

Spiritual Dimensions of Ageing

Our understandings of both ageing and spirituality are changing rapidly in the twenty-first century, and grasping the significance of later life spirituality is now crucial in the context of extended longevity. *Spiritual Dimensions of Ageing* will inform and engage those who study or practise in all fields that relate to the lives of older people, especially in social, psychological and health-related domains, but also wherever the maintenance and development of spiritual meaning and purpose are recognised as important for human flourishing. Bringing together an international group of leading scholars across the fields of psychology, theology, history, philosophy, sociology and gerontology, the volume distils the latest advances in research on spirituality and ageing, and engages in vigorous discussion about how we can interpret this learning for the benefit of older people and those who seek to serve and support them.

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Spiritual Dimensions of Ageing

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The Editors

MALCOLM JOHNSON is currently Visiting Professor of Gerontology and End of Life Care at the University of Bath. He was Professor of Health and Social Policy at the University of Bristol (now Emeritus) from 1995. Between 1984 and 1995 he was Professor of Health and Social Welfare and subsequently first Dean of the School of Health and Social Welfare at the Open University. His research and academic interests are wide, including the social aspects of health and illness, biographical studies, social policy analysis, death and dying and his major specialism, ageing and the lifespan. Of his twelve books and over 160 monographs, chapters and articles, more than half relate to ageing. He is a former Secretary of the BSA Medical Sociology Group and of the British Society of Gerontology and was Founding Editor of the international journal *Ageing and Society*. He is Director of the International Institute on Health and Ageing.

His books include: (with Gearing & Heller) *Mental Health Problems in Old Age*; (with Dickenson) *Death, Dying and Bereavement* (two editions); (with Bengtson, Coleman and Kirkwood) *The Cambridge Handbook of Age & Ageing*; (with Albans) *God, Me and Being Very Old: Stories and spirituality in later life*. An elected Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences (FACSS), Malcolm is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA), a Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America and a Founding Fellow of the British Society of Gerontology who gave him the Outstanding Achievement Award 2014.

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Bishop's Adviser in Adult Education in the Diocese of Guildford, where she had encouraged a focus on lifelong faith development and a special interest in the Church's response to older people's spiritual development. Previously, she held a lectureship at the University of Surrey in the Department of Educational Studies and established the first national educational resource centre for pre-retirement educators. She is a founding member of the Association for Education and Ageing, now in its thirtieth year, and has held roles of Secretary and Chair during this period. She remains Associate Editor (Reviews) for the *International Journal of Education and Ageing*.

In addition to chapters and articles in the educational gerontology field since the mid-eighties, Joanna published *Changing Concepts of Retirement, Educational Implications*, a textbook to support professional and postgraduate students in pre-retirement education and *Preparing for Retirement: The Employer's Guide* to promote good practice within organisations. Trained initially in sociology and psychology, an early interest in older people and later life led to employment as a policy adviser with Age Concern England (now AgeUK) and, following postgraduate studies in medical sociology, professional development work with the Health Education Council. Joanna's current research into spirituality, ageing and lifelong learning reflects her range of interests and experience.

Preface

From a faint glimmer in the eyes of the editors a plan was evolved to bring together international experts on ageing and spirituality and provide them with surroundings and a structure sufficient to enable significant discussion of their current thinking. The vision gained support, sponsorship and interest in a potential publication of the invited papers – all of which we are most grateful to acknowledge, since nothing could have taken place without them. The Symposium on Spiritual Dimensions of Ageing took place in Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park in the UK, with sixteen scholars from Europe, America and Australia.

Abstracts and first drafts of chapters had been received and shared, and the arrangement of the presentations was not dissimilar to the eventual order of appearance in this volume, as their common interests or approaches seemed to suggest. The huge value, as well as the pleasure, of hearing papers delivered lies in the interaction that ensues. This process was orchestrated both on the days of the symposium and extended as far as possible through recording, transcribing and further circulation of responses and suggestions. Participants were asked to identify key points of their own papers, and links with others', and to suggest themes for the book. All of this has fed into the chapters now before the reader.

The accumulation of expertise, combined with long experience and the wisdom that knows the limits of such knowledge, was powerful indeed and has left a lasting impression on those who participated, not least the editors whose dream had come to reality. We were grateful for the continued generosity of the participants, all of whom have subsequently revised their papers in the light of the discussions and made them available for this publication.

We are aware that spirituality and ageing is a field of study that draws on many disciplines, professions and philosophical approaches. It is also becoming more visible as an academic enterprise, though still widely distributed, so it seemed timely to bring together some excellent, but similarly diverse contributions. Our hope for the book is the encouragement and inspiration of contributions yet to come; for the benefit of our ageing societies, and the older people we wish not only to live alongside but also to become.

Acknowledgements

We wish to offer our warmest thanks to all who have assisted in the preparation and development of this book.

Generous support for the Symposium was provided by two important organisations committed to the spiritual wellbeing of older people:

Methodist Homes is a leading provider of care and support to older people in England, Scotland and Wales. In each of its Care Homes, Retirement Living Schemes and Retirement Communities, it employs a Chaplain to nurture the spirituality of its residents and to support staff and relatives, of all faiths and none (Malcolm Johnson is a Member of its Board). Its financial contribution is gratefully acknowledged and our special thanks go to the then Chief Executive, Roger Davies.

The Diocese of Guildford provided grant funding towards the cost of organising and hosting the Symposium at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor. It also sponsored the attendance of two of its Advisers: Joanna Walker (Adult Education) and Tony Oakden (Church and Community) and the use of audio recording facilities and subsequent transcriptions. We are grateful to the Bishop and Diocesan Secretary for supporting the vision of the Symposium in these practical ways.

Revd Dr Keith Albans is the Director of Chaplaincy and Spirituality at Methodist Homes. Keith was a major supporter of the idea of this book and the holding of a Symposium to bring together the chapter authors (of which he is one) in fruitful exchange. Keith has been a colleague and friend to both of the Editors for a long period, sharing the work of listening to the lives and reflections of people at the far end of life. We thank him for his friendship and encouragement.

Caron Staley is the Administrator of the Centre for Death & Society University of Bath. The Centre was the academic sponsor of the Symposium. Caron gave her considerable administrative skills to arranging the Windsor Symposium and the travel arrangements for those who made journeys from other countries. She also shared responsibility for recording the proceedings and providing transcripts to participants.

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Tony Oakden, Diocese of Guildford, provided technical assistance at all sessions, recording and subsequently transcribing presentations and discussions. Transcripts formed valuable resources to chapter authors and to editors, since they captured the linkages and discussion topics raised by the individual papers. We thank them both, sincerely.

Hetty Marx and Janka Romero have been our patient and supportive Editors at Cambridge University Press. We hope they will feel this volume rewards their professional and personal efforts to bring it to completion.

It is often the case that books have a long gestation period and this one has been no exception. They claim the time and attention of authors and editors, sometimes to the point of preoccupation. So we want to reserve special thanks and love for Christine Johnson and Chris Walker – our partners for the journey.