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Discourse against Catholic Doctrine in Təgray (Ethiopia): A Nineteenth Century Text

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The article deals with a peculiar document that was found during a field research conducted by the team of the Ethio-SPARE project¹ during the spring of 2010 in church libraries of Gulo Mākāda *wärāda*, north-east Təgray (historical °Agame²). During the field mission, a number of interesting, previously unknown documents related to the history of the region came to light. Among them, there is a Gə°əz text written during the 19th century and dedicated to the refutation of the Catholic doctrine. Because of its apparent historical significance, the text and its translation are presented here.

After the unsuccessful attempts of the 16th–17th centuries, Catholic missionaries arrived in Ethiopia and attempted to establish missions again at the end of the 1830's. Despite their initial intention to settle in central regions of Ethiopia (such as Gondär, Bāgemder or Goğgam), the political circumstances brought them towards the eastern part of Təgray.³ In 1838, Fr. Giuseppe Sapeto was in °Adwa. In 1843, *däggazmač* Wəbe Ḥaylä Maryam, the ruler of Təgray (1835–1867) permitted Dr. Schimper to settle in °Əntiččo where he was able to attract some proselytes. In 1844, Mgr de Jacobis established a mission in Gol°a⁴, in the vicinity of the town of °Addigrat, the political centre of the °Agame rulers. In 1845, he also established a mission in °Alitena, at the northern frontier of the realm of the *šum °agamä*, in the °Irob region⁵. It soon turned out that the further development of missions

¹ From 24 April to 24 May 2010. See for more details the report of the mission: <http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/ethiostudies/ETHIOSPARE/missions.html>.

² “°Agame” or “°Agamä” was the name given to the north-eastern corner of Təgray comprising the *wärāda* of Gulo Mākāda, Ganta Afäšum, Subḥa Šaaše, Dallol and Kələttä Bäläza until 1974; cf. TSEGAY BERHE G. LIBANOS 2003: 137–138. The °Agame region is known as an important historical area with many remains from the Sabaeen and Aksumite times. LECLANT – MIQUEL 1959: 108–31; GODET 1977: 19–113.

³ Cf. among other works: CRUMMEY 1972: 59–91; O'MAHONEY 1982: 17–53. See also COULBEAUX 1929.

⁴ Also known as G°ala or Gouala.

⁵ “°Irob” is a self designation of three Saho subgroups. They live on the eastern plateau, south of the °Əndäli River which marks the current border between Eritrea and the north-eastern corner of Təgray. Cf. VOIGT 2007: 187a–188b.

in ʿAdwa and in ʾEntiçço was not possible;⁶ however, those in ʿAgame, Golʿa and ʾAlitena, became enduring Catholic settlements.

As commonly known, the Catholic missionaries faced strong opposition from both the political leaders of different scales, and from the hierarchs of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The nature of the Orthodox opposition to the Catholics is basically known to us chiefly from the missionary sources. The Catholic missionaries left us detailed narratives about the persecutions carried out against them, focusing on the role played by the metropolitans of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and other important figures of the Ethiopian politics.⁷ In their reports, they provided less detail about the opposition they faced from the side of the local Orthodox clergy or common faithful. This can be explained by their intention to present some spectacular facts rather than the daily life in Europe, and common problems of the Catholic missions in Ethiopia.

In general, we are familiar with the Orthodox position towards the presence of Catholics in Ethiopia, but we do not know much about the argumentation used by the Orthodox in their debates with the Catholic missionaries during the 19th century. Some Gəʿəz texts refuting the Catholic doctrine were written during the 16th century.⁸ In comparison, we do not have any Ethiopian anti-Catholic writings from the 19th century. The weak development of Catholic missions and their confinement to Təgray may explain this fact. As far as the famous 19th century religious controversies are concerned, Ethiopian sources mostly focus on the struggle between *Qəbʾat*, *Şägga læğğ* and *Təwəhədo* movements, rather than on the local Ethiopian opposition towards the Catholic doctrine.

The short treatise refuting the Catholic faith presented below was found in the manuscript collection of the church (*däbr*) Däbrä Gännät Qəddəst Maryam Säbäya, located in the town of Säbäya, near the frontier of ʿIrob *wäräda* and Eritrea⁹. Säbäya¹⁰ is located at mid distance between ʿAddigrat and ʾAlitena, on the road linking the two towns, which both accommodated

⁶The fiefdom of ʾEntiçço was given to the Protestants in 1848. Cf. O'MAHONEY 1982: 80–81.

⁷In addition to the quoted bibliography, see *Annales de la congrégation de la mission ou Recueil de lettres édifiantes écrites par les prêtres de cette congrégation employés dans les missions étrangères*, vols. 1–34 (1840–1869).

⁸For example the *Məzgäbä haymanot* ('the Treasury of the Faith') and the *Məşbetä læbbunna* ('Mirror of the Intelligence'). Cf. CERULLI 1960.

⁹The exact location is Gulo Mäkäda *wäräda*, *ṭabiya* Säbäya, *qušät* Säsəhayto.

¹⁰The region of Säbäya, where numerous aksumite and sabaean remains could be identified, was already glanced at by the French archeologists Jean Leclant and André Miquel during the 1950's. LECLANT – MIQUEL 1959: 109–111.

significant Catholic missions. The treatise is included in the Four Gospels book (*ʿarbaʿtu wāngel*) of the church.¹¹ Bound in the traditionally typical way (two wooden boards, leather covering), the manuscript (164 fols. in 19 quires) can be dated back to the second half of the 18th century. In fact, a certain ʿIyasu is mentioned in the supplication formulas, and one wonders if the name may refer to kings ʿIyasu II (r. 1730–1755) or ʿIyasu III (r. 1784–1788).¹²

The short, untitled text was written on the fly-leaves of the manuscript (fols. 1v–2v), in two columns per folio, with the total of 6 text columns.¹³ The handwriting is careful and can be dated back to the second half the 19th century. The author of this text is a certain Gäbrä Həywät. In his treatise, he confronts precepts, usually ascribed in Ethiopia to the Catholic doctrine, with arguments he sources from the Holy Scriptures and a few Gəʿəz works. The *Filioque*, the nature of Christ and the hypostasis union are the main topics of the text. Without surprise, the author is strongly influenced by the two main Ethiopian theological works dealing with Catholic doctrine, known at that time: the *Mäzḡäbä haymanot* and the *Mäšbetä ləbunna*. Even more surprising is that the author ascribes the following formula concerning the Unction of Christ to the Catholics: “the Father is the anointer, the Son is the anointed one, the Holy Spirit is the ointment”.¹⁴ However, we know that this is a statement shared by both *Qəbʿat* and *Šägga ləḡḡ* movements¹⁵. In other words, as a follower of *Təwähedo*, the author of the treatise simply associates the Catholic teaching with the doctrines of the competitive movements at that time. Moreover, the author tries to shock the Ethiopian believer with further “anti-Catholic” arguments, by elaborating on the issues of the supremacy of Rome, the place of menstruated women, the role of martyrs and saints in salvation, and the time of the infant baptism.

So far, it has been impossible to identify the author of the treatise, or find out where exactly the text was composed. No other copies of the text have come to light. However, taking into consideration the literary form (discourse) of the work and the place where it was found (the area of the active Catholic preaching), we can assume that the text is a summary of the anti-

¹¹ The shelfmark of this manuscript is SM-003 in the Ethio-Spare database.

¹² See supplication formula at the end of the Gospel of Matthew on fol. 59vb, line 16, and at the beginning of the Gospel of Luke on fol. 88r, line 5.

¹³ Fol. 1v: column *a* and *b*, 20 cm height, 9 cm width, 24 lines; fol. 2r: column *a*, 22.5 cm height, 10 cm width, 28 lines; column *b*, 23 cm height, 11.5 cm width, 28 lines; fol. 2v: column *a*, 21.5 cm height, 11 cm width, 28 lines; column *b*, 22 cm height, 10 cm width, 28 lines.

¹⁴ Fol. 2rb, lines 12–13.

¹⁵ GETACHEW HAILE 1990: 34 (text), 31 (tr.); TEDROS ABRAHA 2010: 454. Thesis already developed during the reign of Susneyos (1607–1632). Cf. GUIDI 1900: 11–12.

Catholic argumentation, possibly used by the Orthodox priests, and a witness of the local attitude towards the Catholic missionary activities. The treatise does not provide any hints to the political issues of the Catholic settlement in Ethiopia. However, it does highlight some elements of the discourse against Catholic faith in the context of the emergence of a strong religious *Təwāhədo* identity.

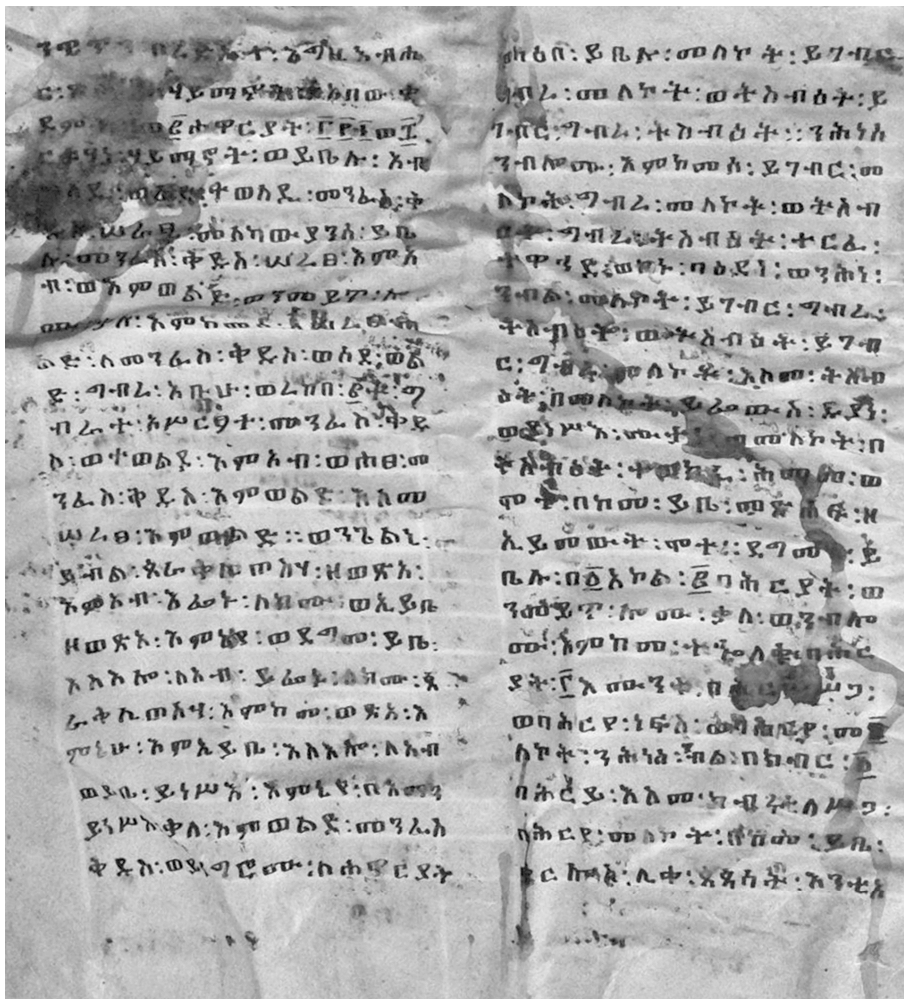


Fig. 1: Manuscript SM-003, fol. 1v

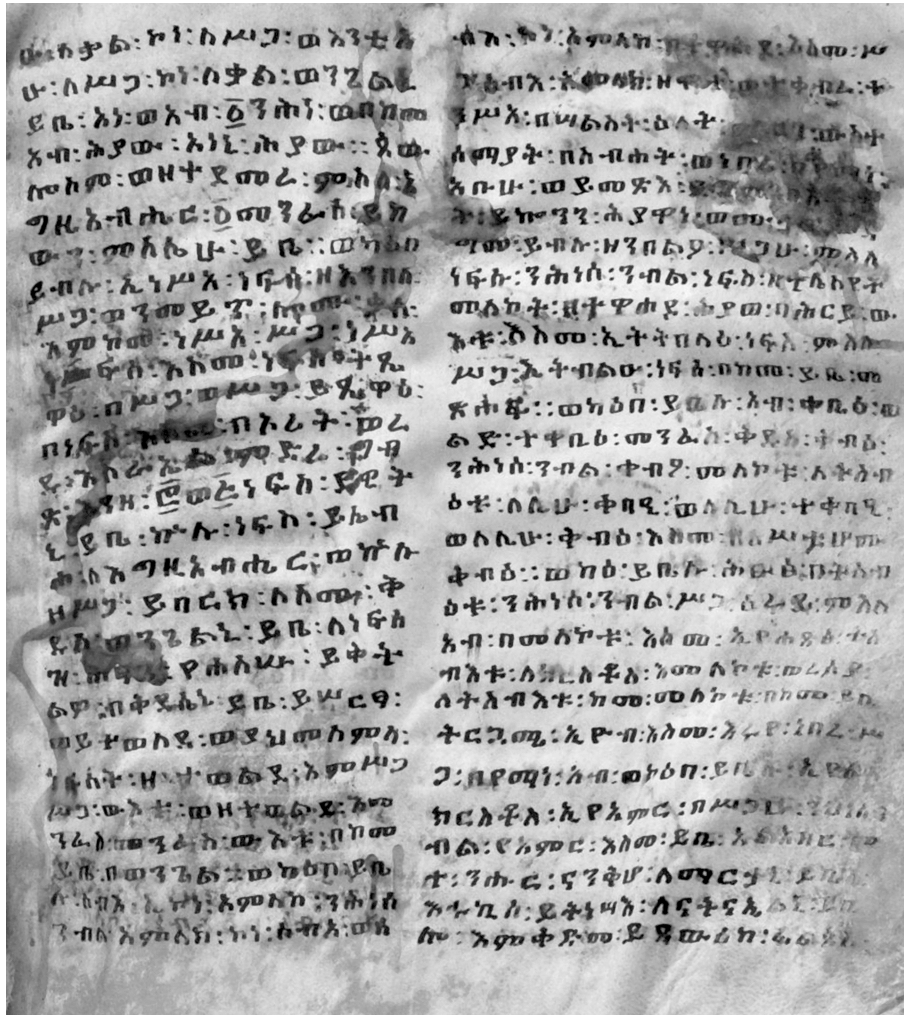


Fig. 2: Manuscript SM-003, fol. 2r

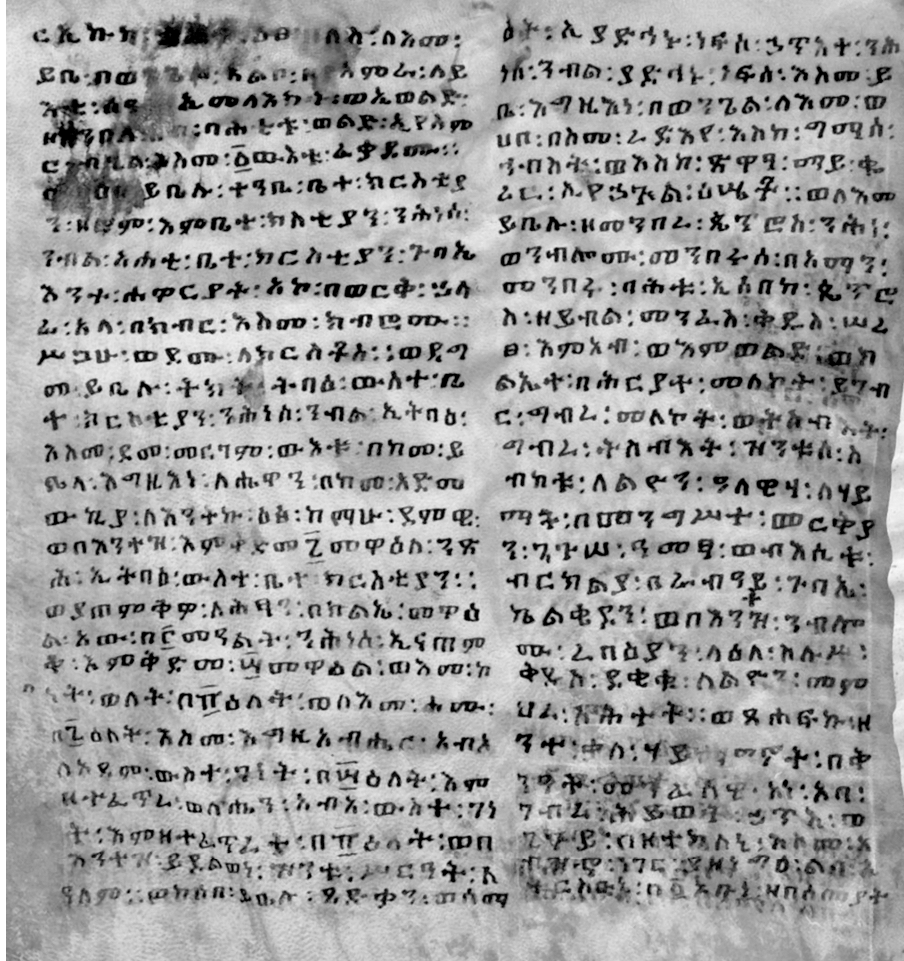


Fig. 3: Manuscript SM-003, fol. 2v

Text

[Fol. 1va, l. 1] ንዌጥን ፡ በረድኤተ ፡ እግዚአብሔር ፡ ጸሐፊ ፡ ሃይማኖት ፡ አበው ፡ ቀደ
ምት ፡ ፲ወጀሐዋርያት ፡ ፫፻፲ወጀርቱሃዓነ ፡ ሃይማኖት ፡ ወይቤሉ ፡ አብ ፡ ወላዲ ፡ ወልድ ፡
ተወላዲ ፡ መንፈስ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ ሠራዲ ፡ መለካውያንስ ፡ ይቤሉ ፡ መንፈስ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ ሠረፀ ፡
እምአብ ፡ ወእምወልድ ፡ ወንመይጥ ፡ ሎሙ ፡ ቃሉ ፡ እምከመስ ፡ አሠረፀ ፡ ወልድ ፡ ለመ
ንፈስ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ ወሰለደ ፡ ወልድ ፡ ግብረ ፡ አቡሁ ፡ ወረከበ ፡ ጀቱ ፡ ግብራተ ፡ አሥርያተ ፡
መንፈስ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ ወተወልዶ ፡ እምአብ ፡ ወሐፀ ፡ መንፈስ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ እምወልድ ፡ እስ
መ ፡ ሠረፀ ፡ እምወልድ ፡ ። ወንጌልኒ ፡ ይብል ፡ ጳራቅሊጦስሃ ፡ ዘወጽአ ፡ እምአብ ፡ እፌ
ኑ ፡ ለክሙ ፡ ወኢይቤ ፡ ዘወጽአ ፡ እምኔየ ፡ ወዳግመ ፡ ይቤ ፡ እስእሎ ፡ ለአብ ፡ ይፌኑ ፡
ለክሙ ፡ ጳራቅሊጦስሃ ፡ እምከመ ፡ ወጽአ ፡ እምኔሁ ፡ እምኢይቤ ፡ እስእሎ ፡ ለአብ ፡
ወይቤ ፡ ይነሥእ ፡ እምኔየ ፡ በአማን ፡ ይነሥእ ፡ ቃለ ፡ እምወልድ ፡ መንፈስ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡
ወይነግሮሙ ፡ ለሐዋርያት ፡ [Fol. 1vb] ወካዕበ ፡ ይቤሉ ፡ መለኮት ፡ ይገብር ፡ ግብረ ፡
መለኮት ፡ ወትሰብዕት ፡ ይገብር ፡ ግብረ ፡ ትሰብዕት ፡ ። ንሕነሰ ፡ ንብሎሙ ፡ እምከመስ ፡
ይገብር ፡ መለኮት ፡ ግብረ ፡ መለኮት ፡ ወትሰብዕት ፡ ግብረ ፡ ትሰብዕት ፡ ተርፈ ፡ ተዋ
ኅዶ ፡ ወኮኑ ፡ ባዕዳነ ፡ ወንሕነ ፡ ንብል ፡ መለኮት ፡ ይገብር ፡ ግብረ ፡ ትሰብዕት ፡ ወትሰብ
ዕት ፡ ይገብር ፡ ግብረ ፡ መለኮት ፡ እስመ ፡ ትሰብዕት ፡ በመለኮት ፡ ይፌውስ ፡ ዱያነ ፡
ወያነሥእ ፡ ሙታኑ ፡ ወመለኮት ፡ በትሰብዕት ፡ ተወክፈ ፡ ሐማመ ፡ ወዋት ፡ በከመ ፡
ይቤ ፡ መጽሐፍ ፡ ዘኢይመውት ፡ ሞተ ፡ ። ዳግመ ፡ ይቤሉ ፡ በጀእኮል ፡ ጀባሕርያት ፡ ወን
መይጥ ፡ ሎሙ ፡ ቃለ ፡ ወንብሎሙ ፡ እምከመ ፡ ትጎለቁ ፡ ባሕርያት ፡ ፫እሙንቱ ፡ ባሕ
ርየ ፡ ሥጋ ፡ ወባሕርየ ፡ ነፍስ ፡ ወባሕርየ ፡ መለኮት ፡ ንሕነሰ ፡ ንብል ፡ በክብር ፡
ጀባሕርይ ፡ እስመ ፡ ክብሩ ፡ ለሥጋ ፡ ባሕርየ ፡ መልኮት ፡ በከመ ፡ ይቤ ፡ ቁርሎስ ፡ ሊቀ ፡
ጳጳሳት ፡ እንቲአ [Fol. 2ra] ሁ ፡ ለቃል ፡ ኮነ ፡ ለሥጋ ፡ ወእንቲአሁ ፡ ለሥጋ ፡ ኮነ ፡ ለቃ
ል ፡ ወንጌልኒ ፡ ይቤ ፡ አነ ፡ ወአብ ፡ ጀንሕነ ፡ ወበከመ ፡ አብ ፡ ሕያው ፡ አነኒ ፡ ሕያው ፡ ።
ጳውሎስም ፡ ወዘተደመረ ፡ ምስለ ፡ እግዚአብሔር ፡ ጀመንፈስ ፡ ይከውን ፡ ምስሌሁ ፡
ይቤ ፡ ወካዕበ ፡ ይብሉ ፡ ኢነሥእ ፡ ነፍስ ፡ ዘእንበለ ፡ ሥጋ ፡ ወንመይጥ ፡ ሎሙ ፡ ቃለ ፡
እምከመ ፡ ነሥእ ፡ ሥጋ ፡ ነሥእ ፡ ነፍስ ፡ እስመ ፡ ነፍስ ፡ ትጼዋዕ ፡ በሥጋ ፡ ወሥጋ ፡ ይጼ
ዋዕ ፡ በነፍስ ፡ እስመ ፡ በአራት ፡ ወረዱ ፡ እስራኤል ፡ ምድረ ፡ ግብጽ ፡ እንዘ ፡ ፎወጅነ
ፍስ ፡ ዳዊትኒ ፡ ይቤ ፡ ኩሉ ፡ ነፍስ ፡ ይሴብሕ ፡ ለእግዚአብሔር ፡ ፡ ወኩሉ ፡ ዘሥጋ ፡
ይባርክ ፡ ለስሙ ፡ ቅድስ ፡ ወንጌልኒ ፡ ይቤ ፡ ለነፍስ ፡ ዝ ፡ ሕፃን ፡ የሐሰሡ ፡ ይቅትልዎ ፡
በቅዳሴኒ ፡ ይቤ ፡ ይሠርፃ ፡ ወይተወለዳ ፡ ወያህመለምላ ፡ ነፍሳት ፡ ዘ ፡ ተወልደ ፡ እም
ሥጋ ፡ ሥጋ ፡ ወ-እቱ ፡ ወዘተወልደ ፡ እመንፈስ ፡ መንፈስ ፡ ወ-እቱ ፡ በከመ ፡ ይቤ ፡ በወን
ጌል ፡ ወካዕበ ፡ ይቤሉ ፡ ሰብእ ፡ ኢኮነ ፡ አምላክ ፡ ንሕነሰ ፡ ንብል ፡ አምላክ ፡ ኮነ ፡ ሰብ
አ ፡ ወሰ [Fol. 2rb] ብእ ፡ ኮነ ፡ አምላክ ፡ በተዋሕዶ ፡ እስመ ፡ ሥጋ ፡ ሰብእ ፡ አምላክ ፡
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ሐት ፡ ወነበረ ፡ ከየማነ ፡ አቡሁ ፡ ወይመጽእ ፡ ዳግመ ፡ በስብሐት ፡ ይከውንን ፡ ሕያዋነ ፡
ወሙታኑ ፡ ወዳግመ ፡ ይብሉ ፡ ዘንበልዎ ፡ ሥጋሁ ፡ ምስለ ፡ ነፍሱ ፡ ንሕነሰ ፡ ንብል ፡ ነፍ
ስ ፡ ዘተሌለየት ፡ መለኮት ፡ ዘተዋሕዶ ፡ ሕያዎ ፡ ባሕርይ ፡ ወ-እቱ ፡ እስመ ፡ ኢትትበለዕ ፡
ነፍስ ፡ ምስለ ፡ ሥጋ ፡ ኢትብልፀ ፡ ነፍስ ፡ በከመ ፡ ይቤ ፡ መጽሐፍ ፡ ወካዕበ ፡ ይቤሉ ፡
አብ ፡ ቀቢዕ ፡ ወልድ ፡ ተቀቢዕ ፡ መንፈስ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ ቅብዕ ፡ ንሕነሰ ፡ ንብል ፡ ቀብዎ ፡
መለኮቱ ፡ ለትሰብዕቱ ፡ ለሊሁ ፡ ቀባዲ ፡ ወለሊሁ ፡ ተቀባዲ ፡ ወለሊሁ ፡ ቅብዕ ፡ እስመ ፡

ሰለሥቲሆሙ ፡ ቅብዕ ፡ ወካዕበ ፡ ይቤሉ ፡ ሕፁፅ ፡ በትሱብዕቱ ፡ ንሕነሰ ፡ ንብል ፡ ሥጋ ፡
 ዕሩይ ፡ ምስለ ፡ አብ ፡ በመለኮቱ ፡ እስመ ፡ ኢየሐጸዕ ፡ ትሱብእቱ ፡ ለክርስቶስ ፡ እመለ
 ኮቱ ፡ ወረሲያ ፡ ለትሱብእቱ ፡ ከመ ፡ መለኮቱ ፡ በከመ ፡ ይቤ ፡ ትርጓሜ ፡ ኢየብ ፡ እስመ ፡
 እሩየ ፡ ነበረ ፡ ሥጋ ፡ በየማነ ፡ አብ ፡ ወካዕበ ፡ ይቤሉ ፡ ኢየሱስ ፡ ክርስቶስ ፡ ኢየአምር ፡
 በሥጋሁ ፡ ንህነሰ ፡ ንብል ፡ የአምር ፡ እስመ ፡ ይቤ ፡ አልእዘር ፡ ሞተ ፡ ንሑር ፡ ናንቅሆ ፡
 ለማርታኒ ፡ ይቤላ ፡ እኅኪስ ፡ ይትነሣእ ፡ ለናትናኤልኒ ፡ ይቤሎ ፡ እምቀድመ ፡ ይጸው
 ዕክ ፡ ፊልጶስ ፡ [Fol. 2va] ርኢኩክ ፡ ፳ ፡ ፳ ፡ ፳ ፡ ዕፀ ፡ በለስ ፡ ለእመ ፡ ይቤ ፡ በወንጌል ፡
 አልቦ ፡ ዘየአምራ ፡ ለይእቱ ፡ ሰዓት ፡ ኢመላእክት ፡ ወኢወልድ ፡ ዘእንበለ ፡ አብ ፡ ባሕ
 ቲቱ ፡ ወልድ ፡ ኢየአምር ፡ ብሂል ፡ እስመ ፡ ጅውእቱ ፡ ፈቃዶሙ ፡ ወካዕበ ፡ ይቤሉ ፡
 ተዓቢ ፡ ቤተ ፡ ክርስቲያን ፡ ዘሮም ፡ እምቤተ ፡ ክርስቲያን ፡ ንሕነሰ ፡ ንብል ፡ አሐቲ ፡
 ቤተ ፡ ክርስቲያን ፡ ጉባኤ ፡ እንተ ፡ ሐዋርያት ፡ አኮ ፡ በወርቅ ፡ ኃላፊ ፡ አላ ፡ በክብር ፡
 እስመ ፡ ክብሮሙ ፡ ሥጋሁ ፡ ወደሙ ፡ ለክርስቶስ ፡ ወዳግመ ፡ ይቤሉ ፡ ትክት ፡ ትባዕ ፡
 ውስተ ፡ ቤተ ፡ ክርስቲያን ፡ ንሕነሰ ፡ ንብል ፡ ኢትባዕ ፡ እስመ ፡ ደመ ፡ መርገም ፡ ውእ
 ቱ ፡ በከመ ፡ ይቤላ ፡ እግዚእነ ፡ ለሐዋን ፡ በከመ ፡ አድመውኪያ ፡ ለእንትኩ ፡ ዕዕ ፡ ከማ
 ሁ ፡ ደምዊ ፡ ወበእንተዝ ፡ እምቅድመ ፡ ጂመዋዕለ ፡ ንጽሕ ፡ ኢትባዕ ፡ ውስተ ፡ ቤተ ፡ ክር
 ስቲያን ፡ ወደጠምቅዎ ፡ ለሐዋን ፡ በክልኤ ፡ መዋዕል ፡ አው ፡ በ፫መዓልት ፡ ንሕነሰ ፡ ኢና
 ጠምቆ ፡ እምቅድመ ፡ ጂመዋዕል ፡ ወእመ ፡ ኮነት ፡ ወለት ፡ በ፹ዕለት ፡ ወለእመ ፡ ሐሙ ፡
 በ፺ዕለት ፡ እስመ ፡ እግዚአብሔር ፡ አብኦ ፡ ለአዳም ፡ ውስተ ፡ ዝነት ፡ በ፻ዕለት ፡ እምዘተ
 ፈጥረ ፡ ወለሔን ፡ አብኦ ፡ ውስተ ፡ ዝነት ፡ እምዘተፈጥረት ፡ በ፹ዕለት ፡ ወበእንተዝ ፡ ይደ
 ልወነ ፡ ዝነቱ ፡ ሥርዓት ፡ ለዓለም ፡ ወካዕበ ፡ ይቤሉ ፡ ጸድቃን ፡ ወሰማ [Fol. 2vb] ዕት ፡
 ኢያድኅኑ ፡ ነፍሰ ፡ ኃጥአተ ፡ ንሕነሰ ፡ ንብል ፡ ያድኅኑ ፡ ነፍሰ ፡ እስመ ፡ ይቤ ፡ እግዚ
 እነ ፡ በወንጌል ፡ ለእመ ፡ ወሀቦ ፡ በስመ ፡ ረድእየ ፡ እስክ ፡ ግማሰ ፡ ንብስት ፡ ወእስክ ፡ ጽዋ
 ዓ ፡ ማይ ፡ ቁሪር ፡ ኢየኃጉል ፡ ዕሤቶ ፡ ወለእመ ፡ ይቤሉ ፡ ዘመንበረ ፡ ጴጥሮስ ፡ ንሕነ ፡
 ወንብሎሙ ፡ መንበሩሰ ፡ በአማን ፡ መንበሩ ፡ ባሕቱ ፡ ኢሰበክ ፡ ጴጥሮስ ፡ ዘይብል ፡ መን
 ፈስ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ ሠረፀ ፡ እምአብ ፡ ወእምወልድ ፡ ወክልኤተ ፡ ባሕርያተ ፡ መለኮት ፡ ይገ
 ብር ፡ ግብረ ፡ መለኮት ፡ ወትሱብእት ፡ ግብረ ፡ ትሱብእት ፡ ዝንቱሰ ፡ ስብከቱ ፡ ለልዮን ፡
 ዓላዊሃ ፡ ለሃይማኖት ፡ በመንግሥተ ፡ መርቅያን ፡ ንጉሠ ፡ ዓመፃ ፡ ወብእሲቱ ፡ ብርክ
 ልያ ፡ በራብዓይ ፡ ጉባኤ ፡ ኬልቄዶን ፡ ወበእንተዝ ፡ ንብሎሙ ፡ ረባዕያን ፡ ላዕለ ፡ ስሉ
 ሥ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ ደቂቁ ፡ ለልዮን ፡ መምህረ ፡ ስሕተት ፡ ወጸሐፍኩ ፡ ዘንተ ፡ ቃለ ፡ ሃይማ
 ኖት ፡ በቅንዓት ፡ መንፈሳዊ ፡ እነ ፡ አባ ፡ ገብረ ፡ ሕይወት ፡ ኃጥእ ፡ ወጊጉይ ፡ በዘተከ
 ሰኒ ፡ እስመ ፡ አብዝኖ ፡ ነገር ፡ ያዘነግዕ ፡ ልበ ፡ ኢትርስዑኒ ፡ በ፩አቡነ ፡ ዘበሰማያት ፡

Translation

[Fol. 1va, l. 1] We begin with the help of God writing the faith of ancient fathers, the twelve Apostles and the 318 Orthodox (fathers). And they say: “the Father generates, the Son (is) generated, the Holy Spirit (is) the Sprout”.¹⁶ The Melkites¹⁷ say: “The Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and from the Son”.¹⁸ And we return to them the word: if the Son let proceed the Holy Spirit, (then) He took the work of His Father, and obtained two works: letting proceed the Holy Spirit, and being generated from the Father. And (therefore) the Holy Spirit is inferior to the Son, because He was generated from the Son.¹⁹ The Gospel says: “I send to you the Paraclete which came from the Father”.²⁰ And He did not say, “which came from Me”. And again He said: “I will ask the Father to send you the Paraclete”.²¹ If it had been generated from Him, He would not say, “I will ask the Father”. And He said: “He (the Father) will take (it) from Me”.²² Verily, He (the Father) takes the word from the Son, (namely) the Holy Spirit, and tells to the Apostles. [Fol. 1vb] And again they say: “the divinity does the work of divinity and humanity does the work of humanity”.²³ And we say to them: if the divinity does the work of divinity and humanity (does) the work of humanity, the union has been abandoned and they became stranger (to each other). And we, we say: the divinity does the work of humanity and humanity does the work of divinity.²⁴ Because humanity,

¹⁶ See in the *Mäṣṣetä läbuna*: አብ፡ ውእቲ፡ ወላዴ፡ ወልድ፡ ወአሥራዔ፡ መንፈስ፡ ቅዱስ፡ ኢተወልደ፡ ወኢሠረዐ፡ እምካልእ ። ወልድኒ፡ ውእቲ፡ ወልድ፡ ተወላዲ፡ እምአብ ። ወመንፈስ፡ ቅዱስኒ፡ ሠራዒ፡ ውእቲ ። “The Father generates the Son and lets proceed the Holy Spirit, He is not born and does not proceed from anyone else. The Son is (indeed) the Son, born from the Father. And the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father”. Cf. CERULLI 1960: 145 (text), 170 (tr.). See also in the *Mäṣṣafä məstir*: YAQOB BEYENE 1993: 243 (text).

¹⁷ Old name given by Ethiopian to the followers of Chalcedon council. Cf. LOBO 1728: 304.

¹⁸ Catholic doctrine “Filioque”. King Gälawdewos (1540–1559) has already contested it in his letter to Catholics. Cf. ULLENDORFF 1987: 166 (text), 170 (tr.). The proceeding of the Holy Spirit from the Father is also explained in the *Mäzgäbä haymanot* and in the *Mäṣṣetä läbbunna*. Cf. CERULLI 1960: 7–8 (text), 73–74 (tr.), 140 (text), 165 (tr.).

¹⁹ This statement that the Holy Spirit is inferior to the Son seems to be an idea ascribed to the Catholics still recently by Ethiopians, even if it is not true. Cf. TEFAGZHI UQBIT 1973: 50. The Ethiopian Orthodox position (the Holy Spirit is not inferior to the Father and the Son) is explained in the *Mäṣṣafä bərhan*, book VI, in quoting Gregorios of Nazianze (against Macedonius). Cf. CONTI ROSSINI – RICCI 1965: 137 (text), 77 (tr.).

²⁰ John 20: 21–23.

²¹ John 14: 16–17.

²² John 14: 26–27.

²³ Doctrine ascribed to the Diophysites professed during the council of Chalcedon as described in the *Mäzgäbä haymanot*. Cf. CERULLI 1960: 15 (text), 81 (tr.).

²⁴ As the actual opinion of the Ethiopian theologian TEFAGZHI UQBIT 1973: 52.

through divinity, cures the sick and resuscitates the dead, and the divinity, through the humanity, accepted the pain and the death. As the Book says: “The One who is immortal, died”.²⁵ Again they say: “in one person, two natures”.²⁶ And we return to them the word and we say to them: if you count the natures (of Christ), they are three: the human nature, the nature of the soul and the nature of divinity.²⁷ And we, we say: “being honoured, one nature”, because the divine nature honoured the flesh.²⁸ As Cyril the archbishop said this [Fol. 2ra]: “the one of the Word became the Flesh” and this “the one of the Flesh became the Word”.²⁹ The Gospel said: “I (the Son) and the Father, we are one”³⁰ and “as the Father is living, Me too, I am living”. And Paul [said] “But the one who united himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit”.³¹ And again they say: “He (the Son) did not accept the soul without the flesh”. And we respond to their words: If He accepted the flesh, He accepted the soul, since the soul is named flesh and the flesh is named soul, since in the Old Testament (the people of) Israel descended (to) the land of Egypt being 75 souls.³² David said also: “Let each soul glorify God and let each flesh bless His holy name”.³³ And the Gospel said: “For the soul of this child they search, to kill Him”.³⁴ And the liturgy said: the souls of the generated one blossomed, born and grew from the flesh, the flesh is Him, and the one which was born from the Spirit, the Spirit is Him, as it is said in the Gospel.³⁵ Again they say: “A man did not become a God”. And we, we say: God became a man and man [Fol. 2rb] became God by the union; because the incarnated man – God who died³⁶ and was buried – rose on the third day and ascended to heaven in glory and sat on the right of His Father and He will come again in glory to judge the

²⁵ Anaphora of Saint John Chrysostom, verse 58. Cf. መጽሐፈ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ 1951: 209.

²⁶ Doctrine ascribed to the Diophysites professed during the council of Chalcedon as described in the *Mäzḡäbä haymanot*. Cf. CERULLI 1960, 11 (text), 77 (tr.).

²⁷ See the *Mäṣḥafä bərhan*, book VI. Cf. CONTI ROSSINI – RICCI 1965: 139 (text), 78 (tr.); see also *Mäzḡäbä haymanot* and *Mäṣḥetä löbbunna*. Cf. CERULLI 1960: 7 (text), 72–73 (tr.), 140 (text), 164–165 (tr.), 143 (text), 168 (tr.).

²⁸ See *Mäzḡäbä haymanot*; cf. CERULLI 1960: 18 (text), 85 (tr.).

²⁹ Ref. to the interpretation of John 1: 14 by St. Cyril exposed in the *Haymanotä ʿabäw* (“The Faith of the Fathers”), chapter 72, section 5, and in the *Dialogue on the Unity of Christ* present in the Gəʿəz patristic collection called *Qerällos*; cf. ሃይማኖት ፡ አበው ፡ 1967: 265; WEISCHER 1977: 45–57.

³⁰ John 10: 30.

³¹ 1 Corinthians 6: 17.

³² Acts 7: 14.

³³ Psalms 145: 21.

³⁴ Ref. to Matthew 2: 13.

³⁵ Ref. to John 3: 6.

³⁶ Ref. to the words of Peter in 1 Peter 3: 18.

living and the dead.³⁷ Again they say: “What we eat (is) His flesh with His soul”. And we, we say: the soul which was separated, the divinity which was united, is the living nature, because the soul is not eaten with the flesh. You do not eat the soul, as the Book says. Again they say: “the Father is the anointer, the Son is the anointed, the Holy Spirit is the ointment”.³⁸ And we, we say: His divinity anointed his humanity (being) Himself the anointer, the anointed one and the ointment, since the three of them are ointment.³⁹ Again they say: “He is insufficient in His humanity”.⁴⁰ And we, we say: the Flesh is equal with the Father in his divinity, since the humanity of Christ is not less than His divinity and He made His humanity like His divinity, as the commentary on (the Book of) Job said: “The flesh stood equally on the right side of the Father”. Again they say: “Jesus Christ does not know in His flesh”. We, we say: He knows (by His flesh) because He said: “Lazarus died, let us go, let us wake him up” and He says to Martha also: “Your brother will resuscitate”.⁴¹ And to Nathanael He says: “Before Philippe [Fol. 2va] called you, I saw you (while you were under) the fig tree”.⁴² If He said in the Gospel “there is no one who knows this hour, either Angels or the Son, only the Father”,⁴³ it means that the Son does not know since their will is one. And again they say: “the Church of Rome is the greater among the Church(es)”⁴⁴. And we say: one is the Church, the assembly of the Apostles⁴⁵ not thanks to a temporary gold, but to glory, since their glory is the flesh and the blood of Christ. And again they say: “a woman who menstruates may enter the church”. We, we say she may not enter because (it is) the blood of a curse as our Lord said to Eve: In the same way that you made that tree bleed, you bleed. And because of this before seven days of

³⁷ Anaphora of Saint John Chrysostom, verse 67. Cf. መጽሐፍ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ 1951: 210. See also ULLENDORFF 1987: 166 (text), 170 (tr.).

³⁸ Thesis developed by the *Qəbʿat* movement and the *Sägga ləgğ* movement. Cf. GETATCHEW HAILE 1990: 34 (text), 31 (tr.); GUIDI 1900: 11–12; TEDROS ABRAHA 2010: 454.

³⁹ Thesis professed by *Təwəhədo/wäld qəb* followers and by the Patriarch of Alexandria. Cf. GUIDI 1893: 603–604; GUIDI 1900: 20–22; cf. also AYELE TEKLEHAYMANOT 1994: 377–381.

⁴⁰ Without the unction, the human nature could not be at the same place as the divine nature, meaning that in His humanity, Christ is less than the Father. This is a reference to the doctrine of Catholics argued by Paez in 1604. Cf. TEFAGZHI UQBIT 1973: 60. This doctrine is ascribed to the Diophysites professed during the council of Chalcedon as described in the *mäzɡäbä haymanot*. Cf. CERULLI 1960: 15 (text), 81 (tr.). But this is also a reference to the doctrine of *qəbʿat* movement. Cf. GETATCHEW HAILE 1990: 29 (text), 26 (tr.).

⁴¹ John 11: 11–23.

⁴² John 1: 48.

⁴³ Matthew 24: 36.

⁴⁴ As described in the *Mäzɡäbä haymanot*. Cf. CERULLI 1960: 24 (text), 91 (tr.).

⁴⁵ In the *Mäzɡäbä haymanot*: “We believe in one holy Church, above all assemblies, the Apostolic one”. Cf. CERULLI 1960: 25 (text), 92 (tr.).

purification, she may not enter a church.⁴⁶ And they baptize the child on the second day or the third day; and we do not baptize him before the fortieth day and if it is a daughter, at the eightieth day, and if they become sick on the seventh day, since Lord introduced Adam in the Paradise on the fortieth day after he was created and Eve, in the Paradise, on the eightieth day after she was created, and therefore this order is appropriate for us forever. And again they say: “the saints and the martyr [Fol. 2vb] do not save the sinful soul”. We, we say: they (do) save the soul because our Lord said in the Gospel “if he gave in the name of my disciple only half of the bread or a chalice of cold water his reward will not perish”.⁴⁷ And if they say, “We belong to the seat of Peter”, we say to them his seat is verily his seat, but Peter did not preach saying that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and from the Son, and about the two natures (that) the divinity does the work of the divinity and the humanity does the work of the humanity. This (is) the preaching of Leon,⁴⁸ transgressor of the faith, during the reign of Marcian,⁴⁹ King of lawlessness, and his wife Pulcheria,⁵⁰ in the fourth council, Chalcedon. And so we say about them: they make four the Holy Trinity, (namely) the children of Leon, teacher of error. And I wrote this discourse on the faith because of spiritual zeal, I, ʾabba Gäbrä Həywät, sinner and guilty in what I was accused of. Indeed, increasing of words makes the heart forgetful. Do not forget (to recite) for me (each one you) one Pater Noster.

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⁴⁶ As prescribed in the 84 pseudo-canon of Nicea, canon no.°29. Cf. DA LEONESSA 1942: 46 (text), 74 (tr.).

⁴⁷ Ref. to Matthew 10: 42.

⁴⁸ Pope Leon (440–461), bishop of Rome who influenced the confession adopted by the council of Chalcedon.

⁴⁹ Marcian, Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire (450–457).

⁵⁰ Daughter of Emperor Arcadius (395–408) and sister of Emperor Theodosius II (408–450), Pulcheria is considered as saint by both Greek Orthodox and Catholic Churches.

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Summary

The article deals with a peculiar document that was found during a field research conducted by the team of the Ethio-SPARE project during the spring 2010 in church libraries of Gulo Mākāda wārāda, north-east Təgray (historical ‘Agame). This document is a Gəʿəz text written during the 19th century and dedicated to the refutation of the Catholic doctrine. Because of its apparent historical significance, the text and its translation are presented here. Taking into consideration the literary form (discourse) of the work and the place where it was found (the area of the active Catholic preaching) we can assume that the text is a summary of the anti-Catholic argumentation, possibly used by the Orthodox priests, and a witness of the local attitude to the Catholic missionary activities. The treatise does not provide any hints to the political issues of the Catholic settlement in Ethiopia. However, it does highlight some elements of the discourse against Catholic faith in the context of the emergence of a strong religious *Təwəḥədo* identity.