

# SELECTED SOTERIOLOGICAL THEMES IN SAINT YARED'S HYMNS OF THE SABBATH<sup>1</sup>

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አጠቃሎ

“ኤሪየንታል ኦርቶዶክስ አብያተ ክርስቲያናት” እየተባሉ ከሚጠሩት ጥንታውያን አብያተ ክርስቲያናት አንዷ የሆነችው የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ከተለያዩ ቋንቋዎች ከተረጎመቻቸው በርካታ መጻሕፍት በተጨማሪ በራሷ ሊቃውንት የተደረሱ አያሌ መጻሕፍት ባለቤት ናት። የዚህ ጽሑፍ አቅራቢ ኢትዮጵያዊ የሆኑ ነገረ መለኮታዊ አስተምህሮዎችን ሲያፈላልግ ከቅዱስ ያሬድ መጻሕፍት በተለይም ከድን የተሻለ ማረፊያ አላገኘም። የዚህ ጽሑፍ ዋና ዓላማም ቅዱስ ያሬድ በመጻሕፍቱ ያስቀመጣቸውን ነገረ ድኅነታዊ አስተምህሮዎች መፈለግና ነገረ ድኅነታዊ አገላለጾችን ማሳየት ነው። ወደዚህ ግብ ለመድረስም ጸሐፊው የቅዱስ ያሬድ ምስጋናዎች ነገረ ድኅነታዊ ፋይዳ አላቸውን? ካላቸውስ ቅዱስ ያሬድ ነገረ ድኅነትን እንዴት ነው የገለጸው? ነገረ ድኅነታዊ የሆኑ የመጽሐፍ ቅዱስ አገላለጾችን እንዴት ነው የተረዳቸውና የተረጎማቸው? አስተምህሮዎቹስ ከሌሎች ሊቃውንት ነገረ መለኮታዊ እሳቤዎች ጋር ይስማማሉ? የሚሉትን ጥያቄዎች አንሥቷል። ከዓላማው ለመድረስ ደግሞ የዘማሪውን ነገረ ድኅነታዊ አእምሮ እንደሚያሳዩ በማመን ከድንው መጽሐፍ የሰናብትን (የእሑዶችን) መዝሙራት ብቻ በመምረጥ ነገረ መለኮታዊ ይዘታቸውን መርምሯል። አቅራቢው መጀመሪያ ከመዝሙራቱ ነገረ ድኅነታዊ ሐሳብ የያዙትን መዝሙራትና የመዝሙራት ክፍሎች በመምረጥና በመሰብሰብ ወደ እንግሊዝኛ የተረጎማቸው ሲሆን በመቀጠል ደግሞ የዘማሪውን ጽሑፎች ነገረ ድኅነታዊ አስተምህሮ ከአበው ጽሑፎችና በአበው ጽሑፎች ላይ ከተደረጉ ጥናቶች ጋር እያነጻጸረ መርምሯቸዋል። በመጨረሻም የቅዱስ ያሬድ መዝሙራት በዓላማቸው የእግዚአብሔርን ክብር ለመግለጽ የቅዱሳንንም ቅድስና ለማጉላት የተጻፉ ቢመስሉም በይዘታቸው ግን ከሚገመተው በላይ ነገረ ድኅነታዊ ሆነው አግኝቷቸዋል። ነገረ ድኅነታዊ አገላለጾችም በብሉይ ኪዳን የተፈጸሙ እና የታዩ ምሳሌዎችን እና የተነገሩ ትንቢቶችን በመተርጎም ላይ የተመሠረቱ፣ ልዩ ልዩ ምልክቶችን በማተት ነገረ ድኅነትን የሚያሳሉ እና የራሱ በሆኑ አገላለጾች

<sup>1</sup>This article is extracted from a senior essay submitted to the Holy Trinity Theological College by the contributor as a partial requirement for his Bachelor Degree in Theology.

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የተሞሉ መሆናቸውን አረጋግጧል። በመጨረሻም ሦስት ወላጅ ያላቸውን የመፍትሔ አቅጣጫዎች አቅርቧል። አንደኛ የቅዱስ ያፌድ የምስጋና ድርሰቶች ተመራማሪዎች በቀላሉ እንዲያገኙቸውና ለዓለም እንዲተዋወቁ (በተለይ ወደ እንግሊዝኛ) መተርጉም አለባቸው። ሁለተኛ በውስጣቸው አምቀው የያዙት ጥበብ እንዲታወቅና ብዙ አንባብያን እንዲጠቀሙባቸው ይዘታቸውና አስተምህሯቸው በስፋትና በጥልቀት መመርመር ይገባቸዋል። በሦስተኛ ደረጃም መጻሕፍቱ የቋጠሩትን ሀብት ለዓለም እንድናጋራው የዘማሪው ሥራዎች ትርጉሞችም ይሁኑ በዘማሪው ሥራዎች ላይ የሚደረጉ የምርምር ውጤቶች ለጎትመት እንዲበቁ መደረግ አለባቸው።

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the Ethiopian Church historians, the establishment of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church (EOTC) goes back to the Apostolic era, when St. Philip baptized the Ethiopian Eunuch,<sup>2</sup> Bakos, in 34 A.D. Despite the Church's establishment in the first century A.D., the Church of Christ did not expand and consolidate for many years. The Church started to strengthen herself after St. Frumentius, the first known bishop of Axum, brought the priesthood and baptized the twin kings, Yēbrēha and Yēsbēha. The coming of the Nine-Saints marked further expansion and strengthening of the Church.

Following the introduction and expansion of Christianity, Ethiopian and non-Ethiopian scholars engaged in translating books into and writing in the Ethiopic language, gé'éz. St. Yared was one of the prominent and pioneer Ethiopian writers who wrote Dəggu<sup>w</sup>ua<sup>3</sup>, Somä Dəggu<sup>w</sup>ua<sup>4</sup>, MéYraf<sup>5</sup>, Zémare<sup>6</sup> and MāwaséYt<sup>c</sup>.<sup>7</sup> However, his works have not been studied in detail. Therefore, the researcher

<sup>2</sup> Act 6:1-6, 8:26-40.

<sup>3</sup>Dəggu<sup>w</sup>ua is a Zema text which is classified in to four main parts: Dəggu<sup>w</sup>ua of the Yohanns, Dəggu<sup>w</sup>ua of the ʾastmähəro, somä dəggu<sup>w</sup>ua and Dəggu<sup>w</sup>ua of the fesica(Easter).

<sup>4</sup> Šomä dəggu<sup>w</sup>ua, is a book of zema chanted on the fast of Lent; only on the Lent.

<sup>5</sup>MéYraf is a one of the five books in the collection *Amméstu äwatwä zemawoch* which form the devine office.

<sup>6</sup>Zémareis one of the modes of performance of ak'wak'wam liturgical chant and dance (EAE VOL.5, PP).

<sup>7</sup>Māwasét is a book of praying for the dead. The prayer is known as 'féthhat' meaning absolution. Māwasét is also chanted on Saturday before Easter known as 'Qäedam séYur'.

sets off to search for the Ethiopian Church and teaching in St. Yared's 'Hymns of Sundays selected from the book of Déggu<sup>w</sup>ua. The research focused on looking for the theological theme of Soteriology<sup>8</sup> in St. Yared's Hymns of Sundays which are acclaimed to Ethiopian scholars.

This paper examines whether the Hymns of Sundays conveys the theology of salvation and how the theology of salvation or Soteriology is expressed in the Hymns of the *Sabbath*, the hymns of Sabbaths have Soteriological/ Theological significance, the hymns of the *Sabbath* have theological conformity with patristic thought and St. Yared interpreted Soteriological scriptural verses in the hymns of the Sabbath.

For the purpose, the author selected the book of Déggu<sup>w</sup>ua and extracted texts for analysis from the Mäzəmur (መዝሙር), which is one of the twenty two titles of Déggu<sup>w</sup>ua (ድጋ). Since the texts of the Mäzəmur are found scattered<sup>9</sup> throughout the entire book, the researcher used the book "Mäsəhafä Ziq WäMäzəmur"<sup>10</sup> where we find the hymns of Sundays the Yrarat, the Yézél, the Sälam (አራራት፣ እዝል እና ሰላም) and other texts that accompany the hymns of Sundays.

It is hoped that this article will attract the interest of researchers to explore Christian wisdom from the works of the same author and thus constitute an additional source stimulating further research on related issues.

The researcher collected the data from primary and secondary sources. Textual and comparative analysis have been applied to generate the article. Discussion with the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church scholars cleared textual ambiguities. The researcher first collected, selected and translated (according to their relevance to the study and the order they appear in the hymns) some hymns and their 'companions'<sup>11</sup>, which he considered to have Soteriological significance. He then, analyzed and compared the Soteriological understanding of St. Yared with

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<sup>8</sup>Soteriology is derived from the Greek word 'Soteria' meaning 'salvation'.

<sup>9</sup>መጽሐፈ ድጋ ዘቅዱስ ያፌድ፡፡ (ትንሣኤ ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት፣ 1988)፡፡

<sup>10</sup>መጽሐፈ ዚቅ ወመዝሙር፡፡ (ትንሣኤ አሳታሚ ድርጅት፣ 1987)፡፡ ገጽ 1-81፡፡

<sup>11</sup> "Companions" here represents the 'araray, the 'əzəl, and the Sälam, related in textual contents with the hymn of each Sunday, which accompany the hymns when they are sung in the church.

the Soteriological teaching of the Scriptures, and the Soteriological understanding and expression of predecessors and successors to St. Yared. Furthermore, the author assessed the Ethiopian exegesis, the commentaries Ṿndēmta, the Gé'éz Anaphors, the patristic writings and related research works.

This paper first presents the review of related literature emphasizing the mystical life of St. Yared and his works with special reference to the Soteriological teaching of the Orthodox Church. The third and the fourth sections are dedicated to analysis of selected hymns of the Sabbath, conclusions and recommendations.

## **2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.1. The Life and Works of St. Yared the Ethiopian**

St. Yared was born to Abiud (Isaac) his father and Christina his mother in a village near Axum in 505 E.C.<sup>12</sup>. His father died when St. Yared was a baby. The death of the father compelled his mother to send her son to his uncle, Gedion, who was a teacher at the religious school in Axum. Due to these circumstances St. Yared joined the traditional school at the age of seven.<sup>13</sup>

However, education was not an easy job for him. He faced punishment from his uncle for not learning fast enough. On his way to visit his mother, the child Yared became tired and rested under a tree with prayer and tears. While he was sitting under the tree he saw an immature insect, a caterpillar<sup>14</sup> trying many times to climb a tree. St. Yared took a lesson from its eventual success and returned to school with a spirit of success. Forgiven by his uncle and master, St. Yared pursued his education and started serving the Church of Axum as a deacon, priest and later succeeded his teacher. He taught the Old and New Testaments and led the school.<sup>15</sup>

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of Hédar 534 E.C. some years later, three birds came to him<sup>16</sup>. The birds first paid respect to him and inspired him concerning heavenly wisdom.

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<sup>12</sup>If not preceded by AD, the years in this article are in the Ethiopian Calendar (E.C.).

<sup>13</sup>ታደሰ አለማየሁ፡፡ የቤተ ክርስቲያን ብርሃን ቅዱስ ያፌድ፡፡ (2005)፡፡ ገጽ16፤ጥዑመ ልሳን ካሣ (ሊቀ ካህናት)፡፡ ያፌድና ዜማው፡፡ (ትንሣኤ ዘጉባኤ ማተሚያ ቤት፤ 1981)፡፡ ገጽ 20፡፡

<sup>14</sup>የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ ከልደተ ክርስቶስ እስከ 2000 ዓ/ም፡፡ (ሜጋ ማተሚያ ቤት፤ 2000)፡፡ ገጽ109፤ልሳነ ወርቅ ገብረ ጊዮርጊስ (መርጌታ)፡፡ ጥንታዊ ሥርዓተ ማኅሌት ዘአሰካ ያፌድ ሊቅ፡፡ (1997); Maison Des Etudes Ethiopiennes, pp. 21.

Later, he was taken to the heavens and saw the angels glorifying God untiringly. He came back learning his chant from the angels. That is why the Ethiopian Church scholars confidently say that the hymns of St. Yared are not of this world but of the heavens.<sup>17</sup> When he returned to earth at Muradä Qal (word descended) he sang “ዋይ ዜማ ዋይ ዜማ ዘሰማዕኡ በሰማይ እመላእክት ቅዱሳን እንዘ ይብሉ ቅዱስ ቅዱስ ቅዱስ እግዚአብሔር መልአ ሰማያት ወምድረ ቅድሳተ ስብሐቲክ Oh song! Ah song that I heard the holy angels sing in the Heavens uttering Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord the Heavens and the Earth are filled with your holy praise.”<sup>18</sup> Yared preferred an acetic life and he spent many years in the Sämen Mountains as a celibate<sup>19</sup>.

Concerning the end of his life, there are two conflicting accounts, it is said that he died or alternatively that he was *taken* by God. But the official documents of the EOTC declared that he was “taken to be with God” [ተሰወረ] at the age of 75 on the 11<sup>th</sup> of Génébot<sup>20</sup>

### 2.1.1. The Mystical Life of St. Yared

From an Orthodox point of view, mysticism can be understood as the life of experiencing the true Doctrine and theologizing the Christian life in the light of the true Tradition and the Scriptures through prayer and contemplation. Vladimir Lossky, in his famous book ‘*The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*’, explained the mystical life as a true Christian life practicing Christian theology:

The eastern tradition has never made a sharp distinction between mysticism and theology; between personal experience of the Divine mysteries and the dogma affirmed by the Church. ...we must live

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<sup>16</sup>የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ ክልደተ ክርስቶስ እስከ 2000 ዓ/ም፡፡ (ሜጋ ማተሚያ ቤት፡ 2000)፡፡ ገጽ98-99፡፡ ልሳነ ወርቅ ገብረ ጊዮርጊስ (መርጌታ)፡፡ ጥንታዊ ሥርዓተ ማሕሌት ዘአቡነ ያፌድ ሊቅ፡፡ (1997); Maison Des Etudes Ethiopiennes, pp. 23-25.

<sup>17</sup> የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ ክልደተ ክርስቶስ እስከ 2000 ዓ/ም፡፡ (ሜጋ ማተሚያ ቤት፡ 2000)፡፡ ገጽ98-99፡፡ ልሳነ ወርቅ ገብረ ጊዮርጊስ (መርጌታ)፡፡ ጥንታዊ ሥርዓተ ማሕሌት ዘአቡነ ያፌድ ሊቅ፡፡ (1997); Maison Des Etudes Ethiopiennes, pp. 23-25.

<sup>18</sup> ልሳነ ወርቅ ገብረ ጊዮርጊስ (መርጌታ)፡፡ ጥንታዊ ሥርዓተ ማሕሌት ዘአቡነ ያፌድ ሊቅ፡፡ (1997); Maison Des Etudes Ethiopiennes, pp. 22.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid, pp. 23.

<sup>20</sup> የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ ክልደተ ክርስቶስ እስከ 2000 ዓ/ም፡፡ (ሜጋ ማተሚያ ቤት፡ 2000)፡፡ ገጽ 102፡፡

the dogma expressing a revealed truth, which appears to us as an unfathomable mystery, in such a fashion that instead of assimilating the mystery to our mode of understanding, we should, on the contrary, look for a profound change, an inner transformation of spirit, enabling us to experience it mystically.<sup>21</sup>

The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, under the article ‘mysticism’ tries to show that the mystic life was seen in, and springs from, the mystical life of Jesus.

Christ’s own life, as it comes to light in the Gospels, is the supreme model of true mystical experience. All His words and acts are penetrated with an infinite depth of experience and are fused with a warmth and intimacy of direct fellowship with God. He reveals an interior sense of life which explores and possesses new depth of reality and which releases for Himself and others new energies by which to live. The active forces of His will appear always to spring from a life conjunction with the Beyond. His ethical ideals in the sermon on the mount are inherently bound up with His prayer experience.<sup>22</sup>

St. Yared’s mystical life started while he was resting, crying and praying under a tree.<sup>23</sup> He experienced the first kind of life of mysticism, which is the life of prayer. Contemplating under the shade of the tree St. Yared learnt a lesson from an immature insect. This incident helped him realize the benefit of hard work and patience for achieving human mental progress<sup>24</sup>.

When we consider his life after his return from the heavens, it is clear that he lived a mystical life. The account of his performance in the presence of Yäse Gäbērä Mäséqäl<sup>25</sup> shows the depth of St. Yared’s mystical life. While he was singing, the king pierced his foot unknowingly; despite this St. Yared continued

<sup>21</sup>Lossky, Vladimir. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. (James Clerke & Co.Ltd, 1957). pp. 8-14.

<sup>22</sup>Hastings, James (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. (Vol. iv, T&T Clark Ltd, 1994). pp. 89.

<sup>23</sup>ጥዑመ ልሳን ካሣ (ሊቀ ካህናት)፡፡ ያፌድና ዜማው፡፡ (ትንሣኤ ዘጉባኤ ማተሚያ ቤት፡ 1981)፡፡ ገጽ 20፡፡

<sup>24</sup> Sergew Hable Selassie. *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History*. (Addis Ababa, 1972). pp.165.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid, pp. 159. The king of Axum succeeded the throne of his father, aYsä Caleb, after he abdicated his throne voluntarily.

his song since he was in a state of spiritual ecstasy.

With regard to the rest of his life, we recognize two aspects: First he spent his life teaching his chant and writing his books which are the expression of his mystical life filled with praise, prayer and contemplation. Secondly he chose an ascetic life, spending the rest of his life in devotion, prayer and praise, which, according to the official Church narrative led him to be taken up to be with God.

### 2.1.2. The Two fold Works of St. Yared

#### i. His Hymn Texts (His Books)

The texts of his hymns are recorded in five books: *Déggu<sup>w</sup>ua*, *Somä Déggu<sup>w</sup>ua*, *Méÿraf*, *Zémmare* and *Mäwasÿét*.<sup>26</sup> Scholars do not agree concerning the list of books. For example, Taddese Alemayehu (2005) argues that the number of books of St. Yared is four. He wrote in the *History of EOTC from Incarnation to 2000* that except the Zema<sup>27</sup> the Anaphora are not by St. Yared. Church scholars such as Archpriest Tiume Lissan Kassa, in the introduction of the book of *Déggu<sup>w</sup>ua*, argue that the five books of St. Yared are *Déggu<sup>w</sup>ua*, *Somä Déggu<sup>w</sup>ua*, *Méÿraf*, *Zémmare* and *Mäwasÿét*.<sup>28</sup>

#### ii. His Zema

The Zema (or the melody) for singing the texts in the books are organized by St. Yared the composer of the texts in a special way. The Zema consists of three modes of chanting called: *Gé'éz*, *ÿézél*, and *ÿararay*. According to the experts of the Zema of St. Yared, these modes can appear separately or together, most often two of them appear in a single piece of song or hymn. The three modes of the Zema are sung using the tones, or the *Mélékét*, which are 10 in number but two of them are believed to have been added later by his disciples.

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<sup>26</sup>የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ ክልደተ ክርስቶስ እስከ 2000 ዓ/ም:: (ጫጋ ማተሚያ ቤት፣ 2000)። ገጽ 110። The contributor of the article for this official publication of the EOTC has argued that except the Zema the texts of the Anaphora are not by St. Yared. However, contrary to this argument, the same author said that the books of St. Yared are five, taking all the Anaphora as the fifth book.

<sup>27</sup>ታዲሰ አለማየሁ፡ የቤተ ክርስቲያን ብርሃን ቅዱስ ያፌድ፡ (2005) ። ገጽ 2።

<sup>28</sup>ጥዑመ ልሳን ካሣ (ሊቀ ካህናት)፡ ያፌድና ዜማው፡ (ትንሣኤ ዘጉባኤ ማተሚያ ቤት፣ 1981)። ገጽ 44፤ መጽሐፈ ድን ዘቅዱስ ያፌድ፡ (ንግድ ማተሚያ ቤት)። (Introductory page).

The whole hymn of the Book of Déggua has 22 titles of Zema (Aréstä zema)<sup>29</sup> and we find the hymns for Sunday (መዝሙር ዘሰንበት /አቡን/) <sup>30</sup> 7<sup>th</sup>, according to the sequence of the 22 titles of the book written by Lissane Werq.<sup>31</sup>

## 2.2. General Concept of Orthodox Soteriology

The word Soteriology is derived from the Greek word ‘swthria Soteria’ meaning ‘salvation’.<sup>32</sup> As a field of study, Soteriology is defined as follows:

...the section of Christian theology which treats of the salvation of Christ for the world. It includes not only the doctrine of the Atonement and of Grace but also: i) the doctrine of human nature as affected by the fall and sin which is the presupposition of Christ’s work, and ii) the doctrine of man’s final destiny as the result of that work.”<sup>33</sup>

From this we understand Soteriology to be the study of Christ’s saving works and human salvation in general. The eastern commentator of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Tsirpanlis, strictly advised the use of the word salvation rather than redemption, reconciliation and justification, which are, according to him, more legalistic words of the Catholic and the Protestant traditions.

Salvation or *soteria* does not mean only liberation from sin, in Greek patristic thought. The conception of *soteria* in the Eastern Church and Patristic Tradition is broader and more inclusive than the Roman Catholic emphasis of redemption and reconciliation, and the protestant

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<sup>29</sup>ልሳነ ወርቅ ገብረ ጊዮርጊስ (መሪኔታ)፣ ጥንታዊ ሥርዐተ ማሕሌት ዘአቡነ ያሬድ ሊቅ፣ (አዲስ አበባ/መቀሌ፣ 1997)፣ ገጽ 58።

<sup>30</sup>ልሳነ ወርቅ ገብረ ጊዮርጊስ (መሪኔታ)። ጥንታዊ ሥርዐተ ማሕሌት ዘአቡነ ያሬድ ሊቅ። (1997); Maison Des Etudes Ethiopiennes, pp.59. This part or head of the Déggua is the main source, although they are scattered throughout the entire book, where we find the text under study.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, pp. 58-59.

<sup>32</sup>Duff, Jeremy. The Elements of New Testament Greek 3rd edition. (Cambridge University Press, 2005). Pp.311; Tsirpanlis, Constantine N. Introduction to Eastern Patristic Thought and Orthodox Theology. (The Liturgical Press, 1991). pp.61; Jossi Jacob (Fr.Dr.), Course Material for Dogmatic Theology (unpublished), pp. 93.

<sup>33</sup>Cross, F.L & Livingstone, E.A. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. (OUP, 1997). pp. 1520.

justification.<sup>34</sup>

After the fall of Adam and under the captivity of death the whole of humanity longed for salvation. Gregory of Nazianzus asserted “It was necessary for us that God become incarnate and die, that we might live again”. And it was for this aim that God became incarnate as indicated by St. Athanasius and restated in the work of Vladimir Lossky. “If God is born and if he dies, it is not because He is born that He dies, but it is to die that He is born.”<sup>35</sup> According to the words of the editor of the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Christianity also claims that redemption happened under the double aspect: deliverance of humanity from sin, and restoration of man and the world to communion with God, through the Incarnation and the death of Christ.<sup>36</sup> But, Tsirpanlis explains, the double aspects that caused the Son of God to become incarnate and which were fulfilled by the saving work of Christ as: “the regaining of immortality and the restoration of God’s image in the fallen man”<sup>37</sup>.

According to Lossky, salvation is the way of deification and union with God that was intended for the first man. The plan of deification, the ascension of man towards God, failed due to man choosing the contrary path to nature and ended in death. Hence by the corrective path of salvation, God descended to man and died to break the triple barriers, death, sin and nature, in that order beginning with the union of the separated natures and ending with the victory over death.<sup>38</sup>

The work of salvation of humanity was started, according to the mind of Athanasius, as reported by Constantine N. Tsirpanlis, with the Incarnation and fulfilled through the death of Christ on the Cross. This tells us that God assumed

not only the nature of humanity but also death for the complete renewal of humanity.

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<sup>34</sup>Tsirpanlis, Constantine N. Introduction to Eastern Patristic Thought and Orthodox Theology. (The Liturgical Press, 1991). pp.

<sup>35</sup>Lossky,Vladmir. Orthodox Theology: An Introduction. (1989). Pp. 110.

<sup>36</sup> Cross, F.L.& Livingstone, E.A. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. (OUP,1997). pp. 1373.

<sup>37</sup>Tsirpanlis, Constantine N. Introduction to Eastern Patristic Thought and Orthodox Theology. (The Liturgical Press, 1991).pp.

<sup>38</sup> Lossky,Vladmir. The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church. (James Clerke & Co.Ltd ,1957). pp.135-136.

But Athanasius goes deeper by placing himself in the Patristic Tradition of Soteriology according to which the most important and sufficient reason for the Word's assuming man's nature and death is not the satisfaction of God's justice, the juridical roman catholic tendency rooted in Augustine and Anselm, but that 'in it (Christ's death) death might once and for all be destroyed, and that men might be renewed according to the Image.'<sup>39</sup>

Salvation can also be understood, in the mind of the Church as manifested through the sacred tradition and Scriptures, as the establishment of total communion with God, initiated by the grace of God<sup>40</sup>, and fulfilled through faith and redemptive sacraments.<sup>41</sup>

### 3. SOTERIOLOGICAL THEMES IN SAINT YARED'S HYMNS OF THE SABBATH

#### 3.1. Incarnation: The Core Act of Salvation and the Start of Theosis

Like the other Church Fathers, St. Yared's Soteriological teaching starts from the concept of the Incarnation. We can see the double actions of the *Logos* (the Word) in his text of the hymns of Sunday. These two-fold actions are the action of descent of the Word and His action of assuming the human flesh from the Virgin. “ወረደ” [*He descended*] and “መጽኢ ኅቤነ” [*He came into us*] are the words, with deeper meaning and conveying richer concepts. We find repeatedly in the Sabbath hymns of St. Yared the assertion of the act of descent of the Word of God and His assumption of human flesh. As an example he sang as follows:

የሐንሰ አገድክ እምካልአኒሁ አንነ ወክሐ እንዘ ይብል  
እምላዕሉ ወረደ ቃለ አብ...

*John silenced [all the other], he made longer cries than the others, Saying, “from the high descended, the Word of the Father... [Déggwua Zä-Yohanés], and*

ብርሃን...ይርዳኝ ዘተሀጉለ ያስተጋብኝ ዝርዋነ መጽኢ ኅቤነ

<sup>39</sup>Tsirpanlis, Constantine N. Introduction to Eastern Patristic Thought and Orthodox Theology. (The Liturgical Press, 1991). pp.

<sup>40</sup>TEp. 2:8f.

<sup>41</sup>Jacob,Jossi (Fr.Dr.), Course Material for Dogmatic Theology (unpublished),pp. 97.

*Light (the Lord)...to help the corrupted, to gather the scattered, came unto us. [Dəggu<sup>w</sup>ua Zä- Īsätāməhəro]*

The word “ወረደ[He] descended”, whenever said in relation to the Word of God, like in the above hymn, shows the act of Incarnation according to Ethiopian scholars and commentators.<sup>42</sup>

In other related texts of St. Yared, incarnation is addressed not only as the core act of salvation but also as the reason and means of *theosis*; the very reason and purpose as well as the apex of salvation.”...ንግድፍ እምላዕሌነ ኩሎ ምግባረ ጽልመት ወንልበስ ወልታ ጽድቅ እስመ ኢየሱስ ክርስቶስ መጽአ ውስተ ዓለም ንዑ ናንሶሱ በብርሃኑ *Let us abandon from us all deeds of darkness, and wear a shield of righteousness, for Jesus Christ has come into the world; let us now walk in His light*”[ Dəggu<sup>w</sup>ua Zä Īsätāméhéro]. This is a clear witness to us to believe that the Incarnation enables us to walk in light wearing the shield of righteousness so as to reach communion with God.

In the Synaxarium (ስንክሳር)<sup>43</sup>, Incarnation is stated to be the core act of the salvation, in the reading for *Mäggabit* 29 the commemoration of the feast of the Annunciation, by hallowing the Annunciation day and lifting it up to the level of first-born of all feasts for the reason that in it human salvation was started through the Incarnation:

*At that time [when St Mary said, “Let it be to me according to your word”<sup>44</sup>], she received a Divine conception, being virgin for the only Son, God the Word descended.... He dwelt in the womb of the holy*

<sup>42</sup> መጽሐፈ ቅዱስ ንባቡና ትርጓሜው፡፡ ትንሣኤ ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት፡፡ (1988)፡፡ ገጽ 449፡፡

<sup>43</sup> ላእከ ማርያም ወልደ ኢየሱስ (ሊቀ መዘምራን፣ ተርጓሚ)፡፡ (1993)፣ መጽሐፈ ስንክሳር ግእዝና አማርኛ ከመጋቢት እስከ ጳጉሜን፡፡ (ትንሣኤ ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ 1993) (Introductory page). Synaxarium (ስንክሳር), as defined in the preface, is a collection: i.e. a book which contains descriptions about the oneness and triad of Trinity, the eternal birth [from His Father] without mother and the worldly birth from our Lady Holy Virgin Mary without father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is a record of the faithful and ethical works of the holy Angels, the holy Prophets and holy Apostles, the holy Righteous and Martyrs; their miracles, their sufferings and plenty of works. The sources of the book of Synaxarium are the Old and New Testaments, the writings [of the fathers], hagiographies and sacred books written by different fathers of the church led by the Holy Spirit. Those who prepared and organized the book to be read daily, with help of God and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, were Abba Michael, the bishop of Atrib, Abba Yohanes, the bishop of Burs, and other saintly fathers and teachers of the church.

<sup>44</sup> Luk. 1:38

*Virgin Mary, in a wonderful union unknowable how it happened. And at that time, He assumed perfect flesh (perfect Incarnation took place), separation would be impossible afterwards; because His divinity and humanity became one without separation. And this day is the first-born of all feasts<sup>45</sup> for in it was made the start of the salvation of the world. Salutation is to His descent, leaving the powers of the heavens, for Incarnation (ለተሠግዎ) in the womb of Mary.<sup>46</sup>*

For St. Yared the act of incarnation is amazing too, “መንክር ምጽኣቱ ወመንክር ልደቱ *Amazing is His coming, magnificent is his birth*” [Déggua Zä-ÿastéméhéro]. Why? Due to His magnificent birth men became the partakers of the glory of God. Other Ethiopian Scholars also share St. Yared’s astonishment. The scholars said “His wisdom through which He saved humanity becoming human is greater than His wisdom through which He created the world”<sup>47</sup> Why? It is true that God created man through His word and action out of his will, but He saved man assuming and becoming man through not only His will but also His obedience! Lossky agrees with the Ethiopian singer and the Ethiopian exegetes with his words, “The Incarnation of the Word is a greater and more profound

mystery than that of creation of the world”<sup>48</sup>.

The words of the writer of the Déggua which says “በልደቱ ተርገወ ሰማይ *Through His birth the heavens were opened*” [Déggua Zä-ÿastéméhéro]” gives us another proof that the Incarnation is the core act of God to save humanity and open the way of *theosis*. This “opened heaven” for St. Yared implies the elevation of humanity into godliness by, the perfect and first reason, the ascension of the

<sup>45</sup>Jacob of Serug (451-521) (translated by Mary Hansbury). On the Mother of God. (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 575 Scarsdale Rd., Crestwood, NY10707, U.S.A., 1998). pp. 3. The feast of Annunciation, the commemoration of the day of the act of Incarnation, like in the Ethiopian tradition, is observed as the first feast, which means the feast of all feasts, in the Syrian tradition too.

<sup>46</sup>ለእከ ማርያም ወልደ ኢየሱስ (ሊቀ መዘምራን፣ ተርጓሚ)። መጽሐፈ ስንክሳር ግእዝና አማርኛ ከመጋቢት እስከ ጳጉሜን። (ትንሣኤ ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ (1993)። ገጽ124።

<sup>47</sup>ተስፋ ገብረ ሥላሴ። ወንጌል ቅዱስ ዘእግዚእን ወመድንኒን ኢየሱስ ክርስቶስ ንባቡና ትርጓሜው። (1988)፣ ገጽ19-22። “ዓለምን ከፈጠረበት ጥበቡ ሰው ሆኖ ዓለምን ማዳኑ ይበልጣል”

<sup>48</sup>Lossky, Vladimir. The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church. (James Clerke & Co.Ltd, 1974). pp.156

divinity and His assumption of human flesh. The heavens were closed for many generations, for 5,500<sup>49</sup> years according to the traditional teaching of our Church. But by His descent, He opened the way and enabled humanity to enter into the realm of Divinity. This shows the aim of God to lift man up to the heavens opening them, or giving man an opportunity to ascend on high, through His coming down unto us, through His birth or Incarnation which is the core act of God for the salvation and *theosis* of humanity.

As can be seen in the book “*Theosis: The True purpose of Human Life*”, the Abbot of St. Gregorios monastery Archimandrite George presents salvation as the purpose of human creation. For him, man is created to enjoy a godly life through grace and communion with the Creator. This was the reason that God became man that man became God through the Incarnation of the Word of God. For this prominent theologian, it was not necessary for God to come to our world simply for the purpose of improving human morality for there were virtuous philosophers who could elevate human ethics. On the contrary, the purpose was the *theosis* of man, which can only be true by the descent of God into humanity and the ascension of man into the very purpose of his creation, *theosis*<sup>50</sup>. This indicates that the salvation of man initiated through the Incarnation is the life of *theosis*, the becoming of men Gods by grace. This condition is the opening of the heavens that by grace man enters into communion with God.

Tracing back to patristic thought, the 20<sup>th</sup> century theologian Vladimir Lossky stated beautifully in full agreement with the Ethiopian singer, in his work ‘In the Image and Likeness of God’, that the descent of God the Word was the way of the ascent of humanity in the following manner:

*The descent of the Divine person of Christ makes human persons capable of ascent in the Holy Spirit. It was necessary that the voluntary humiliation, the redemptive KENOSIS, of the Son of God should take place, so that the fallen men might accomplish their vocation of THEOSIS, the deification of created beings by uncreated*

<sup>49</sup> ተስፋ ገብረ ሥላሴ። ወንጌል ቅዱስ ዘእግዚእነ ወመድኃኒነ ኢየሱስ ክርስቶስ ንባቡና ትርጓሜው። (1988)፣ ፲፮፡19-22። In the introduction of the Ethiopian exegesis of the Gospel, the Ethiopian commentators said “He (God) judged [man] a death of soul on top of a death flesh, descent to Hades on top of descent to the grave”.

<sup>50</sup> George, Archimandrite. *Theosis: The True Purpose of Human Life*, 4th edition, (Greece, Holy Monastery of Saint Gregarious, 63087 Mount Athos, 2006). pp. 25-26, 86.

*grace... The Son of God came down from heaven to accomplish the work of our salvation, to liberate us from the captivity of the devil, to destroy the dominion of sin in our nature, and to undo death, which is the wage of sin.*<sup>51</sup>

The Church scholars, including the Ethiopian singer St. Yared, described the descent of the Son of God into humanity, as a fundamental phenomenon, to make the way into the heavens straight<sup>52</sup> and to enable theosis for humanity.

### **3.2. Trinitarian and Marian Economies in the Incarnation of the Word**

Truly, the Incarnation of the Word of God is the means through which the salvation of humanity is achieved. But the question now is ‘whose economy is it?’

The initiation to save humanity was that of the Holy Trinity. St. Yared gave emphasis to the goodness, gracefulness, and will of the Triune God that made Him take the lead in saving humanity and act accordingly. God, being good, was not willing to remember the debts incurred by the sins of humanity and to desert human beings completely to live a corrupted life in respect of their continued disobedience. Thus he sang,

*“ኢተዘኪሮ አበሳ ዚኣነ ኢንደገነ ፍጹሙ ንማስን ጌር እግዚአብሔር without remembering our debt, He did not leave us to be fully corrupted, God the good. [Déggu<sup>w</sup>ua Zä Yästéméhéro]*

In a similar manner, referring to the Athanasian understanding,<sup>53</sup> the Eastern patristic analyst, Tsirpanlis, stated that the *goodness* and *truthfulness* of God were the two basic qualities of God that made the Word come into humanity and become incarnate. *The theological*

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<sup>51</sup> Lossky, Vladimir. In the Image and Likeness of God. (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, USA, 1974). pp. 97-98.

<sup>52</sup> Matt3:3; Isa57:14.

<sup>53</sup> St. Athanasius (Edited by Schaff, Philip 1819-1893). Athanasius: Selected Works and Letters. (NPNF2-04, Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library). pp. 221; St. Athanasius, On the Incarnation. (St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church).

*elaboration especially of Saint Athanasius regarding the necessity of the Incarnation is of deep meaning. He starts from the two substantial characteristics of God: goodness and truthfulness, and ends by insisting that the Word alone was properly qualified to restore man, since He was 'God-man or Theanthropos'<sup>54</sup>.*

The Ethiopian scholars state, in their introduction to the exegesis of the Gospel's or the *Yändemta*, different qualities of God that made Him save mankind. “**ፈቀደ እግዚአብሔር አድኅኖተ በሃህኑ ወበምሕረቱ**” God willed the salvation of [to save] Adam out of His forgivingness and mercifulness.”<sup>55</sup>

It seems that for St. Yared the grace of God was the other basic quality that made Him save mankind. The Gé'éz text ‘**ጸገወ**’ carries a threefold message: the action of giving, what is given, and the nature of both. In the *Sälam of Béréhan* we find the words of the Ethiopian composer which show the salvation of humanity expressed by the peace, the Savior granted to those who need to be saved, which in turn indicates that: ‘a life of salvation is a life of peacefulness’; **መድኃኒነ ውእቱ ሠርዐ ሰንበተ በቃሉ ወጸገወ ሰላመ ለኩሉ** *He is our Savior; He established the Sabbath with His word, and granted peace to all. [Déggua Zä-ÿastéméhr]*

While describing the desire and work of God to save man, St. Athanasius focused on His *goodness* and *truthfulness*; the Ethiopian commentators too gave more credit to His *mercifulness* and *forgivingness*, which are expressions of *goodness*; but St. Yared, in his hymns of Sundays, through the word ‘**ኢሩት**’ gave more emphasis to His *goodness* and *gracefulness*. Why? The reason seems that *goodness* includes the majority of God's qualities in relation to His creation specially man.

The Other nature of God through which salvation of humanity was affected and to which the author of the *Déggua* appealed was the will of God. In the *ÿézél* of the hymn of *Nolawi* he confessed his faith and said, “**ነአምን አበ ፈናዌ ወልደ ተፈናዌ መንፈስ ቅዱስ ማሕየዌ ዐቢየ ኖላዌ ሰማያዊ** *we believe in the Father the sender, the Son the sent, the Holy Spirit the life giver, The great celestial shepherd* “ [Déggua Zä-ÿastéméhro]. We can understand from this hymn that

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<sup>54</sup>Tsirpanlis, Constantine N. Introduction to Eastern Patristic Thought and Orthodox Theology. (The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1991). pp. 61.

<sup>55</sup>ተስፋ. ገብረ ሥላሴ። ወንጌል ቅዱስ ዘእግዚእነ ወመድኃኒነ ኢየሱስ ክርስቶስ ንባቡና ትርጓሜው። (1988)፣ ገጽ19-22።

he believes the Holy Trinity is the Shepherd or the Savior of the world, the Father through sending His only Son, the Son through assuming our humanity, and thus His crucifixion, death and resurrection, and the Holy Spirit through giving life to the humanity in Jesus Christ. This can be articulated in a negative expression as follows: ‘the Son would not have saved us, unless He was sent by His Father and accompanied by His life giving Spirit’.

In the *Sälam* of the same Sunday, it is stated that: |St. Yared spoke to the Shepherd that He descended from the heavens by the order and the will, of His Father to ransom His people: “እም ሰማይ ወረድከ በትእዛዝ አቡክ ከመ ትቤዙ ሕዝብክ ... *from the heaven, you descended by the will of Your Father that you ransom Your people...*”[ *Déggu<sup>ua</sup> Zä Īastéméhr*]. This assures the economy of the Holy Trinity in the salvation of humanity. In the Ethiopian Anaphora of St. Mary we find a clear statement that any one of the three Divine persons cannot command the other two but they act by the common will.<sup>56</sup> In the praise of the Church to the Virgin Mary, believed to be translated from the hymns composed by St. Ephrem, the economy of salvation is beautifully presented as the economy of the Three; “Out of the will of His own, of His Father and of the Holy Spirit, He came and saved us.”<sup>57</sup>

Vladimir Lossky presented the Holy Trinity as the Savior in an appealing manner of expression in his book ‘Orthodox Theology’, which resonates with the mind of St. Yared:

*Certainly economy belongs to the Divine will and this is unique to the Trinity; certainly the salvation of the world is the single will of the three, ... But this common will is realized differently for each person: the Father sends, the Son obeys, the Spirit accompanies and helps and through it the Son enters the world. The will of the Son is that of the Trinity, but it is rather obedience. It is the Trinity that saves us, but it is the Son Who is incarnated to realize in the world the work of salvation.*<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Daoud, Marcos. The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Church. (1959). pp. 77-78.

<sup>57</sup> ውዳሴ ማርያም ንብሉና ትርጓሜው። (ትንሣኤ ዘጉባኤ ማተሚያ ቤት፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ 1990)። ገጽ 31።

<sup>58</sup> Lossky, Vladimir. Orthodox Theology: An Introduction. (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, USA, 1989), pp.91

Orthodox dogmatic Christological teachings assign an indispensable place to the Virgin Mary. Like all of the Church Fathers, St. Yared, whenever he discusses the work of God to save His people, he highlights the role of the Virgin Mary and reiterates Her role in making the saving work of God effective.

In the hymn of the Sunday of Yäkatit 13 to 20, he articulated the words of the saints that they saw the Highest but were unable to comprehend and hence were overwhelmed by Him. In the case of the Virgin Mary, She saw Him like the other saints, but unlike them, She was able to carry and bear Him. Here are the words of St. Yared: ተበሃሉ ጳድቃን በበይናቲሆሙ እንዘ ይብሉ ቦኑ ዘርኢክምዎ ለልዑል። ኢሳይያስኒ ይቤ ርኢክዎ ለልዑል ርኢየ ወስዕነ ጠይቆቶ፤ ሙሴኒ ይቤ ዘርኢየ በዓምደ ደመና ርኢክዎ ለልዑል ርኢየ ወስዕነ ጠይቆቶ፤ ማርያምኒ ትቤ እንተ የጋቶ በከርሣ ርኢክዎ ለልዑል ርኢየት ወክሀለት ፀዊርቶ ...*The righteous ones talked with one another, saying that, 'Is there anyone of you who saw the Highest?' And Isaiah said, 'I saw the Most High'; he saw but was unable to comprehend Him; and Moses, he who saw Him in the pillar of cloud, said, 'I saw the Most High'; he saw but was unable to comprehend Him; but Mary, she who carried Him in her womb, said, 'I saw the Most High'; she saw and was able to carry Him. [Déggua Zä-Ÿastéméhro]*

For the author of the *Déggua*, the reason to honor and praise the Virgin Mary is not mere love; the reason is Her being the bearer of God. Thus he said, “የምንወድሳ ለማርያም በእንተ ዘተወልደ እምኔሃ *today, let us praise Mary, for from her He was born (or because of the One born of her).*” We find very similar expressions in the writing of the composer of the Anaphora of Mary, Abba Hryaqos,<sup>59</sup> and in the Praises of Mary by St. Ephrem.<sup>60</sup>

In his hymn assigned to the 5<sup>th</sup> of Nāhase, St Yared mentioned a very important symbol for the Virgin Mary in relation to the Incarnation and salvation: “the gate of salvation አንቀጸ አድኅኖ” [*Déggua Zä-Kérämt*]. Through this, he

highlighted her role in the saving work of her Son by becoming a gate through which the Savior entered the world, and the world entered into the salvation; thus the gate of salvation. She is also called by him “the Gate of Light

<sup>59</sup>Daoud, Marcos. *The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Church: Anaphora of St. Mary*, (1959), pp. 74.

<sup>60</sup>ወዳሴ ማርያም ንባቡና ትርጓሜው። (ትንሣኤ ዘጉባኤ ማተሚያ ቤት፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ 1990)። ገጽ 62።

አንቀጽ ብርሃን”<sup>61</sup>, and “Door of Light ፍኅተ ብርሃን”<sup>62</sup>. Abba Giyorgis of Gaśāčā (አባ ጊዮርጊስ ዘጋሥጫ) (1357-1417 EC)<sup>63</sup> adds that through her the True Light, our Savior Jesus Christ, entered into the world and ever lighted it.

Being the abode where the perfect union of humanity and divinity took place, the Virgin Mary’s role in the economy of human salvation is very great. For this reason St. Yared said in the ʿəzəl of Nāḥase 8 to 14: “...ፀሐይ ብሩህ ወወርኅ ንጹሕ ኮከብ ሥርግው ኀበ ማርያም ኀደረ፤ አንጺሐ ሥጋሃ ኀበ ማርያም ኀደረ፤ ቀዳሶ ኪያሃ ኀበ ማርያም ኀደረ፤ መለኮቶ ወልድ ውስተ ሥጋሃ ደመረ ... *A Bright Sun and a Pure Moon, an Adorned Star dwelt in Mary; He dwelt in Mary purifying her flesh; He dwelt in Mary sanctifying her; the Son added [made united perfectly] His Divinity into her flesh...*” [Déggu<sup>W</sup>ua Zä-Kërämt]. St. Yared proclaimed that the Word dwelt in the Virgin Mary while He also dwelt in all humanity as St. John said, in the prologue of his Gospel, “*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*”<sup>64</sup>. Here, the flesh of the Virgin Mary is identified with the flesh of all humanity, a *cosmic flesh*, thus her significant role in our salvation. The perfect union of Divinity and Humanity in Christ took place in the womb of the Virgin Mary. God the Father contributed His Word, and the Virgin Mary contributed her flesh. Though the subject of the act

of assumption, the Incarnation, was the Word, the assumption was made in her womb and from her pure flesh, through her faith and will

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty emphasized the two wills, which were very important for human salvation; the graceful will of God and the humble and obedient will of the Virgin Mary: “*God did not force Himself into St. Mary’s womb, nor did she conceive Him unwillingly, but played an active role. God asked her to accept! The Divine Incarnation was realized by the free grace of God, but she herself humbly accepted obedience.*”<sup>65</sup> The editors of the Orthodox Study Bible gave a very similar comment concerning the Lucian record: “let it be to me according to

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<sup>61</sup>መዕራፍ ዘቅዱስ ያፌድ። (ትንሣኤ ዘጉባኤ ማተሚያ ቤት፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ 1987)። ገጽ 124።

<sup>62</sup>ትንሣኤ ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት። መጽሐፈ አርጋኖን (ጸሎታ ለማርያም)፡ ፍኅተ ብርሃን ዘቀዳሚት። (አዲስ አበባ፣ 1996)። ገጽ 230።

<sup>63</sup>የቅዱስ አባ ጊዮርጊስ ዘጋሥጫና የቅዱስ አባ በጸሎተ ሚካኤል አንድነት ገዳም፣ መጽሐፈ ምሥጢር ግእዝና አማርኛ፣ (2001)። ገጽ 5-9።

<sup>64</sup>Jn1:14.

<sup>65</sup>Malaty, Tadros Y. (Fr.). *Saint Mary in the Orthodox Concept*, (St. George Coptic Church, 1978). Pp. 13.

your word”<sup>66</sup> which manifests the common Orthodox understanding on the role of the Virgin Mary: “*The Incarnation is not only the work of God, but it involves the free response of mankind in the person of Mary. Whereas Eve once disobeyed, Mary now obeys; whereas Eve closed herself to God, Mary opens to His will.*”<sup>67</sup>

According to the understanding of our Church, as recorded in the book written by Abba Abera Bekele, the personal Word dwelt in the womb of the Virgin Mary, at the time she said, “*let it be to me according to your word*”, which signifies the role of our Queen the Virgin Mary in the descent of the Word of God for our salvation.<sup>68</sup> Dr. Amsalu Tefera, an assistant professor of Philology at Addis Ababa University, on his part, made a very interesting remark in his article published in the Journal of the Ethiopian Church Studies (2013) as follows:

*Our Lady the Virgin Mary is the humble handmaid through whom God glorifies Himself. She is the Virgin to whom God gave a child... She is the very Mother of God apart from whom no genuine Incarnation of God would have been possible...Blessed Virgin Mary has a prominent role in the economy of our salvation...*<sup>69</sup>

The author notes the very same understanding in the Syrian and Ethiopian traditions about the Marian role in the salvation of humanity as Sebastian Brock recorded in his article for the introduction to the book of hymns of St. Jacob of Serug entitled “On the Mother of God”. He used to say, in a very emphatic sense, “without Mary, the Incarnation would not have taken place.”<sup>70</sup>

Vladimir Lossky expressed himself in line with the above mentioned individuals concerning the role of Mary:

*Mary remained free to accept or to refuse [the election and call]. The*

<sup>66</sup>Luk1:38.

<sup>67</sup>St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology. *The Orthodox Study Bible*. (Tomas Nelson, USA, 2008). pp. 1363; footnote comment on Luk1:38-10.

<sup>68</sup>አበራ በቀለ (ሊቀ ገብኤ አባ)፡፡ ትምህርተ ሃይማኖትና ክርስቲያናዊ ሕይወት፡፡ (ንግድ ማተሚያ ድርጅት፡፡ አዲስ አበባ፡ ማኅበረ ቅዱሳን፡ 1996)፡፡ ገጽ 131፡፡

<sup>69</sup>Amsalu Tefera (Dr.). “*Mariology in the EOTC Tradition: Special Emphasis on Dersane Zion*”: *Journal of Ethiopian Church Studies* No. 2; (Berehanena Selam Printing Press, Addis Ababa, Research Center Mahibere Kidusan, 2012).pp. 79-80.

<sup>70</sup>Jacob of Serug (451-521) (trans. Mary Hansbury). *On the Mother of God*. (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, USA,1998), p. 3;

*whole history of the world, every fulfillment of the Divine plan, was dependent on this free human response. The humble consent of the Virgin allowed the Word to become flesh. Everything God had waited for from fallen humanity was realized in Mary's personal liberty finally opened her flesh, her human nature, to the necessary work of salvation.*<sup>71</sup>

### **3.3. Salvation: The End of Death by the Death and Resurrection of Christ**

It is accepted that death reigned over man from the time of the fall of our ancestors to the time of the death and resurrection of Christ<sup>72</sup>. The hymn and the *Sälam* of the Sunday two weeks after the feast of Resurrection respectively, read as follows:

**...ተንሥኦ ወኣንሥኦ ኩሎ ሙታነ ወፈትሐሙ ለሙቁሓን ተንሥኦ  
ወኣንሥኦ ኩሎ ሙታነ በዐቢይ ኀይል ወሥልጣን ወኣግዐዘ ነፍሰ**

**ጻድቃን ተንሥኦ ወኣንሥኦ ኩሎ ሙታነ ትንሣኤሁ ገብረ በሰንበት  
በሣልስት ዕለት...**

*...He rose, and raised all the dead, and untied the imprisoned; he rose and raised all the dead in great power and authority, and freed the soul of the righteous; He rose and raised all the dead, He made His Resurrection on Sabbath, on the third day... [Déggu<sup>ua</sup> Zä-Fasika]*

**ተንሥኦ ክርስቶስ እሙታን ከይዶ መቃብሪሁ ለኣዳም ወበትንሣኤሁ  
ገብረ ለነ ሰላመ ለጻድቃን ኣብርሃ**

*Christ rose from the dead, trampling the grave of Adam, and through His Resurrection He made peace for us, He gave light for the righteous. [Déggu<sup>ua</sup> Zä-Fasika]*

The above words of the Ethiopian scribe show that Christ's Resurrection is the means through which death was completely defeated. What does the walk of

<sup>71</sup>Lossky, Vladimir. *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*. (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, USA, 1989). p. 89.

<sup>72</sup>Rom5:14-21.

Christ over the grave of Adam symbolize? When one tramples over another, the trampled party will be destroyed, especially when the one trampling is stronger than the one being trampled on. This analogy of the trampling of Christ over the grave of Adam, **ከይዶ መቃብሪሁ ለአዳም**, shows the defeat of death. From the above hymn, we once more better understand that death is vanquished whereas through the resurrection we receive peace, since the peace lost by the transgression and subsequent death of Adam was re-granted to humanity when Christ arose from the dead.

In the prayer and teaching books of the Church, we find a very beautiful and similar expression which says: “Raised from the dead, He trampled Sheol, He destroyed death by His death.”<sup>73</sup> They all present the same idea in different modes of expression; while St. Yared tells of the trampling of the tomb of Adam, the book of ‘Hidden Teachings’ informs us of the trampling of Sheol; in both actions, the places of the dead, Sheol and the grave, were trampled by the resurrected

Christ, whose soul and flesh were respectively united with His Divinity. The work of Christ through His Resurrection is perfectly expressed in the Yäraray of the Sunday mentioned: **ትንሣኤሁ ገብረ በሰንበት ወሰበረ ፍጥነት ብርት እግዚአለሰንበት አመ ሣልስት ዕለት ሞዎ ለሞት...** *He made His Resurrection on the Sabbath, And He destroyed the door of iron, The Lord of the Sabbath, on the third day, defeated death... [Déggua Zä-Fasika]*. St. Yared symbolized the door of Sheol, i.e. death, by an iron door. To break this iron door a hammer made of iron stronger than the iron-made door was needed. Hence, He fractured the seemingly unbreakable door of Sheol, i.e. the death of humanity, and let all men return to their former dwelling-place, Paradise where they could enjoy a life of peace. Christ applied His soul and body that are united to Divinity flesh and soul, an ever stronger armor in front of which nothing can prevail.

This was celebrated by St. Yared in song and through it tells us of the destruction of the power of death through the resurrection of Christ:

**አርአየ ሥልጣኖ ላዕለ ሞት አርአየ ሥልጣኖ ላዕለ ሞት ንጉሠ ነገሥት እግዚአ ኦጋእዝት አርአየ ሥልጣኖ ላዕለ ሞት... ኦ ትዕግሥት ወአርምሞት በፍቅረ ዚኣነ በጽሐ እስከ ለሞት አርአየ**

<sup>73</sup>ገብረ ሥላሴ ብርሃኑ። መዝሙረ ዳዊት፣ ትምህርተ ኅቡአት። (አክሱም ማተሚያ ቤት፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ ኢትዮጵያ፣ 1995)። ገጽ 518።

**ሥልጣኖ ላዕለ ሞት ወንሕነኒ ንግበር በዓለነ ቅድስተ ፋሲካ በሐሴት አርአየ ሥልጣኖ ላዕለ ሞት ገባሬ ሕይወት ክርስቶስ፤** *He exerted His Authority over death; the King of kings and Lord of Lords, He exerted His Authority over death; ... O patience and silence, out of His love for us He went as far as death, He exerted His Authority over death; And let us [Christians], celebrate our feast the holy Pascha, with happiness, He exerted His Authority over death; Christ the Life-giver. [Déggu<sup>ua</sup> Zä-Fasika]*

The account of the death and resurrection of Christ in the Ethiopian Anaphora attributed to St. Dioscorus, the writer emphasizes that the death experienced by Christ before the resurrection was impossible and unspeakable due to His Divine nature: “The immortal died, died to destroy death, died to raise the dead as He had promised them [the Fathers] by the word of the covenant.”<sup>74</sup>

In the exegesis of the book of Genesis, the Ethiopian commentators expressed in a beautiful way the Divine plan for the salvation of man, already prepared at his fall, to be fulfilled by the death and resurrection of the Son.

**አንድም አዳም ሥጋ የባሕርይ ዕውቀትን ያውቅ ዘንድ፤ ከእኛ አንዱን ወልድን ሆነ፤ በመልዕልተ መስቀል እጁን ዘርግቶ ተሰቅሎ፤ መከራ መስቀልን ተቀብሎ የሐዩ በትንሣኤ [ሕያው ሆኖ ይኖራል]፤ (ያሐዩ) ምእመናንን [አስነሥቶ] በዘለዓለም ሕይወት ያኖራል<sup>75</sup>** *(Again: Adam received flesh, to gain eternal knowledge, he became like One of Us [imitating the words of the Holy Trinity], the Son, being crucified on the Cross stretching out His hands, received the sufferings of the Cross , He lived through His resurrection and made believers share in the eternal life [i.e. life of salvation].*

With regard to our salvation, St. Yared depicted Christ as the ‘Man of Salvation’ who accepted suffering and death, **ዘሐመ ወሞተ ከመ ያድኅነነ** *He is [the One] Who suffered and died to save us.* This is very similar to the creedal expression of Nicaea and Constantinople; “for us and for our salvation ... He suffered and died.”<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup>Daoud, Marcos (Rev.). *The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Church, The Anaphora of St. Dioscorus.* (1959). pp. 160.

<sup>75</sup>ትንሣኤ ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት። መጻሕፍተ ብሉይት ፪ቱ አንድምታ ትርጓሜ። (አዲስ አበባ፣ 1999)። ገጽ 38። The Ethiopian exegesis on Genesis 3:22.

<sup>76</sup>Kelly, J.N.D. *The Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed, Continuum, (The Tower Building 11 York Road London SE1 7NX, 2008), pp 216.

In the Synaxarium, both the days of the crucifixion and the Resurrection, Mäggabit 27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, of our Lord are honored and exalted as days of salvation with different significance. The crucifixion is significant for our salvation, whereas the Resurrection has a twofold significance: for our salvation as well as for the hope of the final resurrection of all the dead. The readings are:

*On this day our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was crucified in the flesh for the salvation of the world... and He gave His rational and understanding soul that He took from our Lady the Holy Virgin Mary. That soul was separated from her flesh and went [descended] into Sheol without separation from the Divinity ... At that time, the flesh was crucified on the wood without separation from the Divinity and*

*likewise the soul descended into Sheol being one with the Divinity to untie the prisoners. Salutation be to the departure of Your soul... when You descended, O Lord, into the depth of Hades, the power of Your Glory undermined the strength of its gate lock, and Sheol vomited the souls it had swallowed.<sup>77</sup>*

And,

*On this day again occurred [it says ‘again occurred’ for the account of the Incarnation of the Word made on the same day] the completion of salvation through His holy and honored Resurrection, ... For He on this day proclaimed through His Incarnation that He made them wait, again they rejoiced in this day both the dead and the living as a result of receiving their salvation from Sheol. And through this, the dead and living understood their resurrection through the Resurrection of the body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, He who is the first-born of the dead as St. Paul said, Christ is “the firstborn of the dead,”<sup>78</sup> through His Resurrection, Salutation be to Your Resurrection [day] (ትንሣኤክ<sup>79</sup>) that became to Adam a day of*

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<sup>77</sup>ላእከ ማርያም ወልደ ኢየሱስ (ሊቀ መዘምራን፣ ተርጓሚ)። መጽሐፈ ስንክሳር ግእዝና አማርኛ ከመጋቢት እስከ ጳጉሜን። (ትንሣኤ ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ 1993)። ገጽ 116-117።

<sup>78</sup>Co.11:18

<sup>79</sup>Your Resurrection (ትንሣኤክ), here shows, from the context of the salutation, not the act of Resurrection but the Easter, or the feast of Resurrection.

*salvation from being judged.*<sup>80</sup>

All these events enable us to recite with fervor the words of the creed, “we look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.”<sup>81</sup>

In the like manner, the book of the Passion (መጽሐፈ ግብረ ሕማማት<sup>82</sup>) conveys the message that death was overcome through the death of Christ on the wood of the Cross according to the reading for the 9<sup>th</sup> hour of Good Friday. Let us see the beautiful words of the book, attributed to the prayer of Simon of the pillar (Stylites) (ስምዖን ዘምድ):

*O my Lord and God Jesus Christ, Who died on the trunk of the Cross [meaning the wooden Cross ], death was defeated through Your death for You received death and life from Your Father. You are the vanquisher of death, but You are the same and You are the giver of Life. You were dragged into death and death was overcome by You. When You made known to [death] that You are Life, [it] was vanquished when [it] saw You. And death was defeated when it heard Your voice.*<sup>83</sup>

The death of Christ, not only overcame death but made humanity to partake in life: “[He] broke the bondage of Satan that, by the death of our Lord, we partake life... [He] was crucified for our sake and through His Cross we gained salvation, strength and were ransomed... He was raised from the dead, trampled Sheol through His death, He destroyed death.”<sup>84</sup>

Vladimir Lossky stated his belief that redemption was through “The passion, death and Resurrection of Christ, by which His redemptive work was

<sup>80</sup> ላእክ ማርያም ወልደ ኢየሱስ (ሊቀ መዘምራን፣ ተርጓሚ)። መጽሐፈ ስንክሳር ግእዝና አማርኛ ከመጋቢት እስከ ጳጉሜን። (ትንሣኤ ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ 1993)። ገጽ 125።

<sup>81</sup> Kelly, J.N.D. *The Early Christian Creeds*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Continuum. (The Tower Building 11 York Road London SE1 7NX, 2008), pp. 298.

<sup>82</sup> The book of passion (መጽሐፈ ግብረ ሕማማት) is a prayer book of the passion /holy/ week, a week the church commemorates the sufferings of Lord Jesus Christ up to His death on the cross and His descent to the tomb, that includes many readings from both the Old and New Testaments, from the writings of different fathers of the church, from Ethiopia and abroad, hagiographies and prayers of saints, the miracles of Mary and Jesus, etc. The book covers all the readings from the eve of the Palm Sunday to the evening of the feast of Resurrection, i.e. Easter.

<sup>83</sup> ትንሣኤ ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት። መጽሐፈ ግብረ ሕማማት በግእዝና በአማርኛ። (አዲስ አበባ፣ 1996)። ገጽ 903።

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, pp 1169, 1170, 1172.

accomplished, thus occupying the central place in the Divine dispensation for the fallen world.”<sup>85</sup> In a similar manner, Abba Abera expressed that our salvation is revealed and confirmed through the death and Resurrection of Christ, that we [humanity] have received the remission of sin and are saved from the judgment [dominion] of death through His death, and we have hope of eternal life through His Resurrection.<sup>86</sup>

The Syrian poet theologian, St. Ephraim, fills us with the hope of the resurrection with his ‘hymn on Paradise’:

*Weary not, my brethren,  
nor suppose  
that your struggle will last long,  
or that your resurrection is far off,  
for our death is already behind us,  
and our resurrection before us*<sup>87</sup>

For this reason we recite during the fifty days from the feast of Easter till the day of Pentecost, (in the middle of the Divine Liturgy): “Christ arose from the dead. He died and trampled death under foot. He gave life and eternal rest to those who were in the grave,”<sup>88</sup>

### 3.4. Salvation as Entering into the Sabbath of Sabbaths

In the ‘Yézél’ of Sunday Hédar 6-19, St. Yared introduced the concept of the “Sabbath of Sabbaths” into which all the righteous enter, identifying the “Sabbath of Sabbaths” with the opened Paradise. Here are his own words: ብፁዕ ብእሱ ዘኢሖረ በምክረ ረሲዓን ወዘኢቆመ ውስተ ፍኖተ ኃጥኣን<sup>89</sup> ይበውእ ውስተ ሰንበተ ሰንበታቲሁ ኀበ ተርኀወ ኀኀት *blessed is the man, who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners; he will enter into His*

<sup>85</sup> Lossky, Vladimir. *In the Image and Likeness of God*. (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, USA, 1974). pp.98.

<sup>86</sup> አበራ በቀለ (ሊቀ ጉባኤ አባ)፡፡ ትምህርተ ሃይማኖትና ክርስቲያናዊ ሕይወት፡፡ (ንግድ ማተሚያ ድርጅት፡፡ አዲስ አበባ፡ ማኅበረ ቅዱሳን፡ 1996)፡፡ ገጽ 143፡፡

<sup>87</sup> St. Ephraim the Syrian (trans. Sebastian Brock). *Hymns on Paradise*: (Hymn VII, 2, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York 10707, U.S.A. 1990). pp. 119.

<sup>88</sup> Tensae Publishing House. *The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church: The Anaphora of the Apostles*. (Addis Ababa-Ethiopia, 2010 G.C.). pp.76.

<sup>89</sup> Ps. 1:1.

*Sabbath of Sabbaths, into the opened Paradise. [Déggu<sup>ua</sup> Zä-ÿastäméhéro].* For the author of the *Déggu<sup>ua</sup>*, the blessed is none other than he who enters the opened paradise which is the Sabbath of Sabbaths.

St. Yared's concept of the "Sabbath of Sabbaths" is clearly reflected in the Gé'éz text of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews as follows: **“ተዐውቀኬ ከመ ሀሎ ዕረፍት ነበ ይበውኡ ሕዝበ እግዚአብሔር ቀዋሚ ዘይነበር;** *it is known that there is a rest imperishable (which persist for ever ፀንቶ የሚኖር,) into which the people of God enter.*<sup>90</sup>” The Orthodox Study Bible reads this text as follows: “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God”<sup>91</sup> The commentators of the same Bible noted that there are three types of rest and the third one is described as follows:

*Rest here [the rest referred to by Paul in Heb. 4:9] is a reference to the third type of rest [the rest in the kingdom, the ultimate Sabbath rest in heaven established by the Messiah. ... Significantly, we experience this rest now as we ascend to God in worship], the perfect final rest of the kingdom of heaven. [The words of St. Paul “Let us therefore be diligent to enter the rest,” show that] Man must labor to enter the rest of God, for rest implies prior work.*<sup>92</sup>

The Ethiopian commentators of the Epistle of Paul to the Hebrew understood the Pauline rest as referring to the heavenly Kingdom that remains forever without passing.<sup>93</sup> The Coptic commentator and researcher of patristic writings, Fr. Tardros Y. Malaty, referring to the early Fathers, mainly to the western father Augustine, related the establishment of the Sabbath to the plan of salvation and he identified the Sabbath with Christ Himself.

*... many Fathers believe that the commandment of “keeping the Sabbath”, which means in Hebrew “the rest”, is actually a symbol of abiding in the Lord Christ, being the rest of the Father; in whom He finds His pleasure concerning us, as well as our own rest, as in Him we enter into the bosom of the Father; the Lord Christ, Himself, is our true Sabbath. ... This is the secret of God's care for keeping the commandment of the Sabbath, and for making it a main line in His*

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<sup>90</sup> የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን፡፡ የቅዱስ ጳውሎስ መጽሐፍ ንባቡና ትርጓሜው 2ኛ ዕጉም፣ (ትንሣኤ ዘጉባኤ ማተሚያ ቤት፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ 1988)፡፡ ገጽ 423፡፡

<sup>91</sup> Heb. 4:9.

<sup>92</sup> St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology. The Orthodox Study Bible. (Tomas Nelson, USA, 2008). pp. 1656, 1657; footnote comments on Heb. 3:3-11; 4:9, 11.

<sup>93</sup> የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን፡፡ የቅዱስ ጳውሎስ መጽሐፍ ንባቡና ትርጓሜው 2ኛ ዕጉም፣ (ትንሣኤ ዘጉባኤ ማተሚያ ቤት፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ 1988)፡፡ ገጽ 423፡፡

*plan of salvation of His people...<sup>94</sup>*

As for St. Yared, the Sabbath is an everlasting day time without night, in which we live without need of a natural sun and moon for the true Sun, our Lord Jesus Christ, will be the true Light that never darkens in the life after death (*eschatone*). **አመ ይመጽኝ ንጉሥ በንጥረ መባርቅት ትሰፍን ሰንበት ርእሰ ኩሎን ዕለታት አሜሃ አልቦ ወርኅ ኢ ፀሐይ ኢ ክረምት ወኢ ሐጋይ** *When the King comes, accompanied by thunder; Sabbath, the head of all days, will reign [forever]; at that time, there will be no moon, nor sun, no summer nor winter. [Somä Déggua ZäDäbérä\_Zäyét]*

The mystical understanding of St. Yared about the life to come, the eschatological life, as witnessed in the book of Revelations, is based on Biblical teaching<sup>95</sup>. The rest of God on the seventh day of creation is a pre-indication of the entrance of man into the eternal rest already at work in this world.<sup>96</sup>

In his *Yézél* of the 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Great Lent named ‘*Gäbérher*’ - meaning the ‘faithful servant St. Yared gave a clear impression of the ‘Sabbath of Sabbaths’ as the Kingdom of God, this was supported by his mode of translating the Biblical verses and his hymnological approach. **ኦ ገብር ኄር ወገብር ምእመን ዘበውትድ ምእመነ ኮንክ ዲበ ብዙኅ እስይመክ ባእ ውስተ ፍስሓሁ ለእግዚእክ ሰንበተ ሰንበታቲሁ** *O good and faithful servant, You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you a ruler over many things; enter into the joy of your Lord, His ‘Sabbath of Sabbaths’!* [Somä Déggua Zä-Gäbérher]. In his interpretative hymn for the first week of the Great Lent, the Kingdom of God for him is the ‘Sabbath of Sabbaths’. He sang: “For the Apostle says thus: It is only through much tribulation that we enter into the Sabbath of Sabbaths,<sup>97</sup>” [Somä Déggua Zä-WärädFurthermore, in the *Yézél* and *Sälam* of (the feast of) Nicodemus St. Yared clearly establishes the significance of the Sabbath for rest, for life, for salvation, for remission of sin and peace; they are interlinked as can be seen in the figure below.

<sup>94</sup>Tadros Y. Malaty (Fr.), Interpretation of the Book of Genesis, COeRL, pp. 48-49.

<sup>95</sup>የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን፡ የቅዱስ ጳውሎስ መጽሐፍ ንባቡና ትርጓሜው 2ኛ ዕትም፣ (ትንሣኤ ዘገባኤ ማተሚያ ቤት፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ 1988)፡፡ ገጽ 423፡፡

<sup>96</sup>Tadros Y. Malaty (Fr.), Interpretation of the Book of Genesis, COeRL, pp. 48-49.

<sup>97</sup>Rev 21:22-25; 22:5.

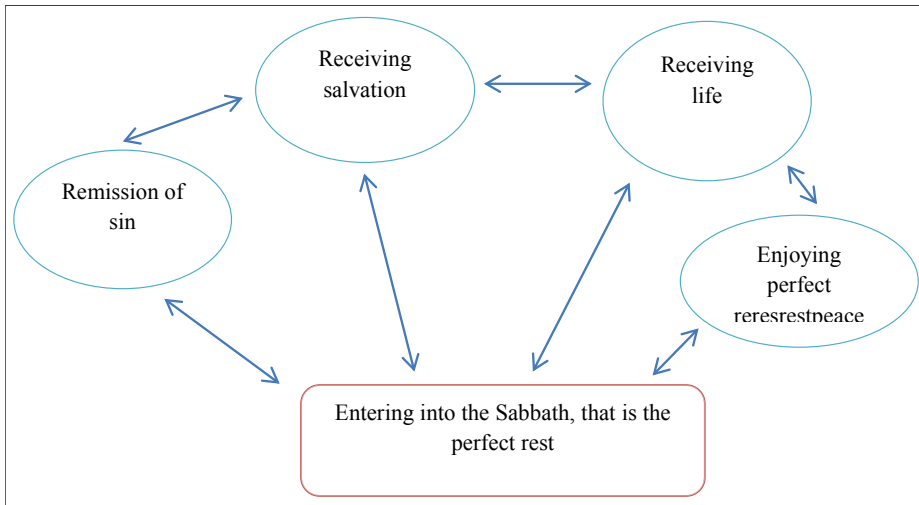


Figure 1: The Sabbath and the Life in the Kingdom of God

### 3.5. The Role of Mankind for his own Salvation

St. Yared puts great emphasis on the role of mankind in gaining salvation, although it has already been granted through the grace of God. Let us start with his hymn of the Sabbath concerning the period between ‘*Hédar*’ 20<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. In it we find that work is among the three fundamental elements that enable man to inherit the Kingdom of God; through the Grace of God, on the side of the Savior, and through faith and good works on the side of man.

... ቅረቡ ኀቤሁ ለአምላክ ጽድቅ ማጎደር ለንጹሐን ከመ ትንሥኡ አክሊለ ስብሐት ዘአስተዳለወ ለእለ ያፈቅርዎ ፀንዑ በጸጋ በሥን ወበሃይማኖት ወረሱ አክሊለ ስምዕ በእምነቶሙ እለ እምዓለም አሥመርዎ ለእግዚአሙ መምህረ ቅዱሳን አክሊለ ሰማዕት ሰያሜ ካህናት

... Come near to Him, to the righteous God, a dwelling place for the pure, to receive the crown of glory that He prepared for those who love Him. They were firm in grace, goodness [deeds], and faith and they inherited the crown of witness through their faith, those who pleased their Lord, the Master of the Saints, the Crown of the Martyrs, and the Ordainer of the priests. [*Déggu<sup>ua</sup> Zä-ÿasétäméhéro*]

Here the elements are presented as follows: God through His Grace allowed

humanity to become heirs to His glory or His Kingdom, and the saints kept firm the gifts given by God and pleased God approaching Him through faith and by doing good works. St. Yared's expression, **ፀንዑ በጸጋ በሥነ ወበሃይማኖት** (*They were firm in grace, goodness [deed], and faith*), is so powerful that it contains the three most important elements for becoming heirs to the crown of witness.

Analysis can be made concerning **ፀንዑ በጸጋ በሥነ ወበሃይማኖት**. He said “**ፀንዑ**” to remind human beings that endurance is rewarding. Those who endure bodily as well as spiritual temptations will receive the crown of glory. What kind of endurance have the Saints displayed which pleased God so much that He granted them the crown of witness? St. Yared said, “**በጸጋ በሥነ ወበሃይማኖት**.” In the case of by *grace* (**ጸጋ**), this is to say that they [the Saints or human beings?] endured suffering in line with the saving grace granted by Christ unceasingly, receiving that grace Divine which is given once and yet is always effective. But when St. Yared says they were endured *in goodness or deed* (**በሥነ**) and *in faith* (**በሃይማኖት**), he persuades us that their faith was firm in a manner that could not be shaken or loosened by any kind of temptation or false teachings. Being faithful they did what they had to do untiringly as they were well aware of the reward awaiting them the crown of witness. “**ሥነ**”, etymologically, has different meanings including: goodness, beauty, teaching, creation, ornament, decoration, praise or reward, but metaphorically it refers to good works and actions.<sup>98</sup>

The Orthodox Study Bible explains the relation between grace, faith and work:

*How can one get from one kingdom to the other? By the unity of grace, faith and work! Not that these are equal, for grace is uncreated and infinite, whereas our faith is limited and can grow; good works flow out of authentic faith. Works cannot earn us this great treasure-it is a pure gift- but those who receive this gift do good works. We are not saved by good works, but [we are saved] for i.e. to perform good works.<sup>99</sup>*

When advising his spiritual children, in his book ‘*Salvation in the Orthodox Concept*’, the late Coptic Orthodox Patriarch His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

<sup>98</sup>ኪዳነ ወልድ ክፍሌ፡፡ መጽሐፈ ሰዋስው ወግስ ወመዝገበ ቃላት ሐዲስ፡፡ (አርቲስቲክ ማተሚያ ቤት፣ 1948)፡፡ ደስታ ተክለ ወልድ፡፡ ገጽ 672፡፡

<sup>99</sup>St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology. The Orthodox Study Bible. (Tomas Nelson, USA, 2008). pp. 1600. footnote comment on Eph. 2:8-10.

wrote: “As a general rule I tell you about the necessity of good works for salvation,” Any verses of the Holy Bible opposing good works refer to ‘works alone without the blood of Christ’ or ‘the works of the Law of the Old Testament’. Without the blood of Christ works are of no avail.”<sup>100</sup> He specified the three conditions man has to fulfill in order to be saved, under the saving blood of Christ; faith, partaking of the sacraments and performing good works are necessary for salvation.<sup>101</sup>

Most of the time St. Yared focuses on love, fasting, almsgiving, and good deeds. For example;

**...ንጹም ጾመ ወናፍቅር ቢጸነ ወንትፋቀር በበይናቲነ እስመ ለዓለም  
ምሕረቱ አክብሩ ሰንበተ ተገበሩ ጽድቀ**

*...Let us fast, and love our neighbor, and love one another; for His mercy is forever, You should observe the Sabbath, and do righteous deeds. [Somä Déggua Zä-Zäwäradä]*

**ቦአ ኢየሱስ ምኵራብ አይሁድ ወመሀረ ቃለ ሃይማኖት ወይቤሎሙ  
ምጽዋተ አበድር እመሥዋዕት... (Jesus entered the synagogue of the  
Jews, and taught the word of faith, and said unto them, “I prefer alms  
to sacrifice!... [Somä Dggua Zä-Mékurab]**

**ሰንበተ አክብሩ ሠናየ ግበሩ ቢጸክሙ አፍቅሩ ነዳያነ ወምስኪናነ  
መሐሩ ከመ ትእመኑ አንትሙ ቦአ ኢየሱስ ምኵራብ አይሁድ  
ወመሀረ ቃለ ሃይማኖት**

*Honor the Sabbath, do what is good, love your neighbor, have mercy upon the poor and destitute; Jesus entered into the Synagogue of the Jews, and taught the word of faith for you to believe. [Somä Déggua Zä-Mékurab]*

**አመ ዕለተ ፍዳ አመ ዕለተ ደይን አመ ዕለተ እግዚአብሔር ምንተ  
ንብላ ለነፍስ አመ ኢታድኅን እምውሉዳ ወምድርኒ አመ ታገብእ  
ማኅፀንታ ምንተ ንብላ ለነፍስ አመ ይወቅሰነ በግርምት ዐውድ  
አሜሃ ይትከሠት ወይሰጣሕ ምግባራቲነ ወይትነበብ ኩሉ ዘገበርነ  
ምንተ ንብላ ለነፍስ እምኔሶ ለሰብእ ሶበ ይምሕር ነዳየ ወይገብር ሠናየ**

<sup>100</sup>Pope Shenouda III. Salvation in the Orthodox Concept. (Egyptian Printing Co., 2005). p. 22.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid, p. 28.

*What shall we say then to the soul on the day of vengeance, the day of damnation, the day of God! When a mother cannot save her children, and when the earth gives up what is in her; what shall we say then to the soul! When He rebukes us at the fierce court, then our deeds will be unveiled and laid out, and all that we have done will be read aloud; what shall we then say to the\_soul! It would be better for a man, if he had mercy upon the poor, and did what is good. [Somä Déggu<sup>w</sup>ua Zä-Däbérä Zäyét]*

All these texts confirm that man has to do good works to gain access to the banquet of Salvation. The commentators who produced the Orthodox Study Bible express with a short and very interesting sentence the conviction that saving faith always agrees with and is succeeded by saving works, “Saving faith always produces righteous work.”<sup>102</sup> These ideas resonate with the teaching of St. James the Apostle: “*What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? ... Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.*”<sup>103</sup>

The Syrian poet theologian, St. Ephraim, confirmed in his hymns on Paradise that good deeds witness to the just and facilitate that they may enter Paradise, and they are called “glorious deeds” that surpass the fruits of Paradise:

*The diligent carry their own fruits  
and now run forward  
to meet Paradise  
as it exalts with every sort of fruits.  
They enter that Garden  
With\_glorious deeds,  
And it sees*

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<sup>102</sup> St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology, The Orthodox Study Bible, (Tomas Nelson, USA, 2008) p. 1,319; footnote comment on Matt 25:31-46.

<sup>103</sup> Jam. 2:14, 17

*that the fruits of the just  
surpass in their excellence  
the fruits of its own trees,  
and that the adornments of the  
victorious out-rival its own.*<sup>104</sup>

### 3.6. Human Salvation in St. Yared's Symbolic and Typological Expressions

#### The Analogy of Satiety from Hunger:

In the hymn that is assigned to be sung on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the liturgical year, that lies between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of the month *Mäskäräm* in the Ethiopian Calendar, St. Yared uses an analogy comparing the state of a (soul) that is saved (from the domination of death), which glorifies and gives thanks to God with a Soul which gives glory to God for its hunger being satisfied. To use St. Yared's own words: "... ነፍስ ድኅንነት ወነፍስ ርህብት እንተ ጸግባት ተአኩተከ ...a soul saved, and a soul starved and then satiated gives you thanks".

#### The Symbol of Father and Mother of the Saved:

In the *Sälam* of the Sunday *Tahésas* 7-13, St. Yared identified Jesus Christ with a father and a mother. Why? In this hymn, St. Yared said about Jesus: “ተሰብከ መድኅን ክብረ ቅዱሳን አብ ወእም ዘይከውን ለኩሉ ዓለም the Savior has proclaimed, the honor of the saints; He Who becomes father and mother to the entire nation.” The concept of identifying Jesus with a mother and a father might spring from different reasons: as a father and a mother give life and through the providential act of God and his covenantal blessings nourish their children, likewise Jesus gives life to all humanity (the entire nation according to St. Yared ) and nourishes salvation without discrimination; or it could be due to the reason that He brought humanity into the sphere of salvation, the kingdom of God, just as our parents cause us to join the world of humanity.

It is unique that St. Yared calls Christ both ‘father and mother’. We find

<sup>104</sup>St. Ephraim the Syrian (trans. Sebastian Brock). Hymns on Paradise: Hymn VI 11. (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York 10707, USA, 1990). pp. 112.

references to Christ as ‘a father’ in both the Scriptures and patristic writings,<sup>105</sup> as a phenomenon of the understanding of the early Church, but it is unusual for Him to be called ‘mother’. St. Yared, in contrast repeatedly calls Christ; ‘mother.’

**ሐዋርያቲሁ ከበበ**

**እግረ አርዳኢሁ ኀፀበ**

**ኮኖሙ አበ ወእመ**

**ወመሀሮሙ ጥበበ**

*He made His Apostles surround Him,*

*washed the feet of His disciples,*

*became their father and mother;*

*and instructed them in wisdom.<sup>106</sup>*

**አንተ አቡነ ወአንተ እምነ አምላክነ ርድአነ ወአድኅነነ**

*You are our Father and You are our Mother; our God, help us and*

*save us<sup>107</sup>*

### **Types that Foretell Salvation:**

St. Yared, in the hymn of Sunday a week before the beginning of the Great Lent, uses typology from the Old Testament account of the Patriarch Jacob and the prophecy of Isaiah to describe the saving works of our Lord Jesus Christ:

**ወብዙኃን ኖሎት መጽኡ ወስኢኑ ከሢቶታ ለዕብን እምአፈ አዘቅት  
እስከ ይመጽእ ያዕቆብ ዘክቡት ውስተ ሐቋሁ ዘሀሎ ይሠኝ እምሰብእ**

**ከሠተ ወአስተየ መርዔቶ። ወከማሁ መጽኡ ብዙኃን ነቢያት  
ወስኢኑ ከሢቶታ ለጥምቀት እስከ ይመጽእ ዐቢይ ኖላዊ እምሰማይ**

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<sup>105</sup> TedrosAbraha.Quotations from Patristic Writings and References to Early Christian Literature in the Books of St. Yared. (Le Museon: Revue D'Etudes Orientales, Tome122, Louvain-La - Neuve, 2009). pp. 346-352.

<sup>106</sup>ትንሣኤ ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት። ጾመ ድን ዘቅዱስ ያፌድ። ዘሰሙነ ሕማማት። (ንግድ ማተሚያ ቤት፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ 1987)። ገጽ 390።

<sup>107</sup>Ibid, pp 100

ከሠተ ወስጥመቀ ብዙኃን አሕዛብ በውስቴታ መንክር ተአምሪሁ ለመድኃኒኑ። በከመ ወጽአት በትር እምሥርወ እሤይ በአምሳለ በትረ ያዕቆብ በዘይርኢ አባግዲሁ ይእቲኬ ማርያም ይእቲ። ወበእንተ ዘይቤ ትወጽእ በትር ወየዐርግ ጽጌ ውእቱኬ ዋሕድ ውእቱ ውእቱኬ ወልደ አምላክ ውእቱ።

*Many of the shepherds came, and were unable to roll the stone*

*from the well's mouth, till Jacob came, and in his loins (belly)<sup>108</sup> was hidden, He Who would be Incarnated [forever] from man, and he was able to open and give drink to his herd; [St. Yared's typological interpretation continues] and likewise, many prophets came, and were unable to unveil the mystery of baptism, till the Grand Shepherd came from heaven, [He] unveiled and baptized many of the Gentiles in it; marvelous was the miracle of our Savior. Just as the rod came forth, from the root of Jesse, in the type of the rod of Jacob, by which he looked after his sheep, so the rod itself is Mary. Just as he said the rod comes forth, and a flower shall grow, so He Himself is the incarnate Word, He Himself is the Son of God. [Déggua Zä-Yasétäméhéro]*

We can summarize the types St. Yared found in the Old Testament in contrast to the anti-types of the New Testament as portrayed in the above hymn as follows:

Type		Anti-type	
1	The shepherds	1	The prophets
2	The stone	2	Christian baptism
3	Jacob	3	Jesus
4	Herd/the flock	4	Gentiles/ baptism
5	Gave drink	5	Baptized
6	The stick/rod	6	Virgin Mary
7	The flower	7	The Incarnate Son of God

<sup>108</sup>Ralph Lee (Dr.), *Symbolic Interpretations in Ethiopic and Ephremic Literature*, p. 211. (unpublished PhD Dissertation SOAS University of London, 2011).

**Table 1: The type-anti-type relations described in the above hymn**

For St. Yared, the reason why Jacob was able to roll the stone, open the well and give drink to the herd was that “ዘክቡት ውስተ ሐቄሁ ዘሀሎ ይሠኝ እምሰብእ *in his loins (belly) was hidden He Who was to be incarnated from man*”. What insight St. Yared had to see Jesus in the belly of the Patriarch Jacob! This tells us about the capacity of St. Yared to make connections between the two Testaments

and to show that Christ is referred to everywhere in the pages of both books, as types and symbols in the Old and as antitypes and fulfillment in the New, and that Christ is the central theme of the whole Scriptures. Such an interpretative approach is very Biblical; Christ taught that His sepulcher<sup>109</sup> was an anti-type of the fish of the sea of Tarshish<sup>110</sup> in which Jonah the prophet remained for three days and nights, and Paul proclaimed the stone in the wilderness that quenched the Israelites,<sup>111</sup> to be none other than Christ Himself<sup>112</sup> by whom the thirst of the whole of humanity is eternally quenched.<sup>113</sup>

### **3.7. The Holy Cross and Human Salvation**

The third Sunday of the Ethiopian liturgical year is named *Mäseqäl* (or the Cross ) because it lies just on or after the feast of the finding of the true Cross, *Mäskäräm* 17<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> (28<sup>th</sup> September to 3<sup>rd</sup> October. In his hymn assigned to this particular Sunday, St. Yared associated our redemption with the Cross on which our Lord was crucified and gave redemptive power to the Cross as a sign of victory over the devil and death with all its consequences.

ዝንቱ ውእቱ መስቀል በአማን ዕፁብ ያቀልል በጽንዐ  
ኀይል ወበሠናይ ምግባር በዕፁ መስቀሉ ኃጢአተ ይሠራ  
ዝንቱ ውእቱ መስቀል ጸርሐ ጸድቃን እምደብር ልዑል  
ወኃጥኣን ምድር በማዕከል ደይን ዝንቱ ውእቱ መስቀል  
ለእምነ ጽዮን ቆመ ማዕበል በዕለተ ሰንበት ገሠጸ ለባሕር  
ዝንቱ ውእቱ መስቀል ደቂቀ እሥራኤል አደዉ በእግር  
ዝንቱ ውእቱ መስቀል ንሕነ ነአምን ረድኤተ ወኀይል

<sup>109</sup>Matt12:40.

<sup>110</sup>Jon1:1f, 2:1f.

<sup>111</sup>Exo17:6.

<sup>112</sup>1Cor10:4.

<sup>113</sup>Jn6:53ff, 7:37f.

**ዝንቱ ውእቱ መስቀል ፅንዕነ ቤዛነ በማዕከለ ፀር ዝንቱ  
ውእቱ መስቀል ኀይልነ ወጸወንነ ወሞገስነ ዝንቱ ውእቱ  
መስቀል**

*This is the Cross, truly that lightens the hardship,  
through strength of power and good deeds; He, through  
His wooden Cross, absolves sin; this is the Cross, the  
righteous cried from a high mountain, and sinners of  
the earth in the midst of grave; this is the Cross, of Zion  
our mother which stilled the storm, He reproved the sea  
on the day of the Sabbath; this is the Cross, the sons of  
Israel crossed on foot; this Cross, we believe aids and  
empowers us [to be made through the Cross]; this is the  
Cross, our strength in the midst of the enemy; this is the  
Cross, the power of Zion and our grace; this is the Cross.  
[Déggu<sup>ua</sup> Zä-Yohanés]*

St. Yared develops seven concepts in this hymn; six of them are attributed to the Cross while the remaining one is attributed to the Redeemer but through His Cross. These concepts are:

1. Truly the Cross lightens hardship;
2. (Jesus) through His wooden Cross absolves sin;
3. The Cross is our strength in the midst of the enemy;
4. The Cross is our ransom in the midst of the enemy;
5. The Cross is our power;
6. The Cross is our Zion; and
7. The Cross is our grace.

In an alternative hymn of the same Sunday, St. Yared expressed the belief that the Cross is our helper [i.e. assistant], and life or existence to those who have faith. “ዝንቱ ውእቱ መስቀል ረድኤት ለኣለ ነአምን ሕይወተ *this is the Cross, helper*

*[aid] [and] life to us who believe*". There is a great unity of meaning with the Pauline text: "For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."<sup>114</sup>

In other parts of the songs assigned to the same Sunday, we find beautiful expressions about the Cross. In the *Yararay* St. Yared tells that He (Jesus) opened Paradise and brought us life or salvation through His Cross:

**በመስቀሉ አርጎው ገነተ በመስቀሉ ገብረ መድኃኒት  
ሰደደ አጋንንተ እመስቀሉ ወሪዶ ቤዘውን ወሠርዐ ሰንበተ  
ለዕረፍት**

*Through His Cross, [He] opened Paradise; through His Cross, [He] made salvation [and He] chased away the demons; descending from His Cross, He ransomed us, and established the Sabbath for rest. [Déggu<sup>ua</sup> Zä-Yohanés]*

Jesus opened Paradise, gave life or salvation and chased away the demons, which were the source of all evil and sin though they could not make evil and sin to reign without men being willing. Through His Cross; practically through His crucifixion, we were ransomed and our rest was established. In the mind of our father St. Yared, the descent of Christ from the Cross: **እመስቀሉ ወሪዶ ቤዘውን ወሠርዐ ሰንበተ ለዕረፍት** can be associated with the exposition of two Biblical references:

- a. His descent from the Cross to the tomb where He defeated death and its dominion, through His resurrection he ransomed us from death's dominion and gave us the hope of resurrection with Him.<sup>115</sup>
- b. When He himself separated His Body and Soul, His Divinity being united with both, was sent to Sheol to ransom and free the souls of Adam and his descendants and return them to their original abode, Paradise.

This is what was recorded by St. Gregory of Nyssa, in the book 'the Faith of Fathers' He said: "His descent from His Cross into Sheol saved us" or more appropriately from the Amharic text: "He saved us through His descent from

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<sup>114</sup>1Cor. 1:18.

<sup>115</sup>Matt16:21, 17:23, 20:1-7;Rom. 6:1-5; 1Cor. 15:3-22.

His Cross.”<sup>116</sup> St. Cyril also expressed a similar idea in the same book stating that: Christ “descended into the places which are under the earth that He might liberate the souls of the men that were kept there,”<sup>117</sup> which signifies a two-fold descent; into the tomb and into Sheol to free both the body and the soul respectively. The expressive words of the same writer are cited in the same book:

*And He did not leave His soul in Sheol and His flesh did not see corruption, and His Divinity was not separated from either [the body or the soul], but the fullness of the Divinity entered with the Soul into Sheol and announced the good tidings within Sheol; and the fullness of the Divinity joined with the Flesh inside the tomb, because Divinity exists everywhere.*<sup>118</sup>

St. Yared’s words beautifully describe how our Savior ransomed us; through His descent to the tomb he ransomed our bodies from the dominion of death and his descent to Sheol ransomed our souls from the Hellish life of slavery by his single word: *‘He ransomed us’*.

His Crucifixion (His Cross) is our Salvation and His Resurrection is our Rest! According to a very similar understanding expressed by Fr. Tadros: “Through the Cross, we realized our Salvation and He reconciled us with God,”<sup>119</sup>. He even granted the Church through the Cross the power of attraction and conquest that the Church might: “conquer the world by the Cross and the Cross only.”<sup>120</sup> St. Ambrose, as mentioned in the NPNF series, described the wood of the Cross as the ‘Ship of Salvation’: “That wood of the Cross is, then, as it were a kind of ship of our salvation, our passage, not a punishment, for there is no other salvation but

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<sup>116</sup> ተስፋ. ገብረ ሥላሴ፡፡ ሃይማኖት አበው በግእዝና በአማርኛ፡፡ ዘጎርጎርዮስ ዘኑሲስ፡፡ (1982)፡፡ ገጽ 107; The Gé'ez texts are [በ]ርደቱ እመስቀሉ ውስተ ሲኦል [አድጎነነ] ወፈትሐ እለ ሀለዉ ህየ ጸድቃነ መቁላነ በጎጢአተ አዳም አቡሆመ ወአንሥኣነ በጽድቀ ትንሣኤሁ እምነ መታን ወአርጎወ ለነ ኖጋተ ንስሐ. We cannot find the letter [በ] and the word [አድጎነነ] in the GLZ text of the book but it is present in the Amharic translation, showing the understanding of the EOTC scholars.

<sup>117</sup> ተስፋ. ገብረ ሥላሴ፡፡ ሃይማኖት አበው በግእዝና በአማርኛ፡፡ ዘቂርሎስ፡፡ (1982)፡፡ ገጽ 240፡፡

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, pp. 244.

<sup>119</sup> Malaty, Tadros Y. (Fr.). *Commentary on the Book Song of Solomon*. (COeRL, 1999), p.19.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, p. 20.

the passage of eternal salvation.”<sup>121</sup>

Another song assigned to the 24<sup>th</sup> of *Mäskäräm*, if it falls on a Sunday, shows that the power of Jesus’ Cross broke the chains of the prisoners, cleansed the lepers, cast out demons, and raised the dead to the glory of God:

መስቀልክ እግዚአብሔር ተሰብሐ ነይሉ መስቀልክ ሙቁሐነ  
ፈትሐ እለ ለምጽ አንጽሐ መስቀልክ እግዚአብሔር ተሰብሐ  
ነይሉ መስቀልክ አጋንንተ አውጽኦ መስቀልክ እግዚአብሔር  
ተሰብሐ ነይሉ መስቀልክ ሙታነ አንሥኦ መስቀልክ  
እግዚአብሔር ተሰብሐ...

*Your Cross, O Lord, is glorified; the power of your Cross released the chained, cleansed those with leprosy, Your Cross, O Lord, is glorified; the power of your Cross cast out demons, Your Cross, O Lord, is glorified; the power of your Cross raised the dead, Your Cross, O Lord, is glorified. [Déggua Ze Yohanés]*

In the additional *Yézél* song of the day, after telling that the Sunday is the Sabbath of Christ, St. Yared presented praise to Christ who opened Paradise through His Cross: ናክብር ሰንበቶ...ሃሌ ሃሌ ሉያ ሃሌ ሉያ ንሴብኦ ክርስቶስህ ለዘበመስቀሉ አርገወ ኀኑት *let us observe [honor] His Sabbath, Halle Halleluiah, Halleluiah, we offer Praise to Christ, Who with His Cross opened Paradise.* With regard to the opening of Paradise, he reminded us that Paradise was closed before the Crucifixion of Christ. Is the Cross only the wood on which Christ was crucified? His outstretched hands and feet nailed to the crossed wood, the crucified Christ, is the real Cross which opened the closed Paradise (guarded by the Cherubs) and allowed humanity to enter the gate of Paradise and to live in the realm of the crucified One. It is amazing to say that Christ opened Paradise with His Cross while He Himself is the key to Paradise! This evoked the following words of worship from St. Yared: “ቦ እለ ይቤሉ ለዕዕኑ ታመልኩ ወለዕዕኑ በዐለ ትገብሩ፤ ኢቀደሶኑ በደሙ ክቡር ለዕፀ መስቀሉ ወበእንተዝ ንሕነ ናመልኩ”. There are some who say ‘why do you worship wood? And why do you celebrate a feast for wood?’ [He himself responded] does not His Blood consecrate His wooden

<sup>121</sup>Schaff, Philip., *NPNF2-10: Ambrose: Selected Works and Letters*, T&T CLARK, EDINBURGH, Grand Rapids. (MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library). pp. 203.

Cross! For this reason we worship/and venerate the Cross.” The contemporary Church scholar and researcher on the life and works of St. Yared, Belay Mekonen Seyoum, commented: “The Cross can be interpreted as referring to Christ” in his article published in the Journal of Ethiopian Church Studies (2013).<sup>122</sup>

St. Yared described the Cross as the anti-type of the tree of life, and in agreement with the Ethiopian exegetes which emphasized the role of the tree of life in the plan of salvation and in regaining Paradise,<sup>123</sup> stating that the salvation of humanity was granted through the Cross.

*The Cross means the tree of life; tree that was touched by His honored Blood. Did not it [the Cross] become honored? Did not He honor it [the Cross]? Did not He make it greater than other trees for He sanctified it through His Blood? The Cross, the hope of the hopeless, became the life of all the nations, the joy for us who believe, the greatness and beauty of Kings, the foundation of the Church, the peace of those at sea, and a harbor for ships, the Cross. His Cross is our life, the Cross of Christ is our salvation.*<sup>124</sup>

*The Cross is outside, and the Cross is inside, in the desert the Cross lightens the darkness.*<sup>125</sup>

The renowned Saintly Father, St. John Chrysostom, said “the Cross is a great good, the armor of salvation, a shield which cannot be beaten down, a weapon

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<sup>122</sup>በላይ መከራንን ሥዩም፣ “የቅዱስ ያሬድ የሕይወት ታሪክና ሥራዎቹ አጭር የዳሰሳ ጥናት”፣ የኢትዮጵያ ቤተክርስቲያን የጥናት መጽሔት፣ 2005፣ ቁጥር 3፣ ገጽ 12።

<sup>123</sup>ትንሣኤ ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት። መጻሕፍተ ብሉይት ፪ቱ አንድምታ ትርጓሜ። (አዲስ አበባ፣1999)። ገጽ 24። ለአዳም ሦስት ዕለት ተሰጥተውት ነበር። አንዱን ሊጠብቀው፣ አንዱን ሊመገበው፣ አንዱን ሺሕ ዓመት ነሮ ሊታደስበት፣ አትብላ ያለውን ዕፅ በለስ በበላ ጊዜ የሚታደስበትን ዕፅ ተነሥቶታል፤ በሚታደስበትም ዕፅ ሕይወት ፈንታ ዛሬ ሥጋው ደሙ ገብቶልናል፤ ሥጋውን ደሙን ተቀብለን በልጅነት ታድሰን መንግሥተ ሰማያት የምንገባ ሁነናል። Three trees were given to Adam; the one he to preserve, the one he to consume (for food), the one he to be renewed after 1000 years. When he ate the tree of wisdom he was ordered not to eat, the tree of life was taken out of him. But for us today the tree of life is replaced by His (Christ's) flesh and blood, for we are able to enter the Heavenly Kingdom taking His Flesh and Blood, and being renewed.

<sup>124</sup>ጸመ ድን ዘቅዱስ ያሬድ። (ንግድ ማተሚያ ቤት፣አዲስ አበባ፣1987)። ገጽ 51።

<sup>125</sup>Ibid, pp. 52.

to oppose the devil.”<sup>126</sup> He makes a significant connection between salvation and the holy Cross, in his homily on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians, in addition to his understanding of salvation as an ongoing process of struggle with the ever present enemies of humankind.

### 3.8. The Church: The House of Salvation

St. Yared saw the economy of the Holy Trinity in the Church and he showed his belief and knowledge in the hymn of Sunday assigned for the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the first Ethiopian month, *Mäskäräm*, and known by the name *Hénsäta* [ሐንዐታ] or her foundation, if it falls on a Sunday. In this particular hymn, he stated that the Church is built by the Holy Spirit, hallowed by the water which flowed from the side of Jesus at the time of His suffering, and that the Father consecrated her and made her His HOUSE (dwelling place).

ሐንዐዋ ለቤተ ክርስቲያን ወሃረርዋ በመንፈስ ቅዱስ  
እንተ ተሐንፀት በእደ ካህናት ወተቀደሰት በአፈ ጳጳሳት  
ወተዐትበት በማይ ዘውኅዘ እምገቦሁ አመ ሕማማቲሁ  
ለሰማይ አቅዲሙ ፈጠሮ ወበምድር ተክለ ደብተራ ቀደሳ  
አብ ወማኅደሮ ረሰያ -

*They [the Apostles] built the Church, and founded her through the Holy Spirit; she was built by the hands of priests, and consecrated by the mouths of bishops, and sanctified by the water flowing down from His side at the time of his suffering. He first created the heavens, and on the earth He pitched the Tabernacle, the Father consecrated her and made her His house. [Déggu<sup>ua</sup> Zä-Yohanäs]*

The Church being built by the Holy Spirit, was *sanctified by Jesus, and became the house of the Father*, and surely salvation is through the economy of the Holy

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<sup>126</sup>St.John Chrysostom (Schaff Philip (1819-1893) (Ed.)). *On the Epistle of St. Paul, the Apostle to the Philippians (NPNF1-13) Homily XIII, Grand Rapids, MI: (Christian Classics Ethereal Library).* pp. 381.

Spirit, definitely the Church is the house of human salvation, no one can receive salvation except in the Church which is built by and considered to be the house

of the Holy Trinity. It is thus said that the Church is the house of God the savior, therefore no one doubts her being of the house of salvation.

St. Yared uttered very significant words, saying that the Church is built by the hands of priests and blessed by the mouth of bishops, thus indicating that the Church is commissioned to do the work of salvation through the priesthood, and constitutes the property of the Holy Trinity.

In the *Yəzəl* of the song of the same Sunday *Hénsäta*, St. Yared advised all Christians to go to the Church and salute/kiss her. Furthermore, He borrowed the words of the psalmist and continued by advising us to walk around (encircle) her, for she is the Zion of Christians through the power of God over her as a result of her being built in His (Jesus') name, consecrated by His (Jesus') blood, and signed or hallowed through His wooden Cross.

በሐ በልዋ ተሳለምዋ ዕግትዋ ለጽዮን ወሕቀፍዋ ደዩ  
ልበክሙ ውስተ ኀይላ እንተ ተሐንፀት በስሙ ወተቀደለት  
በደሙ ወተዐትበት በዕፀ መስቀሉ ጊሡ ኀቤሃ እስመ  
ኀይለ እግዚአብሔር ላዕሌሃ

*Greet her and kiss her; encircle Zion and embrace her,  
set your hearts on her power; she is built in His name,  
and is sanctified by His blood, and is hallowed by His  
wooden Cross. Go every morning [ጊሡ]<sup>127</sup> unto her, for  
the power of God is over her. [Déggua Zä-Yohanés]*

The above text by the author of the of the *Déggua* informs us that everybody who wants to be embraced in the bosom of salvation should visit the Church; hence she is lifted to the level of being the house of Salvation because she is built in His name and blessed by His blood. According to St. Yared, if our redemption is through His blood, we have to visit the Church which is sanctified by His redemptive blood. This in turn shows that anybody outside the bosom of the

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<sup>127</sup>ጊሡ here shows the continuous action of visiting the church, house of God, in the mornings to pray, to receive Holy Eucharist, to listen to the Gospel of life, to receive benedictions through the priests.

Church is outside the bosom of salvation. Though there is no space beyond the reach of the Church, there may be those unwilling to partake of her nourishment, which is Salvation. In this context St. Yared tells us that the doors of the Church are always open; “ኢይትዓጸዉ አናቅጽኪ *your doors shall not be closed!*” [*Somä Déggu<sup>ua</sup> Zä-Mékurab*]

Why did he attempt to show us that the doors of the Church are not always closed? Is that not because she is the house of salvation? And does that not show us that the work of salvation (the effect of the saving work of the Redeemer) does not stop even for a moment?

The doors of the Church, being the house of salvation, are ever opened allowing those who desire to be saved to enter into her at any time they will! This caused St. Yared to engage in a mystical discourse with the Church and he called unto her: “Your doors never have been closed, your doors are not closed, and your doors never will be closed.” The words of the prayer of petition by the assistant priest during the Divine liturgy beautifully expresses the official standpoint of EOTC teaching with regard to the ever open Church; “And make the doors of your holy Church open unto us in mercy and in faith.”<sup>128</sup> In his other expressions of praise St. Yared explained why the door of the Church should always be open; because it is the gate of salvation (አንቀጸ አድጎኖ፣ አንቀጸ መድኅኒት),<sup>129</sup> the gate of life (አንቀጸ ሕይወት)<sup>130</sup> and people should always diligently visit her.

In another hymn, for the feast of *Mäséqäl*, St. Yared described how we are born of His baptism in the holy Church; Zion the peaceful mother of all people. Here are his words: “... ወለደኑ በጥምቀቱ በቅድስት ቤተ ክርስቲያን፣ ጾዮን ቅድስት ሰላማዊት እመ ኩሉ ሕዝብ (*He bore us through His baptism, in (or through) the holy Church; the holy Zion, the peaceful, and the mother of all people*)” [*Déggu<sup>ua</sup> Zä-Yohanés*]. Hence, if being children of Christ constitutes our salvation, and we receive this state in the Church through baptism, thus it is true that the Church, being the mother of all, is the house of salvation.

<sup>128</sup>Tensae Publishing House. *The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church*. (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2010). pp. 103; ትንሣኤ ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት። መጽሐፈ ቅዱስ ጉልሕ በግእዝና በአማርኛ ክነምልክቱ። (ብርሃንና ሰላም ማተሚያ ድርጅት፣ 1994)። (...ወረሲ ጎዋጎወ ቤተ ክርስቲያንክ ቅድስት ርኅዋተ ለነ በምሕረት ወበአሚን)።

<sup>129</sup>ትንሣኤ ማሳተሚያ ድርጅት። ጸመ ድን ዘቅዱስ ያፌድ። (ንግድ ማተሚያ ቤት፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ (1987)። ፡ ገጽ 23-26።

<sup>130</sup>Ibid, pp 17, 23.

St. Yared, in the *Yararay* of *Nolawi*, introduced us to the concept of the everlasting house of Christ in which we, the inheritors, worship Him by bowing down before Him: “ለክርስቶስ ህላዌሁ ነአምን ወንሰግድ ውስተ ጸርሐ ቀዋሚት በዕለተ ሰንበት ያድኅኝ ወረደ ኖላዊ ኄር) *We believe in the existence of Christ, and we bow [unto Him] in His everlasting house, on the day of the Sabbath; He descended to save us, the Good shepherd.*” [Déggua Zä-Ÿasétäméhéro]

If the house of Christ which does not perish (but rather persists) is not the Church, where could it be? Definitely, the house in which we worship Christ our Savior is the Church, which is believed to be the community of believers in communion with God and it is believed to be imperishable, that means that it remains forever. Hence, St. Yared knowingly worshiped Christ inside His imperishable house because outside the imperishable house of Christ salvation is not to be found. This in turn shows that the Church of Christ is the house of salvation in which Christ grants us His eternal life.

While commenting on the holy city or New Jerusalem that St. John the Apostle saw in his vision, the editors of the Orthodox Study Bible verified that it is the Church: “*The holy city, New Jerusalem, is the city built by God.*<sup>131</sup>*It is the perfected Church, the bride ready for her husband, Christ, the abode of the righteous eternally.*”<sup>132</sup>

St. Yared’s celebrated book to praise the Eucharist and he who established it, known as the *Zémmare*, called the Church Jerusalem and the holy Zion which lead the believers to God the just.

*Jerusalem...Zion...the Gentiles walk through your light  
[Christ, being the light of the Church] and the Kings  
through your rays... the Kings and the Gentiles build  
your fences; precious stones are your basement... your  
doors shall not be closed [for] the Great King rests inside  
you...when our Lord descends onto the top of mount Zion,*

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<sup>131</sup> Heb11:10,16.

<sup>132</sup> St. Athanasius, Academy of Orthodox Theology (2008), The Orthodox Study Bible, Tomas Nelson, U.S.A. pp. 1744; footnote comment on Rev 21:2f.

*the holy Zion shall lead us [be our way].*<sup>133</sup>

St. Yared used the word **ጳጳሱ ቀዋሚት**, *His everlasting house*, to refer to the Church or the Tabernacle not made by human hands, into which Christ the High Priest and Savior once entered with His own blood,<sup>134</sup> and the holy city or New Jerusalem which John saw in his revelation. Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty said much about this everlasting house of God, the Church or holy city.

*It is an extension of the holy Church, as the Holy One is dwelling in it. And when he wanted to give her a name, he called it, "The new Jerusalem" i.e. the new city of God. It stays new, because all that is eternal is new, will stay new and will never get old. It will never be affected by age or perishing factors, or lose its beauty and brightness that is illuminated by the Light of God.... "[Described by St. Augustine] "The spiritual person in the Church,"<sup>135</sup> is heaven, the Church, is heaven, and heaven is the Church."*<sup>136</sup>

To verify that the Church is the house of God, St. Yared in his *Somä Déggua* presented the Church as a house where the wealth of God, necessary for human salvation, is stored and hence anyone who visits her can obtain what he/she desires, and receive aid and life.

*"O, Lord, grant us a positive (ሐዋዘ) light; waking up in the morning, let us visit the Church, where the wealth of His glorious treasure is stored. Let us beseech from Him aid and life. Those who go [ዘጌሠ means one who repeatedly visits] in to her, will not suffer".*<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> መሪጌታ መዘገቡ ስብሐት፡፡ ዝማሬ ወመዋሥኦት፡ 4ኛ እትም፡፡ (ብርሃንና ሰላም ማተሚያ ድርጅት፡ 2006)፡፡ ገጽ 5፡፡

<sup>134</sup> Heb 9:11-12.

<sup>135</sup> Augustine (St.4<sup>th</sup> c-5<sup>th</sup> c) (Edited by Philip Schaff: 1819-1893), *Sermon on the Mount; Harmony of the Gospels; Homilies on the Gospels; On the Lord's Prayer in St. Matthew's Gospel*, Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, pp. 468.

<sup>136</sup> Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty (1996), *The Book of Revelation*, St. George's Coptic Orthodox Church, Sporting: Alexandria, Anba Reuis Press, Abassia, Cairo, Egypt, pp. 232-234.

<sup>137</sup> (1987)፡፡ ጾመ ድን ዘቅዱስ ያሬድ፡፡ ንግድ ማተሚያ ቤት፡፡ አዲስ አበባ፡፡ ገጽ 45፡፡

#### 4. CONCLUSION

St. Yared, the Ethiopian singer-writer of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, composed many songs; purposefully to praise and worship the Holy Trinity, to venerate the perpetually Virgin Mary, the Saints and Angels. While presenting his songs, St. Yared confessed his faith, interpreted selected verses of Scripture, and endeavored to find types in the Old Testament and Anti-types in the New Testament. Thus he theologized the matters of God, expressing knowledge of the saving works of our Lord Jesus Christ, the role of our Lady the blessed Virgin Mary; in general articulating ideas concerning the way of salvation and the *theosis* of man.

He employed famous methods of interpretation, like those often used by other exegetes of the Holy Scriptures, such as symbolism and typology. The researcher would like to put forward another important conclusion as a finding of his analysis of the ‘hymns of the Sabbath’. These literary works of St. Yared have a unique feature: their purpose is to be words of glorification but they are also Soteriological in content, providing evidence of St. Yared’s Soteriological mind. St. Yared also *expressed essential concepts* about the saving work of Christ and the salvation of mankind in short but powerful compositions; concerning the Savior these extend from the Incarnation of God the Word, through His Death and Resurrection to His Second Coming; and concerning man from his responsibility starting with exercising faith, partaking of the sacramental life, practicing a life of purity and godliness till his entry into paradise, under the umbrella of God’s grace. Generally, the author concludes that the study of the Sabbath hymns of St. Yared, and the texts of other hymns of St. Yared attest to their Soteriological significance, which is no less important than their liturgical significance. They do not constitute plain expressions of praises, but rather words of Theology that touch on the Soteriological understanding of the Church using an associative Semantic approach. They deliver a theological content while also serving the purpose of worship and glorifying God. Thus they nourish the faithful encouraging them to achieve higher spiritual maturity. His texts, in addition, show an essential compliance with patristic writings, in their purpose, content and presentation, reflecting the traditions of Oriental Christendom especially in its Hellenic mode of expression. \

Furthermore, the contributor of this article would like to suggest three recommendations which are relevant to the Church in general and to concerned individuals. The first suggestion concerns the imperative to engage in translation of the writings of St. Yared, which would both facilitate their accessibility and further their promotion. Currently, the writings of St. Yared are neither accessible to researchers nor even familiar to the world of scholars and ordinary readers who might be nourished by them. The main reason for this is that his works have not been translated, neither into foreign languages nor into Amharic, the national language of Ethiopia.

In practice, researchers wishing to penetrate the wisdom of the writings of St. Yared face four options: either they have to be clergy, who can understand *gé'éz* language well, or they must join *gé'éz* School for the purpose of their study, or they may employ a translator, otherwise they must abandon their research for lack of accessibility to the texts. The second recommendation is that the texts of the St. Yared have not been given their due importance with regard to research activities, and a great deal of activity is required to give them the position they deserve. Finally, publication is no less important than making translations and doing research. Unless there is an opportunity to publish translations and research reports, the wisdom of the writings of St. Yared, the Ethiopian singer and poet, will remain inaccessible and undiscovered.

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