

The Road to Forgiveness

Frank Johnson reviews *No Enemy to Conquer – Forgiveness in an Unforgiving World* by Michael Henderson.

In today's climate, when conflicts of every sort seem to cover the earth and hatred seems to be the chief motivator behind the violence we witness every day on our television screens, the voice of forgiveness has almost been drowned out. And yet, when that voice is heard, and sometimes it manages to break through the wall of hatred, its effect can be stunning. Why is the voice of forgiveness so stunning? Because it is in such stark contrast with the calls for revenge and retribution that are the normal response to injustice and violence. And yet, the only effective way to break a cycle of violence and hatred is through forgiveness. In theory this is all very logical and straightforward, but in practice, forgiveness often requires heroic courage and violence towards one's own natural sense of repulsion.

What is remarkable about *No Enemy to Conquer* is that it offers a vast range of real-life experiences of people who have managed to forgive, often in the most tragic and unjust of circumstances. These stories, carefully gathered by Michael Henderson, speak for themselves. They have no need of explanations or theoretical underpinnings. They come from all over the world and from the most diverse situations. There are far too many to mention here, but a few examples will suffice to make the point: Gee Walker, a mother from Liverpool, whose son was axed to death in an unprovoked racial attack; a Norwegian, former POW, who was able to forgive his Gestapo torturer; Benazir Bhutto, ex-Prime Minister of Pakistan, who forgave her father's killers, and who was eventually assassinated herself. These are just a few examples of this rich collection of moving human stories. But they are more than human interest stories; they are examples of how people in desperate and tragic situations are able to go beyond their natural and understandable reactions, to heal the wounds of injustice and hatred through forgiveness.

No Enemy to Conquer is a remarkable book because it doesn't moralise but simply let's the power of personal and group experiences of real situations go to work on the reader. It should be on the shelf of every politician and every individual who consider themselves committed to the cause of peace and harmony. It deserves as wide a readership as possible.

No Enemy to Conquer is available price £12.99 from good bookshops or from Marston Book Services Tel: 01235 465500.