

Who Speaks for Ethiopia and Why?

By Mitiku Adisu

Introduction

Professor Tecola never tires of inviting us to a ‘good fight’ and so three of his articles [posted in www.tecolahagos.com] will furnish the context for the present discussion. The articles are,

- A. *On whose side are you? Ethiopia against the world* [26 December 2006]
- B. “*Kinijit*” and the Somali crisis [Editorial: 7 January 2007]
- C. *Ethiopia’s vital interest: National security v political expedience*
 - Part I: *The current Diaspora politics v visions of New Democracies* [10 February 2007]
 - Part II: *The role of religion in the political life of Ethiopia: The Ethiopian Orthodox Church “Synod in Exile”* [18 February 2007]

Let me first make a few observations. I do not think anyone disagrees that diversity of thought is a necessary right; in fact, any restrictions on thought are bound to undernourish public conversation. None of us has the final word on procedures or how they turn out; time has a way of shedding light on matters that conspire to leave us in the dark. Finally, it must be stated that people generally understand what works for them if and when the terms are clearly presented.

Somalia First,ⁱ Ethiopia First

Ethiopian intervention in Somalia will continue to be debated for sometime to come. Somali irredentism, it is worth repeating, is alive and well irrespective of a secularist or a *jihadist* group in power. One need not read reams of a treatise to confirm that.

We now realize the case for intervention was exaggerated and that the issue is being recalibrated to fit the “imminent danger” thesis. We will be paying a heavy price for that. The presumed danger was no greater than that caused by mass arrests, defections, and killings within Ethiopia proper.ⁱⁱ This is the first item to get out of the way.

Secondly, the account for intervention may indeed be other than what we were let on.ⁱⁱⁱ Where transparency is not forthcoming, outcomes are also difficult to verify which means one is at the mercy of proponents of a course of action.

Thirdly, comparing the current problem with the 1976-77 Somali invasion is untenable. The world is no longer bi-polar. Somalia was then a viable state under a military strongman, and armed to the teeth. The Ethiopian center was disturbed and the future uncertain. The Soviet Union was positioning itself to play a decisive role in Ethiopian affairs.^{iv} The US, on the other hand, was demanding respect for human rights as the basis

for bilateral relations with and military support for Ethiopia. Unlike the events of thirty years ago, Opposition leaders today are behind bars. China's regional influence is on the ascendency, as are stateless entities. One can go on listing divergences.

The simple facts of life: never discount the personal

I think a good rule of thumb in a time of uncertainty is to reduce complexity to its basic form. The secretiveness of our leaders, unpredictability of global events, and local conflicts continue to pose insurmountable challenges. The standoff with Eritrea and now intervention in Somalia further compound the situation to a degree that overwhelms the best of resources or intentions.

Ethiopian politics, not unlike those in other developing countries is hopelessly personal. One implication of this is that well-meaning individuals could have a tremendous opportunity and leverage to effect changes on the individual level and ultimately the societal. In other words, mending fences and courting friendships can have historic significance.

The explanation for Prime Minister Meles intervening in Somalia but remaining ambivalent about Eritrea is hid from the glare of local or international laws and publics in the shady and unregulated world of personal connections and external influences. For all intents and purposes, the Ethiopian prime minister and his Eritrean counterpart must be viewed as two sides of the same coin—not, as oft repeated, comrades-turned-enemies. In a bizarre sense, the border issue appears rehearsed and poised to degenerate into other ill-conceived surprises.

Governments are run as personal fiefdoms. We are constantly reminded that either we have PM Meles and his party or none at all. This was also the case during the governments of Emperor Haileselassie and Mengistu *and* socialist revolutionists. Will Kinijit, if and when it assumes power, let go this tradition?

Advice: more? Or less?

One interesting development in Professor Tecola's articles is his harsh criticism of the Opposition and his counsel to the ruling party on how to resolve the present crisis. Though consistent in holding PM Meles responsible for the mess we are in, he, nonetheless, advises the ruling party to, I quote,

- *Declare state of emergency.*
- Release all political prisoners especially the Opposition leaders, with a condition that they are *not to engage in any subversive political activity* that will undermine the defense of Ethiopia during the period of emergency.
- *Release Seye Abrha and reinstate him to command the Northern Ethiopian Army* facing off the Eritrean threat. Reinforcement of the Northern front extremely important, with additional recruitment of militia army.
- Replace the current Chief of Staff of the Ethiopian military forces immediately.

- Appoint new Foreign Affairs Minister and his Deputy and other seasoned diplomats to the United Nations, United States, Germany, France, and United Kingdom.
- *Appoint a coordinator for Ethiopians in the Diaspora.*
- Mount massive public relations offensive in defense of Ethiopia through civilian business men and women, religious leaders, civic leaders et cetera around the world concentrating more in Europe and the United States. [End Quote; *A*, p.8; italics mine]

The suggestions are baffling in that a state of emergency has been *en force* since 15 May 2005, which explains the pervasiveness of arbitrary detentions, defections, killings, and clamp down on free press. Appealing for the release of jailed Opposition leaders on condition that they *will not engage in any subversive political activity* is an outright violation of citizen and human rights. The ruling party has yet to produce evidence that subversive activities ever took place. One may also want to inquire why the ruling party should unilaterally determine what constitutes “subversive?”

Releasing Seye to put him in charge of the northern command amounts to asking PM Meles to commit suicide. Unless, of course, one is arguing the whole episode of jailing Seye was, in the first place, a tactical move on the part of the ruling party; or the situation is so desperate that releasing Seye is worth the risk. Appointing a Diaspora coordinator perhaps is the least convincing of the recommendations.

These recommendations, if practicable at all, will have far-reaching consequences. It may well be the author is legitimately concerned about the security of the nation and was perhaps sidetracked as a result of envisioning a worst-case scenario. Indeed, the title “On whose side are you?” (*A*: 26 December 2006) is so forbidding that it leaves no room for objection or for reflection. Perhaps the question should have probed who in the struggle for the soul of the nation was for consensus rather than for conflict. Not long ago a similarly frenzied situation led to a war with Eritrea decimating in its wake a hundred thousand lives; and all this destruction to keep incumbents in power. What makes us believe it will be any different now or in the near future? In the end, good governance must induce trust in the governed. Alas, we’ve been surviving on a deficit of trust for far too long!

Meison and the *EPRP* had once banked on a strategy that they believed would transform our nation. Then as now, no questions were requested or tolerated; the result of those choices was so devastating that it is not worth repeating here. Opposition is, therefore, indispensable and *any* opposition better than *no* opposition. As the saying goes ከአንድ ብርቱ ሁለት መድኃኒቱ። [*kaAnd brtu hulat madhanitu*: two are better than one.]

It is not clear why Opposition manifesto was equated with that of *Meison/EPRP* in the run up to the 1976-77 Somalia war? Was the comparison fair? Why were *TPLF* activities conveniently left out? It should be noted that most groups did not harbor the destruction of the Motherland at heart. Rather, a case could be made that each was busy grinding an ideological axe and was blinded by power for its own sake. We have not progressed much in thirty years. In contrast to *Meison/EPRP/TPLF*, Opposition leaders today are not armed, are in jail and their plight ignored by the international community (save for

Human Rights groups.) We ask, what, if not concern for the welfare of the nation forces one to risk life, limb, and livelihood?

I am afraid the possibility that, as Professor Tecola put it, መከል ሠፋሪ *mehal safaris* might seize power may have marred his otherwise provoking analysis. Who are the *mehal safaris* any way? We are told they are

- “*From Addis Ababa or nearby region*”^{vi}: this description fails to be precise. Perhaps, he means that Addis Ababans are impervious to realities in the rest of the nation, which may be the case. But it does not tell us if residents of Gojjam or Balle view those in Gambella or Sidamo any different.^{vii} That Addis Ababa, not Makelle or Harrar is the center of the nation is not unique to Ethiopia; a dominant capital city seems to mark most developing nations. In a nation that is 85 percent agrarian it is not surprising that opportunities in schooling and employment are concentrated in the capital city. A typical Ethiopian lad (including Professor Tecola) would fetch his or her secondary and postsecondary education in Addis and remain there for employment. Or perhaps, he/she would travel abroad and return to Addis, build a house and start a family. The Professor, we are told, hails from Wallo, which does not make him less Addis Ababan than the person born in Addis to parents from Kaffa or Sidamo or Wallaga. Addis, as a *cultural* center, is a microcosm of the nation and as such belongs to no single group.^{viii} Let us not forget that it is only in the past 10 years that educational and employment opportunities became readily available at the regional level and that Addis shed its hodgepodge looks for a more cosmopolitan one.
- “*Birds of the same feather*”: three things must be considered when one is the Opposition. First, one must recruit carefully persons who buy into party program or else face dissolution of the program. Recruitment is the minimum requirement for organizing and is, in fact, more evident in the ethnic-based ruling party structure than that of the Opposition. Second, as the opposition one does not have the luxury enjoyed by incumbents. The current Opposition was formed from disparate groups led by strong personalities only three years ago; that it is still around to worry the ruling party is, to say the least, amazing and goes to show that opposition indeed runs deep and the much-vaunted ruling party control is nothing but deceptive and doomed. Finally, one recognizes the potential for a split within opposition party ranks^{ix} and that it should not come as a surprise that some members may not abide by stated party guidelines.
- *Ex-members of Derg, EPRP and Meison and should be barred from leadership roles*: Membership alone should not determine a criminal act or intent; blanket statements only create further fissure in the body politic. By his own admission Professor Tecola had once served as a special counsel to the present minority government but resigned after nearly two years on the job. There are several ways to read his short-lived involvement. One can argue that his involvement, however small, was that indispensable link that rescued the minority group from potential disaster—considering the latter’s inexperience in statecraft. One can also argue that the Professor early on realized the futility of rendering his expertise in good conscience

to a group that progressively violated his values (never mind the nature of the conflict between the two.) Likewise, those who associated with Derg, the EPRP/Meison or TPLF/EPRDF should be less scrutinized. Some may have remained within their respective groups in the hope of effecting change from within. In the end, the choices become a matter of perspective and tactics than conspiracy or criminal intent *per se*. For Professor Tecola his website has provided him a forum to serve the wider Ethiopian community and Ethiopianists. In short, one should not prejudge that every individual is incapable of learning from mistakes.

- *Shoa Amharas*: Let me make a string of comments. The fact that Amharas dominated the cultural and political landscape in the recent past is no news at all. In any society a certain individual, a certain family, a certain clan or ethnic group tends to wield disproportionate political or economic power. That is not abnormal. That Tigreans were disproportionately advantaged is no news either.^x That Amharas were colonialists is a farfetched proposition—unless one re-defined and localized the term. Tigreans are not currently colonizing Ethiopia; if at all, they may be settling old scores against their Amhara cousins or simply guarding against power contenders (see, Part I, p.3). Insecurity for Tigreans derives partly from their ethnic size and partly instigated by their ill-treatment of others. I hope the search for an exit from this ethnic morass does not include resurrecting the impracticable and demagogic idea of “greater Tigray.” In all the above instances I am not referring to the peasantry; the peasantry is perhaps the only pan-ethnic class that is bound together by the forces of illiteracy, religion, diseases and poverty.

Failure of Amhara-dominated government was due mainly to unwillingness to extend opportunities to “minority” groups and/or regions.^{xi} Someone may come up with any number of rational excuses but in the end a policy of exclusion remains the culprit. By the same token, TPLF’s idea of an ethnic quota system was so seductive and divisive that it dis-empowered embittered leaders of “nations and nationalities,” coaxing them into the desired end.

Here is the obvious point: any minority-led government is bound to fail in the *long-run*. Just observe how much things have changed since the TPLF-led government came to power fifteen years ago. It appears the ruling party is finally seeing the light in the dangers of governing without adequate representation^{xii} or the futility of leading in the face of widespread opposition. It could also be that sustained and coordinated opposition is having its effect. But to say Tigre-led core is ok but *not* Amhara-led core or Oromo-led core is absurd; to base representation of a multi-ethnic nation solely on ethnicity is short-sighted. To want to take turns simply to inflict pain on some entity for some presumed misdemeanor is inhuman and waste. It is in this vein that one foresees the *suddenness* and inevitability of change; it is no longer *if* but *when* change happens. We are now at a crossroads where persisting in one set of options is no safer than holding onto the *status quo*. Any viable treatment of present conditions must, of necessity, seek to genuinely integrate popular will. This, in turn, entails, negotiating power in good faith as well as sharing rights to economic resources, etc.

In its crudest form, therefore, the current problem is in large part the feuding of Amhara *educated and propertied* and their Tigre cousins over genealogy and power.^{xiii} The rest of the nation, sadly, is held hostage to this malady. That is why teaming up against a Tigre-led government (or any for that matter) will not break the gridlock.

The cure may come in one or more of three ways: relegate such divisive items to a corner of history and move on to greater things (some aspects of our history are better left buried any way); leaders within these groups wake up to the reality that shared power is not weakness at all and indeed that shared power is the only viable alternative; re-center the debates on non-ethnic themes (the opposition needs to stop harping on ethnic politics.) There is enough reason to believe that the Ethiopian consensus is not necessarily bound by ethnicity.^{xiv} That could explain the ruling party's fear of an organized opposition or a strong church. That also explains why the ruling party preemptively dubs any opposition as Amhara (old colonial chauvinists) or Derg (genocidal dictators) or Oromo (terrorists). Such acts may buy the ruling party a breathing space but ultimately bode disaster because they are illusory and ill-advised.

It is tragic that despite talk of an illustrious past we insist on being victims of our own undoing. Our checkered past is become front and center of our conversation robbing us of enjoyment of the present. Of immediate relevance then is *to realize* that ethnicity, as a political tool, is a spent force. Indeed, the opportunistic Somali campaign may have inaugurated a post-ethnic chapter in our political life.^{xv} Henceforth, we need *to guard* against tactics that seek to divert our attention from the real issue of building a democratic society. Talk of the “developmental state” is one such ploy.^{xvi}

Broad-brushing will save you

I am in agreement with the Professor's broad-brush approach to issues dealt with in his articles. When and if handled with care, more, not less, of that approach could enable us to make sense of our enduring dilemma and to overcome our provincialism. Tigreans harp on Yohannes IV and his exploits to near saintliness in disregard for the rest. Criticize Menilik II on aspects of his politicking and Amharas want your head by early morning (perhaps not that early.)^{xvii} Oromos play down their role in shaping modern Ethiopia's militarism, lore and dynastic rule, among others. Tigreans struggle to come to terms with the fact that they are a minority (about 6 percent of 75 million.)^{xviii}

Future historians will have to add a chapter to their chronicles, entitled, The Untouchables with instruction that Tigreans have no business messing with Amhara or Oromo kings, and vice versa. In the end, neither Yohannes nor Menilik as Emperors of the realm would have granted claims to their imperial selves exclusively to one group. Disowning these leaders becomes a tremendous challenge to each of us and, in some existential sense, a worthless endeavor. History will not permit us to pick and choose our past at will.

The Oromo suffer from a crisis of perception; they are perceived either as allies of the ruling party or its *alter ego* the Eritrean regime.^{xix} For the Oromo, policy miscalculations, factionalism and an intense desire to resurrect the past have denied it a more vigorous role in the politics of the day.^{xx} The past, though fraught with disappointments is requisite for forging ahead. The present, alas, is fleeting and severe in its verdict. In the coming years, religious affiliation, regionalism and relevant strategies or lack thereof^{xxi} will significantly determine the group's contributions. Persisting in the creation of a homogenous Oromo unit, despite the above variations, could result in further loss of its moorings and impact negatively its democratic sensibilities.

Of all groups, the Oromo cannot afford to be separatists. Their size, dispersion over a large swathe of land and integration with people groups disallows that. They must move swiftly to become the best Amharic and Tigrigna speakers and not just afaan Oromo and English languages. Oromo ethos blossoms only as it accommodates and owns diversity and exposes others to its enduring values.^{xxii} Perhaps this explains the fact that the Oromo could make such a deep and lasting impact on Ethiopian psyche and society in a matter of decades of coming in contact with dynastic highlanders. An inter-generational philosophy that has served it well should not be tossed away too readily. In the end, to argue the Oromo were only victim and not party to the historical processes ultimately de-humanizes the group.

Whether by design or by default, the temptation to deny parts of our shared history persists among Ethiopian intellectuals. This in turn contributed to a crisis mindset. We have to make up our minds. We can't keep complaining about the past and at the same time seek to repeat similar blunders. Owning up the unpleasant past holds the key to our enduring dilemma. Ownership paves the way to understanding one's responsibilities and coming to terms with the past. In acceptance lie change and peace. Our obsession with the unrecoverable past must give way to the urgency of living our lives in the now and the immediate future.

Professor Tecola seems to present issues in bold relief—at times, almost in cataclysmic terms. Ayman Zawahiri is quoted and *Kinijit* communiqué, “War is not the choice of Ethiopian people” is recast as suggesting subversive activities had taken place. Zawahiri may not be aware that the Prophet in gratitude for sheltering the very first persecuted Muslims had declared Ethiopia a jihad-free zone. A good Muslim would heed the Prophet's words.

I don't think Professor Tecola is serious in suggesting that elder Professors Mesfin or Hailu were engaged in conspiracy of sorts to deserve jail without trial or that there is any sense in exposing a mother and her infant to a prison environment. I am also certain that he is not suggesting that jailed Opposition leaders should be released and not assume offices to which the voter had elected them. Serious democracy demands that the citizenry be able to change its rulers and hold them accountable. This applies in wartime as well as peacetime.

Ethiopia is ancient

We make no apologies for assuming that Ethiopia as a nation is here to stay and not disintegrating. The challenge is to move away from a deficit mentality. This is not to minimize the danger posed by a headstrong government, a sparring opposition that calls itself “international,”^{xxiii} or by extremist groups and worldwide economic and social changes. Ethiopia is ancient; ancient is resilient and resilience seems to be the wealth of the general public. As a people we have too much invested in each other to now attempt a total overhaul of our mores. That is why leaders and their cadres come and go while the long-suffering publics endure.

The danger at present is our inability to think and talk to each other without intermediaries. We jostle to set a national agenda in religious or ethnic terms and in so doing show unwillingness to see beyond our narrow confines. Our fundamental problems are self-inflicted.

I don't think Ethiopians as a nation are good at breaking up on their own or once a breakup occurs, to sustain it. I visualize the mingling of Ethiopian peoples in terms of a flowing river. Impediments and temporary dams may slow the flow, dirty the texture or even divert it off course. Removal of those impediments, on the other hand, will bring back the old vigor. ካልደፍረሰ አይጠራም [kaldeferesse ayTTeram: a good shaking brings clarity.] Someone may scold me for fantasizing. So, is anything wrong with fantasizing? And has not the arrival of TPLF on the heels of the turbulent era of Derg and socialist revolutionists enhanced our organizational capabilities?

Ethnicizing religion (Christian, that is)

I find the discussion on church and state informative and well argued (C: Part II). Few things have to be said about Christianity though. The Christian faith is uniquely transcendental, trans-cultural in scope and *translatable*.^{xxiv} All religions preceding Christ were “only a shadow of good things to come—not the realities themselves.”^{xxv} In Christ, cosmic longings find their resolution. Christianity is fundamentally different from other myths and religions in that it is God's revelation dramatically bursting into human history in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. In other words, Jesus Christ is incomparable in the way he lived and in the astounding claims he made.^{xxvi}

For the Ethiopian (Orthodox) church, universalizing the local (or inadequately localizing the universal) may pose a singular challenge to its vitality. The cardinal teaching of Christian mission is that Jesus Christ *is* the center (not tradition or ethnicity or nationalism, important as these things are.) All come to him (or the Gospel brought to them) as they are and receive his transforming grace to become a new creation, a new society.^{xxvii} In him all things come together and find their reason for being.^{xxviii} According to the doctrine of the historic church, anarchy reigns where this truth is not duly acknowledged. Whichever Christian faith tradition one subscribes to, one ought continually to take a moment to reflect if what one holds as truth has not evolved into Christ-less Christianity.^{xxix}

Let me take us back one more time to national census as pertains to religion. In almost every situation Ethiopian scholars tend to identify only Orthodox Christian and Muslim populations in total disregard for Protestant Christians.^{xxx} The fact that some eleven million hard working citizens are unaccounted for or denied recognition cannot be mere oversight.^{xxx} I am not here referring to government reports. Rather my critique is directed at the educated few who persist in perpetrating such blunders. What happened to the talk of justice, human rights, and freedoms?

I believe part of the reason is that most Protestant Christians shied away from engaging in the peculiarities of Ethiopian politics and perhaps adhered to particulars of a theological dispensation,^{xxxii} often of a syncretistic or fatalistic stripe. It could be that some Protestant groups adopted indiscriminately non-Ethiopian middle-class European cultures disguised as orthodox and apostolic.^{xxxiii} It could also be that Ethiopian nationalism is so enmeshed in the life and customs of the Church that the mention of Protestantism evoked foreignness—that is, an entity out to rob the nation of its independence. If one were pliant, a quick reference to two foreign missionaries, Frumentius and Edesius (4th c. AD),^{xxxiv} would have corrected such a lapse of memory. History tells us that the arrival of these two at the royal court resulted in the Christianization of Semitic highlanders who later engaged in actively proselytizing the surrounding regions. Incidentally, perceiving a citizen as a foreigner reminds me of an episode.

At the height of the February 1974 revolution, Ethiopian socialist revolutionists needed to register with Europeans that, contrary to reports of religious persecution circulated by reactionary elements, there indeed was freedom of worship in the country. To this end, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned Protestant church leaders for consultation and emending of the allegations. The meeting was called to order and to the surprise of all present, one of the invited leaders, the late-Honorable *Fitawrari* Baissa Jammo, reputedly fired the first question asking why Ethiopian nationals should appear at the Ministry and not at a more appropriate venue.^{xxxv} The presiding Minister was caught off-guard, to say the least.

Here is an enduring problem.^{xxxvi} From the upper echelons of power to the street level an unnecessary distinction has been introduced to corrupt the faith community. I am afraid an inflexible theological stance has bled into the political fabric staining our perception of each other.

It should be made clear that Christianity is neither Western nor native to Ethiopia. We need to educate ourselves, change our attitude toward Christians of different persuasion^{xxxvii} and make a conscious effort to stand in the gap. Our nation is already too fractured by ethnicity, living standards, illiteracy and politics. Christians should be at the forefront sealing the gap.

Intellectualism gone awry

The tendency within the Ethiopian intellectual community has been to push religion aside on the grounds that it is irrational, beneath one's intellectual pursuit and unfit for civil

discourse. Acceding too readily to the seductions of a soulless and a heartless secularism ultimately puts a strain on social cohesion and morality.

Retreat in the face of a widespread yearning to democratize created a void that, to our loss, was quickly filled by subversive elements. Among such groups are those with a universalistic agenda refusing to be beholden to local strictures. Atheistic socialism, for example, rejected accounting to the God our forebears worshipped and instead reproduced and imposed a Soviet reality. Not taking responsibility for one's actions was the tragic result. Any future social policy, therefore, must be amenable to aspirations of the majority if stability is to be sustained.

Fear of igniting a conflict and the desire to appear impartial and 'learned' could account for the reticence of intellectuals. Input from the silent majority remained inconsequential. Alternate views on such matters often are met with (verbal) violence.^{xxxviii} Fear and ignorance seem to have taken over our better judgment. Yet, the way to overcome these destructive tendencies is not to give in to their demands in silence but to bring them out into the open. The purposes of a dialogue must be to understand own and others' faith tradition without negotiating the distinctiveness of each, to respect and nurture dialogue between committed individuals and groups in order to save the masses from unnecessary hardships. Those with expertise in this area ought to rescue us from growing pain and apathy. Perhaps a good starting point will be for competent demographers to stop playing politics and set straight the ethnic and religious composition of the nation and for theologians and historians to layout the basic tenets of the faith and how these relate to contemporary life and social transformation.

An argument could be made that Ethiopian intellectuals are generally left of center and evince a deep sense of anti-intellectualism.^{xxxix} One distinguishing characteristic of anti-intellectualism is the prevalence of long-winded criticisms of any and/or all issues in total disregard for their social utility or generative power or historical context.

One also recalls how educational certification in the time of the Ethiopian Revolution was deemed *bourgeois* in addition to the fact that mental activity did not constitute work. Learning became a synonym for Marxian thought and practice. Any who veered from the correct ideological path were branded ሃሳብወያን [*hassabawyan*: idealists.] Anti-intellectualism manifested itself in inflexible stances and in selectively promoting one perspective. Despite the fact that Ethiopia is home to indigenous, Christian, Jewish and Islamic religions, rarely did we see native scholars extend a critical inquiry into matters of religion and society.^{xl} The call is often to compartmentalize religion and yet evidence shows that religion is consistently employed to achieve political ends. Policies of successive governments have remained essentially exploitative of the church.^{xli} In essence, then, talk of politics not mixing with religion is a myth concocted by rabid politicians and their hirelings.

Ethiopian scholars, we said, seem to be embarrassed or are at a loss in dealing with the complex issue of religion.^{xlii} The result has often been writing religion off-hand or trying to stamp it out altogether (as the socialist revolutionists attempted to do in the aftermath

of the February 1974 revolution) or employ religion to incite nationalistic/ethnic fervor (as is currently happening.) The grandest folly of Ethiopian political leaders and their underwriters over the past thirty years has been inattention to or outright dismissal of internal societal behaviors.^{xliii}

The unfortunate thing about events of the past fifty or so years is the moral bankruptcy of Ethiopian intellectuals. This must be urgently reversed to forestall impending social upheavals lurking behind the facade of equal treatment. Ethiopian intellectuals should at the minimum desist from worsening the situation by not introducing partisan politics into the institution of the church. In sum, abandoning a Christian heritage, undermining a consensus that has served us so well (despite shortfalls) and seeking neutrality in such a momentous time cedes control of the socio-cultural center to marginal ideas.

The fact that Professor Tecola raised this topic in several of his articles is timely and worthy of our attention. The current mindset is such that any reference to religion must be extremist. Nothing is further from the truth. Not infrequently, balance is advised. We take it for granted that each is the center and that balance is identification with own values and interpretation of reality. Diversity is equated with tolerance and difference with intolerance. This is deceptive and unrealistic especially when tied to regional/global realities and the processes of democratization. Ethiopian reality demands that we not keep *all* our religious/cultural eggs in European or Saudi baskets.^{xliv}

At other times, we seek refuge in membership size or in chronology to debunk and drown other voices. I would hasten to add that majority opinions or ancientness for their own sake ought not to be confused with balance or moderation; in fact, it often takes minority or “extremist” views (read: reformation) to bring us back to reality.^{xlv}

Anti-intellectualism also manifests itself in ways that at times confound explanation.^{xlvi} For example, it is not uncommon to find among Ethiopian scholars a propensity to question the mysteries of faith or point out its absurdities and at the same time adhere unquestioningly to untranslatable and incomprehensible features of a faith.^{xlvii} One also observed an irrational animosity toward Christians of different persuasion and the ease with which one resorted to using abusive language upon being confronted with contrary data. The same feeling is not evident, interestingly, toward nature religions, non-Christians or cultic groups (such as *Rastas*).

The same also take liberty to pontificate on the need to separate religion and politics and yet use the church (religion) to achieve a political end.^{xlviii} In other cases, we find intellectuals assuming the role of a random arbiter on matters they do not qualify to pronounce judgment on or are not willing to commit to on the intellectual and metaphysical levels. I would argue that such incompatible positions and imbalances result from intellectual laziness, inconsistency and dishonesty. I suggest that Ethiopian intellectuals go back and study aspects of monasticism and the lives of stalwarts of the faith, the monastic holy men and women, in relation to rampant irreverence, indiscipline, indecency and unrealistic consumption habits plaguing our communities.^{xlix}

Betrayed by leaders

It is not important who is in the wrong in the current feud between church leaders; both sides are dangerously wrong. The long-term loss to our national well-being should spur all groups to seek ways to bridge misunderstandings that are rapidly percolating to the general public.

Perhaps, unbeknownst to them, the same leaders betray and confuse millions of ordinary and devout believers by their contentious act. Yet, Christ, the Good Shepherd of his flock, will undertake the care of the weak and the straying.

Woe to the shepherds ... who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD ... I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them ... I myself will search for my sheep and look after them ... I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.¹

Professor Tecola raises a very serious ethical issue relating to leaders of the Ethiopian church. His explanation of matters pertaining to Abuna Merkorios and the “Synod in exile” is both educative and disturbing. In questioning the wisdom of self-exile Professor Tecola remarks, “Who said being a Church leader is a pleasant walk in the park?” (C: Part II, p.4). To be a leader is not easy even in the best of times and under the best of conditions. The telling difference, however, is that the same standard is not applied to leaders outside the Church community. That should not be surprising considering the fact that the Church by its very existence and mission in the world is *expected* to be the standard bearer and is thus judged by those very high standards.

The recurring problem is that the Church has compromised her prophetic voice. I dare say that at present Professor Mesfin Woldemariam wields a moral authority greater than the head of the church and the Prime Minister of Ethiopia combined.^{li} Leaders of the Ethiopian Church refuse to be accountable to Christ *and* to the faithful; they either seek to be answerable to “God” and not to man *or* to man and not to God. They have fallen victim to a Constantinian legacy whereby church and state become inseparable and the head of state plays a lesser deity to pronounce ultimate norms from palace grounds. Could this explain why ተዋሕዶ *Tewahdo* was preferred to ሦስት ልደት *Sost Ldat*? After all, isn’t a party of two less complex and controllable than a party of three?

Whether it is Emperor Haile Selassie or Mengistu or now Meles, each for their own ends meddled in ecclesiastical issues to allot a subservient role to the Church. Jerusalem is circumspect about running afoul of Athens. In reality, the City of God is destined to rule the City of Man and not the vice versa. I am not suggesting theocracy but only that the Church is indispensable in enlivening and gracing the temporal with her eternal values.

Be that as it may, we should not hastily conclude that self-exile of a church leader is in of itself evidence of desertion. The specifics are not clear. But one thing is certain. Christ, who is the head of the Church was presented on several occasions during his earthly ministry with a chance to not face the ordeals of a shameful death on the Cross.^{liii} In each case, however, he denied himself that escape route. He had come for the sole purpose of “seeking and saving the lost”^{liii} and nothing deterred him from that mission. In God’s divine economy, death on the Cross was the symbol and instrument for redeeming humanity. “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”^{liv}

De-ethnicizing faith

It is interesting that Abuna Petros is contrasted with the current church leadership. Interestingly, he is also depicted as “a patriot and a martyr” (C: Part II, p7). Though accurate, I would reorder that depiction. I think there is a widely held misperception that the Church Father was merely a patriot (perhaps popularized by Poet Laureate Tsegaye’s poem **ጴጥሮስ ያዥን ሰዓት** Petros yaChin Saat: *Petros at the Hour* and a long-running play by the same title.) This is not to deny the Holy Father was a patriot; indeed he was. However, he is first and foremost head of a flock and, therefore, any designation should not compete or in any way eclipse his role as the spiritual leader of the church. If one misses that, one fails to understand who Abuna Petros was, what he stood for, and why or how he could courageously face down the assassin and his straying bullets. Or why he quoted scripture to establish the source of his authority and instruct and inspire the faithful with little regard for his own safety.

“... Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the one who has the power to kill the body and after that has the authority to cast into hell; yes I tell you fear Him ... endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.”^{lv}

The same was true of the martyred Qes Gudina Tumsa. Qes Gudina, as some may recall, was a towering figure both in intellect and physique. He had been warned on numerous occasions of what is being planned for him by the current rulers. In fact, he had by this time already served brief jail time. Though he had sufficient reason to leave the country (following Julius Nyerere’s intervention) and live in a relative comfort in exile he, nonetheless, chose to pay the ultimate price, quoting the Apostolic article of faith that

"Christ died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."^{lvi}

In both instances, it would be a grave mistake to try to understand the essence of the leadership of the two individuals in separation from their steadfast belief that they received their calling from none other than Christ himself and that that calling entailed following the Master unto death. Any other way around this amounted to deserting Christ and violating their conscience. Those who are conscious of receiving life appreciate it and in turn consecrate theirs unconditionally to the Giver of Life.

In other words, to think of Abuna Petros primarily as a patriot or Martin Luther King as a social activist and a Negro or Bonhoeffer as academe and anti-Nazi or Qes Gudina as Oromo^{lvii} misses the point and devalues the meaning of their life and testament. These individuals are first and foremost shepherds of a flock. To limit the Christian gospel to ethnicity or nationality is to be unfaithful to Christ's mandate and to miss the full import of his life and teachings. In fact, any who profess to be Christian and yet harbor merely ethnic or anti-ethnic views are advised to re-examine their standing.^{lviii} Commitment to Christ, in the end, must ennoble the mundane without succumbing to it.

Conclusion: Who then speaks for Ethiopia and why?

The title question is meant to provoke thought and not necessarily provide a clear-cut answer. Every Ethiopian should be encouraged to participate in all matters that define our multi-layered commitments one to another. Those who have much to offer and are endowed with a panoramic view of society ought to speak up and enable others to join in without fear of censure or insult. Our well-being is at stake. Silence is not golden. Silence allows few shrill voices to usurp the high ground and subdue or sabotage our collective aspirations. By diligently participating in our shared hopes we turn the tide on deception, become the narrators of our own stories and, in due course, establish a flourishing consensus.

Not all opinions carry the same weight, of course. Those of us privileged to share our ideas or perchance to voice concerns of the voiceless jot a word here and a phrase there in the hope that someone's fears may be assuaged, faith affirmed, information shared, misconceptions corrected, injustices righted and doubts cast. Ideas do trigger other ideas in the process of which few may be nudged out of their indifference or made to change their mind for the common good.

People who talk to each other develop a sense of kinship (even when they disagree) and create a level of expectation otherwise difficult to realize. Brevity of life should prompt us to seek out those things that bind us and to resist those that humiliate^{lix} and divide us. Is our goal to make life unbearable for each other or is it to find respite from our harrowing existence? Perhaps we need to declare a 50-year moratorium on the idea of forming separate ethnic enclaves; in the interim, we should focus all our resources on rooting out illiteracy and poverty. See you later.

All Rights Reserved. No part of documents published by this author in tecolahagos.com may be reproduced in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the author.

Endnote

ⁱ Intervention in Somalia is essentially “religious” whether one looks at it from the Somali side (political Islam), Ethiopian side (in the manner of mobilizing local and donor support) or the media (Christian Ethiopia v. Islam). See also my article, “Restraint and Convenience: Words to live by?” 2 January 2007. Posted at <http://www.addisvoice.com/article/restraint> [1]. pdf - 131 KB

ⁱⁱ See US State Department Report on Human Rights (2006) and reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

ⁱⁱⁱ John Snow on Channel 4: <http://www.channel4.com/news/special-reports/special-reports-storypage.jsp?id=4493>

^{iv} In fact, the Soviets used the tactic of information blackout to set their own agenda. See Andrew and Mitrokin. (2005). *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the battle for the Third World*. Basic Books.

^v Literally, one who sits on the fence; one who blends in, plays one against the other; bodes danger, etc.

The word መከላከል *mehal safari*, according to Zewdie Retta (ተፈሪ መከላከል ረጅም የሥልጣን ጉዞ፤ *Teferi Makonnen-The Long Journey to Ultimate Power, 2005*) historically referred to that protesting section of the population that arose to defend its interests and whose leaders remained in the background; this contrasts with *Derg*'s usage of the word as the non-committed and hence, unpredictable and dangerous. The term is currently used pejoratively especially in reference to ethnic Amharas. See “Ethnocentrism,” Part IV, p.8, www.eedn.org; “Paradigm of Poverty and Humanism: Understanding Ethiopian Modernity,” www.tecolahagos.com

^{vi} The phrase is often a thinly veiled reference to Amharas (See for example, “Paradigm of Poverty and Humanism” in www.tecolahagos.com)

^{vii} Obviously mass mobilization during wars and resettlements following the February Revolution has changed long held perceptions.

^{viii} See Wallo *sefer*, Gojjam *berenda*, Goffa *sefer*, etc.

^{ix} The fact that the ruling party jailed Opposition leadership may have saved the Opposition from collapsing. Indeed, incumbents may be regretting now.

^x In the areas of culture and power, for example, compared to the Oromo, Gumuz, the Somali, etc. (who account for more than 60 percent of the Ethiopian population.)

^{xi} In the end, I don't think the general public cares who rules the land so long as its basic needs are met and rights protected.

^{xii} But this does not mean the ruling party is repentant or ready to accede; its overtures for truce may be only tactical.

^{xiii} One can observe such rivalries lurking behind such national debates as intervention in Somalia, the Second Ethiopian Millennium, etc.

^{xiv} Religious affiliations cut across ethnic lines.

^{xv} With the Somalia campaign, religion may have supplanted ethnicity as an organizing principle.

^{xvi} The idea of the “developmental state” is neither new nor original with Prime Minister Meles. It is interesting that Taiwan and South Korea are often cited as a model—never mind their geographical locations (access to the Seas), proximity to relatively intense economic region and a Confucian tradition, etc. Moreover, it is not clear how the “developmental state” will differ from policies contained in “revolutionary democracy” or World Bank sanctioned “privatization and market” regimes. Could introducing the “developmental state” simply be a means of legitimizing the ruling party's monopoly of the private sector? Pakistan and China could well become models for Ethiopia's role in regional/geo-politics and for establishing a strong (militaristic) state. Consequently, “war on terror” will provide cover, increasing centralization of power and human rights abuses.

^{xvii} One observes that Tigrean and Amhara intellectuals have an interesting and highly charged take on the reigns of Menilik and Yohannes IV; the exercise is often to lend credence to own arguments and to discredit others'. One needs only to check information such authors include and deliberately leave out.

^{xviii} There were attempts to sneak in 10 percent as a factual figure and now a revised document (2005) at the Library of Congress has raised the Tigrean population to “perhaps 14 percent” of Ethiopian population (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>; accessed 2/24/07). What is the significance of this statement in view of the upcoming census? In other instances, the Tigrean population is lumped with Amharas making up 32 percent of the total population. Such games are not simply exercise in dishonesty and sloppiness but also a deliberate attempt to misinform the unsuspecting researcher and in the process to shape policy outcomes. Tigray population is 4,334,996: CSA, 2005 (CSA, 1994: 3,136,267) out of a total 75 million. Improved census procedures in 2005 could account for the over one million population growth registered in 1994.

^{xix} A recent article by Berhanu Balcha “Minority rule brings neither democracy nor stability,” suggested aligning with one *against* the other; this is a recipe for increased distrust and insecurity. See ethiomeia.com.

^{xx} I believe that Oromo's with their democratic tradition have something significant to offer to the nation at large. I have often wondered about the timing of the book “Oromo Democracy” by Asmarom Legesse (The Red Sea Press, 2000) and

OLF's increased alliance with the Eritrean regime.

^{xxi} In terms of strategy, consensus has to be reached in the following areas: a) whether to continue with armed struggle or to press on with "one person, one vote" or a combination of both b) whether to recognize the futility of simply standing "against" so-called colonizers, etc., and having no policy "for" substantive issues c) to astutely read world events and adjust accordingly: would struggling within existing structures be a better approach than the complexity that will certainly arise from demanding a separatist agenda? d) Whether to practice the dictum that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" and suffer the devastation that that incurs on its organizational image or to work out an agenda that brings together different factions.

^{xxii} The same is true of Tigreans. The fact that state power structure is ethnicized may be politically expedient but does not bode well for the long-term health of the region. Regional administration could advance economic and political development; ethnicizing it will not. In other words, any future for the regions and by corollary, for the whole nation ought to seriously consider ethnic-blind political assignments. We need to envision an Oromo president for Tigray region and an Amhara functionary in Oromo region. Reality demands it; a global world provides the opportunities, and missing it could exact a high price on local and regional affairs.

^{xxiii} For all intents and purposes there can only be one "Kinijit"; the "international" appellation needs to be played down. Perception matters and wrong perception could be emotionally draining and distractive.

^{xxiv} The Christian God speaks your language and no language is sacred to the point of excluding the rest. Christ indwells the believer and hence place of birth or original language of the Christian faith is relativized. In other words, the believer need not know *Aramaic* (the language Jesus spoke) or visit Jerusalem (the first Church.) How would Ethiopian society have been different had liturgy for the Orthodox faithful been in a mother tongue instead of just *Ge'ez* (or its kins *Amharic* and *Tigrigna*?) See Lamin Sanneh. (1989). *Translating the Message*; Samuel Escobar. (2003). *The New Global Mission*.

^{xxv} Hebrews 10:1

^{xxvi} One can verify for oneself by comparing truth claims and how these correspond with the claimant's life and teachings. One accepts or rejects claims made by Jesus of Nazareth but one can hardly remain indifferent or take a middle-of-the road position on those claims.

^{xxvii} "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come ... But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." II Corinthians 5: 17; I Peter 2:9

^{xxviii} Galatians 3:28; Colosians 1: 17; Hebrews 1:3

^{xxix} There is resurgence among global literati questioning fundamental Christian tenets. There is nothing new in that. Some genuinely seek the truth; others have commercial and political designs. At the heart of these inquiries is the Person of Jesus Christ and whether his claims to divinity as portrayed in the Gospels are true. One may or may not believe these claims. But can one have Christianity without Christ or Christ despite his claims?

^{xxx} Protestant Christians number about 11 million. Muslims claim 65%-70% (see www.muhammad.net/bio/ethiopia.htm), though the 1994/2004 Census (CSA) registers no more than a third of total population.

^{xxxi} Report of recent religious clashes in Jimma in major websites did not include Protestant and Catholic dead. A truly Christian attitude and objective journalism would have required reporting all dead, irrespective of religious or ethnic affiliation.

^{xxxii} For example, *pre-millennialism* taught that the world is beyond redemption ("what must be must be") and that it must await the Return of Jesus to set it right. In other words, painting the walls of a burning house is not worth the effort; rather the focus must be on saving people from the engulfing flames; that the physical world (the flesh) is doomed. Suffering purifies and prepares the soul for the next world. The world is to be renounced and withdrawn from, thus, limiting one's role in effecting social changes. A third category would be the misguided but prevailing notion that "religion and politics don't mix." A proper definition of what 'politics' is should remedy this problem. In its general definition, 'politics' is no more than community activity (Heywood, 1994: 17). The church is *in* the world and not *of* the world (John 17: 15, 16). In its narrow sense, it refers to the acquisition and uses of power, the establishment of political structures and programs, etc. It should be noted here that the theology of the primitive church was decidedly different from those that emerged in early 20th Century. Jesus' and his apostles' teachings were attended by actions (Acts 1: 1; Galatians 2: 10). In sum, the church is here to proclaim the rule of the Kingdom of Christ to set people free from spiritual and physical bondages (Luke 4: 18-19.) Maintaining her integrity means not getting entangled with ephemeral programs and speaking against unjust social structures. Principles, not policy, must take precedence in her social involvements. The social effects of her teachings work imperceptively at first (like yeast or a mustard seed) but ultimately result in massive transformation on the individual and societal levels.

^{xxxiii} The fact that few on the fringes of society exist should not be reason to uncritically reject any or all elements related to them.

^{xxxiv} Or the gospel in the First Century by the Evangelist Philip (Acts 8.)

^{xxxv} It is striking that Abuna Zena Markos had also gone to “discuss with me (Tecola) about several problems of the church ... (C: Part II, p.2). I could not place the significance of this visit or what the narrator’s position at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had to do with the affairs of the church.

^{xxxvi} Interestingly, identical experience exists in Eritrea.

^{xxxvii} The fact is that Protestant churches are themselves not homogenous in their doctrines, liturgies, and organization. The one commonality they share is Jesus and the Apostolic faith. In other words, anyone who adheres to Jesus and the Apostolic foundation has enough reason to be respectful of and in solidarity with the other. Hence, I would suggest that the current demographic picture of 40-50 percent Orthodox Christians and 10-12 percent Protestant Christians be set as 50-60 percent Christians.

^{xxxviii} See http://www.zikkir.com/ethiopia/Berihun_Assfaw_open_letter_to_Getatchew_Haile_Feb2007.pdf

^{xxxix} This phenomenon has been more pronounced in the last fifty years than in earlier periods; the latter period did not preclude anti-religious attitudes.

^{xl} The focus is, more often than not, on ancient Ethiopia’s royal chronicles, independence, uniqueness, land holdings and her interaction with the outside world. The fact that native scholars lagged behind their *ferenji* counterparts is all too evident if one were to browse, for example, proceedings of International Ethiopian Studies, etc. The fact that foreign scholars defined the Ethiopian cultural narrative certainly contributed to how we view ourselves. The fact that more Ethiopian scholars are currently engaged in research with an ethnic slant may introduce a yet fragmenting narrative.

^{xli} One can also make a case that the Church, at least until 1974, had ‘used’ the state to advance her interests.

^{xlii} Exceptions are Tadesse Tamrat (Church and State), Getachew Haile, Messay Kebede, Sergew Hable Selassie, among few natives. Most recently (2005), Tibebe Eshete made religion/church the focus of his detailed and resourceful doctoral dissertation, “Growing through the storms: the history of the evangelical movement in Ethiopia, 1941-1991.” Low job prospects for a graduate of religious studies may be a factor in low interest; the church’s complicity in perpetuating poverty and injustice may have caused a generation of Ethiopians to inadvertently “throw out the baby with the bathwater.”

^{xliii} One such case is World Bank separately funding “interfaith” projects for Orthodox Christians, Protestant Christians, and Muslims. Effective implementation and minimizing corruption seems to have guided the policy decision. On the other hand, the long-term ramifications of the new policy on social cohesion have not been thought-out carefully. See Marshall & Keough. (2004). *Mind, Heart, and Soul*.

^{xliv} That is, Europe’s unbridled secularism or Saudi religious totalitarianism.

^{xlv} Professor Tecola, referring to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, puts it this way: “As a general observation, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is frozen in time—a relic of the past of our medieval period of rituals and dogmatism—it need be reformed...the most important challenge facing the Ethiopian church is its role in shaping the personality of Ethiopians and Ethiopian society” (C: Part II, p.7, p.6). These comments come from an individual who says he feels “totally overwhelmed in the presence of a Church Father” (ibid, p.2). And I have no reason to doubt that the Professor’s comments are not coming from a genuine desire to see the Church prosper and bring about positive social changes.

^{xlvi} See Messay Kebede, “Guilt and Atonement: The Genesis of Revolutionary Spirit in Ethiopia,” and “Bringing reason back to Ethiopian politics,” posted in ethiomeia.com

^{xlvii} The mystery of faith is such that there exist phenomena that one cannot always comprehend less explaining them. Rationalism finds it difficult to coexist with the Unexplained or the Unexplainable; in seeking to explain the Unexplainable it often fritters away the gift of reverence for the Holy. In the case before us, we are prone to making the opposite error of acceding too easily to “inviolable” aspects of traditions and not consistently apply similar intellectual rigor. The peculiar intellectual habit continues to fail us (see Mbiti (1970), *Concepts of God in Africa*; Otto (1958), *The Idea of the Holy*.)

^{xlviii} Observe the apparent religiosity in party politics today. The ruling party had a hand in determining the appointment of the current Church Father, in calling a meeting of Protestant church leaders prior to the May 2005 elections, and in going out of its way to play up Muslim vote against the Opposition. Observe also the call to prayer vigils by Women groups and *Kinijit*. Derg’s first move, we recall, was to set revolutionary lyrics to religious tunes, murder a presiding Abuna and pick his replacement.

^{xlix} Irreverence assigns the common designation *Ato* to a Church Father or transgresses public etiquette to vocally lodge objection to “First Lady” Azeb receiving the Martin Luther King Award. I am not endorsing the fact that the head of the church was mums about government atrocities but vocal supporting some of its policies. My argument is that there are better and civil ways to object than embarrassing oneself. In the case of the “First Lady,” attempt was made to link her to her husband’s (Prime Minister Meles) blunders. Instead, the inquiry should have focused on what standards were used to nominate her and accordingly lodge complaints.

^l Ezekiel 34; see also John 10. Whatever is taking place now within the church hierarchy, despite claims to truth, is not hid from the all-seeing God. And God has his way of bringing all things to light. It does not bode well for those who persist in using God to disguise their agendas.

^{li} The terms “honest” and “humble” are too dignified to describe our political leaders. The same are so violently poised that they could care less about local censure and that the fulfilling of donor wishes has become of paramount importance.

^{lii} Matthew 4: 10; Mark 8: 33; John 18:11

^{liii} Luke 19:10

^{liv} I Corinthians 1:18

^{lv} Luke 12:4-5; Hebrews 11:25

^{lvi} II Corinthians 5:15

^{lvii} The fact that his brother, Baro Tumsa, was a leader of Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and that the current socialist revolutionists saw him simply as Oromo nationalist does not tally with his long-standing conviction and declaration a) that absolute power belonged to God alone and not to a monarch or an ideology b) that salvation is for all, irrespective of categorizations; and that salvation is part and parcel of seeking social and economic justice and c) that there is no final conflict in belonging to an ethnic group and adherence to pan-ethnic notions.

<http://catholicsensibility.wordpress.com/2005/04/>

^{lviii} Galatians 3: 26-28

^{lix} To revel in someone’s humiliation is bad taste and ultimately de-humanizing.