AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY
vol. 2, nº 2 (2025) 258–280

# *Täwaḥədo* Theologizing as a Possible Guide for Ecumenical Fellowship in the Spirit of Nicaea[1]

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**Abstract**

The Ethiopian Orthodox *Täwaḥədo* Church (EOTC) embodies a vibrant and unique heritage of self-theologizing that is both consistent with Nicene formulations and deeply accommodating of non-Western epistemic assumptions. As the only country in Africa never to be colonized, Ethiopia boasts an ancient written language, Gəʿəz (ግዕዝ), and a theological heritage that was virtually devoid of any direct Greek philosophical influence until the twentieth century. *Täwaḥədo* (ተዋሕዶ) is the term used today to express the Christology of the EOTC. More broadly and deeply, however, it encapsulates the manner by which the EOTC embraces the mystery of life in Christ through 'Harmonious Tension' and embodied practical experience. This article briefly explores the historical usage and development of *täwaḥədo* in the EOTC tradition to highlight several important characteristics and suggest ways that other church traditions might be able to learn how to better hold apparently contradictory theological perspectives in tension for the benefit of the Global Church.

**Résumé**

L'Église orthodoxe éthiopienne *Täwaḥədo* (EOTC : *Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church* en anglais) incarne un héritage dynamique et unique de théologie autonome, à la fois conforme aux formulations nicéennes et profondément accommodante envers les hypothèses épistémiques non

[1] A major portion of this article was originally delivered as a presentation at the *International Orthodox Theological Association* (IOTA) International Conference: "Nicaea and the Church of the Third Millenium: Towards Catholic-Orthodox Unity" held at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome, Italy, 6 June 2025.

Published with license by ACTEA | DOI: https://doi.org/10.69683/66k6dq24
 | ISSN: 3006-1768 (print); 3007-1771 (online)

occidentales. Seul pays d'Afrique à n'avoir jamais été colonisé, l'Éthiopie possède une langue écrite ancienne, le Gəʿəz (ግዕዝ), et un héritage théologique qui a été pratiquement dépourvu de toute influence philosophique grecque directe jusqu'au XXe siècle. *Täwaḥədo* (ተዋሕዶ) est le terme utilisé aujourd'hui pour exprimer la christologie de l'EOTC. Plus largement et plus profondément, cependant, il résume la manière dont l'EOTC embrasse le mystère de la vie en Christ à travers une « tension harmonieuse » et une expérience pratique incarnée. Cet article explore brièvement l'usage historique et le développement du *täwaḥədo* dans la tradition de l'Église orthodoxe éthiopienne afin de mettre en évidence plusieurs caractéristiques importantes et de suggérer des moyens par lesquels d'autres traditions ecclésiales pourraient apprendre à mieux maintenir en tension des perspectives théologiques apparemment contradictoires, dans l'intérêt de l'Église mondiale.

**Resumo**

A Igreja Ortodoxa Etíope *Täwaḥədo* (EOTC: *Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church* em inglês) incorpora uma herança vibrante e única de autoteologização que é consistente com as formulações nicenas e profundamente receptiva às premissas epistémicas não ocidentais. Sendo o único país africano que nunca foi colonizado, a Etiópia possui uma língua escrita antiga, o Gəʿəz (ግዕዝ), e uma herança teológica que esteve praticamente isenta de qualquer influência filosófica grega direta até ao século XX. *Täwaḥədo* (ተዋሕዶ) é o termo usado hoje para expressar a cristologia da EOTC. De forma mais ampla e profunda, porém, ele resume a maneira pela qual a EOTC abraça o mistério da vida em Cristo por meio da «Tensão Harmoniosa» e da experiência prática incorporada. Este artigo explora brevemente o uso histórico e o desenvolvimento de *täwaḥədo* na tradição da EOTC para destacar várias características importantes e sugerir maneiras pelas quais outras tradições eclesiásticas poderiam aprender a melhor manter em tensão perspectivas teológicas aparentemente contraditórias, para o benefício da Igreja Global.

**Keywords**

Ethiopian Orthodox *Täwaḥədo* Church (EOTC), Council of Nicaea, Self-Theologizing, Majority World Christian Theologies, Indigenous African Spirituality, Ecumenical Dialogue, *Tawahedo, Täwahedo*, *Tewahedo*

**Mots-clés**

Église Orthodoxe Éthiopienne *Täwaḥədo*, Concile de Nicée, auto-théologie, théologies chrétiennes du monde majoritaire, spiritualité

africaine indigène, dialogue œcuménique, *Tawahedo, Täwahedo*, *Tewahedo*

**Palavras-chave**

Igreja Ortodoxa Etíope de *Täwaḥədo*, Concílio de Niceia, autoteologia, teologias cristãs maioritárias do mundo, espiritualidade indígena africana, diálogo ecuménico, *Tawahedo, Täwahedo*, *Tewahedo*

## Introduction

Considerable diversity existed at the Council of Nicaea in 325, but far more ethnic, cultural, and theological diversity exists within Christianity today. The Ethiopian Orthodox *Täwaḥədo* Church[2] (henceforth EOTC)[3] embodies a unique manner of doing theology that is simultaneously aligned with Nicene formulations and deeply accommodating of the various cultural and epistemic assumptions found today throughout Majority World[4] Christianity. Key here is the virtual absence of direct Greek philosophical influence upon the traditional theological fabric of the EOTC, meaning that Christians in diverse Majority World contexts increasingly representative of Roman Catholic (e.g., Brazil, Mexico, Philippines, DRC), Protestant (e.g., Nigeria, China, Tanzania), and Orthodox (e.g., India, Syria, Romania) populations can likely benefit from the ways that Ethiopian Christians have traditionally articulated the mysteries of the Triune God.

In this year of the seventeenth centennial of the Council of Nicaea, it is appropriate to consider how the only uncolonized country in Africa has faithfully preserved, developed, expanded, and enriched their incredible Nicene

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[2] Amharic: የኢትዮጵያ፡ ኦርቶዶክስ፡ ተዋሕዶ፡ ቤተ፡ ክርስቲያን። (*Yäityopya Ortodoks Täwahədo Betä Krəstiyan*).

[3] It is important here to acknowledge the Eritrean Orthodox *Täwaḥədo* Church, which many scholars rightfully discuss in tandem with the EOTC. E.g., Stéphane Ancel, Giulia Bonacci, and Joachim Persoon, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church." The Eritrean Orthodox *Täwaḥədo* Church gained autocephaly in 1993 with Eritrea's independence yet shares all the same core religious literature and outlooks of the Ethiopian Orthodox *Täwaḥədo* Church (although with some nuances). I do not wish to exclude Eritrea or my dear Eritrean colleagues from this conversation, but find it somewhat easier to focus on Ethiopia for the specific purposes of this article as it is the only country not colonized in Africa and because it has a somewhat greater focus upon the *Kəbra ̈Nagäšt* (Gəʿəz: ክብረ፡ ነገሥት።, 'The Glory of Kings') that I discuss briefly below.

[4] The phrase 'Majority World' was first coined by Shahidul Alam as a positive alternative to 'Third World', 'Developing World', and 'LDCs' (Least Developed Countries), all of which conceal "histories of oppression and continued exploitation" and "hinder the appreciation of the cultural and social wealth." See Shahidul Alam, "Majority World: Challenging the West's Rhetoric of Democracy," 89.

(and legitimately 'pre-Chalcedonian'[5]) Christian heritage in ways that might be beneficial for other Christians of Africa and for the growing majority of global Christians who find classically Greek formulations to be somewhat disconnected from their daily lives of faith. Much like the African Athanasius was driven to develop Nicene theology in his Anti-Arian polemics due to soteriological implications for the common Christian of his day, the EOTC has developed Nicene theology in ways that contributed to what is becoming one of the largest and most vibrant Christian traditions in the world.[6]

In this article, I will bring together new findings about the development of *täwaḥədo* (ተዋሕዶ) as a theological concept with more established notions of 'self-theologizing' to outline several ways that the historic example of the EOTC might provide helpful avenues for ecumenical interactions in the 21st century. Specifically, I will focus on two important dimensions of what I am here calling '*Täwaḥədo* Theologizing':

1. the central concept of 'Harmonious Tension'; and
2. the insistence upon *embodied* (and practical) spirituality informing doctrinal dialogue.

I will conclude by sketching three areas for potential application of these aspects of *Täwaḥədo* Theologizing in the spirit of Nicaea.

## Nicaea and the Foundations of the EOTC's *Täwaḥədo* Theologizing

Whereas the EOTC's eventual rejection[7] of the decisions made at the Council of Chalcedon is well-known and amply discussed, her embrace of Nicaea is more frequently simply taken for granted. The EOTC's deep coherence with Nicaea is vital, however, not just for describing it as a 'pre-Chalcedonian' Christian tradition but also for cementing its rich theology as

[5] Grillmeier uses this phrase repeatedly with reference to different aspects of the EOTC in his extensive work on Christology. See especially Alois Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition,* Volume 2, Part 4: *From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590–604), The Church of Alexandria with Nubia and Ethiopia after 451*, pp. 336, 372, 384. For an example of other authoritative scholars using this phrase, see V. C. Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon Re-Examined*.

[6] Currently boasting 55+ million adherents, the EOTC is projected to surpass the Russian Orthodox Church in the year 2050 as the largest autocephalous Orthodox Church in the world (with roughly 85–90 million adherents). Barring any drastic demographic changes, the EOTC will also likely eclipse the size of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship, the World Methodist Council, the Lutheran World Federation, and the Worldwide Anglican Communion. See Patrick Johnstone, *The Future of the Global Church: History, Trends and Possibilities*, 93–118; and John Binns, *The Orthodox Church of Ethiopia: A History*, 232.

[7] Even though the EOTC adopted the Coptic Church's rejection of Chalcedon, the decisions from that council remained only "vaguely known" until about the fifteenth century when Giyorgis of Gaśśecha (ጊዮርጊስ ዘጋሠጫ) wrote his *Book of Mystery* (መጽሐፈ፡ ምሥጢር፡; *Maṣəḥafa Məṣṭir*). See Witold Witakowski, "Chalcedon, Council Of," 710.

something from which all other Christians can learn. Therefore, it is worth reviewing briefly some of the main ways that Nicaea is remembered and championed in the EOTC.

Although no Ethiopian was present at the Council of Nicaea, Frumentius[8] — the first Bishop of Ethiopia, venerated in the EOTC tradition as the Revealer of Light (ከሣቴ ብርሃን; *Käśate Bərhan*) — met with Athanasius in Alexandria sometime after the latter was made Patriarch, perhaps circa 330.[9] Frumentius was clearly aware of the issues at Nicaea, and was "certainly involved"[10] in Anti-Arian debates of his day. The EOTC's quick adoption of Nicene theology is confirmed by formulations in several archaeological and numismatic artifacts.[11]

More significant for the present discussion is the theological legacy that the Council of Nicaea has obtained within the EOTC. Numerous Ethiopic literary and liturgical passages reflect the high place that Nicaea holds in the tradition. For example, one eucharistic anaphora[12] of the EOTC highlights Nicaea,[13] and it happens to be the only Ecumenical Council whose attendees receive regular commemoration in the EOTC calendar — an event which happens on the ninth day of every Ethiopian month.[14] Although such commemoration is often symbolized by the round number of 300 (ሠለስቱ፡ ምእት፡፡; *śälastu məʾət*), several texts and commentaries speak explicitly about the "318" (the number of bishops traditionally said to have attended the Council of Nicaea).[15] Commenting on

[8] More formally known as *Abba Sälama* (አባ ሰላማ). See Gianfranco Fiaccadori, "Sälama (Käśate Bərhan)."

[9] The consecration of Frumentius as bishop "took place, therefore, between 328, when Athanasius was elected to the See of St. Mark, and 335, when his first exile was enforced at the Council of Tyre;" Fiaccadori, "Sälama (Käśate Bərhan)" 486. See also Hamle 26 (August 02) in E. A. Wallis Budge, trans., *The Ethiopian Synaxarium*.

[10] Fiaccadori, "Sälama," 487.

[11] See Stephanie L. Black, "'In the Power of God Christ': Greek Inscriptional Evidence for the Anti-Arian Theology of Ethiopia's First Christian King."

[12] Greek: ἀναφορά. Literally a 'lifting up', an *anaphora* is an essential prayer of thanksgiving that is chanted as the Eucharistic elements are consecrated, typically featuring some variation of these words: "Let us lift up our hearts" and "We lift them up to the Lord." Although present in all Orthodox churches, the EOTC features more anaphorae than any other Orthodox tradition — arguably fourteen or even fifteen.

[13] This was most probably composed in Gəʿəz in the fifteenth century by Giyorgis of Gaśśecha (ጊዮርጊስ ዘጋሠጫ). See Habtemichael Kidane, "Anaphoras," 251–253; Getatchew Haile, "On the Authorship of Ethiopian Anaphoras," 9–38.

[14] I am indebted to Ralph Lee for emphasizing this to me during personal correspondence. It is also of note that this commemoration is not shared with the Coptic Church calendar, which is unusual. See Emmanuel Fritsch and Ugo Zanetti, "Calendar," in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica: A–C*, 668–672.

[15] There is also an allusion to the 318 "mighty men" that Abraham raised up as an army in Genesis 14:14.

the famous *Apocalypse of Weeks* in Ethiopic Enoch,[16] the *Book of the Mysteries of Heaven and Earth* identifies the present age ("Week 8") as "The Age of the 318 Orthodox Faithful, the sword is the Word of God, and the place signifies the churches built in the age of King Constantine."[17] However, the most pronounced discussion of Nicaea is found in the Ethiopian national epic, *Kəbrä Nägäśt* (ክብረ፡ ነገሥት።; 'The Glory of Kings').[18] Therein, the EOTC's indigenous embodied theology is woven together in several ways that are explicitly traced back to Nicaea. This is demonstrated immediately in the first chapter:

> ፍካሬ፡ ወዜና፡ ዘ፫፻፲፰ቱ፡ ርቱዓነ፡ ሃይማኖት፡ በእንተ፡ ክብር፡ ወዕበይ፡ ወተድላ፡ ዘከመ፡ ወሀበ፡ እግዚአብሔር፡ ለደቂቀ፡ አዳም፤ ወፈድፋደሰ፡ ዘበእንተ፡ ዕበያ፡ ወክብራ፡ ለጽዮን፡ ታቦተ፡ ሕጉ፡ ለእግዚአብሔር፡ እንተ፡ ገባሪሃ፡ ወኬንያሃ፡ ለሊሁ፡ በውስተ፡ ጽርሐ፡ መቅደሱ፡ እምቅድመ፡ ኵሉ፡ ፍጥረት፡ መላእክት፡ ወሰብእ። እስመ፡ በኅብረት፡ ወበሥምረት፡ ወበዕሪና፡ ገብርዋ፡ አብ፡ ወወልድ፡ ወመንፈስ፡ ቅዱስ፡ ለጽዮን፡ ሰማያዊት፡ ለማኅደረ፡ ስብሐቲሆሙ።
>
> *Fəkare wäzena zä 318 rətuʿanä haymanot bäʾentä kəbr wäʿəbäy wätädəla zäkämä wähabä ʾƎgziʾabḥer lädäqiqä ʾAdam, wäfädfadäsä zäbäʾəntä ʿəbäya wäkəbra läṣəyon tabotä ḥəgu läʾƎgziʾabḥer ʾəntä gäbariha wäkenyaha lälihu bäwəstä ṣərḥa mäqdäsu ʾəmqedmä kwəllu fəṭrät mälaʾəkt wäsäbəʾ. ʾəsmä bäḫəbrät wäbäśəmrät wäbäʿərina gäbrəwa ʾab wäwäld wäMänfäs Qəddus läṣəyon sämayawit lämaḫdärä səbḥatihomu.*
>
> The interpretation and announcement of the 318 Orthodox in Faith: Concerning the glory and greatness and dignity that God gave to the children of Adam, and especially concerning the greatness and glory of Zion — the Ark[19] of the Law of God — which He Himself made and fashioned, within which is the chamber of His holiness from before the time of all creatures, angels, and humans. Because with unity, good will, and agreement, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit made the Heavenly Zion as a dwelling place for their glory.[20]

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[16] Of course, a strong connection exists between Ethiopic Enoch and 1Enoch. Only the Gəʿəz text is complete, but the textual developments since its translation (probably in the fifth century AD), and the fact that the earliest extant manuscripts are nearly 1,000 years later than this translation date, mean that they cannot be understood as identical texts. For a further discussion of how the EOTC understands the concept of 'canon', see Bruk A. Asale, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Canon of the Scriptures: Neither Open nor Closed."

[17] Ralph Lee, "The Reception and Function of 1 Enoch in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tradition," 316.

[18] Notably, this was the opinion of Witakowski. See Witold Witakowski, "Nicea, Council Of," 1176.

[19] The Ark is a primary incarnational symbol in EOTC thought, and every EOTC church contains a *tabot* (ታቦት) or "Ark" in place of the altar, which serves as a potent symbol of divine indwelling.

[20] Gəʿəz text taken from Carl Bezold, trans., *Kebra Nagast: Die Herrlichkeit der Könige nach*

Further discussion of the many fascinating Nicene Christological terms[21] used throughout the *Kəbrä Nägäśt* is beyond the scope of this article, but the brief examples provided here more than suffice to demonstrate the strong commitment the EOTC has to Nicaea in her ongoing process of indigenous *Täwaḥədo* Theologizing — especially in relation to ubiquitous Trinitarian formulae consequential of the recognition of the Son's full divinity.

Regarding my titular phrase "*Täwaḥədo* Theologizing," two separate ideas should be explained. First, the word *täwaḥədo* is currently most associated with the EOTC's Christology, expressing the mysterious "union" of humanity and divinity in Christ. However, *täwaḥədo* only became the dominant christological view at the Council of Boru Meda in 1878.[22] Until very recently, it was universally accepted that *täwaḥədo* was a key term used since the earliest composition of texts in *Gəʿəz* (ግዕዝ). This was based upon the impression that *täwaḥədo* was used in the fifth century *Qerəllos* (ቄርሎስ; Cyril)[23] to translate ἕνωσις (*hénōsis*), thus making it merely a "formulation inherited from Cyril of Alexandria."[24] In the course of my own research, however, I have discovered that only the related word *dämärä* (ደመረ)[25] and not *täwaḥədo* is used in *Qerəllos*. The semantic range of these terms is almost impossible to pin down from strict lexical assessment. Arguably, *dämärä* carries the core sense of mathematical addition while *täwaḥədo* is most connected to the sense of oneness. The

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*den Handschriften in Berlin, London, Oxford und Paris zum ersten Mal im Äthiopischen Urtext herausgegeben und mit deutscher Übersetzung versehen*, ፩ ['1']; my transliteration and translation.

[21] Of particular interest is the unusual verb እትገሰስ (*ətəgäsäs*, 'I will become tangible') — which seems to denounce gnostic or docetic understandings of the Incarnation — and the absence of the phrase ኀቡረ ህላዌ (*ḫaburä həlawe*, 'of the same nature'), which was used to translate ὁμοούσιος (*homoousios*) in the fifth century text *Qerrəlos* (ቄርሎስ) that is discussed further below. For more information see the forthcoming article from Ralph Lee, "The Council of the 318: The defining of an Epoch for the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church?"

[22] Eloi Ficquet, "Boru Meda," 609.

[23] It is also possible that this text was translated in the early sixth century. See Alessandro Bausi, "Qerəllos," 288.

[24] Tedros Abraha, "Täwaḥədo," 873. To be clear, it is true that EOTC *täwaḥədo* christology is heavily dependent on Cyril, especially his words from the Formula of Reunion in 433: ἐκ δύο φύσεων (*ek dúo phúseōn*, 'from two natures'). The only translation of *Qerəllos* is that made by Weischer into German.

[25] This word means "insert, add, join, associate, unite, mix, mingle . . . ." See Wolf Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary of Geʿez Classical Ethiopic: Geʿez-English / English-Geʿez: With an Index of the Semitic Roots*, 135. NB: The actual word used to translate ἕνωσις *(hénōsis)* is the form ትድምርት (*tədmərt*), which Leslau defines as "union, union of the two persons [sic] of Christ, communion, connection, mixture . . ." and which Dillmann describes as "an abstract noun derived from a Reflexive-Passive stem." See August Dillmann, Carl Bezold, and James A. Crichton, *Ethiopic Grammar*, 234–235. See also Bernd Manuel Weischer, "Die christologische Terminologie des Cyrill von Alexandrien im Äthiopischen," 733–741.

triliteral root of *täwaḥədo* is ወሐደ (*wäḥädä*), meaning 'to make one.' Both terms continue to be used in abundance throughout the EOTC today, but it is often possible to discern that *dämärä* is used for common things while *täwaḥədo* is reserved for sacred matters.[26]

Second, the term 'theologizing' as I use it here is rooted in the growing Missiological concept of *self-theologizing*. First coined by Paul Hiebert in 1985,[27] it has gained prominence among both Protestants and Roman Catholics. For instance, the Catholic theologian Stephen Bevans has engaged explicitly with the notion of self-theologizing.[28] Furthermore, Orthodox theologians such as Michael Oleksa[29] and Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos[30] have also written about highly similar concepts in relation to the needs for theological contextualization in local communities. Due to the largely *insulated* manner in which the EOTC developed its own unique characteristics,[31] I use the phrase '*Täwaḥədo* Theologizing' as a shorthand to encapsulate the incredibly rich ways that the EOTC has "integrated," "synthesized," and "creatively incorporated"[32] various spiritual and theological concepts so that they become fully "at home in the Ethiopian mind."[33]

## Harmonious Tension

The West has long possessed a "preference for what is clear and certain over what is ambiguous or undecided; the preference for what is single, fixed, static and systematised, over what is multiple, fluid, moving and contingent."[34] By contrast, the traditional *Täwaḥədo* theologizing of the EOTC can be described as an approach that delights in variety and apparent contradiction. To borrow a phrase coined to describe the work of Ephrem the Syrian (who enjoys a prominent place in EOTC veneration) the fundamental approach of the EOTC

[26] This is especially observable in the *Books of the Monks*. See Calum Andrew Samuelson, "Expressions of *Theōsis* in Selected Ethiopic Monastic Literature," 210, 243, 251, 262, 295.

[27] See Paul G. Hiebert, "The Fourth Self." For further helpful discussion, see also Rochelle Cathcart and Mike Nicholls, "Self-Theology, Global Theology, and Missional Theology in the Writings of Paul G. Hiebert."

[28] E.g., Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*, 60.

[29] E.g., Michael Oleksa, *Orthodox Alaska: A Theology of Mission*.

[30] E.g., Anastasios Yannoulatos, *Facing the World: Orthodox Christian Essays on Global Concerns*.

[31] Numerous scholars have written extensively about this. Preeminent among them are Edward Ullendorff, Alois Grillmeier, Roger Cowely, Ephraim Isaac, and Yirga Woldeyes.

[32] Yirga Gelaw Woldeyes, *Native Colonialism: Education and the Economy of Violence Against Traditions in Ethiopia*, 91–92, 80.

[33] Kirsten Stoffregen Pedersen, *Traditional Ethiopian Exegesis of the Book of Psalms*, 298.

[34] Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*, 323.

might be described as "Faith adoring the mystery"[35] (in contradistinction to "Faith seeking understanding"[36]). A leading Ethiopian philosopher, Maimire Mennasemay, has described this approach as containing "internal tension,"[37] but I prefer to speak of *Harmonious Tension*. Related to this idea, Mennasemay says: "contradiction, understood theologically as 'mystery', is not opposed to 'unity' but is constitutive of its very unity."[38] He adds: "matter and spirit, appearance and reality, are not mutually exclusive entities but exist in 'unity', in the *Tëwahedo* sense."[39]

Some have suggested that elements of mysterious contradiction or tension in the EOTC began all the way back with King Ezana, who may have allowed differing articulations of Nicaean Trinitarian theology on his famous trilingual stele in Aksum.[40] More likely, perhaps, is that this characteristic of the EOTC can be traced (through the Syriac tradition) all the way back to Rabbinical methods of biblical interpretation. The classic example illustrative of Harmonious Tension in the EOTC is the genre of *ʾAndəmta* (አንድምታ) commentary, which has preserved and cherished contradictory interpretations of Scripture[41] in a way that has been compared to Jewish methods.[42] The famous outstanding example of *ʾAndəmta* occurs at Revelation 6:2, which features 14 different glosses providing explanations for the "white horse of the apocalypse."[43]

Another important example of how the embrace of Harmonious Tension manifests itself within the EOTC is the principle of *Wax and Gold*,[44] especially

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[35] See Sidney Griffith, *Faith Adoring the Mystery: Reading the Bible with St. Ephraem the Syrian*.

[36] Latin: *Fides quarens intellectum*. This was the famous dictum of St Anselm of Canterbury (1033/1034–1109).

[37] Maimire Mennasemay, "Towards *Qiné* (ቅኔ) Hermeneutics," 19.

[38] Mennasemay, "Towards *Qiné* (ቅኔ) Hermeneutics," 19.

[39] Mennasemay, "Towards *Qiné* (ቅኔ) Hermeneutics," 30.

[40] See Black, "'In the Power of God Christ.'"

[41] NB: Many other kinds of Ethiopic literature besides the Bible also features *ʾAndəmta* commentary, including Patristic, Monastic, and Liturgical texts.

[42] Especially those in the Talmud. Cf. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Quatre lectures talmudiques*, 102.

[43] Roger W. Cowley, *The Traditional Interpretation of the Apocalypse of John in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 229–232.

[44] ሰምና ወርቅ (*saʾmənna wərq*). This rich tradition involves a plain, external meaning ('wax') complementing and highlighting a concealed and deeper meaning ('gold'). Sergew Gelaw and a team of scholars have identified eight broad methods used in *Wax and Gold:* grammatical constructions (especially double subjects); synonyms and words that carry special meanings; proper nouns that evoke particular events and passages from sacred texts; historical allusions; allusions to myths and legends; words or phrases quoted from sacred texts that encapsulate their meaning; words and phrases that parallel prophecy; and analogical words and phrases. See Sergew Gelaw, *የግዕዝ ቅኔ መንገዶች ክፍል ፩ [The Paths of Gəʿəz Qəne Part 1]*, 30.

as it is practiced within the extemporaneous oral poetic tradition known as *Qəne* (ቅኔ).[45] Therein, *Wax and Gold* plays with multiple layers of meaning simultaneously through elaborate 'rules' and methods so as to avoid both the divide of dualism and the confusion of mere conflation. Indeed, it is the very co-existence of opposing polarities that brings the deepest meaning in *Täwaḥədo* Theologizing.

A final note relating to this notion of Harmonious Tension concerns the classic apophatic approach (ἀπόφασις, *apóphasis*) to theological thinking or theologizing. There are, indeed, multiple similarities present here, such as the important idea of "discursive abstinence,"[46] which strongly describes the Ethiopian approach to theology. However, rather than being primarily an enterprise involving negation, *Täwaḥədo* Theologizing emphatically involves the joining of two or more apparently conflicting elements in order to produce something with rich meaning that strongly resists dilution or pragmatic simplification.

**Embodied Practical Experience**

The dimension of embodied (ሥጋዊ; *śəgawi*) practical experience within *Täwaḥədo* Theologizing builds upon and is closely connected to the dimension of Harmonious Tension. For instance, the genre of *ʾAndəmta* commentary already highlighted, is largely dependent upon embodied and practical experience with the texts at hand. In his seminal work on *ʾAndəmta*, Roger Cowley insisted that its "rules" are best understood as "generalizations arising from actual engagement in exegetical debate, rather than expressions of a philosophical interpretative system."[47] Many other examples of embodied theology can be found in the EOTC, and two short prayers will be presented to this end in the final section of this article.

More relevant to the thrust of this article are the embodied implications behind the intriguing evolution in recorded usage of the term *täwaḥədo*. The reason I discovered the absence of the term *täwaḥədo* in the text of *Qərəllos* was because I was so impressed by its overwhelming usage in a much later and extremely influential Ethiopic monastic text known as the *Araʿgawi Mänfäsawi* (አረጋዊ፡ መንፈሳዊ።, 'The Spiritual Elder'). This text is one of three *Books of the*

[45] For a good introductory article, see Daniel Assefa and Tekletsadik Belachew, "Ethiopian Qene (Traditional and Living Oral Poetry) as a Medium for Biblical Hermeneutics."

[46] Serafim Seppälä, In Speechless Ecstasy: Expression and Interpretation of Mystical Experience in Classical Syriac and Sufi Literature, 128.

[47] Roger W. Cowley, Ethiopian Biblical Interpretation: A Study in Exegetical Tradition and Hermeneutics, 374.

*Monks*[48] traditionally studied as required training for every monk in Ethiopia and contains the highly mystical writings of three monks from the Syriac tradition—most prominently, John of Dalyatha (ܝܘܚܢܢ ܕܕܠܝܬܐ, *Yōḥanān d-Dlīṯēh*). Although significant further research is still needed,[49] my findings[50] in the Ethiopic *Books of the Monks* strongly suggest that their usage of *täwaḥədo* was the result of a thorough theological 'synthesis' by Ethiopian monks wrestling with the best way to articulate in *Gəʿəz* the highly mystical experiences described by the Syriac authors and observed in their own Ethiopian monastic communities. In other words, it appears increasingly likely that *täwaḥədo* was first used in the EOTC to describe the embodied and practical experience of monastic communities and then later selected or 'elevated' as the best expression of the EOTC's understanding of christology.[51]

The probability of this progression is strengthened by the absence of the term *täwaḥədo* from several crucial Ethiopic texts that predate the translation of the *Books of the Monks* into Gəʿəz, including the *Dəggʷa* (ድጓ),[52] and perhaps most importantly, the Ethiopic biblical texts themselves. This point should not be underestimated, especially since the EOTC has possessed their own Gəʿəz translation of the Bible since the early fifth century (meaning they could develop their own unique expressions in Gəʿəz). The term *täwaḥədo* features abundantly in the biblical *ʾAndəmta* commentary in Amharic precisely because it is a term representing gradual and thoughtful theological development that

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[48] ሥስቱ፡ መጻሕፍተ፡ መነኰሳት። (*Śostu Mäṣaḥəftä Mänäkwäsat*). The other two texts constituting this collection are ፊልክስዩስ (*Filəksəyus*), written by Dadisho of Qatar (Syriac: ܪܝܫܐ ܕܬܫܥܝܐ; *Dādišoʿ Qaṭrāyā*) and ማር፡ ይስሐቅ። (*Mar Yəsḥaq*), written by Isaac the Syrian ( ܡܪܝ ,ܐܣܚܩ ܕܢܝܢܘܐ; *Mār Īsḥāq d-Nīnwē*).

[49] One of the most important factors to consider is the occurrence of täwaḥədo in the *Book of Mystery* (መጽሐፈ፡ ምሥጢር።; *Maṣəḥafä Məśṭir*) by Giyorgis of Gaśśecha (ጊዮርጊስ ዘጋሠጫ) or Sägla. See Abba Hiruie Ermias, *The Book of Mystery: Mäṣhafä Məśṭir of Abba Giyorgis of Gaśəčča*. My current speculation is that *täwaḥədo* was popularized in the early fifteenth century by Giyorgis and then used for the translation of the *Araʾgawi Mänfaśawi* in 1524.

[50] See especially my "Expressions of *theosis in Selected Ethiopic Monastic Literature*," chapter 6.

[51] The interactions with and influence of the European Jesuits in Ethiopia during the sixteenth century is certainly another factor that propelled Ethiopian theologians to sharpen and clarify their Christology, and may have given new cause to regard 'older' Christological terms like *dämärä* as somewhat inadequate, imprecise, or problematic.

[52] More properly known as the *Dəggʷa* of St Yared (ድጓ፤ ዘቅዱስ፡ ያሬድ።). There is, in fact, a singular occurrence of *täwaḥədo* in the *Dəggʷa*, but its appearance is easily identified as a much later addition. It is used in reference to Wälätaʾ Pẹṭros, who died in 1642, a date which is more than a century after the translation of the *Araʾgawi Mänfaśawi* into Gəʿəz. Recent research has verified the highly complex composition of the *Dəggʷa* in its current form, lending credence to this assessment. See Jonas Karlsson, "The Diachronic Development of the *Dəggʷā*: A Study of Texts and Manuscripts of Selected Ethiopic Antiphon Collections."

articulates complex ideas with words not found in the biblical texts. Ultimately, when *täwaḥədo* was selected as the official expression of the EOTC's Christology at the Council of Boru Meda in 1878, it had gained substantial traction beyond strictly monastic communities because of its ability to articulate mystical union in ways that resonated with those who had tasted glimpses of it — whether ascetic, christological, or trinitarian.

In part, this represents an inverse development in christological and trinitarian thinking to that of many Chalcedonian traditions. Instead of receiving christological doctrine from major councils that was then explored and applied in mystical endeavours, the EOTC received and integrated beautiful language from mystics that was then explored and applied at major councils discussing christological and trinitarian doctrine. Nevertheless, this basic pattern is not entirely without similarity or precedent — especially in other related Oriental Orthodox traditions. One of the best examples on this point may be the highly 'practical' theology of Philoxenus of Mabbug, about whom David Michelson claims it can be said that practice led to and influenced formal doctrine.[53] Within Ethiopia today, the importance of embodied and practical experience of God is still cherished and prized in remarkable ways. Monks frequently mingle with and influence important social events, and the opinion of senior church scholars (known as *Arat ʿAyn*[54]) is highly regarded even if it seems to contradict established teachings or doctrines of the church. At the risk of seeming simplistic, it might be possible to describe the overarching EOTC perspective as insisting that evidence of Christlikeness within a person is ultimately what qualifies them to speak about God.[55]

**Examples and Potential for Ecumenical Fellowship**

So, how exactly might these dimensions of *Täwaḥədo* Theologizing act as a guide for ecumenical fellowship today? First, *Täwaḥədo* Theologizing may be more fruitful in Majority World contexts where most Global Christians now live[56] because it is so deeply rooted in non-Western ways of thinking and less entrenched in logical and discursive paradigms. Thus, while several forms of Catholic and Protestant Christianity expend great energy in working to

[53] David A. Michelson, *The Practical Christology of Philoxenos of Mabbug*, 3.

[54] አረት፡ ዓይን።, 'four eyes'. Contrary to the popular phrase in the West, this phrase in Ethiopia refers not to a wearer of eyeglasses, but rather a spiritual master who can see in all four 'directions' according to the categories of literature in the traditional schools of EOTC education.

[55] These can be assessed in various ways, including, for instance, the "markers of deification" (or perhaps 'of sanctification'). See Paul L. Gavrilyuk, Andrew Hofer, and Matthew Levering, "Introduction: Theses on Deification," 4–7.

[56] 28.5% in Africa + 15.8% in Asia + 23.4% in Latin America = 67.7% of total Christians. "Status of Global Christianity, 2025, in the Context of 1900–2050."

'inculturate' theology that is often propositional, discursive, linear, or logical in non-Western contexts, the aspects of *Täwaḥədo* Theologizing briefly examined here may offer new 'starting points' that are far less encumbered by ill-fitting frameworks. Allen Yeh, among others, has written persuasively about how some of these dynamics do and should operate, involving the prioritization of relational values such as hospitality and honour while sidestepping Western emphases upon ideals such as efficiency and individualism.[57]

Furthermore, when considering ecumenical efforts and the Majority World, it is not insignificant that Africa is now the continent with the most Christians. Although it is hardly straightforward to link Ethiopia with the rest of Africa simply because it is on the same continent,[58] it is nevertheless important to consider the strong similarities with other contexts in which cultures were not originally or traditionally shaped by abstract, hypothetical, or non-mysterious ways of thinking and being.

A second potential application for *Täwaḥədo* Theologizing involves interdisciplinary endeavours in the academy. Despite significant misunderstandings and even resistance in the past, it has become clear that academic institutions can benefit greatly by learning from Ethiopian language, culture, philosophy,[59] and theology.[60] Writing specifically about the intersection of theology and linguistics, the famous Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako insisted that: "Mother tongues and new idioms are crucial for gaining fresh insights into the doctrine of Christ."[61] Due to the irreducibility of languages to exactly equivalent semantic units, I take for granted the fact that an articulation of Cyril's Christology in Greek,[62] for instance, cannot be exactly or perfectly expressed in Gəʿəz without introducing or forsaking certain nuances or cultural assumptions.[63] If it is recognized that the tension existing between different

[57] E.g., see Allen Yeh and Tite Tiénou, eds., Majority World Theologies: Theologizing From Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Ends of the Earth; and Allen Yeh, "Majority World Theologies."

[58] For instance, Niringiye (along with others) prefers to speak about four (or several) different Africas. Zac Niringiye, "On this Rock I will build my Church: Ecclesiology in Africa." The four Africas mentioned in this context were: North Africa, the Horn of Africa, South Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

[59] For a groundbreaking text that has recently demonstrated the sophistication of indigenous African philosophical thought, see Zara Yaqob and Walda Heywat, *The Hatata Inquiries: Two Texts of Seventeenth-Century African Philosophy from Ethiopia about Reason, the Creator, and Our Ethical Responsibilities*.

[60] This is especially true in relation to post-colonial and African scholarship.

[61] Kwame Bediako, "The Doctrine of Christ and the Significance of Vernacular Terminology," 111.

[62] E.g., ἐκ δύο φύσεων (*ek dúo phúseōn*, 'from two natures').

[63] One simple way to illustrate this point in the Ethiopian context is the most common word for God used by the EOTC: *ʾĀgziʾabḥer* (አግዚአብሔር). Like θεός (*theós*), evidence

languages and Christian traditions can serve to expand rather than constrict conceptions of divine mystery in the *täwaḥədo* sense of unity, ecumenical dialogue may be able to take a great step forward indeed.

A final potential application for *Täwaḥədo* Theologizing involves daily devotional prayers. Whether we like it or not, millions of Christians globally are increasingly using apps to guide their spiritual meditations, devotions, and prayers.[64] Many of these are already surprisingly ecumenical, employing various forms of *Lectio Divina*, the Jesuit *Examen*, and prayers from numerous church fathers and mystics of different traditions. I believe that the mystical[65] approach of *Täwaḥədo* Theologizing could work quite well in this regard, especially since most of the 'mystical' texts of the EOTC almost completely avoid doctrinal statements or discussion.[66]

Demonstrative of this fact is a small Ethiopic prayer book called the *Wəddase ʾAmlak*,[67] which features prayers from Basil, Ephrem, Cyril, Athanasius, Pachomius, and others,[68] but heavily edited, abridged, and broken up into accessible units for individual days. Although not focused on christology (or any doctrinal apologetics, for that matter) several fascinating ideas relating to christology can nevertheless be detected, such as the theotic

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demonstrates that *ʾƎgziʾabḥer* was used before the spread of Christianity in Ethiopia, meaning it had associations with the culture and customs of the time. From a plain linguistic perspective, *ʾƎgziʾabḥer* is a compound word consisting of *ʾəgziʾ* (እግዚእ, 'master, lord') in construct with *bəḥer* (ብሔር, 'region, land'), combined to mean "Lord of the land." Several pre-seventeenth century manuscripts contain the term in this construct form. Furthermore, in the Ethiopic translation of the Septuagint (LXX; a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) and NT from Greek, *ʾƎgziʾabḥer* is used to translate both *theos* and *kurios* (κύριος), demonstrating a certain measure of flexibility. Finally, a creative and indigenous 'theological' explanation has also developed around *ʾƎgziʾabḥer*, which is only possible in Gəʿəz. This explanation exploits trinitarian convictions to decipher the mysterious way that each Person of the Trinity is "hidden" within the name *ʾƎgziʾabḥer*: *ʾəgziʾ* (እግዚእ, 'lord') is Christ, *äb* (አብ, 'father') is the Father, and *ḫer* (ኄር, 'good') is the Holy Spirit. All these demonstrate different shades of meaning which *ʾƎgziʾabḥer* contains when compared with the *theos* inherited from Aristotle and Plato.

[64] Some of the more popular examples of these apps include: Hallow, Pray As You Go, Abide, and Lectio 365.

[65] ምሥጢር (*məśṭir*); μυστήριον (*mystērion*); ܪܙܐ (*ʾrāzā*). It must not be forgotten that 'mystery' is a deeply biblical word, used dozens of times by Paul alone, not to mention the occurrences elsewhere in the NT and in the LXX.

[66] This is famously true of Isaac the Syrian (of Nineveh), whose writings were translated and circulated very widely. See Sebastian P. Brock, "Isaac the Syrian."

[67] ውዳሴ፡ አምላክ። ('The Praise of God'). Like many other Ethiopic texts from this period, the evidence reveals that the *Wəddase ʾAmlak* was translated from an Arabic source. See Daniel Assefa, "Wəddase amlak."

[68] It is especially noteworthy that these figures span different traditions and locations.

implications of "mingling" and "adding" mentioned in the prayer ዘሐሙስ፤ ፱፫። (*zäḥämus*, 'Thursday,[69] no. 55'):

> አ ዘበከይከ ላዕለ አልዓዛር ወአውኀዝከ አንብዓ ኀዘን ተወከፍ ምረረ ኀዘንየ ወአንብዕየ። ፈውስ ሕማምየ በሕማማቲከ። አጥዒ ቍስልየ በቍስላቲከ ቶስሕ ደምየ በደምከ ወደምር ውስተ ሥጋየ መዐዛ ሕይወት ዘቅዱስ ሥጋከ ከርቤ ዘሰተይከ እምነ ጽላእያን ያጥዕማ ለነፍስየ እንተ ሰትየት ሐሞተ እኩየ ሥጋከ ዘሰፍሐ ዲበ ዕፀ መስቀል ስፋሐ ይረስዮ ለሕሊናየ ኀቢከ እስመ ናሁ ተመውአ እምኀበ ጽላኢ ርእስከ ዘጸነ ላዕለ ዕፀ መስቀል ያልዕሎ ለርእስየ ዘተዘብጡ እምኀበ ርኩሳን እደዊከ ቅዱሳት እለ ተቀነዋ በቅንዋት እምኀበ ከሀድያን ይምጥቃኒ ኀቢከ እምግብር እኩይ በከመ አሰፈውከ በአፉከ።
>
> *O zäbäkäykä laʿälä ʾaLʾazar wäʾawḫazkä ʾanbəʿa ḫazən täwäkäf mərärä ḫazänəyä wäʾanbəʿəyä. Fäwəs ḥəmaməye bäḥəmamatikä. ʾAṭʿi qʷəsəlyä bäqʷəsəlatikä tosəḥ däməyä bädäməkä wädämər wəstä śəgayä mäʿaza ḥəywät zäqəddus śəgakä kärbe zäsätäykä ʾəmnä ṣəlaʾəyan yaṭəʿəma länäfsəyä ʾəntä sätəyät ḥamotä ʾəkuyä śəgakä zäsäfəḥa dibä ʿəḏä mäsqäl səfuḥa yəräsəyo läḥəlinayä ḫabekä ʾəsmä nahu tämäwəʾa ʾəməḫabä ṣəlaʾi rəʾəsəkä zäṣänä laʿälä ʿəḏa mäsqäl yəməṭəqani ḫabekä ʾəgəbr ʾəkuy bäkämä ʾasäfäwəkä bäʾafukä.*
>
> O You who wept for the sake of Lazarus and poured out tears of sadness, please [now] accept the bitterness of my sadness and tears. Cure my suffering with Your sufferings. Heal my wounds with Your wounds. Mingle (ቶስሕ) my blood with Your blood and add (ደምር; *dämər*) to my flesh the perfume of Life from Your holy flesh. May the vinegar that You drank from those who hated You now sweeten my soul — my soul that drank the evil venom. May Your flesh that was spread out on the broad wood of the Cross draw my mind towards You. For behold, [my mind] was overcome with hatred. [Therefore], let Your head that was inclined on the wood of the Cross [now] lift up my head. Let Your holy hands that were plucked by defilement and transfixed with nails by the deniers [now] lift me up to You and [away] from doing evil; just as You promised Hope with Your mouth.[70]

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[69] The prayers of Thursday are attributed to አረጋዊ መንፈሳዊ ቅዱስ ዮሐንስ አፈ ወርቅ (*Arägawi Mänfäsawi Qədus Yoḥänəs Afä Wərq*, 'The Spiritual Elder Saint John the Golden Mouth'), which initially seems to refer to John Chrysostom, but my research has highlighted several phrases and themes that strongly suggest the attribution actually refers (or originally referred) to John of Dalyatha, who is known in the EOTC Tradition as the *Arägawi Mänfäsawi* or 'Spiritual Elder'. See Calum Andrew Samuelson, "Expressions of *Theōsis* in Selected Ethiopic Monastic Literature," Appendix G.

[70] ውዳሴ አምላክ። ዘሰባቱ ዕለታት፤ በግእዝና በአማርኛ [*Wəddase ʾAmlak: Zäsäbatu ʿƎlätat (Bägəʾəzənna Bäʾamarəña)*, Gəʿəz and Amharic: *'The Praise of God for Seven Days* (in Gəʿəz and Amharic)'], ፫፻፷፰ [368]; my transliteration and translation.

One can immediately notice the highly embodied language in this prayer, which apparently takes for granted that the person praying it is somehow actively experiencing the tears it speaks about. It is more difficult to detect the Harmonious Tension expressed in the space of this single and short prayer, but the hope of being lifted to Christ (and away from evil) nevertheless highlights the familiar paradoxical experience of Christians who catch glimpses of God's glory while surrounded by the sinfulness of the world — even if it is not a full-fledged 'mystical ascent' in the likes of advanced ascetics or St Paul.

Relatedly, and even more typical of the highly 'free'[71] mystical writings of the various assembled authors of the *Wəddase ʾAmlak*, one frequently encounters highly expressive and embodied language that places the supplicant in the position of notable female biblical characters. For instance, consider the following prayer, ዘሐሙስ፤ ፳፱። (*zäḥämus*, 'Thursday, #79'):

> አ እግዚአየ ኢየሱስ ክርስቶስ ሀበኒ ከመ እሕቅፍ አዕጋሪከ ንጹሐተ ወአጼኑ እምኔሆን መዐዛ ሕይወት ወአርኅሶን በነጠንጣበ አዕይንትየ ወእመዝምዞን በስእርተ ርእስየ ከመ ተበለኒ ሑር በሰላም ተኅድግ ለከ ኃጢአትከ ወስምከ ይኩን ጽሑፈ ውስተ መጽሐፈ ሕይወት ሀበነ ዘንተ በዝንቱ ስምከ ቅዱስ። አ እግዚአየ ኢየሱስ ክርስቶስ ረስያ ለነፍስየ ከመ ትኩን ለከ እንዚራ ወመሠንቆ ወትስብከ በስምከ ውስተ ዐሠርቱ አህጉር ወትዘምር ለከ በቃል ጥዑም ወመዓርዒር ምስለ ጸዋትው ልዑላውያን።
>
> *O ʾƎgziʾəyä ʾIyäsus Krəstos habäni kämä ʾeḥəqəf ʾaʿəgarikä nəṣuḥatä wäʾaṣenu ʾemnehon mäʿaza həywät wäʾarəḫəson bänäṭänṭabä ʾaʿeynetəyä wäʾəmmäzməzon bäsəʾərtä rəʾəsəyë kämä täbaläni ḫur bäsälam täḫadəgä läkä ḫaṭiʾatəkä wäsəməkä yekun ṣəḥufä wəstä mäṣḥafä ḥəywät habänä zäntä bäzəntu səmekä qəddus. O ʾƎgziʾəyä ʾIyäsus Krəstos räsəya länafsəyä kämä təkun läkä ʾənzira wämäśänqo wätəsəbək bäsəməkä wəstä ʿaśärtu ʾahəgur wätəzämər läkä bäqal ṭəʾum wämäʾarʿir məslä ṣäwatəw ləʾulawyan.*
>
> > O my LORD Jesus Christ, allow that I might embrace Your pure feet. For I smell from them the [very] perfume of Life; I anoint them with tears from my eyes and wipe them with the hair of my head so that You will say to me, 'Go in peace. Your sins are forgiven and your name will be written in the Book of Life.' [Please] Give all of us this [Peace and Forgiveness], because of Your Holy name. O my LORD Jesus Christ, [tune] my soul so that it will be for You a harp and *mašaŋqo*[72] and proclaim Your name in the Ten Cities (Decapolis) and praise You with sweet sounds; sounds that are

[71] It is not insignificant that the word *Gəʿəz* (ግዕዝ) itself comes from the triliteral root meaning "become free." See Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary*, 175.

[72] An ancient, one-stringed musical instrument of Ethiopia. Because no exact equivalent exists, this word has been preserved in transliteration.

> sweet like honey [in harmony] with the exclamations of the Exalted Ones.[73]

Once again, this short prayer skirts controversial doctrine by focusing instead on spiritual actions that are universally uncomfortable. Even in 'traditional' cultures more accustomed with visceral bodily realities, smelling the feet of another person remains an uncomfortable act. And in the characteristic manner of *Täwaḥədo* Theologizing, it doesn't seem to matter here that most men with short hair will be unable to actually wipe the feet of their Saviour! Such prayers are reflective of a much broader EOTC tradition that revels in the 'negative space' so vital for ecumenism by prioritizing the power of personal experience above the potential of cleverly curated litanies. Ultimately, the basic approach of *Täwaḥədo* Theologizing suggests that sincerely (even if imperfectly) praying the prayers (and perhaps singing the songs) of other traditions[74] (especially in thoroughly embodied, corporate settings) could be one of the best ways to foster ecumenical fellowship and greater love for our fellow Christians of all kinds around the world.

## Conclusion

Having surveyed the foundations and development of '*täwaḥədo*' along with varied examples, several points should now be apparent. First, the EOTC's manifest adherence to the Christological pronouncements of Nicaea (especially in her Trinitarian language) forms a foundation upon which all other Christian traditions may confidently position themselves as they consider her other characteristics that are imbued with so much ecumenical potential. Second, the impulse of *Täwaḥədo* Theologizing outlined here is pregnant with ecumenical energy insofar as it represents a theological approach that actively integrates disparate ideas ('harmonious tension') far more than rigorously vetting ideas in order to promote only the 'cream of the crop'. Relatedly, *Täwaḥədo* Theologizing has been described here as something highly 'practical' but also as something that resists "pragmatic simplification". With several examples in mind, perhaps it best now simply to say that *Täwaḥədo* Theologizing enables the common Christian to express and locate their real experience of God in familiar terms without feeling the pressure (so often encountered in established forms of Christianity) to promulgate such terms as a rule to be followed by their fellow sibling in Christ. Finally, the highly embodied facets of spiritual training

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[73] ውዳሴ አምላክ። ዘሰባቱ ዕለታት፤ በግእዝና በአማርኛ [*Wəddase ʾAmlak: Zäsäbatu ʾƎlätat (Bägəʾəzənna Bäʾamarəña)*, Gəʿəz and Amharic: '*The Praise of God for Seven Days* (in Gəʿəz and Amharic)'], ፬፻ [400]; my transliteration and translation.

[74] It should not be forgotten that the prayers of the *Wəddase ʾAmlak* themselves ultimately trace their lineage back to the works of Church Fathers in adjacent traditions who were theologizing in Greek, Syriac, and even Arabic.

and practice that are emphasized throughout the communal teachings and life of the EOTC demonstrate how ecumenical fellowship might be anchored in universally uncomfortable dimensions of the human experience — even if such dimensions can never be completely flattened for every culture and must therefore perpetually persist within a "multiple, fluid, moving and contingent"[75] mosaic of Christian communion.

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[75] McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary*, 323.
[76] Also available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285046329

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[78] Their names are more technically transliterated as *Zare'a Yā'eqob* and *Walda Ḥeywat*.