

**A Defence of His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie (1892 - 1975) - Anonymous Ethiopian Orthodox Deacon (July 2010)** retrieved with amendments 4/23/2016

<http://www.orthodoxchristianity.net/forum/index.php?topic=20326.45>

I have found myself quite dismayed by long-standing beliefs and statements made about His Late Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie.

In the wake of the coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1930, the emergence of a messianic cult centered upon the proclamation of his divinity and/or identity as Jesus Christ, was formed by the Leonard Percival Howell and others among the poor in the slums of Jamaica. Since this time, Rastafarianism has now grown into a world-wide syncretistic political-religion combining elements of Ethiopianism-Garveyism, Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, and African animism.

Also, prior and during the Ethiopian 'Red Terror' from 1974 - 1987, there was much misinformation and negative propaganda disseminated about the Emperor by the brutal Marxist Communist Derg regime that had overthrown and murdered him. So, let me try to correct some of these falsehoods, misperceptions and inaccuracies.

Firstly, the official opinion of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the entire Oriental Orthodox communion about the Emperor is very clear. His Imperial Majesty was accorded the title of Defender of the Faith jointly by all the Patriarchs of the Oriental Orthodox Communion during their last Council in Addis Ababa. They continue to accord him that title today. His Holiness Patriarch Abune Paulos issued a statement on November 5, 2000 (Gregorian Calendar) on the very day of the Emperor's reburial ceremony in which he clearly stated that the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church regards Emperor Haile Selassie as worthy of the Churches highest honors in the conduct of his funeral and in observance of his memory. The Holy Synod also issued a statement read out at the reburial ceremony by the then general secretary of the Synod, Archbishop Abune Gerima, which enumerated many of the immense contributions that the Emperor had made towards the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Even the diasporan Synod-in-Exile under former Patriarch Abune Merkorios which has nothing in agreement with Patriarch Abune Paulos, agrees with him and the Addis Ababa based Synod on these points. Every Ethiopian monarch from St. Lalibela onwards had pleaded with Alexandria to allow for native bishops to preside over the Ethiopian church. For centuries, a single Coptic Archbishop was responsible for ordaining all the Priests and Deacons and blessing every new Church built in a large Empire populated by a people whose language he could not speak. Emperor Haile Selassie was not only the monarch who was able to not only achieve this goal, but also was able to canonically achieve self-government for the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church and its own

Patriarch in legitimate succession to the See of St. Mark of Alexandria. His Majesty built many important churches in Ethiopia, including the new Cathedral of St. Mary of Zion at Axum, Holy Trinity Cathedral in Addis Ababa, and St. Tekle Haimanot's Church at the Debre Libanos Monastery, among many others. He supported a multitude of others. In every public and private speech or letter he ever gave, His Majesty humbled himself and acknowledged the greatness of his Creator. He rejected clearly any and all efforts to label him as divine, and in fact sent priests (including the His Eminence, Archbishop Abune Yesehaq of blessed memory) to the Caribbean region to spread the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo faith. As stated above he convened the one and only Conference of all the Patriarchs of the Oriental Orthodox Churches in Addis Ababa in 1965 in order to strengthen them further through unity. He also intervened on behalf of Christians under duress, such as the Ecumenical Patriarchate at Constantinople, and the Russian and Serbian Orthodox Churches in the communist era. That is why when His Holiness the current Patriarch of Constantinople walked into Holy Trinity Cathedral in Addis Ababa with Patriarch Abune Paulos, one of the first things he did was to kneel before the Emperor's tomb and kiss it. Pope Shenouda III of the Coptic Orthodox Church also in his first act upon his visit to Ethiopia was to place a wreath on the Emperor's tomb and to pray over it.

In his personal life, His Majesty was irreproachable in the conduct of his Christian practice. Ethiopians generally knew that his last stop before leaving the country on a visit abroad, and his first stop upon his return was always to pray at a Church (usually Holy Trinity Cathedral). He attended church every Sunday (usually at the church of St. Mark when he lived at the Guenete Leul Palace, and after he donated that home to the University and moved to the Jubilee Palace, at the Church of St. Stephen). When he went into exile during the Italian occupation in 1936, he made a pledge at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, that if Ethiopian independence was restored, when he heard any final legal appeals in his Supreme Court he would do so standing in honor of Christ rather than sitting on his throne. After he returned to power, he always stood when listening to court cases presented before him, up to the very end of his reign in his 80's, no matter how long the hearing was. He also attended services at every church in Addis Ababa or any other town on its annual feast day no matter what day it was if he was in the city. Facts that are not generally known include the fact that His Majesty took Holy Communion twice a month on the days dedicated to the Savior of the World (Medhane Alem) and Our Lady Covenant of Mercy (Kidane Meheret). He did this quietly without fanfare at the small Kidane Meheret church on the grounds of the old Menelik Imperial Palace. During the many and long fasts of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, His Majesty not only stringently observed the fast, but refused to sleep on his bed. He would instead sleep on a sheet on the floor of his room.

Similar to His Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie, Tsar Nicholas II of Russia was also brutally martyred by Marxist Communist fanatics as a symbol of the overthrow of Christian Kingship & Civilizational Order. The Russian Orthodox Church both within Russia and outside its borders in its Diaspora, canonized Tsar Nicholas II as a Passion-Bearer and Saintly Martyr. Emperor Haile Selassie can be seen in the same manner. His canonization might help many Rastafarian sectarians to abandon their heretical & blasphemous beliefs.

There is no current effort in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church for his canonization. It is true that many Ethiopian monarchs, and non-Royalty are probably deserving of sainthood, and have been canonized, and others have not been so honored. Nevertheless, it is for the Holy Synod to decide if Emperor Haile Selassie is deserving of canonization along with the affirmation of the Ethiopian Orthodox laity, so let us not belittle his contributions and his devout Orthodox Christian life.

Amen.