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The Charismatic Movement in Ethiopia 1960–1980

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As a former missionary in Ethiopia, Fargher analyzes the Ethiopian situation during the stated period quite admirably. He clarifies how the charismatic invasion has drastically changed church life in all Ethiopia in the last two generations. He gives the origins as well as the present-day reactions to the movement. The tension in the generation gap is particularly valuable, since such an insight can be very useful in other contexts too. The section on contributions of the movement reveal valuable practical wisdom needed in any church-planting ministry in Two-Thirds World situations.

Editor

INTRODUCTION

The charismatic movement in Ethiopia was certainly ‘charismatic’, but at the same time this designation has misleading overtones. In the Ethiopian context it was much more a renewal movement; I will therefore use the terms ‘charismatic’ and ‘renewal’ interchangeable.¹ Many of the structures from within which the movement burst forth were not really very old, but they had become static; even though some were only a decade or two old. Initially the movement possessed a lot of rough edges, but as these were rubbed off a glow appeared. From the very outset this movement was not confined to what we generally call the Pentecostal denominations.

The renewal movement was not imported into Ethiopia from overseas. It sprang up from within the country and remained to become very much a part of Ethiopian Christianity; therein lies its historical importance. When the renewal movement began in Ethiopia there were three large denominations in the country and a number of smaller ones. The largest was the Orthodox Church followed by the Kalä Hiywät Church; the third largest was the Mäkanä Yäsus Church. p. 345 Along with the smaller denominations these three make up what must be known in the future as ‘the church in Ethiopia’. The renewal movement prepared Christians of all denominations to recognize what they had in common and what the real things were that divided Christians from ‘Christians’. Each denomination initially reacted to the movement in a different way; later each came to terms with it in its own way and profited by the movement in proportion to its openness and carefulness.

The movement began as a young people’s movement; this was one of its strengths, and at the same time a weakness that took some years to overcome. The twenty-year period selected for this study is an arbitrary setting of dates but it does provide an approximate starting point and also a definite point by which time the movement had achieved a considerable degree of maturity. By 1960 a quarter of a century had passed since the re-entry into Ethiopia of expatriate missionaries following the Italian Occupation. During

¹ The Ethiopian experience is quite different from that described by Henry Asige Ajega in ‘The Charismatic Movement in African Israel Church Nineveh (Kenya)’, *Strange Gifts?* ed. D. Martin and P. Mullen (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984) pp.217–219. This Kenyan movement began in 1921 at Kaimosi in Western Kenya.

these twenty-five years the church of Ethiopia had developed numerically and organizationally. By this time patterns had developed which the renewal movement challenged. The challenge was constructive and positive. What would have happened to the church of Ethiopia during the first seven tough years of the Revolution (1974–1980) if the renewal movement had not already effected many beneficial changes by that time? The charismatic movement and the communist revolution transformed the church of Ethiopia into a unit quite different from what it had been in the 1945–1960 period.

THE PROVENANCE OF THE MOVEMENT

In 1960 the leadership of the Orthodox, non-Orthodox, and Catholic churches was almost entirely in the hands of older people.² Traditionally this was where the leadership belonged. In the political sphere the same was true. Throughout the country the younger generation was expected to wait until sickness and death cleared a way for it. Within many of the churches which continued to retain strong ties with external bodies there was an obvious trend to **P. 346** dependency. Many in these denominations who held administrative positions received high salaries which came from subsidy gifts. At least 85% of the membership of all denominations was made up of rural farmers and their families. These were devout Christians, but biblically illiterate, and academically worlds apart from the young people. It was these men who were the leaders in thousands of rural congregations. In both the rural areas and the urban centres the young people, that is the fifteen to thirty-five year old group, were generally excluded from having any part in the leadership.

The fact that each of the denominations claimed to base its theology and liturgy on the Bible might appear to be a uniting factor; in fact it was a matter which gave rise to endless confusion. The Orthodox church, in spite of the importance it placed on tradition and liturgy, attempted to base the faith of its membership upon the Bible. To an even greater degree this was true of the other churches, even of the Catholic church, especially in the rural areas. The Christians in these churches were biblicists but to one degree or another they faced two problems. Firstly, a stereotyped hermeneutic, rather than a Holy Spirit-inspired one, dominated the preaching and teaching in these churches. The sermon content was mostly ethical, often verging on the legalistic. Secondly, in place of the spontaneous sharing which characterized the renewal movement, the other churches had a fixed pattern of worship. In most churches doctrinal correctness rather than warmth, emotion and experience characterized the preaching.

Many of the Christian young people who moved to the urban areas to continue their education were the children of the leaders in the rural churches. Until these young people had reached grade eight they had studied close to home. They admired the devotion and tenacity of their fathers, many of whom had suffered for their faith. These adults had not had an opportunity to learn; but in spite of this they had struggled to teach themselves how to read and write Amharic, a second language to almost all of them. They desperately wanted their children to learn and so sent them off to school, often at great personal sacrifice. As their children continued their education they moved from the smaller towns to the urban areas. They became proficient in Amharic. They had been taught well at home and read their Bibles. They gathered together with other Christian young people to read

² Many of the essays in *Strange Gifts?* (e.g. Paul S. Fiddes, 'The Theology of the Charismatic Movement', pp.19–40, and Andrew Walker, 'The theology of the "Restoration" House Churches', pp.208–219) comment on the problem of authoritarian leadership in the movement. This was not a problem that particularly bothered the movement in Ethiopia.

their Bibles, to sing and to pray.³ As they did so they discovered for p. 347 themselves a new meaning in the Bible; they began to ask themselves why God wasn't at work in their midst, why their faith in the living God had become a ritual and formality.

The type of leadership patterns which existed in the churches, the emphasis upon the Bible and yet the stereotyped interpretation, and then the congregating of the Christian young people in the urban centres—these were some of the sociological factors that gave rise to the Ethiopian charismatic movement. In a sentence—almost without exception these young people found themselves excluded from the churches in which they had grown up. The father figures of the churches rejected them. It was perfectly natural that the traditional leadership should react in this way; leadership belonged to the fifty-plus generation (at that point in time!). The older generation felt threatened by the young people who knew so much more Amharic, and consequently so much more about the Bible, than they did. They wanted their children to learn but once they had acquired an education they did not know what to do with them. The younger generation had an honest desire to serve in the churches from which they found themselves excluded. A crisis of major proportions had developed.

The fact that they were excluded made the young people question critically what was going on in many of the congregations. They found ethical laxity, sterile worship and legalism. They began to be increasingly critical of the congregations within which they had grown up. The young people in many of the Orthodox churches discovered that biblical preaching and Bible study were not encouraged. In order to protect the liturgy which had been passed down from one generation to the next for many centuries, many priests felt that it was essential that nothing be questioned, nothing should change. In many of the other churches the elders had been almost as unbending as the conservative priesthood in the Orthodox church: traditions of form and interpretation had been established in all of them. In the congregational services conducted in the rural areas the same type of antiphonal singing took place Sunday after Sunday. In areas where the churches were expanding there was some enthusiasm among the new converts but the congregations as a whole had sunk into a stereotyped form of worship that had no dynamism. p. 348

SOME DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE MOVEMENT

No doubt there are many more characteristics than the five which I wish to mention. These five are the most outstanding; they are the ones that have made the greatest impact upon the church of Ethiopia. First is *the emphasis upon the literal meaning of the Bible*. Unfortunately this did not mean that all parties approached passages such as [1 Corinthians 14](#) with an open mind, ready to study it together and see what instruction it gave. It did however mean that there was a new willingness on the part of many to come under the word of God, to expect God to do the things that he had done in the past, and to make biblical preaching again the centre of the worship services. There was an insistence that today God must be at work among his people and in the world. There was a desire to know God and to experience his presence and power. There was a renewed emphasis upon the reality of conversion as a work of the Holy Spirit rather than just a human decision.

³ John P. Kildhal, *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972) p.65, observed that 'prior need for acceptance by groups and by God, were characteristic of the tongue-speakers we interviewed'. Later (pp.83-4) he commented: 'Their sense of community crossed ethnic, socio-economic, and educational lines. Their common overwhelming experience surmounted other barriers.'

The *congregational participation* which had all but dropped out of most services was reintroduced. Traditionally, communal meetings were structured for community participation. It was customary to share experiences, problems and achievements. As the renewal movement gained momentum discussion once again became a part of Christian worship, especially in the smaller groups. It was at this time, and as a result of the renewal movement, that the importance of small groups was recognized: not in place of, but alongside, the congregational services. In many groups the tendency developed of leaving all hermeneutical cruxes to the inspiration of the Spirit. At times there was such an unbalanced emphasis upon communal participation, upon the Holy Spirit as interpreter of the Bible, that the preacher would say: I do not need to say anything about this verse, or phrase, the Holy Spirit will show you what it means. Many congregations which had not experienced for a long time the joy of new believers being added to their fellowship, began to be rejuvenated as many people, especially young people, began to believe. Traditionally women had been excluded from many congregational activities; the renewal movement radically changed this situation.

Thirdly, there was a *new emphasis placed on prayer, purity and propagation*. This is not to imply that Christians had forgotten how to pray. But the renewal movement reminded people afresh to expect great things through prayer, to pray for miracles, to ask God for healing, to allow God to work out all the insoluble problems of life. Many Christians had lost sight of the exhortation to 'pray for one p. 349 another'. Christians learned anew to share their cares and burdens with one another and to bear one another up in prayer. Many impurities had unobtrusively crept into the conduct of Christians: older people had become careless in handling funds; younger people had responded to legalism by become ingenuous: 'If I'm not apprehended then I didn't do it'. The Holy Spirit was recognized as the Christian's lawgiver, convictor, and restorer. Christians were exhorted to be bold and fearless in their witness for Christ. This marked a new beginning of urban evangelism in Ethiopia—a movement that expanded dramatically during the revolution years. The emphases upon prayer, purity and propagation stimulated and strengthened the growth of small group fellowships.

The majority of Christians did not experience too many problems in coming to terms with the first three characteristics: not so the fourth one. *Speaking in tongues* became a distinguishing feature, albeit a temporary one, of the renewal movement. Some, but not all, preached that this sign, and this sign alone, proved possession of the Holy Spirit.⁴ Others preached fire baptism: unless Christians had actually experienced the fire from heaven they were not part of the redeemed. The vast majority of Christians were unprepared to handle this new teaching. It was not easy for them to perceive the social and religious reasons which had given rise to it. Rejection by the majority was interpreted by the minority as a sure sign that they were indeed part of the select group who had to suffer persecution for their faith. Singing and praying often became unnecessarily loud. One-line choruses were sung over and over scores of times accompanied by loud clapping, shouts of 'Hallelujah, Amen' and ululating. A great deal of emphasis was placed on healing and prophecy. In the early years of the movement enthusiasts tried to ignore false claims of healing and unfulfilled prophecies. Many of the enthusiasts found it difficult to admit that they could possibly have been wrong, or made a mistake.

The fifth characteristic was probably the most offensive to the initially unsympathetic. Many within the renewal movement taught that *the baptism of the Spirit*, accompanied by tongue speaking, *imparted to the recipient a type of perfection*. This led to the teaching that

⁴ Phillip H. Wiebe, 'The Pentecostal Initial Evidence Doctrine', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 27 (Dec. 1984) 4 pp.465-472 has re-examined this Pentecostal claim.

such an individual was always right: being full of the Spirit how could he or she make any mistakes? they argued. Humility was p. 350 dethroned by a proud, often haughty and offensive confidence. Advice from 'carnal' Christians, as non-enthusiasts were often designated, was never considered to be advice worth taking. Only those within the movement could counsel or exhort. Caution and discretion were dismissed as cowardice and fear. Culturally offensive things, such as adolescent boys and girls kissing in public, were condoned as biblical commands. All-night prayer meetings during which both sexes slept in the same room was another offence that both Christians and non-Christians found difficult to accept. It took time and experience to prove that not all who claimed to be led by the Spirit were actually so led. It took even longer for some to realize that even the most spiritual people can sometimes make mistakes.

REACTIONS

By about 1970 there were enthusiasts for renewal within all denominations. They made no secret of their identity: their enthusiasm and exuberance embarrassed and annoyed the unsympathetic. The reactions to, and ramifications of, the five characteristics noted above helped shape the renewal movement. The young people of every denomination, almost without exception, were enthusiastic. There was a very real sense in which this movement in Ethiopia was spearheaded by the Christian youth. They saw it as a return to a biblical lifestyle—which it was. It was also a movement with clear sociological ramifications. The movement enabled the youth to gain an authority and identity which the older generation had denied them. They became leaders in a cause that their parents, the church leaders, could not understand.⁵ Spiritually the young people found what the Bible promised them—an experience of God's presence and blessing. As they became bold and aggressive in their praying and preaching they saw results. Their prayers were answered: people were saved.

The puzzled majority in all denominations and missions deepened its defensive trenches and prepared to fight what would be a losing battle. Initially the older generation was determined that everything in the church should go on as before: singing, preaching, participation, p. 351 administration, conduct of meetings, giving, and evangelism were all treated as sacrosanct and not subject to any type of change. The fact that the movement passed through a disruptive stage made the leadership of the churches even more defensive. It took years before sufficient concessions had been made on both sides to enable the two groups to work together harmoniously. The energetic, enthusiastic and Bible-verse-quoting youth bamboozled many of the older people in the church. Most expatriate missionaries reacted in one of two ways. Some said, 'We have no place for such a thing in our liturgical tradition'; and others, 'Such enthusiasm belongs only to the immature stage of the church'. The result of both reactions was the same:—'we cannot afford to come to terms with this movement, so we'll separate ourselves from it by excluding the enthusiasts'.

Exclusion, or excommunication, was a futile reaction, for it encouraged the forming of new fellowships, something the churches did not want to encourage. This only further widened the gap between the generations. The youth began to meet in homes. These

⁵ William J. Samarian, *Tongues of Men and Angels. The Religious Language of Pentecostalism* (New York/London: Macmillan, 1972) p.235 notes the importance of fulfillment and accomplishment: 'People talk in tongues, because it is part of a movement that offers them the fulfillment of aspirations that their previous religious experience created in them. They too want to believe in God passionately, to know the delight of communion with him, and to see him at work in life.'

meetings were the beginning of what would be known during the first decade of the revolution as the 'Homechurch Movement'.⁶ These home meetings were led by the young people and attracted young people. In most urban areas the young people who flocked to these fellowships did not discontinue their attendance at church even though they felt unhappy with the services. Until about 1970 the home gatherings experienced a minimum of problems. From 1960–1975 the renewal movement shifted out of the churches, into the homes, and then back into the churches again. The experience of being expelled from the churches did result in the formation of one new denomination, the Full Gospel Believers' Church.⁷ The leaders of this church initially had no intention of forming a new denomination. It began as a fellowship of like-minded Christians. As it evangelized it became a denomination. The small group fellowships, which began because the churches were p. 352 unwilling to allow the enthusiasts to take part in the regular services, were then adopted by many of the churches as a viable method of stimulating church life.

Exclusion did not bother the enthusiasts of renewal any more than did the various attacks which were launched against it, often, sadly enough, by other Christians. Throughout the twenty-year period under review, few if any enthusiasts for renewal were able to remain within the Orthodox church.⁸ Repeatedly they were attacked as 'Protestant' and expelled from the church property. The vocal and public repudiation of the renewal movement by some leaders of the Orthodox church created a problem that dogged the movement for many years. It was natural enough that observers would connect the renewal movement with historical Pentecostalism, although in Ethiopia there were far more enthusiasts outside the Pentecostal denominations than within. In spite of this all the enthusiasts were branded by the government as 'Penty'.⁹ This, as well as the social changes of the early 1970s, further widened the generation gap. Fathers attacked their children as 'Penty'; the youth replied by attacking the older generation as 'blind leaders of the blind'; they attacked them for being cowards and traitors (so the youth said) because they refused to identify themselves with the issues which the young people considered to be crucial; they attacked them for their pride of office, for loving authority above ministry; they attacked them for being, dependent upon overseas funds for their salaries.

As a whole the young people were enthusiastic about the renewal movement and supported it in spite of the outspoken disapproval of their fathers. Scores, and then hundreds, and eventually thousands of small group meetings sprang up all over the country regardless of attacks from both the government and the churches. Some of the renewal groups began to send out their own evangelists who went out 'in faith', living only

⁶ Cf. 'The Theology of the "Restoration" House Churches' by Andrew Walker, *Strange Gifts?* pp.208–219. In Ethiopia the Homechurch Movement was only tangentially related to the charismatic movement and was thus quite different in nature and function from the sectarian movement described by Walker.

⁷ This denomination had/has no organic connections with denominations in the west using the same name. In fact, initially, the F.G.B.C. was quite xenophobic. A group calling itself the 'Apostolic Church' practised baptism in the name of Jesus only, and was therefore called the 'Jesus Only People' (cf. Andrew Walker, 'The Orthodox Church and the Charismatic Movement', *Strange Tongues?* p. 169), but this movement was apparently imported into Ethiopia from North America, and was not a by-product of the renewal movement.

⁸ There are persistent rumours of groups of 'secret enthusiasts' within the Orthodox church: it is difficult to understand how these people could be both 'secret' and at the same time 'enthusiasts'.

⁹ 'Penty' being short for 'Pentecostal', i.e. trouble-maker, rebel, traitor. Over a period of years the enthusiasts managed to shake off this epithet proving by their conduct that they were loyal and faithful citizens. For a year or two this name was pasted onto all enthusiasts.

on the gifts of those who supported the movement. The small group meetings were often rowdy causing the neighbours to complain to the police about the noise. Parents expressed concern about the involvement of girls and boys in these p. 353 meetings. Many enthusiasts were persecuted and imprisoned, some for many years. Instead of making any attempt to avoid such confrontation they often welcomed it. There were many occasions when confrontation appeared to be unnecessary but such decisions were inevitably left to the individual conscience; once the decision had been made it was wholeheartedly supported by the group. Among the young the excitement and enthusiasm was contagious. By the early 1970s a deep rift existed; there was a generation gap and both sides were full of bitterness.

HARMONY ACHIEVED

The conflict between the two groups reached its nadir in the mid-1970s. It happened in this way: the government needed the support of all citizens in order to fight the secessionist wars which had broken out in the east and north. The nation as a whole was commanded to wave its left fist in the air and scream imprecations against all the enemies of the Motherland. The presence of a few unwise 'prophets', who preached that these invasions were God's judgment on a nation forgetting God, only exacerbated tensions. Many of the young people refused, in spite of imprisonment and physical violence, to curse their enemies. The vast majority of the older generation did not agree that this was an issue on which they should draw fine lines. The young people were supported by those within the movement but condemned as 'traitors' by those outside, sometimes even by their Christian parents. Many pastors and elders travelled from one part of the country to the other trying to bind up the wounds but they were too deep to heal quickly. The young people felt that they had been betrayed.

Gradually some of the older generation began to see things from a different perspective. During the 1960s there had been a lot of froth and bubble in the renewal movement.¹⁰ There had been insincere preachers who had stolen funds and many harsh words had been spoken on both sides, in spite of this the older generation could not deny that the largest percentage of these young people were brave, dedicated and vitally alive Christians. This new evidence of faith had been expressed in words that were put to Ethiopian tunes, tunes that p. 354 became so popular that secular musicians sometimes copied them. Those who had been spectators of the renewal movement slowly began to admit that the biblical preaching of many of the young people had both content and value to it; the Bible, they discovered, was not just a book of 'do's and don'ts'. Little by little the older generation began to acknowledge its shortcomings and mistakes. This did not happen suddenly or in any one particularly place. It was a gradual softening which took place over a number of years. Slowly, thanks to tireless peacemakers, both sides of the conflict began to see that it was possible for them to make minor concessions and to minister to one another.

For years neither side had been willing to share: for both of them it had been an 'either/or' situation. The youth were determined to stage a *coup d'état*, and the older people were equally determined to maintain the status quo, come what may. Gradually the young people were convinced that they could minister without having to administer.

¹⁰ Felicitas D. Goodman, *Speaking in Tongues. A Cross-Cultural Study of Glossolalia* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1972) explores the whole subject of behaviour and dissociation from a sympathetic anthropologist's point of view. The point is made that dissociation, almost of necessity, carries with it some unusual behaviour.

They were persuaded that many changes could be brought about in an orderly way. However, as the young people began to move towards a rapprochement with the church leadership they often forced them to make hasty and unwise decisions which they later regretted. In the mid-1970s the mood of the country was revolutionary: the young people thought they knew what changes were needed in the churches, and they wanted to see them implemented immediately. Thus it was that during the early 1970s in every denomination some type of youth movement was formed; this gave them their own organization within the church. Youth delegates were appointed to numerous church boards and committees. Slowly, but surely, the young people began to share in the Sunday services.

Perhaps the most difficult thing for both the enthusiasts of the renewal movement and the others to learn, as they moved back together again in the life of the church, was Spirit-controlled spontaneity.¹¹ Years of bitterness and endless recriminations had left many deep wounds; as a result many Christians refused to become members of any one denomination. Both sides were suspicious of the other. There was the constant feeling on the one side that there was too much freedom, and on the other that there was not enough. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s those within the charismatic p.355 movement had often suffered unjustifiably and unnecessarily because of the exhibitionism of some who claimed to be enthusiasts. This made them ready to agree to the imposition of controls on what could and could not be done. They realized that noise and disorder in meetings were not always, or even often, signs of the Holy Spirit's presence. A consensus of opinion was gradually reached on how much repetitive singing and handclapping should take place during worship services. Fora for talking to one another, and thereby curbing criticism, were set up.

The most significant peacemaker was music.¹² The revival movement introduced the piano accordion and guitar into many of the church services in Ethiopia. Within the country both instruments were already associated with dancebands and, in most rural churches and many urban ones, the leadership had banned such musical instruments. Three types of singing had been common in the churches: translated hymns set to western tunes, traditional antiphonal singing, and chanting by priests and deacons. All three lacked the one thing which the renewal movement stressed: the expression of relevant spirituality. The movement introduced three things into almost all of the churches and thereby gained itself a place within, rather than outside, these churches. Hundreds and thousands of new hymns were written. The author's name was never attached to the hymn, and once accepted it became public property. New instruments were introduced into worship services, thus facilitating further change. Within the brief space of about five years (approximately 1973–1978) almost every congregation in the country had at least one gowned young people's choir.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE MOVEMENT

The movement began almost unnoticed in the early 1960s. Within twenty years it had changed the shape of Christianity in most parts of Ethiopia. By the 1980s it had become institutionalized and could hardly any longer be called a separate movement. But the

¹¹ The ideal is 'churches in which enthusiasm and regular order coexist in harmonious interaction'. James D. G. Dunn, 'Models of Christian Community', *Strange Gifts?* p. 12.

¹² Douglas Davies, 'The Charismatic Ethic and the Spirit of Post-Industrialism' (*Strange Gifts?* pp.137–150, esp. p.140). He too points out that it is the group experience, the sense of community, even in the tongue-speaking, that is most important. Music, more than any other single thing, achieved that sense of oneness.

contributions it has made will last as long as their value is recognized by Ethiopian Christians. Space permits only the brief mention of five contributions, although no doubt there are many more. **P. 356**

First there was the *enthusiasm*. Even those churches which had been established for only a few decades had become traditional and static. The denominations which refused to come to terms within the movement still remain that way; they have a religion but no enthusiasm. Elsewhere, congregational services are now viewed by many as the opportunity to minister to one another as well as the time to worship God. In spite of difficulties there is a renewed realization of the primacy of evangelism. In many places a legalistic ethic has been replaced by an emphasis upon purity of attitude and intention.

The second contribution, *music*, has already been briefly mentioned. Hundreds of Christians who had never thought of expressing their faith through songs were encouraged to do just this. Hundreds of their songs have now become part of Ethiopian church life and worship. The authors remain anonymous but their words express the Christians' faith. The minstrel [*zāmare*] was a familiar figure in traditional Ethiopia; often he played the role of the modern gossip columnist—rebuking, telling secrets, quashing rumours. The renewal movement brought a powerful new figure into Ethiopian church history: the soloist. Many of these men and women were able to make whole congregations dissolve into tears or shout out 'halleluiahs' and 'amens'. Thousands upon thousands of their cassettes (from which they receive not a cent in royalties) have found their way into the remotest parts of Ethiopia—indeed, into every army camp and prison in the country. The introduction of chorus singing has enabled the whole congregation to share in music in a way which was previously impossible. Many denominations, or individual congregations within the denomination, which previously knew little about congregational singing have introduced chorus singing into their worship. It would be safe to say that today any young person between the ages of five and thirty-five who wants to sing can find a place in one choir or another in his or her local congregation.

The renewal movement has made *participation* a meaningful word for Ethiopian Christians. The traditional model was that the functionaries (priests, deacons, elders, pastors) went about their activities while the rest of the congregation simply sat, or stood, and listened. Before the renewal movement began there was a limited amount of after-service sharing in many smaller rural congregations. This was usually confined to sharing prayer requests and praise items. In many denominations this has now changed. Music, more than any other single factor, has encouraged the participation of the whole congregation in much of the service. People do not need to be literate in order to sing choruses; it would appear that it is easier to be enthusiastic **p. 357** while singing choruses than throughout hymns with four or five verses. The administration of the congregation now often involves a number of committees in which many young people are involved. The young people often have a representative on the Elders' Board and are given some opportunities to preach. The renewal movement had succeeded in focusing Christians' attention on mass participation in worship.

The fourth contribution is a forceful reminder that, exegete 1 Corinthians however you will, *the gifts of the Holy Spirit* are present in the Ethiopian church today. On the potentially divisive issue of speaking in tongues no consensus of opinion has been reached. But Christians have agreed to respect one another's viewpoints and refrain from causing offence. The same is true in the case of prophecy.¹³ Those who uttered prophecies

¹³ Rex Davis, 'Living Liturgically: the Charismatic Contribution' *Strange Gifts?* pp.107–122) writes on p.114: 'The recovery of prophecy in worship is surely the greatest of pentecostal contributions in this century ...'

were never considered to be prophets! They simply spoke and then disappeared back into the crowd. Forbearance rather than arguments prevented this from causing hurt feelings. Much the same can be said for exorcism, suffering, exhorting, to name but a few of the gifts. Most Christians in Ethiopia are now thoroughly convinced that they need the gifts of the Spirit in order to live Spirit-filled lives and to exercise a fruitful ministry. This viewpoint has also contributed to a greater participation of the congregations in the worship services. It has also enabled gifted young people to be accepted more readily by the older generation.

The renewal movement has convinced Christians that not every enthusiast is genuine no matter how often he may have spoken in tongues or how many demons she may claim to have exorcised. Too often they have seen people go astray who had seemed to start well.¹⁴ They have learned that a difference must be made between confidence and pride. The young people in particular learned that there is no true freedom in their own fellowships without some mutually agreed guidelines. Congregations and congregational leaders discovered that p.358 it was possible to retain most of the enthusiasts within the church by making an effort to include and to define, that is, by permitting the enthusiast to minister within the congregation as long as he or she observed the guidelines.¹⁵ It took years to learn the lesson that the Holy Spirit may, and will, bring about many changes, but that these changes can always be in the context of order and decency; most congregations and individuals did eventually agree that this was a lesson worth learning.

CONCLUSIONS

The charismatic movement came to Ethiopia at a time when two distinct age groups within the Christian population were experiencing serious social problems. Christians generally did not recognize the existence of these tensions. The renewal movement has solved those problems for the Christians. Many of the young people who were the leaders of the renewal movement back in the early 1960s are now in their mid-fifties. Many are now leaders in their congregations. Where are *their* children? Within the structures of the church we can initiate change and respond to it. To do either requires effort; change will always be disturbing. The easier way is to do nothing, to accept the status quo, to discourage change. Through the difficult and disturbing years of 1960–1980 God taught the church in Ethiopia many things through the renewal movement. These lessons need to be written boldly and clearly into the pages of Ethiopian church history. They are lessons from which many other churches around the world could derive considerable benefit.

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Although prophecy was present in the Ethiopian renewal movement it was not considered to be one of the most important gifts.

¹⁴ In his essay 'All Creatures Great and Small: towards a Pneumatology of Life' (*Strange Gifts?* pp.41–53), in which he advocates panpneumatism (overtones of Hegel?), W. J. Hollenweger has a section entitled 'Non-White Indigenous Pneumatologies' (pp.46ff). He suggests that some 'non-white indigenous people' may have acquired a better understanding than the western world of panpneumatism. Preachers within the charismatic movement in Ethiopia did not display any tendencies towards panpneumatism.

¹⁵ 'The Charismatic Joy of Liturgical Dance Movement' by Nell Challingsworth, (*Strange Gifts?* pp. 123–126). The liturgical dance that is here described appears to have had no place in the Ethiopian renewal movement.