PREFACE

This study investigates the background, beginnings and early development of non-Orthodox churches in southern Ethiopia, especially the role of the Sudan Interior Mission (S.I.M.) in the origins of the movement. The church-planting theory of the pioneer S.I.M. missionaries was spelled out by them when they entered Ethiopia and in their work in subsequent years; by 1944 it was possible to evaluate the outcome of their theory fairly objectively. That a new churches' movement existed, and flourished particularly during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia, has been amply documented, especially by F. Peter Cotterell in *Born at Midnight*. Clarence W. Duff's *Cords of Love* tells the story up to 1938 biographically, mainly using letters he wrote to his family.

Neither of these books documents the theory and practice behind the movement; nor has any previous attempt been made to sketch the milieu within which the movement took place. The outcome was dependent upon many things besides the particular church-planting theories of the key individuals involved in the work. For this reason a number of areas which impinge in various ways on the outcome are investigated in some detail. Chapter One shows that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church exercised a moulding effect upon the whole of Ethiopian society. Considerable attention is given to the place of the Orthodox Church in the northern culture, not because new primary sources are being used, but because of the influence which the northern culture, and particularly its religion, has had (and continues to have) in southern Ethiopia. In addition, an effort is made to compare and contrast the church-planting theory and practice carried on in southern Ethiopia with what was being done by the S.I.M. in West Africa.

The Kale Heywat Church, the denomination of approximately 3500 congregations (1996), which had grown out of the original work of the S.I.M., is but one of a number of denominations within the new churches’ movement. The existence of so many congregations in a land which has had an established church for approximately 1600 years demands some sort of detailed explanation. This is especially true considering the following two facts: until the time of Haile Selassie the government of Ethiopia either directly discouraged missionary work or "employed" missionaries as government workers. Secondly, it was the stated policy of most, if not all other mission societies working in Ethiopia prior to 1927, to refrain from
establishing new, that is, non-Orthodox congregations. The fact that the Swedish Evangelical Mission in Eritrea made the pragmatic decision to form a new church did not alter its stated policy.

Space forbids a detailed study of the social, religious, economic and political aspects of southern Ethiopia in the 1920s. Most of the S.I.M. missionaries who entered Ethiopia between 1927 and 1938 were products of the North American fundamentalist movement; their convictions are described briefly as a backdrop to their preaching.

The work of the S.I.M. missionaries in Ethiopia is then examined under four headings which follow what might be called the natural order of evangelization. The setting in which the missionaries prepared for and undertook evangelism is the subject of the first section. Evangelism was expected to result in converts who then needed to be gathered into groups for the purpose of instruction so that they could in turn be involved in further evangelistic outreach. Finally the missionaries prepared the groups to function on their own, aware as they were in 1936 that they were likely to be expelled from the country at any moment.

After the Occupation the S.I.M. missionaries began to return to Ethiopia in an unofficial capacity; later some of them obtained contracts as government school teachers. However, except for the occasional visit, they were not allowed to leave the city until the end of 1944. Before that time they had been able to report on what was taking place in the rural areas but they had not been able to influence the movement in any significant way.

Thirty years later (1974) Ethiopia's revolution caused the exit of most of the S.I.M. missionaries from the areas where the Kale Heywat Church had established itself. Its ability at that time to respond positively to the social, economic and philosophical pressures of the period demonstrated that the Kale Heywat Church had become a mature and responsible body of Christians.

The effectiveness of the missionaries' church-planting theories were tested during the Occupation and made available for objective assessment in 1941-1944. As far as possible, the facts as they were discovered by the expatriates are given in chapter five. The more important side of the story—the Ethiopians' report of what actually took place as they experienced it—is left for them to tell.

Almost no use has been made of local sources. This is deliberate, and there are a number of reasons for this decision. It seems best that the Ethiopian church historians present their own story through their own writings or through translation. The expatriate emphasis will always be somewhat
unnatural. This present study is one-sided and makes no claim to give the whole picture. Much still remains to be told. The Kale Heywat Church is in the process of gathering material to write this story as they see it.

My research is built on the foundations laid by others; in particular F. Peter Cotterell's book *Born at Midnight*. Clarence Duff's autobiographical account of his work, *Cords of Love*, was a big help even though it became available after I had completed much of my research. Primary materials were obtained from the S.I.M. offices in Addis Ababa, Cedar Grove, London, and in particular, Toronto. The S.I.M. archives are now located in Charlotte, North Carolina. My thanks to Chris Ferrier, the S.I.M. archivist at that time, for all of her help. A great deal of valuable information was also obtained from the Yale Divinity School Library, the U.S.P.G. Headquarters in London, the S.O.A.S. Library, and the library of the Mekane Yesus Seminary in Addis Ababa. The archivists in each of these places helped me a great deal.

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The original dissertation has been totally rewritten under the skilful and
gracious editorship of Professor Adrian Hastings who generously contributed much more time and effort than anyone should expect from an editor. I am deeply grateful to him.

I must however accept responsibility for the opinions expressed and the way in which they are presented.

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Brian L. Fargher