of Satan binds him; it dwells [in him] terrifying him for forty days. If the gift of the Son reaches him, [Satan] abandons him and goes away. Thereafter he remains far away whenever [the man] is pure, [and] he draws near whenever he performs sin. When the day of his death arrives, his desolation [and] his alarm are mighty things. When [death] appears to him, in his alarm the blood vanishes from his heart. Just as a thread and fire will not ignite unless they find grease, [so] soul and flesh, too, cannot be united without blood. After a man is dead, clear fluid and not blood comes out. But while [this] proves that He died in His body [and] was [still] alive in His divinity, when after He died they pierced Him, blood as much as the sea [and] water as much as the sea flowed from His side. And the blood is the mystery of the eucharist, and the water is the miracle of baptism.

28 ከውሮብር: taking the stem *አውሮብር, or as occurs later *ተውሮብር as equivalent to Mod. Amh. ከውሮብር and ከተውሮብር, resp.
29 ከንጠርየው: would seem to be a toponymic equivalent to ከንጠር ከንጠር is Pontus, incorrectly understanding the name Pontius to be a gentilic.
30 this phrase is inserted in the text above ኢኔታ ወንክ.
And He was buried means that He was buried.

And He rose from the dead on the third day means that He was dead and He rose in three days. If one says, ‘Why did [God] make His death on a Friday?’, He had created Adam on Friday; the creation that was created on Friday was lost, and so as He said, ‘I shall renew [him] and shall return him to his former estate,’ therefore [God] made His death on Friday. If one says, ‘Why did [God] make His resurrection on a Sunday?’, Sunday is the beginning of creation, and as He said, ‘Afterwards My coming shall be on Sunday,’ [so] He made His resurrection on Sunday.

As it is written in the sacred scriptures means, ‘And on the third day He will heal us and will give us life.’

He ascended in glory into Heaven means, He ascended in glory into the Heaven of Heavens. Because He ascended in His body, it infers that He ascended wholly. It says of Him, He ascended.

And He sat at the right hand of the Father means that He sat at the right hand of the Father. One says of Him ‘at the right hand’ whilst one [also] should say, ‘whether at the right hand or at the left hand, he smote the Satan of Death and is above all.’

He will come again in glory means that He will come again in honour. If I say to you, ‘He will come,’ it is not that He will be slapped, struck [on the head] and nailed as before. He will come in honour making both heaven and earth pass away, accompanied by ten thousand thousand angels.

He will judge the living and the dead means that He will come and judge and give to the righteous the Kingdom of Heaven, and to the sinners the Hell of Fire. If one says, ‘Why did He say of the righteous [that they will be] living, [and] of the sinners [that they will be] dead?’, unless [a man] has the grace of the Holy Spirit residing in him, he will not be called living. Therefore, He said of sinners [that they shall be as] dead.

And there is no end to His Kingdom means: if I say to you, ‘[He will give] the Kingdom of Heaven to the righteous, [and] hellfire to the sinners,’ the edge of His Kingdom has no limit; one shall not say of it, ‘It will pass away at this time; it will vanish at this time.’

31 there seems to be something missing here, as the exegesis is in Ge’ez and not Amharic and in any event does not “explain” the phrase in question.
The 300 spoke this and set it down. They continued for 62 years before any heresy arose against them.

In the 62nd year Macedonius\(^{32}\) arose. He said, ‘Is it not that Arius misled [us] when he said that the Son is created? Rather, the Holy Spirit is created!’ When they said to him, ‘How is He created?’, he said, ‘He is created like the angels.’ After that, 150 scholars assembled and the King was [at that time] Theodosius. The Archbishop was Timothy. They said to him, ‘What scripture do you have?’ He said, ‘The 300 have said in their Prayer of the Faith: “in Whom everything exists and without Whom there is nothing.” When they say that everything is created in Him, what scripture do I need? The Holy Spirit is indeed created. You say, “How is He created?” …

When He says to you, *And while ye baptise them, say “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,”* [and also] when He says to you, And all their power [is] from the breath of His mouth, [and also] when He says in the Mass of the Seraphim, Holy, Holy, Holy, it proves rather that it is [meant] for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.’ They said, ‘It would not make it for us either two or four.’ They gave evidence from the Old and New [Testaments] and they expelled him and sent him away. After that, they had [him] brought back before [them]. They defeated [him] and wrote [this]. As the 300 wrote, ‘We believe in One God and we believe in One Lord,’ so they settled [the matter].

*A*nd *w*e believe in the Lord, the Holy Spirit* means that they said, ‘He is not the one who first brought his dominion unto man, nor the one who afterwards will hand it over to man. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Ruler of [man’s] nature and substance.’

*Life-giving* means that conscious life is bestowed out of conscious death.

*Who proceeded from the Father* means ‘who proceeded from the Father.’ But as regards His manner of proceeding, the earth is at first dust [and] afterwards it produces foliage; it is not like this. Rather, whether one says, ‘The birth of the Son and the issue of the Holy Spirit from the Father are miraculous’ or not, it is a marvelous thing; it is not possible that one should say, ‘He proceeded\(^{33}\) at this [particular] time.’

\(^{32}\) Macedonius, Bishop of Constantinople, d. c. 362, who supported the Semi-Arian cause. The arithmetic here seems a little puzzling: the Council of Nicaea was held in 325, Macedonius died c. 362, and the Council of Constantinople which was traditionally believed to have incorporated the additions prompted by Macedonius’ heresy took place in 381. Neither of the latter dates could be described by the phrase ‘in the 62nd year’.

\(^{33}\) reading ѩѾ for ԺѾ.
sic, for እርት as later.

The form የታታVerts here, balanced by እንደሬ-ርር, is the impersonal, originally 3rd plural, deriving from a different reduction of original እንደሬ-ርር than the plural የታታVerts. See also የትለለ Assass ’one believes’ in fn. 38. Similar forms occur elsewhere; note also የትለለ earlier.

The writing of the initial first order ዯ- in እንደሬ may be influenced by the corresponding Ge’ez form.
Let us worship Him and let us glorify Him together with the Father and the Son means, let us honour Him like the Father [and] like the Son. Let us glorify Him, let us worship Him.

Who spoke through the prophets means that it is He (the Holy Spirit) who spoke through the prophets. If someone should say, ‘How so?’, it is He who made [them] say, ‘For I shall place [Him] from the fruit of thy belly upon thy throne; behold, ye shall see Him crucified for your salvation.’ And so let us glorify Him, let us worship Him.

And we believe in one Holy Church means, we believe in the Church. If one says, how does one believe in the church? This large churchyard, [or] this little churchyard?, the Church means the community of Christians. If ever [people] gather about a dispute, one calls them litigants; if they gather about livestock, one should call them marketers. They said, ‘We believe in the Holy Spirit who has assembled us for the [canonical] hours, for prayers, [and] for the mass.’

The assembly of the Apostles which is over all means that they said, ‘We believe in the Holy Spirit which they have placed above all.’

And we believe in one baptism for the remission of sins means, we believe in baptism. If one says, ‘Does one believe whether this [is] a large lake, [or whether] this is a little lake?’, they have said, ‘We believe in the Holy Spirit which bestows the gift of the Son.’

While we hope for the resurrection of the dead means, we trust that, having died, we shall rise. It means, just as one casts aside [one’s] clothes, [so] I have cast off my former sin. It means, He (i.e. Jesus) stood upon the cross just as one stands in the lake (i.e. of baptism). It means, He (i.e. Jesus) resided in the belly of the tomb for three days [and] three nights just as one is baptised three times. As we trust that as He died and then rose, [so] after we have been baptised we shall perform heavenly and not earthly deeds.

And life to come means ‘while we trust that the eternal life that is to come will be given to us.’

For ever and ever means for ever and ever.

Amen means ‘in truth.’
Bibliography


