

AIMS AND PURPOSES  
of  
CHURCH EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA

*Girma Amare*

The cultural role of the Church in Ethiopia has been very similar to that of the synagogue in Jewish society or the mosque in Muslim society: it has acted as the principal agent in the preservation and transmission of the nation's cultural heritage.\* It is therefore not surprising to find that the Ethiopian Church has developed an educational system comparable in its elaborateness to that of the Hebrew, Greek, or Chinese systems.

Even though the exact date when the Church started offering formal education to children is not known, it is safe to assume that its educational activities go back to the earliest days of Christianity in Ethiopia. Aba Selama, the first Christian metropolitan of the country, who was instrumental in the conversion of King Ezana of Axum in 330 A.D., may be referred to as a Royal tutor. Maintaining a tutor in wealthy households, a common practice to this day, thus had its beginning far back in the history of the Church. Moreover, regardless of his wealth or social status, every Christian in Ethiopia has a confessor (father of the soul), who may be regarded as a part-time tutor, for a confessor is not only a counsellor on all matters pertaining to religion but also an instructor on the virtues of the good life. By periodic visits to the homes of those who have entrusted themselves to his care for the salvation of their souls, the confessor makes sure that the laws of God are followed. This is in addition to the instruction offered from the pulpit.

Many foreign visitors—adventurers, traders, missionaries and empire-builders—have written, sometimes at considerable length, about the system of Church education in Ethiopia, but a really systematic and scholarly study of this interesting area of education is long overdue. The field is open to Ethiopian and foreign scholars alike. Here we shall mention only a few of the salient features of the Church system, an appreciation of which may contribute to a better understanding of our modern system. A point to bear in mind is that, in our discussion, the terms "Church education" and "traditional education" are used interchangeably, even though the latter has a broader connotation, including as it does both the education given by the home and that given by society at large.

#### The System of Church Education

One might draw a parallel between the stages of Church education and modern Western/American education—elementary, secondary, college and university.<sup>1</sup>

##### A. Elementary Education

The usual age at which children enter elementary school is seven, though some enter much earlier and others much later. Indeed, the large majority of peasant children do not enter school at all, as their parents cannot spare them from the work of the farm. Those who do go to school are usually the sons of the relative-

\* According to an official release there are at present 24,941 churches (including monasteries). There are also 159,155 priests (including deacons and cantors.)

ly well-to-do. Girls have the same educational rights as boys, but tradition inhibits the exercise of these rights. The common view is that a girl's place is in the home and that it is therefore a waste of time and money to send her to school. And this is not only the poor man's view; Samuel Gobat once remarked that "the daughters of the higher class learn nothing but spinning and managing the affairs of the house...." It was also believed that educated women would resort to wicked ways and kill their husbands. Despite these impediments, however, some women—mostly from wealthy families—have succeeded in getting a certain amount of schooling, and there are isolated instances of women who have become distinguished scholars. One such scholar is Woz. Ekuletaw Askale of Gojam. She is a mistress of Kene.\*

(The Church school is usually a one-room building in or near the Church compound, though sometimes the only shelter is provided by a tree. In a typical classroom one finds an old teacher, usually a priest of "debtera" (cantor), seated on a small stool with a long stick beside him and the book of psalms in his hands, while some thirty pupils, in groups of two or three, sit on the floor before him. The more advanced students teach the less advanced, while the teacher attends to the former but periodically checks on the progress of the smaller children. Elementary education consists of learning the alphabet (or syllabary) and committing to memory the Acts of the Apostles and the Psalms of David. Moral teaching constitutes a major part of the education of the child. This consists of learning by heart certain prayers which are sung at the beginning and the end of each school day. In addition, if the student intends to pursue his education further he spends many hours each night with his teacher learning other prayers by heart. These include the Praises of God and the Virgin Mary, the Songs of the Prophets and of Solomon, etc. As part of their moral instruction, children are also required to give service to their teacher. They learn the virtues of obedience, humility, and respect for their elders by washing the feet of their teacher, by fetching wood and water for his household purposes, and by running errands to the market place. Children are also expected to kiss their teacher's feet when entering and leaving the classroom. In return they receive his blessing.)

Elementary education is completed in two or three years, depending on the child's ability and his opportunity for study at home. The end of this stage is marked by a great feast. Proud parents present gifts to the teacher—an ox or cow if they are well-to-do or simply a sheep or goat if they are poor. The successful student is presented with new clothes and money.)

#### B. Secondary Education

For all but very few the end of the elementary school stage is the end of formal education. In the first place, few parents can afford the long absence of their sons in a distant secondary school, perhaps in another province. In the second place, the student who decides to continue his education must be prepared to face long years of extreme privation. The hardship suffered by Ethiopian students has become proverbial. Dr. M. de Jacobis describes the life of the student thus:

"Without speaking of the personal service, often of the most menial character, rendered by the pupil to his master—a service, however, which their filial affection for their tutors seems to make sweet and easy to them—the student leaves his home and family, carrying on his back the sack of pease or meal which is his whole subsistence during his college term; and when that is exhaust-

ed, his only recourse is to beg in order to live. And to this, that the length of the course of study exacted is perfectly despairing...., but few students have the courage to embark on them.”

Secondary education is given in what is known as the *Zema Bet* or *School of Music*. Church music, dancing and the beating of time constitute the core curriculum of secondary education. Students master the songs sung at the termination of mass (*Zemare*) and at commemoration services and funerals (*Mewaset*) as well as the arts of Church dancing and time-beating. Also included is the study of a collection of hymns (*Deggwa*) made very popular by the famous 6th century musician, Abuna Yared.

Mainly because of poor teaching methods, it takes about fourteen years to complete this part of Church education. The use of Ge'ez, a language which no student at this stage understands, presents insurmountable difficulties. Like the elementary school child, who shares the same difficulty, the secondary student resorts to memorization as the only method of learning.

A secondary school is usually conducted by a *Meri Geta*, as the head of a parish is called, a learned man well versed in Zema and Kene. The standard of the school depends entirely upon the qualifications of the *Meri Geta*, since the Church makes no efforts to ensure uniformity of standards in its schools, either at the elementary or secondary levels.

#### C. College Education

In spite of the fact that very few students ever reach this stage, this part of the student's education is considered the most important. The education offered in the Kene schools is a prerequisite for further study at the university level, and it is at this stage that students are introduced to Ge'ez grammar, the translation of Ge'ez texts into Amharic and the composition of verses. Thus the student now begins to make sense of what he has learned. Memorization plays a less important part in Kene education—though Ge'ez grammar and prosody are largely learned by rote—and a good deal of the learning takes place through discussion groups and the criticism of compositions on a given theme.

The study of Kene derives its significance from the fact that this is the most highly refined expression of Ethiopian culture, which, it is said, is characterized by ambiguity, vagueness and secretiveness. Kene may be defined as the art of detecting others' ambiguities while increasing the subtleties of one's own. This art is acquired through the mastery of two types of poetry, *Semena Work* (Wax and Gold) and *Wusta Waira* (Inside the Olive Tree).

#### D. University Education

The completion of the fundamentals of Kene constitute college education. Thereafter the students begin to specialize. Those who wish to specialize in Kene remain in the Kene school or move on to a similar school of greater renown. The philosophically-inclined enter a *Meshaf Bet* (House of Books), while those endowed with a good voice and a talent for music return to a Zema school for a more extensive and specialized study of Church music and dance.

For the student who enters a *Meshaf Bet* there are four areas of specialization: a) the Old Testament; b) the New Testament; c) Dogma and Philosophy; d) Astronomy. Though it is usual to specialize in only one of these areas, there are scholars who have specialized in two, three, or even all four. Anyone who has succeeded in mastering all four areas of learning becomes known as "The Four-Eyed."

Just as Paris in the Middle Ages was renowned for its theology, Bologna for its law, and Chartres for its literature, so in Ethiopia there are schools whose

reputation in particular fields of study draws students from every corner of the Empire. Thus, Zuramba in Begemder is noted for its Zemare and Mewast music, while Sekula in Walde and Debre Abbai in Tigre are noted for Keddasse music. Bethlehem in Begemder is the seat of learning for Deggwa. Anda Bet in Begemder is famous for its calligraphy.

It is interesting to note that specialization in a particular field must be preceded by a study, both broad and deep, of all aspects of the Church's teaching, music, poetry and history. In other words, a wide understanding of Ethiopian culture is a prerequisite for entry into any of the specialized courses offered by these schools. In a world which appears to be menaced by the evil consequences of too much specialization, a lesson could probably be drawn from this approach to education.

#### Aims of Church Education

The primary aim of Church education is to prepare young men for the service of the Church as deacons, priests, scribes, etc. Yet Church schools also serve the State in that they provide a pool of educated men who may be recruited for the service of the State. It is not uncommon for individuals to hold two positions, one ecclesiastical and one secular. In fact, it would be quite wrong to dissociate the Church and its schools from the secular administration of the country. The Emperor is Head of the Church as well as Head of State. In the past, too, Church and State frequently complemented each other, the Church receiving the support of Emperors and high-ranking officials, while religiously-inclined monarchs like Lalibela (1180-1200) built churches and those with inclinations to scholarship spent a great deal of effort and money in support of education. Eyassu the Great (1682-1706), for example, made Gondar the centre of religious culture in Ethiopia by attracting outstanding scholars like Kife Yohannes of Gojam to his capital.

During his reign it is reckoned that over five hundred scholars lived in Gojam, while his Church, Debre Berhan Selassie, had one hundred and fifty teachers. The famous library of Gondar with its large collection of religious writings was founded by Yohannes II. According to his chronicler, Aleqa Wolde Mariam, the library contained no less than 981 manuscripts. Theodore II founded the library of Macdella. Galadewes, himself a very learned man, spent some three thousand ounces of gold in amassing his collection of Ge'ez manuscripts. He not only sponsored the translation from Arabic into Ge'ez of some important works such as Hymanote Abaw (Faith of the Father), Meshaf Kandil (Order of Extreme Unction of the Sick) and the book of Baralam and Yoseph, but he also wrote the famous "Confessions of Faith."

\* The purpose of Church education is not to extend man's understanding of the world, but rather to lead men to accepting the existing order of things as it is, to preserve whatever has been handed down through the years, and in turn to pass it on unchanged to the next generation. For this reason, unquestioning submissiveness both to the social and natural order is considered the highest of virtues.

\* The ideal child accepts the order of his superiors without question and dutifully conforms to the natural order of things without any desire to change it. The Emperor as the Lord's Anointed and God's delegate on earth must be obeyed without any impious questioning of his authority. The Church, too, as the voice of God, must be listened to without question. The child's spirit of inquiry is stifled at home and the process of stifling continues at school. At home the child is told all kinds of stories about the evil consequences of curiosity, and at school the emphasis on memory work discourages initiative and inquiry. Yet it is interesting to note that the spirit of social non-conformity is often found among the masters of Kene and other sophisticated scholars. This is an understandable phenomenon; the

teaching given at the highest educational levels encourages independence of thought. The more educated, the less conformist. Examples of such men are Kefle Yohannes, Tekle Zewahera, Abaye Kassa and Corhum the Four-Eyed, all of them scholars of distinction.

Mortification of the body through rigorous fasting and the renunciation of this world are the most effective ways of ensuring the submission of the individual to the will of God. The laws of fasting in Ethiopia are very harsh; almost 250 days in a year are fasting days, and of these 180 are obligatory to all. Fasting implies abstention from meat, eggs, and all dairy products, and restricting one's meals to one or two a day. The virtuous Christian is also one who is little concerned with the riches of this world and is thoughtless of his future, which, in any case, is not under his control. "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them....And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin."

As important as fasting is the observance of the innumerable saint's days or sacred days which divert people's attention from work. People are not only required to go to Church on these days, but are also prohibited from engaging in any kind of work. All outdoor activities such as ploughing are discontinued for a day or two, depending on the duration of the holiday. Even household duties such as the preparation of food are suspended; housewives use the already prepared food of the previous day. On these days, individual families usually have small celebrations to honour a particular saint of their choice. In addition to this, they hold periodic commemoration feasts for dead relatives. All these practices have the endorsement of the Church.

The Church encourages on one hand extravagance and on the other the renunciation of all wordly activities, both very detrimental to the material development of a nation. Since the very existence of the priests depended upon people's voluntary offerings, the Church had to denounce both frugality and greed as most unethical and corrupting in their effect. It is the frugal rich man who will have the hardest time to find his way to heaven. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God." At the same time the church taught people not to be concerned with the affairs of the world and not to be too busy accumulating material wealth and riches.

Following Max Weber's analysis, there is a definite relationship between the particular faith of a people and their economic behavior. The Ethiopians, just like the people of the Middle Ages in Europe, never regarded hard work as a moral duty that brought its own intrinsic reward. Frugality was absent from the ethical feeling of the people. In Reformation Europe, the adoption of Calvinism changed the economic behavior of the converts to that creed. Such behavior was a direct result of the ethics inherent in the new faith, which is "the valuation of the fulfillment of duty in wordly affairs as the highest form which the moral activity of the individual could assume. This it was which inevitably gave everyday wordly activity a religious significance, and which first created the conception of a calling in this sense."<sup>4</sup> Consequently, the execution of wordly duties, since it is a matter that is willed by God, has ethical significance. In the sight of God, all callings have the same worth. The monastic way of life which renounces temporal obligations is a manifestation of selfishness and not a life worthy of praise in the sight of God. On the contrary, hard work and frugality are ethical in the sense that they save men from all sorts of evil temptation. There is, therefore, a close relationship between the type of religious belief of a people and their attitude towards life. In the case of Ethiopia, their religious belief drove them away from the concerns of life in this world.

The Puritan teaching revolutionized the attitude of the European toward life and work. What is needed in Ethiopia today is a similar teaching that will uplift the Ethiopian from his lethargy and otherworldliness. It is only the modern schools (not the welfare school or the too protective modern family) that can do this. The child must be made to learn that hard work is a virtue that has an intrinsic as well as an extrinsic reward; that all individuals have callings in this world which have the same importance to national development. The good carpenter can contribute just as much as the good academician; what really matters is not the kind of job a man has but how efficiently he is able to do it.

Ethiopian conservatism is often linked with the attitude of secretiveness. The Ethiopian likes not only to preserve whatever he has but also to keep it secret from others. This applies not only to material possessions such as books, manuscripts or money, which are often buried or kept in very secluded places, but also to the skills or knowledge that an individual may possess. Thus a person well acquainted with the medical value of certain herbs will never attempt to pass on his knowledge for posterity but will keep it to himself. He may under rare circumstances confide his secret to a very close relation under oath that he will not reveal it to other people. This, of course, is partly due to selfish motives. In any event, the practice accounts for the loss not only of very interesting material but also of useful knowledge that would have added to the wealth of the Ethiopian culture.

→ It may appear a contradiction that along with the religious values of otherworldliness and self-mortification traditional education also encouraged the virtues of the brave man: strength, fearlessness, and hardihood. This is, however, a fact. Historical circumstances explain this. Warfare has always been a necessary sport for Ethiopians. It was the sole means of self-preservation against foreign enemies or hostile neighboring tribes. It has been noted earlier that a good part of the reign of Ethiopian Emperors was spent in perpetual warlike activities, subduing rebels, expelling intruders, or conquering new lands. A society that is perpetually engaged in warfare naturally attaches great importance to the virtues of the warrior. The Emperor, besides being the religious head, is also the chief warrior, and has the duty to lead his people to war in defense of the faith and of the fatherland. The nobility are likewise warlords. The warrior character of the people is also manifested in their daily lives. The name given to a male child at birth expresses the soldierly value of the culture; "Afamenta" (don't hesitate), "Nadew" (wipe them out), "Tasaw" (smash them), are but a few instances of such names.

The Church gave full support to the warlike activities of the State. The war of the state is simultaneously that of the Church as well. The former is interested in conquest and the latter in conversion. Thus, war against pagans and Muslims was supported by the Church on the grounds of *lex teliones* "a religiously sanctioned punishment for the sins of the enemy." To symbolize the support of the church in such matters, altars were carried to the battlegrounds, and victories against enemies were often attributed to the intervention of angels and saints. St. George, the patron saint of Ethiopia, is believed to have fought in the battle of Adwa in 1896. In times of war, physically able churchmen are required to take up arms along with the laity.

Religion and warfare were so much a part of Ethiopian life that education emphasized the virtues of the warrior just as much as those of the priest. In the socializing process of the child, parents make it a point to impart the virtues associated with gallantry and bravery. Mothers tell their children of heroes and of the accomplishments of their male ancestors. The child is praised and rewarded for beating the neighboring child by whom he was challenged. Yet dishonesty in fighting, like attacking an opponent without warning or from the rear, or cruelty to a

person is strongly disapproved of. While still young the individual is encouraged not to accept insult or humiliation from his peers without physical retaliation. "Sissy" is the greatest insult that can be offered to any Ethiopian male, and anyone who through weakness or cowardice cannot reply to the charge is an object of ridicule. Searing the arm with red-hot embers is a mark of virility. Skill in Shillela, "the strident verse that is declaimed in order to inflame the blood of the warrior" and learning by heart verses that glorify acts of gallantry are very important aspects of the education of the child. Children are often encouraged to participate in the stick battles which are held on certain holidays when the males of one village challenge those of another to a battle. Casualties on these occasions are numerous. The students of Kene also call out their counterparts in the Zema school for a similar battle once or twice a year. Such fights are intended to keep young men fit and give them opportunities of proving their worth as men.

The traditional Ethiopian child imbibes, therefore, two sets of values as he grows up—the religious value which emphasizes humility, deep spirituality and politeness, and that of the warrior which emphasizes gallantry and hardihood. These two sets of values complement rather than contradict each other. The truly educated Ethiopian is polite and courteous both to foreigners and to his own countrymen. He is also capable of exhibiting great courage and bravery when circumstances demand it.

#### Some Remarks About Traditional Education

1. The most outstanding feature of traditional education is the emphasis it places upon obedience and complete subservience to authority. Only blind compliance to the dictates of parents and elders is expected of the child. Individual initiative and inquiry are considered defects that have to be discouraged at every manifestation by severe chastisement.

This kind of upbringing is the exact antithesis of the practices in some other societies. For instance, in the Manus Society of New Guinea the child is given absolute liberty; he is not required to respect authority, much less age and wisdom. In this respect, there is a certain parallel between the Manus ways of bringing up the child and the American. Margaret Mead points out that American children are "given years of cultural nonparticipation in which they are permitted to live in a world of their own. They are allowed to say what they like, and to ignore many of the conventions of their adults."<sup>5</sup>

Here we have two diametrically opposed methods of rearing children; on the one hand we have the traditional Ethiopian way, where the individual is choked by the stifling authoritarianism of parents and society, and on the other, we have the Manus or American way, where the child is given full liberty with practically no parental or societal pressure. The consequences of these two extreme practices are obvious. The former kills initiative and inventiveness; it inevitably leads to a condition of life that is characterized by ultra-conservatism and stagnation. A good example of this is Ethiopian society. The latter method permits children "to grow as the lords of empty creation, despising the adults who slave for them so devotedly and then apply the whip of shame to make them fall in line with a course of life which they have never been taught to see as noble or dignified."<sup>6</sup>

Both are extreme practices which are unacceptable. Inventiveness, curiosity, critical-mindedness and independence of thought and action are essential qualities of the educated individual who is to succeed in the modern world. The most important task of the modern school is to cultivate these qualities in children. Unlike the child growing up in the traditional setting, the modern Ethiopian has to use his independent judgment in many situations—in choosing a spouse, in deliberating upon a career or in electing his representative for parliament.

Whether or not he is successful in his judgment depends on the training and guidance he receives at home and at school. What in fact is crippling Ethiopia today is largely the lack of these qualities in so many individuals who hold important positions of responsibility.

This, however, does not mean that all the values and practices in traditional education, with its emphasis upon respect for elders, politeness, and obedience to superiors, could not be retained. These qualities do not in any way conflict with the qualities of independence, inventiveness and creativity. In fact they could well complement each other. The modern Ethiopian who is able to acquire these two sets of qualities is that much the richer for doing so.

2. The second observation to be made about traditional education, especially on the higher levels, concerns the emphasis it places upon emulation as a method of teaching. From this point of view traditional education much resembles that of ancient Greece. "For the Greeks," says Marrow, "education... meant, essentially, a profound and intimate relationship, a personal union between a young man and an elder man who was at once his model, his guide and his initiator. The relationship between master and pupil was to remain that between lover and loved. Education remained, in principle, not so much a form of teaching, but an instruction of technique as an expenditure of loving effort by an elder concerned to promote growth of the younger man." The same could be said of the kind of teacher-pupil relationship to be found in traditional Ethiopian schools. The instructor simultaneously takes the role of the parents (he acts in loco parentis) and of the teacher. He loves and cares for his students just as much as they love and care for him. He is not only responsible for teaching them what is in the books, but also helping them cultivate the essential virtues of the good man—deep spirituality, honesty, obedience, politeness, etc. He does this by being an example to them. Through his daily contacts he encourages his students to emulate him in these qualities.

Much to the disadvantage of the modern student, the traditionally close teacher-pupil relation is gradually disappearing. The large number of students assigned to a single teacher in the modern schools makes it impossible for the modern teacher to meet his students freely outside classroom hours to give them individual attention. He is in no position to inspire, guide and counsel them. T.V. as an instructional medium has further reduced the contact between teachers and pupils. Much of the decline in morals, the widespread frustration, the large number of drop-out cases and the increasing delinquency among students in Ethiopia may be largely explained by absence of contact between the students and their teachers. The student cannot go to his parents to discuss his academic and personal problems because the parents can hardly understand his problems and are in no position to counsel him. The teacher is too much tied up with his many assignments to have any time left to attend to the problems of the individual student.

3. A further interesting aspect of traditional education is its practice with regard to promotions and recognitions. Although the fulfillment of certain rigid academic requirements and the passing of examinations play an important part in the promotion of the student, there are other things also that count. The student is being constantly assessed by his teacher for other qualities such as honesty and personal integrity. The educated person, according to the traditional definition, is at once a good man who stands as an example to all those around him and one who is competent in his field of learning. In the world of today, where a degree has become the sole ticket for special social recognition and respect, there is always the danger of identifying the degree-holder with the educated person.

4. It is also of great interest to note that the traditional school has no resemblance to the welfare-type school that exists today. The excessive hardship that the

traditional student had to go through is a clear indication of this. Once the student leaves home he is absolutely on his own; supporting himself mainly by begging. While he does this, he runs the risk of being bitten by dogs or being attacked by wild animals. His one or two meals a day consist of peas or dried enjera.\* He wears a home-made sheepskin which has become the symbol of the traditional student. His only possessions are his educational materials, consisting of one or two parchments, ink prepared from charcoal and a pen made from reed. The modern student, by comparison, lives in great comfort, a fact which older citizens love to point out.

These hardships leave a lasting mark upon the character and general disposition of the traditional student; he acquires a high degree of self-discipline and self-confidence, qualities that are very much lacking in the modern student who grows up either in a welfare school system or in a too protective family environment. The world of the traditional student is the same world that he finds once he quits school; it presents the same problems, hardships and challenges. He is therefore better prepared to meet its challenges. On the other hand, the world of the modern student is a make-believe world that bears little resemblance to the real world outside. It does not help him to acquire the self-discipline required to deal with the challenges of real life. Thus, when he leaves school he has to undergo a totally new orientation and readjustment. A few succeed in doing this and many fail. The spread of frustration and disillusionment among the educated men and women of today has its partial explanation here. The failure to produce men and women who are prepared to face boldly and with confidence the challenges of their society and of the world is one of the great weaknesses of modern education in Ethiopia. While it is not suggested that modern students should undergo the same hardships and privations as their predecessors, it is strongly recommended that they should be led to acquire self-discipline and self-restraint by earning what they get free at present. Conditions in the school should be a reflection of those in the society.

5. A very interesting aspect of traditional education is the emphasis placed upon learning by doing. It was pointed out earlier that the student acquires the virtues of obedience to and reverence for elders by being of practical service to his teachers and parents (fetching wood and water for them, cleaning their house, etc.) The courteousness of the traditional student has become proverbial. The newcomer to the school or the visitor is accorded a very kind reception; he is given food, his feet are washed and he is furnished with a bed—even if the host has to sleep on the floor. This readiness to put into practice the moral virtues taught in school is an important aspect of traditional moral teaching. Whatever is taught in a Church school has its immediate application in practical life situations. The student who is fluent in reading makes use of his ability as a reader of excerpts from the Holy Scriptures during mass or other Church services. At the completion of this elementary education, the student may qualify to be a deacon. He now becomes very much involved in the activities of the Church. He helps in christening ceremonies and funeral services, and plays an important role during mass. In return he enjoys many of the advantages that other churchmen enjoy.

The services that the student can render to society increase in direct proportion to his qualifications. Usually those with higher education become teachers, at the same time serving the Church in different capacities. Some are recruited by the state to serve as counsellors, chroniclers, etc.

The significance of these traditional educational practices is twofold: The first is the emphasis placed upon learning by doing. This is particularly true in the area of moral teaching. Yet, the same practice applies to all other areas of instruc-

\* A sort of a pancake prepared from millet.

tion. The student who is fluent in reading may not be able to comprehend what he is reading since much of the writing is in Ge'ez, yet he can put his ability to real, effective use.

The second significant lesson to be drawn from the traditional practice of education is the effective utilization of what is learned in school in the service of the society. Whatever the specialization of the student, and whatever the degree of mastery of his subject may be, he can effectively utilize what he has learned in the service of society. There is always a demand for the educated individual, because he has something to offer. The learned man is needed as a teacher, as a scribe, as an adviser, etc. This is due to the fact that whatever is taught in the traditional schools had some cash value to the society outside. A lesson could be drawn from this in the sense that much of what is being taught in the modern schools is so unrelated to the needs of the country and to the availability of jobs that students who drop out from school, and even those who manage to graduate, either cannot find jobs or go into jobs where they cannot effectively use what they have learnt at school.

6. Finally, the traditionally educated person, with the few exceptions already alluded to, is neither an eccentric nor a social deviate but one who fits perfectly into his own society. This is because traditional education in Ethiopia is a reflection of the values of the society. It presents no ideas and develops no tastes that are contradictory or new to the cultural values of the society. In this way the possibilities of conflict between the educated and the uneducated, between the young and the old, do not arise.

It is only when new ideas at variance with the traditional ones begin to infiltrate that conflict between the upholders of these new ideas and the defenders of the old values inevitably arises. This is the situation today. With the introduction of modern schools that represent different cultures and profess novel and strange ideas, Ethiopia is entering a new phase in its history, a phase of instability and conflict. How successfully we shall emerge from this phase of instability and conflict depends on how successful educators are in selecting those practices and ideas of traditional education that are of value and fusing them with modern educational ideas and practices.

#### **The Influence of Church Education**

Because of its geographical isolation the Ethiopian Church is very conservative. External as well as internal threats to the national culture have reinforced this conservative outlook. The Church resisted very strongly the efforts of Portuguese Jesuits to replace Ethiopian Christianity by Roman Catholicism in the 16th Century, and fought to the bitter end against the encroachments of the Muslims under the leadership of Gran.

The Church has continued to offer the main resistance to all forms of innovation or change, even if such change meant the enrichment of the national culture. Many leaders of vision have been frustrated by this uncompromising position of the Church. Emperor Theodore is an outstanding example of those who failed to gain the support of the Church in the effort to introduce changes.

Emperor Menilik II had to employ all kinds of conciliatory techniques to soothe the Church in his efforts to launch Ethiopia into the modern world. To avoid a sudden break with the traditional system of education he allowed the Church to have a hand in the running of the new educational system that he introduced in 1908. He ensured that the foreign teachers engaged were of the Coptic faith. He also allowed the Church complete freedom to run its own schools.

In 1950 a few Government-run schools were turned over to Church administration for reasons of finance. This has helped the Church to get acquainted with

modern curricula and to take the initiative in introducing similar changes into its own schools.

Many Church schools today have introduced such modern courses as English, mathematics and health into their curricula. Also, because of the shortage of teachers the Ministry has drawn teachers for the public schools from the priesthood. These teachers were given instruction in modern subjects and methods of teaching during summers to up-grade their quality. In this way it was possible to reduce the resistance of the conservative elements in the Church to changes now being introduced. Furthermore, the utilitarian value of subjects now being taught in modern schools is being recognized even by the Church. For these reasons great transformations are being gradually instituted in the Church schools.

While Church schools are gradually absorbing some of the new ideas of today, the public schools on the other hand are feeling the influence of the Church. Courses like Ge'ez and Amharic literature have been introduced into the curriculum of the public schools. The teaching of morals is another area which has been taken from the Church curriculum. It is now being realized that the study of Ethiopian culture should constitute an important part of the education of the Ethiopian child. The Church as the storehouse of Ethiopian culture could well supply the modern schools with all the necessary materials in this area.

Out of this there is bound to emerge an enriched and more appropriate education for Ethiopia.

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