

Faith, love key to long road ahead

BEYOND VIOLENCE, by Agnes Leakey Hoffmeyr (Grosvenor Books).

Quite a book by somebody who is very much more than just quite a lady.

Mrs Hofmeyr comes across as an immensely sincere person who has lived through personal turbulence which would have made many others bitter and twisted.

By birth a member of an illustrious family whose members include a world-famous anthropologist, and by marriage a member of an equally illustrious South African family.

The book is autobiographical, covering her life from her earliest years in Kenya where the father she loved dearly struggled as a farmer to keep body and soul together only to be sacrificed by Mau Mau to the gods of the movement.

Cold comfort, for Mrs

Hofmeyr to learn years later, from Laurens van der Post, that her father's sacrifice was "the greatest compliment" that could have been paid to him. Kikuyu policy being that "only the best is good enough for the gods".

The anecdotes of her years in Kenya, with her father and her relationship with him, are gripping.

The main theme of the book is forgiveness, compassion and love.

She has, through faith, managed to avoid falling into the trap of railing in blind anger against disaster and the Maker.

If the faith and love she so clearly exhibits could be communicated throughout South African life there would be no

problem with the future.

She sums the White-vs-Black situation in South Africa brilliantly: "There is a long road to walk together. There is at least as long a road to walk in the recesses of our hearts where human attitudes and eventually political realities are born.

She has great faith in the future, urging all people rather to ask "How much do I need forgiveness," than "How can I forgive."

It is a little handbook which poses a simple solution, in fewer than 100 pages. It should be made compulsory reading for every power-crazy, cynically-opportunistic politician, White or Black.

Keith Abendroth