
A Clarified Vision for Urban Missions
by Harvie M Conn
(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987)
240 pages

If you are an urban pastor, or are aspiring to be one, this is the book for you. It is an excellent volume, intellectually stimulating, with an extensive and useful bibliography. Because of the challenge of urbanization in the world, and especially in Africa (which has the fastest urban growth rate anywhere), Conn's book needs to be read by everyone involved in urban ministry.

You may have been suspicious of the city. You may see it as a place where death is rampant, or where people find themselves as nobodies. Or you may see it as more dehumanizing than the rural setting. Conn addresses these and other popular urban stereotypes under seven major headings: (1) the rural/urban myth; (2) the depersonalization misunderstanding; (3) the crime generalization; (4) the secularization myth; (5) the privatization generalization; (6) the power of misunderstanding; and (7) the monoclass generalization.

Conn does not see the process of African people moving into the city as "detrribalization" but as "re-tribalization," an urban crisis crossing the lines tribe and class, along which lines the gospel is still carried. He goes on to recommend rural-to-urban kin networking (49). The author calls on evangelicals living in the city to speak against evil, injustices and oppression against the poor, widows, orphans and aliens. He rightly states that the "traditional faith of the homeland does not die easily" (100). Certainly we find this true in our cities, as we meet people preoccupied with protective charms against witchcraft.

Conn encourages urban ministries, when building appropriate Christian communities for the city, to multiply churches within the structures of tribe, caste, and language. "Cities are not melting pots; you need to establish churches according to people's likes."

Some important problems faced by urban pastors in Africa did not get treated by Conn. We want to know how to handle the mobility of our congregations, where many are tied so closely to their rural home church that they send their tithes there and return there for the important church festivals, such as Christmas and Easter. We need special help in the area of counselling and family problems. How should I as an African urban pastor deal with one-parent families, where father with one or two of the

children is working in the city, while mother with the rest of the children takes care of the "shamba" back home in the rural area. How should the urban pastor cope with ministering to a more sophisticated audience whilst his training often minimal. And, in the city where the pace of life seems so fast and so busy, what advice can be given to the urban pastor who wonders how he can accomplish enough within the given time that he has.

If Conn does not address these particular questions, nevertheless he does perform the useful service of explaining urban realities world-wide, so that we can see our own African urban ministry problems within that larger setting. And we in Africa must heed his challenge to see our cities not as places of refuge for evil, but rather as places where God is at work. I highly recommend this book for the libraries of all theological colleges in Africa.

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Contextualization of Theology: A New Sophism?
A Study of the Relationship between Theology and Culture
by Theodore B Witmer
(ThM thesis; La Mirada CA: Talbot School of Theology, 1986)
(available from the author: PO Box 21285, Nairobi, Kenya),
iv + 95 pages; US\$4 plus postage

A masters thesis is supposed to demonstrate the writer's mastery of the prevailing ideas associated with his subject. This Mr Witmer has done by interacting with the principal writers on culture and theology of current interest: Archer, Barney, Conn, Feinberg, Geisler, Hesselgrave, Hiebert, Inch, Kraft, Nida, Parshall, Radmacher, Stott and others of equal renown. African writers cited as serious theologians include Adeyemo, Ada, Bediako, Gitari, Kato, and Tienou. But since the most serious threats to historical Christianity in Africa are perceived as coming not from African but from Euroamerican theologians, these receive the most attention.

Mr Witmer, a lecturer at the Institut Supérieur Théologique de Bunia, Zaire, follows the theologian's tradition of defining categories, quoting sources, taking a stance, and showing its apparent superiority. After defining culture, theology and contextualization, Witmer expounds three major approaches to these factors, namely those of the dialectical contex-

tualizers, the inerrantists (his preference), and the ethnotheologians. Dialectical contextualization, a deliberate syncretism, lets culture determine the content of theology, Witmer says. As examples he cites the European Von Allmen and the African Gitari. The ethnotheologians he finds epitomized in the American Kraft, especially in the latter's Christianity in Culture. While starting with the Bible, this position lets the local culture determine what is important and which forms to preserve or adopt, provided that people's dynamically equivalent response to God is that which the Bible intended.

The inerrantists take the Bible as objective, unchanging, revealed truth, and are willing to adjust not their theology but the culturally sensitive expression and application of it. For Witmer the supracultural theological "map" has been reasonably codified in the historical formulations and creeds of the church. Thus "the goal of theology is to conform ever more completely and accurately to the map" (51). Preference should even be given to preserving the biblical forms as well as the meanings, with insistence put on the content of Scripture that is foreign to human cultures.

While this work is a helpful overview of the theological implications for attempts at contextualizing theology, it is not intended as a guide for doing contextualization. Indeed Witmer denies the apparent impracticality of his presentation by declaring that good theory is always of more practical use than bad theory. Perhaps this helps explain why the book is almost entirely without actual recent examples of attempts to relate theology to specific cultural situations, except for the more extreme cases such as Kraft's recommendation of Christian polygamy amongst the Higi of Nigeria. Witmer cites a few examples of cultural adaptation as practiced by the apostles, but seems to think that these concern only matters of Jewish diet, sacrifice and circumcision, while the apostles retained, as normative for all cultures, biblical baptism (which mode?), sexuality, monogamy and male leadership of the home. Local cultural issues, taken from Africa, are mostly mentioned only in passing, as for example: polygamy, spiritism, the Islamic state, and sacred sites. I will look forward some day to reading how Witmer might work out the practical implications of his perspective in real-life contextual situations. Addressing the dimension of application would certainly enhance the value of his contribution.

This inexpensive, spiral-bound edition consists of reduced-size copies of originally type-written pages. Some will certainly find the print a strain to read--any reprint should use less reduction. The 137 bibliographic references and numerous quotations make the book a useful source on the literature of contextualization. Those teaching courses in contextualization at theological schools in Africa will find this book helpful supplementary reading as they seek to clarify their own perspectives on the issues.

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The First Epistle to the Corinthians
The New International Commentary on the New Testament
(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987)
xxiv + 880 pages; US\$27.95

Readers of Gordon Fee's new commentary on 1 Corinthians will benefit in several ways from Fee's commitments and expertise. First, Fee is a believer, who brings to his study of Scripture a passion for truth and for obedience to God's Word. This becomes evident not least as Fee wrestles throughout the commentary with applications from his exegetical insights for the church today. Fee's commitments also involve an international perspective. For example, in recent years he has divided his time between teaching at Regent College (Vancouver, Canada) and teaching at various theological schools throughout the world. In fact, this pattern brought him to Nairobi, Kenya, in 1988, where he gave a memorable series of lectures on 1 Corinthians to students and staff of the Nairobi Fellowship of Theological Colleges. Second, to my knowledge Fee's commentary is the first on 1 Corinthians by a Pentecostal scholar. Since this is the letter in which Paul discusses spiritual gifts, readers will take special interest in how Fee comments on the relevant passages. Third, the author has international standing as a NT textual critic, so that his notations on the text of 1 Corinthians will attract particularly close attention. Finally, this commentary is the culmination of years of preparation for just such work. Fee has already written two books on how to interpret the NT (New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983]; and with Douglas Stuart, How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982]). He has also written a study-book on 1 Corinthians (for the International Correspondence Institute), and this is his second commentary on letters from the Pauline corpus (The Pastoral Epistles, Good News Commentary [San Francisco: Harper, 1984]).

As with the entire series, the intended audience for this commentary includes both scholar and student. The New International Version (with Fee's emendations) is quoted at the beginning of each section. Greek and Hebrew words are transliterated and translated in the text, but not in the footnotes. In each section the quotation of the passage is followed by a brief summary of the argument, a verse by verse exegesis, and an applica-

tion to the contemporary church. Fee leaves many traditional questions about 1 Corinthians (author, genre, date, provenance, integrity) to the standard NT introductions. Instead he focuses his introduction on the exigence of the letter, the constraints on the author, and the argument itself. In these areas Fee often takes an independent path.

Fee considers 1 Corinthians a complete rather than composite letter (although he shares with many commentators a strong reservation about the textual integrity of 14:34-35). Thus the same situation is addressed throughout the letter. The situation which Paul addresses is not, as is often argued, one of party factions, if by that is meant factions identified according to differing theological positions. Rather, the problem which Paul addresses is an anti-Pauline sentiment (hence Paul's defensive posture throughout the epistle--see especially chapters 1-4 and 9) which involves a dispute over the Gospel and Paul's own authority. This problem results from the Corinthian church's view of what it means to be pneumatikos (spiritual). Paul's authority is questioned on account of Apollos' ministry, and the church doubts that Paul's spiritual life measures up. Paul seems to them to vacillate on the matter of eating food offered to idols, and he has slighted the church by refusing their patronage. Thus Paul not only must defend his apostolic authority; he must also correct the Corinthians' understanding of what it means to be pneumatikos. They overemphasize speaking in tongues and have a faulty understanding of what constitute wisdom and knowledge in Christ. They have a spiritual understanding of the sacraments, thinking that behaviour has little effect on true spirituality. And in all this they are proud, have adopted a Hellenistic dualism by taking a dim view of the material world, and have a "spiritualized eschatology" (seeing the promised future existence as present here and now). In large part the Corinthians' error may be understood in terms of socio-economic divisions within Graeco-Roman society: Paul's refusal of patronage, the Corinthians' dabbling in sophia, and their abuse of the poor at the Lord's Table.

Fee's commentary is a model for evangelical scholarship. It is thorough, listing the various significant interpretations at each point and discussing all the exegetical issues for each passage. While no complete bibliography is provided, the footnotes offer an extensive bibliography together with very helpful commentary on the relevant literature. As he himself states, the commentary tries to incorporate the insights of the hitherto best commentary on 1 Corinthians, that by C K Barrett, along with the helpful historical and literary parallels to the text noted in H Conzelmann's commentary. The result is an excellent explication of Paul's argument along grammatical, contextual, and theological lines.

Perhaps Fee's interpretation of 1 Corinthians would have benefited from more in-depth attention to the contemporary literature of the period. For instance, neither Conzelmann nor Fee (except briefly on page 542, and with no reference in the ~~index~~ to extrabiblical literature) make reference to

Juvenal's sixteen Satires, which shed considerable light on the problems faced in 1 Corinthians (e.g. on the existence of adult male homosexuality, not simply pederasty, in the Graeco-Roman world, see Satires II and IX [cf. 1 Cor 6:10]; on the socio-economic stratification among guests at banquets, see Satire V [1 Cor 11:17ff]; on incest between step-mother and step-son, see Satire VI, lines 403ff [1 Cor 5:1]; on the sexual excesses within the society generally, not just Corinth, see throughout the Satires [1 Cor 5-6]; on the eating of idol meat on special religious occasions, see Satire XI, lines 77ff [cf. 1 Cor 8, 10]; on rising to positions of wealth from slavery, see Satire I, lines 101ff [cf. 1 Cor 7:21]).

The commentary is also a model for scholarship in that it clarifies the text so well. In particular, Fee repeatedly elucidates the grammatical and topical structure of the text in a most helpful way, often by arranging the text visually to illuminate the argument. Also, Fee is helpful in discussing differences among English versions. Indeed, the commentary includes a thorough review of the translation decisions of the NIV (on this point, note especially Fee's differences at 7:1,27; and 14:2,16).

Fee has ground-breaking insights on several of the interpretive issues of 1 Corinthians and ably defends his positions on controversial passages, while never failing to present the alternative arguments. He supports the minority position on 5:5, which understands Paul to argue that the immoral man should be put out of the church into Satan's sphere with the hope that he will turn from sin (so "destruction of the flesh") and be restored to the church. In 7:29ff Fee understands Paul to be distinguishing between anxieties of the world versus care for the things of the Lord, whether one is married or single (a new interpretation). In 8:1-13 and 10:1-22, Fee argues that the same issue is in view, that of eating idol food in temples (10:23ff addresses the eating of such food when purchased from the marketplace). While acknowledging that 11:2-16 is a most difficult passage to understand, Fee suggests that the underlying problem in Corinth is that women are expressing their spiritualized eschatology by failing to make distinctions between male and female--the issue has nothing to do with subordination of wives to their husbands or women to men (kephale Fee takes as meaning "source" rather than "headship").

To many readers Fee's understanding of chapters 12 through 14 will be of particular interest. Although merely to highlight some of his arguments and conclusions in this review really does them an injustice, I hope that the following notations may entice the reader to investigate the commentary with the care it deserves. Fee argues that 14:2-4 refers to spiritual tongues expressing prayers and praise to God, not to receiving a message from God. Thus he does not distinguish two types of gifts of tongues, one which is for private devotion (which every Christian ought to have) and one which is to be interpreted in the church (which only some Christians have)--it is the same gift. Also, he sees no basis in 1 Corinthians for suggesting that all should speak in tongues. However, he also

sees that Paul enumerates a sampling of gifts which the Spirit bestows on the worshipping community; that is, Paul is not suggesting that certain individuals have certain offices by virtue of their gifts. Some may have several gifts, and gifts are more the possession of the body of Christ than of individuals. Thus potentially all could prophesy (so 14:24f), and he could wish on all the gift of tongues for personal edification (14:5), but in fact not all have these gifts. Also, on the one hand, Paul opposes a cacophony of tongues in the assembly--it benefits neither believers nor unbelievers; but, on the other hand, in limiting the number of persons speaking in a tongue or prophesying in the assembly, he is not limiting the number of such occurrences per meeting but only the number of such utterances before an interpretation or weighing of the message is given (14:27ff). With these and many other insights, Fee calls Pentecostal, Charismatic, Reformed and Dispensational Christians to a better reading of the text, and perhaps a reading which will bring greater unity among Evangelicals on these matters.

Indeed, throughout his commentary on 1 Corinthians Fee calls believers from various theological traditions, from Catholic to Reformed, from Dispensational to Pentecostal, back into the classroom to hear again and aright the Word of God. Here is a commentary on a letter with much relevance to the Church throughout the world even today, and Fee has managed not only to show us what Paul was saying to a little church in the first century AD but also how it speaks to us today. In both these tasks he has serviced us with what is unquestionably the best commentary to date on 1 Corinthians. All theological libraries in Africa will need to have a copy, and staff and students will be wrestling with its contributions for years to come.

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Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road
J. Dudley Woodberry, editor
(Monrovia CA: MARC, 1989)
392 pages; US\$15.95

Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road is a collection of papers from the conference in Zeist, Netherlands, sponsored by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization in 1987. Like many collections, this one sometimes leaves the reader without a sense of unified direction and purpose, since multiple themes and objectives are covered by the nearly 25 prom-

inent authors, including well-known Islamicists Kenneth Cragg, Warren Chastain, Phil Parshall, Vivienne Stacey and David Shenk. But even with so many diverse viewpoints and topics, the reader does sense that significant questions are being attended to, and potentially helpful models and approaches advocated.

For those ministering in the African context, the work might be considered a bit of a disappointment. Africa, with one-fourth of the world's Muslim population, and perhaps one-half of the cultural expressions within Islam, is only barely represented in these articles, as the editor has us walk the Emmaus Road together with the authors and participants at the 1987 LCWE consultation. While a few of the authors have had exposure to Africa (notably Cragg and Shenk), only two of the authors are African (one an Egyptian), and only one article, "Social and Theological Changes in Conversion" by Tokumboh Adeyemo of AEAM, is rooted in the dynamics of Africa's socio-religious life. The remaining articles draw most heavily on the contributors' experiences in the Middle East, the Indian sub-continent, and Indonesia.

While the book is not targeted on the unique challenges of Islam in Africa, there are many helpful insights from other geographic areas which do have bearing on the African context. I found several chapters particularly insightful.

Kenneth Cragg's "Contemporary Trends in Islam" (chapter 2) is must reading for all. Though Islam will have regional manifestations and emphases, Cragg outlines many of the trends which are enveloping Muslim communities worldwide, and points towards an inner crisis of faith, secularization, and fundamentalism as increasingly dominant factors affecting the world of Islam and our understanding of it.

Paul Hiebert's "Power Encounter and Folk Islam" (chapter 3), more than helping the reader to understand the role of "signs and wonders" in ministry among Muslims (as many would expect from the title), encourages the reader to realize that Islam must be approached at the level of individual culture. Hiebert outlines with charts and diagrams (in typically helpful Hiebert-fashion) the cosmology of popular Islam, as well as the various levels of belief and practice within an Islamic worldview. His central theme is that "Islam focuses more on here-and-now concerns" rather than on ultimate ones, and thus the church worker must deal with the common people's felt needs, rather than getting caught up in doctrine and creedal statements.

Dudley Woodberry's "Different Diagnoses of the Human Condition" (chapter 8) helps the reader understand that when we talk about sin, salvation and atonement in Islam and Christianity, we might be using similar terminology but our words carry vastly different meanings. Muslims have a very optimistic diagnosis of human nature, and therefore generally see no need for

human nature to be transformed, merely guided. Woodberry skillfully outlines the Quranic narratives concerning the fall, sin, human nature, and judgment, and asks the question from these Muslim passages, "is not a person's appropriate response: 'God make atonement for me!'"

Chapters 13-16, all dealing with issues of contextualization (Old Forms and New Meanings), are highly recommended. Phil Parshall's "Lessons Learned in Contextualization" (chapter 14) and Rafique Uddin's "Contextualized Worship and Witness" (chapter 15) point to the need in every situation to make the gospel take root in the culture and experience of the local people. They advocate a contextualized lifestyle among missionaries; contextualized finance, since "many Muslims view externally financed ministries, even self-help programs, as unethical inducements towards proselytization"; and contextualized worship, including consideration of adapting Muslim salat (prayer) and saum (fasting) in Christian practice. While these are advocated, unfortunately the authors do not generally provide documented evidence concerning the outworking of these approaches, for example whether they contribute to heightened understanding among Muslims, whether they enhance the growth of the church, and whether they do not lead to syncretistic practices or claims by Muslims that "Christians can only copy Islam since they lack a superior faith."

While space does not allow a full critique of the remaining parts of this book, two other sections are worth noting. Three chapters (17-19) on Spiritual Empowering, especially the need for increased prayer for Muslims, spoke to me deeply, especially J. Christy Wilson's "The Experience of Praying for Muslims," where he states categorically "all the Muslim world will surely be evangelized . . . but the primary means will be prayer." Secondly, Warren Chastain's "Annotated Bibliography on Islam" (chapter 21) by itself is worth the price of the whole book. Over 250 books, in nine major subject categories related to Islam, are listed and described. This list, and especially section nine: "Christianity and Islam. Missions. The Message and Communication" should be carefully noted by serious students of Islam and utilized for additional reading, research and resource acquisition.

The book does contain minor typographical errors, as well as a major duplication of pages (pages 263 and 265). Otherwise, it is well produced and quite readable. The editor has wisely used a three-quarters page layout, reserving the remaining quarter-page column for helpful quotes and transitional sub-headings, which makes the material flow and helps the reader organize the material as he reads.

I highly recommend this book. While it should prove a welcome addition to the personal libraries of many EAJET readers, it is an absolute must for the library of any theological school in Africa, where preparation for ministry among Africa's nearly 250 million Muslims must be a significant aspect of our faithfulness to the Great Commission.

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The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today
by Wayne A Grudem
(Winchester IL: Crossway Books, 1988)
351 pages

What was the nature of prophecy in the NT? In what sense should it be practiced today? Those difficult questions divide evangelicals around the world, but especially in Africa, where many churches are built on the ministry of modern day prophets. For every pastor or theologian in Africa who has sought appropriate biblical responses to those questions, Wayne Grudem's book provides meaty food for thought.

Grudem, associate professor of biblical and systematic theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in the United States, offers provocative ideas from the very beginning of the book. The foundation of his thinking is that prophecy in the New Testament is different from, and has less authority than, prophecy in the OT. In both cases the source of the prophecy was a revelation from God. But in the OT God protected the words the prophets spoke and wrote so that the spoken and written words were the very words of God. This function of speaking and writing the very words of God was taken over by the apostles in the NT. These were the men who wrote the inspired Scriptures and provided the foundational authority for the Church

On the other hand, Grudem believes that "congregational" prophecy in the NT is something less than proclaiming the very words of God. From his exegesis of 1 Corinthians 14:29-38, Grudem points out that: (1) congregational prophecy was to be judged by the congregation; (2) some prophecies were intentionally neglected; (3) the prophecies of the Corinthian prophets were not the very words of God; and (4) the prophets of Corinth had less authority than the apostles. His conclusion is that "the prophets at Corinth did not speak with a divine authority of actual words, and were not thought by others to speak with an absolute authority." Rather, they were "speaking merely human words to report something that God brings to mind" (87, 89).

Grudem then compares this understanding of prophecy with the rest of the NT, including references to prophecy in Acts 11, 13, 19, 21; Matthew 10;

Romans 16; 1 Thessalonians 5; and 1 Peter 4. I found his analysis of Acts 21:4 especially convincing. How could Paul possibly ignore words spoken "through the Holy Spirit" and not be disobeying God, unless these words were the prophets' own (fallible) report of something God had brought to his mind? Grudem's conclusion is that NT, non-apostolic prophecy is consistently reporting a revelation of God in non-inspired, human words.

Grudem does draw a distinction between "congregational prophecy" and the prophecy exercised by the apostles. When the apostles exercised the gift of prophecy, they spoke with "absolute authority in the actual words used" (Grudem sees Ephesians 2:20 and 3:5 as referring to "apostles who are also prophets"). On the other hand, "ordinary congregational prophecy" carried no such "absolute divine authority" (110).

In the later chapters of his book, Grudem touches on other issues concerning prophecy. He says that prophecy in the NT is always based on a revelation from God; its is a recognizable, controllable idea that God suddenly brings to mind. Because a prophetic utterance is not infallible, it is subordinate to the teaching of the Bible. The purpose of prophecy is to encourage the church. The ministry of prophecy is open to all who have been given the gift (though all will not be given the gift), including women (since it is subordinate to the teaching ministry of the Word). And, perhaps most significantly, Grudem believes that this non-authoritative gift of prophecy continues today.

Grudem's position is very attractive, both from an exegetical and from a practical point of view. Most of his exegesis is thorough and convincing, though I did have a few questions. Is there really such a clear distinction between the judging of a prophet in the OT and the judging of prophecies in the NT? Is the difference in "apostolic" and "congregational" prophecy in the NT as clear-cut as he presents it? Was Agabus really making a minor mistake in Acts 21:10-11 when he said that the Jews would hand Paul over to the Gentiles, especially in light of Paul's own remark in Acts 28:17? (For further interaction with Grudem's exegesis, see D A Carson, *Showing the Spirit* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987] 93-100, where Carson supports Grudem's general thesis, but raises some specific questions regarding his exegesis.) Overall, however, Grudem's exegesis seems sound and he lays a solid foundation for his thesis. He has made a significant observation that is difficult to avoid: there was a kind of prophecy in the NT with sub-apostolic authority.

This is the significance of Grudem's book for churches and theologians in Africa. It presents a position that provides an acceptable middle ground for the understanding of prophecy. Those who have encouraged the practice of prophecy today have a deep desire to know that God can speak to them directly here and now, bringing specific guidance and edification through an awareness of God's presence. Those who have feared the use of prophecy

are concerned that its use threatens the supreme authority and adequacy of the Bible. Grudem's position addresses the concerns of both groups. Yes, God still speaks today. No, he does not speak in the same, authoritative way that he spoke through the OT prophets and NT apostles, except through the infallible, authoritative Word of God. Grudem's position allows room for the leading of God through continuing revelation, but subjects that leading to the overriding authority of the Bible.

African evangelical pastors and theologians need to pay careful attention to this book. If they find its ideas Scripturally sound, it will provide them with biblical balance and a place to unify on the issue of prophecy in the church today.

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Tender Memories
Arthur Luvai, Wanjiku Kabira, Barrack Muluka, editors
(Nairobi: Heinemann, 1989)
103 pages; Ksh 50/

This newly published anthology of Kenyan poems and short stories provides the reader with a refreshing reprieve from the heavily politically slanted themes that habitually characterize African literature, especially the novels and dramas. While the anguish of social and political conflicts has been compellingly depicted by a number of globally acclaimed African authors, it is worth remembering that the struggles of many ordinary men, women, and children are not necessarily solved by the transfer of political power.

Tender Memories has been compiled specifically to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the United Nations International Year of the Child. The 25 selections, all authored by East Africans, focus on fictionalized glimpses of a childhood that has left traces that cannot be obliterated. Wordsworth's famous paradox, "the child is the father of the man," is exemplified in memories ranging from moments of exquisite bliss to resurgences of sheer terror. While the poems and stories collectively demonstrate a wide range in terms of literary prowess or subtlety, all of the selections resonate one inescapable reality: the way in which children are treated in today's society will inexorably determine the kind of society we will have a few years from now.

Bringing this point even closer to home, our present society in East Africa is the distillation of the joys and pains experienced by the children of the recent past. The emotional range in *Tender Memories* is clearly exemplified in two of the finest poems in the anthology. Arthur Luvai's "Memories" demonstrates the nostalgic process of unearthing the past in almost exclusively positive terms:

I turn each leaf
Searching for the years that have gone.
Some in various stages of rich decay
Give off vague fragrance of the past (p. 90).

The persona concedes that he has tried "in vain . . . to make live the bitterness" he has experienced in the punishments of his "childhood pranks." The "humus" of his past is the residue of a "rich" boyhood; his recollections produce a "warm glow." At the other end of the spectrum is Leteipa Ole Sunkuli's starkly negativistic "Epistle to the World" (the first selection in the anthology), which portrays the brooding bitterness of a generation of juveniles whose childhood had been turned into havoc by the horrors of war. Disturbingly reminiscent of eye-witness accounts in Uganda a few years ago, the poem announces that children will, indeed, seek to avenge their parents' death:

Even five-year olds will be soldiers
They will be in the city by hundreds
To stand against those
Who wrenched childhood from them (p. 1).

An even more particularized legacy of such upheavals is depicted in J. A. O. Teiye's "Boy Soldier," whose pride in his flashing gun is metaphorically described as "a peninsula of love/In a sea of penury and death" (p. 60).

It is characteristic of twentieth century literature to focus on the darkness of a cloud rather than on its silver lining, and *Tender Memories* is no exception to this. Contemporary literature raises many questions, but offers few answers; problems are scrutinized carefully, but solutions are approached with either a simulated, or even genuine, cynicism if they are considered at all. Nevertheless, there is a divinely-mandated obligation for every thinking Christian to address the spiritual and social problems in his or her society. As a significant segment of the world's second largest continent, East Africa is not immune to the turbulent transition from a primarily rural to an increasingly urbanized society, with concomitant problems such as unemployment, fragmentation of family or tribal groupings, unfulfilled and unrealized aspirations, and severe moral deterioration. Many of these problems have been filtered through the minds of sensitive and articulate literary artists: consequently, it is impera-

tive that Christian theologians and scholars give serious attention to the writings of African novelists, dramatists, and poets, some of whom are represented in this work.

The disruption of the family unit and the resulting pain experienced by the children of the family shape the configuration of this anthology. Child abuse and child abandonment are graphically presented in Arthur Luvai's "Then and Now," Samuel Kimaru's "Forgive me, Parking Boy," and G. Gathemia's "Outcast." In Luvai's poem, a one room shack is the setting for the hurling of a baby "once for all/Against a real wall" (p. 47), while Kimaru and Gathemia focus on nameless street urchins who have been rejected by illegitimate parents. (There is a haunting parallel here to the "Chimney Sweeper" poems of William Blake, depicting the victimization of children in eighteenth-century London during the Industrial Revolution).

Perhaps the most disturbing feature of *Tender Mercies* is the recurring expose of an all too common problem in our society: the irresponsible father. The emotional and psychological devastation caused by the failure of fathers to contribute to the spiritual and economic needs of their families is treated with great seriousness in several of the major stories in this anthology. Both male and female authors, as well as the victimized child personae, make their appearance here, though in varying degrees of emotional intensity. Wanjira Muthoni's "Papa the Great" masterfully analyzes the unresolved tension between a young girl's idealized conviction that her "Papa was a very tall man, the greatest in the world" (p. 2) and her confused attempts to comprehend the reasons for his blatant affair with a young female companion and his desertion of his family. Even more heart-rending is Lydia Muchira's "The Search," a story that seems to lack focus until it is discovered that the emotional and mental collapse of the gifted protagonist, Betty, is traceable to a bizarre encounter with her father and a young girl stepping out of a shower-room at a discotheque.

The alienation between fathers and sons is treated with even greater literary subtlety, especially in Barrack Muluka's "The Dark House" and Samuel Kimaru's "The Giant." In his story, Muluka imaginatively interweaves motifs of light and darkness in his handling of the contrast between Nairobi's reputation as a place of light ("they said that there was no darkness there" p. 11), and the decrepitude of the slum dwelling in which Okusimba lives because his father is too lazy to provide kerosene for the tin lamp, their only source of light. The boy's spontaneously ambivalent feelings towards his father emerge at the latter's failed suicide attempt while leaping out of an upper window: "I hoped and feared he was dead" (p. 14). Kimaru's "The Giant" (a pseudonym for the father in the story) strikes an even more painful note when we discover that the persona-protagonist is given the name of the author. Young Kimaru "was never able to call him 'father'" (p. 21). The "Giant" is portrayed as a drunkard and philanderer who terrorizes his children and insults them

during his rare visits at home. In an ironic turn of events, however, the "Giant" is metamorphosed into a real father on his death-bed, when he attempts to make amends to everyone in his family for his previous profligate behaviour.

In sharp juxtaposition to the irresponsibility of fathers is the recognition of the enduring (and endearing) resourcefulness of mothers. In a delightful poetic tribute to his mother, Samuel Kimaru in "Palaver in Stones" portrays an African counterpart to "the virtuous woman" of Proverbs 31. The mother does all the work; she gathers firewood, makes all of the household purchases, prepares all the meals, does all of the housework, assists the neighbours, tells stories to the children . . . while the father indolently sits and does nothing (pp. 69-70). This traditionally tolerated disparity is, however, changing, though not without new problems and challenges.

The painful awareness of the conflict between the demands of tradition and the possibilities of the future is poignantly traced in Leteipa Ole Sunkuli's "They Sold My Sister" (p. 40). Set in Maasai, young Tumuka boldly announces to his father that since "the world has changed," it is not right for his sister to be sold to an old suitor for "a fat wad of notes" (pp. 40-41). Tumuka's protest fails, unfortunately, and the transaction takes place. The younger sister, the persona in the story, consequently resolves to run away when another similar scenario begins to take shape, and the story abruptly ends without a resolution. A counterpart to this selection is Wanjiku Matenjwa's "The Day," a somewhat rambling story of a female journalist who has achieved a measure of professional fulfillment, but is painfully cognizant of the contrast between her "spacious luxurious office" (p. 59) and the confined and shabby apartment where she lives, also in Nairobi, subjected to the foul odours and raucous sounds of crude neighbors. The difficulties and obstacles still facing enterprising girls in East Africa are frankly addressed by Wanjira Muthoni in her story, "The Struggle," and in her poem, "A Dream." In the story, young Njanja is harshly treated by insensitive female teachers and manages to escape the seductions of lustful male instructors before finally receiving a letter of admission to a national school, but "what a long and rough road!" (p. 103). In "A Dream," in a pleasing parody of Martin Luther King's famous phrase, Muthoni writes:

I have a dream . . .
That a day will come when my little girl
Will be judged by her brains
And her contribution to the world (p. 36).

The major limitation of *Tender Mercies* is not in what is portrayed, but in what is omitted. The harsh realities depicted in these poems and short stories ring with authenticity, and can be attested to by anyone who has eyes to see and ears to hear. What is disregarded, however, is the very

wide silver lining that surrounds the cloud. East Africa has, throughout most of this century, been receptive to the Gospel of Christ, and Kenya in particular has a higher percentage of professing Christians than most of the other nations of the world. While mere profession is not synonymous with genuine transformation, *Tender Memories* would have been more complete if the "memories" had acknowledged the impressive spiritual legacy of the countless godly African men and women whose footsteps have been followed by their children.

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