

Middle of the road solution for SA

THE PASSING SUMMER by Michael Cassidy. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989)

The author of the book is well-known in South Africa as an evangelist and preacher. His evangelistic approach together with his concern for the socio-political situation in South Africa, is a much appreciated combination.

He writes the book because he believes that there are genuine Christians on both sides of the conflict in South Africa. The result of this is that "in many ways, our political problem is really a religious and theological one, and to miss this is to miss a crucial component in the whole drama".

A definite purpose throughout the book is to explain to people that time is running out in this country of us. This is also illustrated by the title "The passing summer", as well as by the quote of Martin Luther King (jr), at the beginning of the first chapter:

"There is such a thing in history as being too late with the right answers."

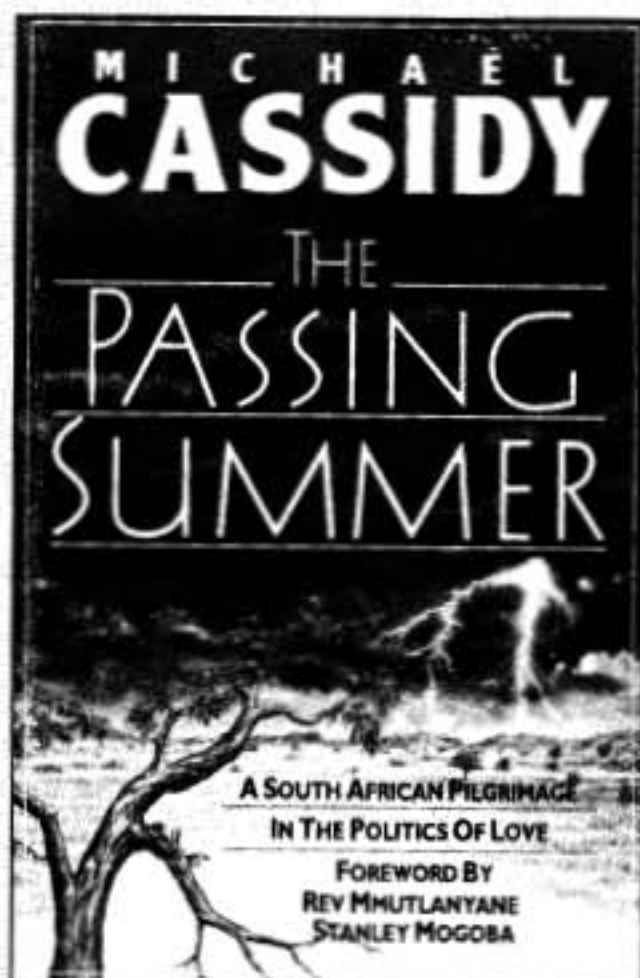
The writer gives us substantial background information about the historical situation in South Africa. He gives special attention to the conflict between the Afrikaner and the colonial powers. The book is definitely written in a wider context than just the South African situation. Especially for people outside South Africa, but also for many people in South Africa, it is important to understand the struggle of the Afrikaner in order to understand the roots of apartheid, namely colonialism.

Cassidy discusses the "fruits" of apartheid. He sketches the structural injustices and black protest. The results of Bantu education; detention without trial; race classification and forced removals are illustrated by telling the story of people who are personal friends of him. Although Cassidy gives a lot of hard facts about the political situation in South Africa in this chapter, it is the true stories about real people that give one an idea of the injustices in South Africa.

The first four chapters are historically inclined. The next concerns the task of the church in South Africa. Here Cassidy makes his own theological premises clear, namely that the church must understand God and his creation in a wider context. A misunderstanding of God and Christ results in a kind of Christianity that is so busy with the minor things that it becomes blind to the major things that happen around it. The church has a responsibility to connect the vertical and the horizontal; to seek a holistic ministry.

Cassidy gives attention to some of the important issues in the church in South Africa: the Kairos Document, black theology, black consciousness, ideology, military service, active resistance, civil disobedience, sanctions, communism and the relationship between church and state. Unfortunately some of his conclusions are oversimplified.

He attaches much importance to the concept



of reconciliation. This is a concept that causes much dispute in South Africa these days because of the way it is misused by many Christians in defence of the status quo. He tries to interpret it in a wider context and warns that if supporters of reconciliation in a society of conflict are not committed to dismantling unjust structures, it will further undermine the credibility of the church.

The question can still be asked whether Cassidy does not simplify the solution for South Africa by using reconciliation as "the easy way out".

The same critique can be held against the book as a whole. Throughout his book there is a sort of "middle of the road" trend. Cassidy makes it clear that there is injustice on all the sides and he delivers critique against all sides and at the end chooses the "middle of the road" solution of reconciliation.

In his last chapter he puts the socio-political situation in a wider perspective, namely eternity. Although most people will agree with his view, that there is more to life than the socio-political situation in South Africa and that we must keep the eternal perspective in mind, the emphasis in his last chapter gives the idea that he wants to tone down everything he wrote earlier.

Cassidy is an eloquent writer. He tells stories in much detail and with compassion, also being factual and entertaining at the same time. His passion for the gospel and justice is clear. To a certain extent he succeeds to integrate his evangelical and political views. In a country where the church has a tendency to separate its call for justice from its mission as a church, a book such as this is of utmost importance.

Although he makes controversial statements and many people would seriously differ with him, it is an important book for anybody to read, especially those members of society who call themselves Christians and are involved in the church.

□ Bobby Nel is a theologian and attached to the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in Cape Town.

Education for liberation

By Marian Shaer

Some 60 Cape Town women devoted a weekend in August to looking at constitutions: how they are made, what they should consist of and how they should be amended and be enforced.

In the opening address of the weekend conference which was facilitated by Idasa, Eleonore van der Horst, an advocate and chairperson of the Western Cape branch of the Women's Bureau, stressed that women represented 50 per cent of the adult population and that they should therefore play an important role in negotiating the political future of South Africa. She mentioned two prerequisites:

- Women should understand the long term implications and appreciate that there will always be conflicting interests which need to be balanced;
- Women should be familiar with the basic concepts of constitutions and constitution making.

Aptly, it was for these reasons the conference had been arranged. After the Harare women's conference in April, the Western Cape delegates identified the need to equip themselves with the tools needed by participants in the constitution building process. This was reaffirmed at the conference when a speaker encouraged delegates to make sure that it would be costly for the decision makers to exclude women.

Dr Dorothy Driver, a lecturer in English literature at the University of Cape Town, analysed the language of the ANC's Constitutional Guidelines, focusing on women in particular. Dr Driver concluded that although the document uses gender neutral terms, women exist in the guidelines only as mothers. A specific clause is included to ensure that "women have equal rights in all spheres of public and private life and the state shall take affirmative action to eliminate inequalities and

Pretoria's his

In June Idasa's Pretoria office, with a forum entitled "Resistance in Pretoria", launched a long-term history project. This project of re-writing the history of Pretoria will hopefully culminate in a conference and a publication in about three years' time. One might ask: Why re-write the history of Pretoria? Does Pretoria have another history?

The word "Pretoria" has too often and too long been used as a synonym for the word "government". People have been led to believe that Pretoria has but one face — the face of apartheid. They laugh when they hear you are having a meeting about resistance in Pretoria. "What resistance?" they ask.

With our meeting on resistance to apartheid in Pretoria we were introduced to a different Pretoria — Pretoria as a city with a history of resistance to apartheid and oppression. Mr Andrew Boraime, a housing consultant for Plan Act, explained how the government's urban policies over the last six decades disrupted the

or (women's)



Speakers . . . Dr Mamphela Ramphela (above) and Dr Dorothy Driver (right).
Delegates . . . Margaret Fourie, Hella Gobel and Denise Ackermann (above right).

discrimination between the sexes". Dr Driver asked why women need to be referred to specifically and whether it was because women were absent from the rest of the document?

Questions were asked on whether there should be nit-picking about full stops, commas and pronouns. Dr Driver referred to the Zambian constitution which does not include "sex" in its terminology when it defines discriminatory practices. If this small provision was made, it is argued, many of the discriminatory laws and administrative practices in Zambia would immediately have become unconstitutional.

Ms Rhoda Kadalie, lecturer in anthropology at the University of the Western Cape, provided a thorough backdrop of the oppression of women in South Africa. She explained that while men controlled women's work, sexuality and reproduction, women are oppressed. This subordination will end with the abolition of the sexual division of labour; when women are alleviated from the burden of domestic labour

and child-care; with the removal of all kinds of institutionalised forms of discrimination; the attainment of political equality and the freedom of choice over child bearing; the adoption of adequate measures against male violence and control over women.

Dr Mamphela Ramphela, an anthropologist at UCT, explained that these criteria can only be met if the "villain-victim" scenario was rejected. "Women often assume that the problem lies with men and forget that we actively contribute to creating this society."

Ms Kadalie extended the argument by explaining that there were forms of oppression and exploitation directly related to race and class, for example, domestic work, unequal pay, enforced contraception, migratory labour and forced removals, squatting etc. There were, however, forms of oppression that affected all women, albeit in different ways: perceptions among women of their duties in the home with regard to child-care; housework; servicing the needs of men; ideas of femininity; health care for women; issues of rape and abortion; violence against women and child abuse; lack of creches; child-care; paternity care and militarization.

In a forum featuring a cross section of views ranging from the positions of the Federation of South African Women to those of Career 2000, there appeared to be little hope that the participants would settle on a strategy to organise and unify women in a country so starkly divided by race and class barriers. Dr Ramphela stressed though that it was important to confront this issue — if the differentiation of power among women was ignored, consensus would not be based on reality and false expectations would be raised. Mrs Myrtle Witbooi, of the South African Domestic Workers' Union, cautioned against a preoccupation with categorising women. "We are all women of South Africa. I am a woman of South Africa. Don't put any clouds on me."

The necessity for women to be educated and organised, and to market feminism as a way of enriching humanity was reiterated in most workshop sessions. That women themselves were among those this message needs to reach was spelt out by several speakers, including



Photographs by Welma Odendaal, DIE SLUID-AFRIKAAN

attorney Sarah Christie, who reported the following incident as an example:

"A senior shop steward in a large factory was charged with the rape of a fellow worker and members of the shop stewards' committee were also apparently implicated. When the complainant reported this to the factory personnel officer, she was attacked by women at the plant who accused her of being a scab, or breaking the union."

Repeated emphasis was also placed on the fact that a constitution has to command broad-based respect to be successful. This made the need for education a priority.

Participants ended the conference by formulating two proposals to take back to their organisations: Firstly, that an information package be compiled which will reflect the conference proceedings and serve as a tool for education; secondly, the establishment of an extra-parliamentary women's commission to do research on the position of women in South Africa. The aim is to collect the information which will ensure that the necessary emphasis is placed on non-sexism in a new constitution for South Africa.

□ Marian Shaer is the Western Cape Regional Co-ordinator of Idasa

History rewritten

lives of blacks, but he also described how these policies resulted in resistance.

Township speakers told fascinating stories, for example a story of a potato boycott in Pretoria and one about the women's march to the Union Buildings. It became clear that there are many stories like these two — the problem is to find them and to write them down.

We hope that this project will lead the people of Pretoria to realise that they share a proud history of resistance. This recognition might lead to an increasing awareness that Pretoria can become significant in the process of change. By working together and writing together Pretorians will discover a wealth of resources, skills and enthusiasm.

Who knows, a new social history of Pretoria might stun people into never using "Pretoria" as a synonym for the word "government" again!

Lou-Marie Kruger
Pretoria Regional Co-ordinator