institutions. The animated discussions were about the crucial issues that were portrayed in the play but had also been exposed in the study.

As the reader might be aware, the book is rich with research knowledge that breaks new ground. I recommend the book for cross-cultural studies, African studies, educational psychology and rural development in the Third World, and all scholars who are interested in the impact of mainstream formal schooling on minority or underclass communities.

Department of Sociology
Bridgewater College
Bridgewater, Virginia, 22812, U.S.A.

MWIZENGE S. TEMBO


Charles Villa-Vicencio, Professor of Religion and Society at the University of Cape Town (currently on leave to serve as Director of Research for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission), has produced a fascinating book of interviews with twenty-one South African leaders.

These personalities make up a “who’s who” of prominent men and women who were involved in some way with the struggle against apartheid. In their conversations they speak of the values which shaped their understanding of politics. Of the subjects, six are atheists (Neville Alexander, Ray Alexander, Nadine Gordimer, Chris Hani, Govan Mbeki, Joe Slovo); eleven are professed Christians or sympathetic to Christianity (Cheryl Carolus, Frank Chikane, Sheena Duncan, Trevor Huddleston, Stanley Mogoba, Itumeleng Mosala, Nelson Mandela, Ruth Mompati, Beyers Naude, Albertina Sisulu, Desmond Tutu); one is a religious Jew (Franz Auerbach); two are Muslims (Fatima Meer, Ebrahim Rasool); and one is Hindu (Ela Gandhi). What is striking is the extent to which individuals from different faith (and non-faith) perspectives share fundamental values that inspired their political involvement and continue to shape their understanding of what a future South Africa should be. Emerging from these pages are story upon story of personal spiritual journeys travelled which become, as Villa-Vicencio puts it, “biography as theology” (xxix).

For Frank Chikane and Desmond Tutu, the link between Christian calling and political involvement is clear. “To be a Christian is to be engaged in struggle,” Chikane simply states (p. 63). He believes, “Theology ought to be on the cutting-edge of radical politics” (p. 64). For Tutu, the incarnation—the participation of God in the affairs of the world—means that we need also to be politically engaged in the world (p. 277).

Even the self-professed atheists in the group appreciate the contribution that religion can make. Neville Alexander argues, “I became a radical socialist because I was a radical and very sincere Christian” (p. 8). Chris Hani, also, emphasizes how his Marxist ideals were “a natural development of my Christian upbringing” (p. 120). As he sees it, Marxism is a secular expression of a biblical social vision. Joe Slovo explains that the Marxist critique of religion as an opiate is true to the extent that religion distracts the attention of the poor away from the causes of their oppression to a future reward in heaven. But “the religion of
Jesus is not an opiate,” the Sermon on the Mount coming very close to a socialist manifesto (pp. 267-268). The concern with the poor, which is at the heart of the Christian message, is compatible with the Communists’ emphasis on the marginalized worker, they agree.

The institutional church showed little awareness of the radical message of the gospel, however, and many Marxists fell away from the church. Explains Hani, “In brief, I came to the conclusion that the political organizations to which I belonged were doing far more than the church to eradicate these evils” (p. 119). The Communists interviewed nevertheless see no reason to crusade against a religion which they personally have rejected. “I know others who gain strength in their commitment to the very things to which I am committed as a result of their faith,” says Hani (p. 119). And Govan Mbeki remarks, “Who am I to suggest that their faith is not important? It has motivated them to be involved in the struggle for a better society. That is enough for me” (p. 169). Slovo admits that his interest in religion is “partly due to the liberating religious praxis of people whom I have come deeply to respect in the struggle” (p. 272). In fact, not all Marxists abandoned Christianity. Itumeleng Mosala counts Jesus and Marx (in addition to Steve Biko) as the greatest influences on his life (p. 210). And for Trevor Huddleston, socialism and Christianity only make sense together: “Socialism provides an economic programme, the gospel empowers, and together they constitute a vision” (p. 137).

Equally significant is the extent to which the believers interviewed respect the moral insights of non-believers. Chikane recognizes that there are agnostics and atheists deeply engaged in the fight against evil, and he is not interested in persuading them to adopt his religious views. “I sometimes think that what I experience as evidence of God’s existence is simply differently understood by others” (p. 68). Tutu acknowledges his deep respect for people like Joe Slovo and Chris Hani, whose funeral he officiated. Of Hani, he says, “He has done more for justice than most Christians” (p. 279).

Also interviewed were Muslims Fatima Meer and Ebrahim Rasool, who describe how their political involvement developed naturally from their religious upbringing. Yet they are both tolerant of other faiths and accept the universality of values. Meer explains, “I am a Muslim and find no need to look any further for spiritual resources. Others stand in different traditions and need to utilize their religious resources to develop their own human potential” (p. 181). Rasool believes that religion should inspire people to do the right thing, whether it is expedient or not. Values like “love, justice, decency, human rights, democracy, honesty, a decent education, housing, concern for the poor and so on... stand central to the Muslim religion, as they do to other religions” (p. 241).

Rounding out this volume are interviews by Stanley Mogoba and Ruth Mompati, who emphasize traditional African values as a source of their politics. The African understanding of “ubuntu” (the finding of meaning as individuals only within community) and the concomitant values it fosters, such as mutuality, compassion, and sharing, inform the politics of several of those interviewed, including Albertina Sisulu and Sheena Duncan, who see a compatibility between African tradition and the Christian gospel.

In these pages, one notices a deep and abiding tolerance—an ability to accept different beliefs and cultures—that was forged partly through common struggle. The coalescence of the social visions of Christians, Jews, Muslims, atheists, and communists who struggled together bodes well for the future unity of South Africans. But will those who fought a