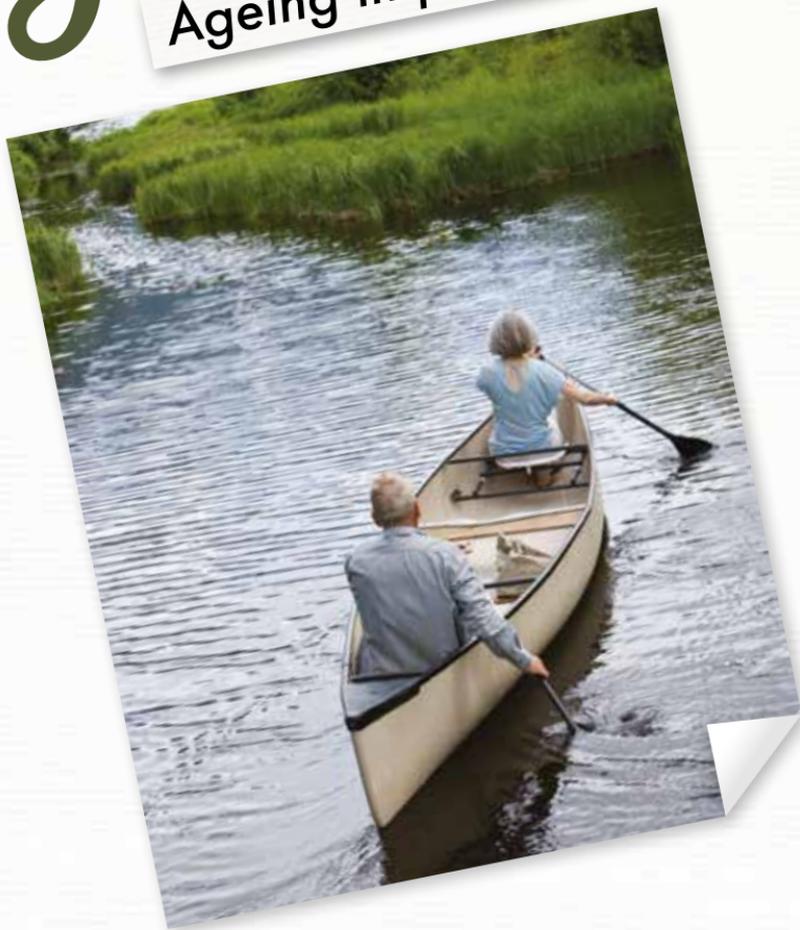


Harriet & Donald Mowat

The freedom of Years

Ageing in perspective



The Bible Reading Fellowship

15 The Chambers, Vineyard
Abingdon OX14 3FE
brf.org.uk

The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) is a Registered Charity (233280)

ISBN 978 0 85746 506 1

First published 2018

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

All rights reserved

Text © Harriet and Donald Mowat 2018

This edition © The Bible Reading Fellowship 2018

Cover images © Thinkstock

The authors assert the moral right to be identified as the authors of this work

Acknowledgements

Unless otherwise acknowledged, scripture quotations from the Good News Bible published by The Bible Societies/HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, UK © American Bible Society 1966, 1971, 1976, 1992, used with permission.

Extracts from the Authorised Version of the Bible (The King James Bible), the rights in which are vested in the Crown, are reproduced by permission of the Crown's Patentee, Cambridge University Press.

Every effort has been made to trace and contact copyright owners for material used in this resource. We apologise for any inadvertent omissions or errors, and would ask those concerned to contact us so that full acknowledgement can be made in the future.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

Harriet & Donald Mowat

The freedom of
Years
Ageing in perspective



Contents

Acknowledgements	6
Introduction	7
1 We are all ageing.....	10
2 What is ageing for?.....	24
3 Successful ageing: the story so far.....	47
4 The spiritual journey: making meaning	68
5 Attitudes to ageing: implications for spiritual care and support.....	84
6 The context in which we age.....	100
7 The discontents of ageing	113
8 'Clouds of glory': the second half of life and its spiritual tasks.....	133
9 Retirement: doing things differently	157
10 Practising ageing: choosing, believing, trusting.....	171
Notes.....	183

Introduction

Discussion of the 'ageing population' seems to be everywhere these days. We can't watch the news without hearing about pressures on emergency services, bed blocking or the rising costs of care homes. Politicians seem to struggle to define or agree on the 'problem': no one is sure which group of professionals is to blame. All of them agree that time and resources are in short supply. What are we to make of this very contemporary crisis in our Western world?

Taking a spiritual perspective arguably gives us a focus, and helps us move to the core of what is important to people. Ours is specifically a Christian perspective developed within the UK's health and social care services over the past 40 years; although we hope still to hold the interest of the secular reader, our national services have evolved in the 20th century out of a Christian culture in Western Europe and, despite the pressures of political correctness in the new century, it seems difficult to ignore these determinants.

Perhaps you visit a spouse or relative in hospital or a care setting? Perhaps, like us, you have begun to think about the nature of your own ageing: that, just possibly, in time to come, those 'old people' will prove to be us? Perhaps you work as a care attendant or nurse? Perhaps you are a volunteer, attached to a church and visiting elders from your community in such a setting? You may be a hospital chaplain, a vicar, or a bewildered and stressed social worker or medic. You may well have reached your 50s and beyond, and have started to think about your own ageing journey.

Angus and Josephine, fictional characters whom you will meet during this book, are, we hope, illustrative of the way different formative experiences confer different perspectives on life, shape

further life experience and potentially influence different health outcomes. There are many facets to ageing, and we take time in these pages to discuss the psychological and social aspects as they affect us as individuals in context, from early life attachments and through our attempts at personal maturation, to what is sometimes called 'successful ageing'. We talk about the contemporary social context that affects us and our lives in relation to family, to caring institutions and to professionals as we age, as gradually 'they' become 'us'.

What are we to make of things? We all search for meaning, through our own and one another's stories and narratives. As Angus and Josephine's stories unfold, perhaps alongside the stories of your own loved ones, we have an opportunity to think about ageing, its discontents and its effects on our own spirits and spirituality.

Why bother? Ageing is an issue long brushed under the rug, by politicians and by those of us (most of us) who prefer denial to facing reality. This book, we hope, will help you to develop the strength to deal with difficult feelings and difficult realities concerning the contemporary care of elders. Through knowing our ageing selves a little better, we will learn to look before we leap. We offer help here in understanding more fully the lives of our elders and the context in which those lives have been shaped and led, and in understanding better how to enhance what is already going well, without our getting in the way.

We hope that we have written a readable book, one which is robust when it comes to its basic ideas. We have tried, in the light of new knowledge in the field of neurobiology, to relate this to more generally accepted psychology and theology. This is a complicated area and deserves wider attention and debate in a society increasingly oriented towards work and materialism. The growing understanding that both psychological and spiritual phenomena arise from and are integrated in a biological context challenges the idea of distinctions between mind, body and spirit, which has dominated Western thinking for centuries.

Our book flows from the general to the specific, finishing with a summary chapter. The first chapter introduces Angus and Josephine, who accompany us throughout the book. We think initially about the way in which we understand ageing; in the second chapter, we look in more detail at what the purpose of ageing might be. Chapters 3 and 4 examine accepted ideas about successful ageing and the links between ageing and spiritual journeys. In Chapters 5 and 6, we build some social policy and political context around our ageing and current societal attitudes to this. Chapter 7 acts as a bridge into the second half of the book, focusing on some of the difficulties that we might experience as we age. Chapters 8 and 9 are grounded in what we come to call the 'second half' of life; we look there at the possibilities of doing things differently as we age, at how this can be encouraged and supported, and at the freedom that might result if, as chapter 10 concludes, we can put at least some accrued virtues into practice, and leave 'good stories' behind us.

Chapter 1

We are all ageing

Whenever I see someone, may I never feel superior. From the depth of my heart, may I be able to really appreciate the other person in front of me. Whenever I am with kings, presidents or beggars, I always remember we are the same.

You were born the same human way. There is no special way that bishops are born, and when the end comes, also you will die as a normal human being.¹

The old-age dilemma

Just before Christmas 2015, our beloved Labrador Holly had to be put down. Those who have loved dogs know how difficult this can be. Holly was an old lady with severe osteoarthritis. She had had a wonderful, trouble-free life with us for her twelve years; she had come to no harm and nothing unpleasant had happened to her, save the odd denial of a dog biscuit and occasional shout of fury as she shook herself all over us after being in the sea. She provided us and all our children with enormous quantities of love, amusement and joy over her life. We have always had two dogs at a time, and now we find ourselves with only one, with our equally beloved 'rescue' Labrador, Rupert. His life has not been as serene or assured; perhaps after traumas in earlier life, he came to us aged four, angry and distressed, and took a while to trust us.

We are all missing Holly, especially Rupert, and we show it in different ways. Rupert is quieter, we are a shade sadder and there seems to be something missing: something just around the corner

that we can't quite grasp – something not quite right. Of course, these feelings will pass, but the associated set of discussions and feelings prompted by Holly's death are highly relevant to this book.

Should we find another puppy? A new Labrador will probably live a similar time, between 12 and 14 years, and by that time we will be in our late 70s. What will our lives look like by then? Would it be 'responsible' of us to embark on adopting another dog 'at our stage of life'? When is someone too old to have a dog? We're quite sure we *will* get another dog, such is the emotional power of hope and joy over 'responsible and sensible' rationality. But the discussion we are having raises deeper questions about our ageing selves, and the degree to which we are all influenced in our decision-making by the stereotypes and assumptions associated with old age. It also makes us conscious of uncomfortable realities about the passage of time, and requires us to face up to our own ageing.

Questions of meaning

It seems that we all inevitably come, at some stage in our life, to the question of our meaning and place in the world. We begin to ask ourselves, 'What is life all about? What is it all *for*?' More pressingly, 'What has *my* life been about, and what does the future hold, both in this world and in any future life after death?' In most cases, this will be a revisit, probably, of the questions wrestled with in our youth in one way or another, as we propelled ourselves (or were propelled, if we lacked drive) into the wider world.

These questions, 'What is my life about, and what am I going to do about it?', are the key to managing and giving substance to one's life. We each have our different versions and timings of these existential questions, and of course we each respond differently to life's prompts. For most of us, these issues become sidelined by our movement into that middle period of life, where we seem to be swallowed up by worldly concerns. Our 'generative years',

as the Eriksons called them,² require us to look out to the world, to produce, to thrust ourselves forwards. In these middle years, we are ensnared in productivity of one kind or another. We get our meaning, if we have time to think about it, from our culturally agreed 'generative purposes', including educating ourselves, making money to live and thrive, buying houses, building lives with each other. We cultivate interests, we might produce children and care for them. We might care for our elders. But do we do all this thoughtfully, or simply according to economic vogue, to the politics and culture of the day?

Questions of meaning, mortality and death inevitably pop up throughout our lives, often from the unconscious in the form of dreams, shy reminders of what might be important. These questions often come unexpectedly, out of the blue, sometimes as a natural consequence of a response to life events. Perhaps a contemporary of ours dies, surprisingly and suddenly, and this causes us to think about our own death. It brings us up short, catches us unawares and reminds us of the reality of our own fragility. Our parents age: we watch them growing frailer, perhaps becoming more cautious and probably experiencing a variety of aches and pains or long-term disability, a portent perhaps for our own lives. Our parents die, and this causes us to consider our own ageing selves and our inevitable mortality. All around us there is a background media drone about the ageing population, about the difficulties and problems associated with ageing: we reluctantly, after much resistance, begin to think about our own personal ageing. We wonder *when* we should consider ourselves old. 'Is it about age or attitude?' we muse. The 'forever young' approach of the advertising world and the insinuations of the 'baby boomer' generation seem hollow, and collapse soundlessly in the face of practical realities, after the echoing assertions that we are 'worth it' die away.

It is part of our shared human condition and experience to ask these questions. How we respond and deal with such questions is the general subject of this book. The way in which our ageing helps

or hinders us in thinking about these questions of meaning is its specific context. We take the view that ageing is part of life, and requires us therefore to think about life and its meaning, a view shared with Helen Small, who writes simply: 'If we want to think differently about old age, then we have to think differently about life itself.'³

Our Christian perspective

We have written this book from our shared Christian perspective, which combines backgrounds in Church of Scotland and Anglican traditions. We hope that won't discourage people of other faiths, or those of no professed religious affiliation. In any case, our perspective won't be every Christian's idea of Christianity, and 'ours' does not claim any great authority, other than as an expression or outcome of our thinking, praying and searching over many years. We want this book simply to be one contribution, and a stimulant to thought about ageing.

Our initial idea for a title to hold together our ideas on ageing was 'living without triumph'. This concept has become central to our own thinking about living and ageing. The phrase is taken from a passage written by our friend David Ogston.⁴ David was a man of great sensitivity, joy, insight and agony; after his death, his wife, Meg, and his friend and clerical colleague Johnston McKay sifted through the treasury of his writings, creating two volumes of prayer, poetry and thought. David had been pondering upon what he called 'the refractions of Jesus': borrowing from John le Carré, he imaginatively categorises these as 'Tinker, Tailor, Soldier and Spy', writing about the changing ideas and realities of Christians as soldiers. The old references to 'onward', 'marching as to war', 'putting on the armour' and 'fighting a good fight with all [their] might', he feels, are increasingly less relevant and less understandable. Things are just not like that any longer:

This is not where the Christian is, not at all... Most of the time the Christian feels as if he or she is actually a member of some forgotten army... Christians are a timid and shuffling group who argue amongst themselves and get sidetracked with trivia, whilst all the while feeling they are on a great campaign.

He points out the tension and paradox between the Christians' love of triumph, and the knowledge and bitter experience of defeat. He refers to St Ignatius of Loyola's prayer:

*Dearest Lord, teach me to be generous;
Teach me to serve Thee as Thou deservest;
To give and not to count the cost;
To fight and not to heed the wounds;
To toil and not to seek for rest;
To labour and not to seek reward,
Save that of knowing that I do Thy will.*

This prayer, David Ogston suggests, describes what it feels like to be a lonely army of one. However, it is in the occupation of this loneliness, of this place of uncertainty, in thinking about where the battle is that the individual might deserve congratulation, might merit any sense of experiencing triumph. It is in the loneliness and the steadfastness despite uncertainty, in the battle within ourselves for meaningful peace or lasting sense of achievement, that the learning takes place. We learn eventually to live without triumph, without inflation, without hubris, without grandiosity. Instead, we are left with a sense that the collective good matters far more than our individual accomplishment. Those who can achieve *this* balance are those who are at last truly putting on the armour of God.

We have taken this analytic view and extended it to include the journey into ageing. David talks about the tensions within our hymns, our worship and our thoughts. When we are finally learning to live without necessary reference to worldly achievement and to its material trappings, we are 'living without triumph'. When we

can recognise and learn to resist the temptations of power, envy, vanity and gluttony, we are beginning to live by different criteria. Later we will refer to Richard Rohr's thinking about being *in the flow*,⁵ which also pursues the idea of living in relationship, rather than in hierarchical opposition to each other. We may dare to speak of 'putting on the armour of Christ' to enter old age, as we enter a dance with each other and with God. This will give us a chance to revisit and review our core beliefs. We will need help with this.

Christians who don't go to church

Our approach in this book has also been influenced by the recent discussions of and interest in the 'invisible' church.⁶ This is a term used by Steve Aisthorpe to describe people who are Christians but who do not attend church any more. Aisthorpe suggests that a significant group of people have a strong Christian faith, but either have stopped going to church or have rarely attended formal church. Most of this group are in their 50s and beyond. His book is a wake-up call to churches who focus on attendance as the mark of faithfulness, and who fix on youth policy as the one means of keeping church going. Linda Woodhead has written extensively on the phenomenon of declining religious adherence, and the rise in its place of alternative spiritual interest and 'no religion'.⁷

Aisthorpe and Woodhead's ideas of faith involving doubt and disbelief are not new, of course, but they alert us once again to the profound, compelling, lifelong and ever-changing nature of the Christian journey of faith, a journey ultimately inseparable from that of ageing. People do, it is readily observed, move away from institutionalised religious activity towards a more mixed economy of Christian and spiritual practices, and we might do well to see this as part of the Christian journey, rather than (through an arguably authoritarian lens) simply as a failure to adhere. We discuss in our conclusions the specific implications of this dilemma for the way the church might choose to act in relation to spiritual care for older

people who are disabled or incapacitated in some way. So, while we acknowledge the importance and centrality of church life and services to many, we attempt to think about Christian care more broadly, beyond the confines of church behaviours and practices.

Some difficult questions

Part of our search as ageing Christians is to find ways of ageing well and ‘successfully’. In Chapter 3, we think in a bit more detail about the ideas on successful ageing and the links to the ‘anti-ageing’ voice so prevalent in our society. This voice invokes memories of the myth of Narcissus, his self-absorption, his rejection of all external influences other than his compliant and cowardly companion, Echo, and his dependence on his mirrored reflection, which leads inexorably to his downfall. Myths exist to help us think. There is an understandable wish, as we age, to look for a recipe or a simple formulation, a way of ageing that will be successful for us without disturbing our comfort or our complacency: indeed, a whole field of social and medical research exists calling itself ‘successful ageing’, although thankfully the irony of this is not lost, and it is suitably critical of itself.

‘Successful’ is a rather problematic concept, in any case: one person’s success may obviously be another person’s failure. Is it, for instance, a mark of success to live a long life, making it to one’s late 90s? This must surely depend on quality of life. How do we measure this? Whose success are we marking? Is it that of genetics, social environment, family or even God? If a woman is confined to bed, unresponsive through advanced dementia, flexing in pain, finding daylight a trial, then one might argue that this is not a particularly successful ageing trajectory even if, as a centenarian, she can briefly or meaningfully glance across at a telegram. When do we stop counting birthdays? These ideas imply difficult discussions to be had, often resulting in decisions being deferred to clinical staff. One woman’s idea of quality of life may be the dread of another. Dare we ask: is it the destination or the journey that is important?

We are all heading to one destination: 'Dust you are and to dust you will return' (Genesis 3:19, NIV). This dust is our universal experience; we will all die, and we all age, no matter our age at death. How we journey to our death through life is, however, entirely unique, and we really are offered endless hope, possibilities of love and grounds for strengthening faith. Although there are many shared stages and paths along the way, the road that each of us ultimately takes is an individual one. And what we learn on the way is the vital thing.

Two approaches to ageing

In our research and clinical experience over the years, we have informally identified two very broad 'types' of agers: firstly, people who think about ageing, who make changes and who embark on an inner life, and, secondly, people who retain their midlife *modus vivendi*, thereby choosing to sustain what we might call the outward journey. Let's look at two differing examples.

Introducing **ANGUS...**

Angus is in his early 80s. He was recently widowed after 50 years of a happy marriage to his late wife, Sally. He has two children and four grandchildren, all of whom know, love and regularly maintain contact with him. He is financially secure and can afford holidays and treats. He spends a lot of time with friends, in the village in which he has lived for much of his adult life. He is a welcome invitee to parties and events. He is charming and amusing, as well as very accepting of others; he tells a good joke. He is well educated, good-looking and genuinely modest about his accomplishments and the considerable contribution he has made to village life. He enjoys social company and is very gregarious.

He has been a churchwarden, and he is still involved in the social life of the church. He goes to church every week but

admits, when pushed, to having little substantial 'belief'. His image of God is rather childlike: he pictures God as an old man on a cloud, a benign being but without much connection with his people on earth (God, not Angus, he laughs without any sense of irony). He has no idea where his wife is in her death. He hopes she is warm and comfortable.

Life has not demanded much reflection from Angus. Indeed, he says he is not psychologically minded. He finds that, although he can be cheerful and upbeat when he is in company, when home alone in the evening he cannot go upstairs to bed because of an overwhelming sense of loss. Nights are dark and lonely, and he is full of fear. He displays this by refusing to eat alone, for fear that he chokes when there is no one close by to help him. This fear reflects ancient memories of a fellow university student, who had made it through a difficult World War II only to die by choking on a biscuit as he sat alone in his digs. Angus' memory of this, and the accompanying anxiety, is reflected in a difficulty in swallowing generally. He is consulting the family doctor about this. Outwardly, he is 'great for his age'; inwardly, his spiritual journey is faltering and uncomfortable. He is discontented, he is frightened and he is profoundly lonely.

Introducing JOSEPHINE...

By contrast, let us think about Josephine, who is 96 years of age. She is a lay nun, belonging to an order that is scattered across the country. Her lay community is growing older and fewer in number, and they mostly communicate by letter or phone. Josephine has a degree from Cardiff, conferred between the two World Wars. She was a missionary in Africa for many years, living in difficult and challenging conditions. She never married or had children. Upon retirement, she lived in a van on the outskirts of a village before moving into her present rented accommodation as she became less mobile and consequently unable to drive.

She acted as vergers to the local church for years, responsible for locking and unlocking the church. She fell on the steps of the church because of increased frailty and broke her leg, which caused her final retreat into being housebound. Her living accommodation is an unmodernised two-room flat which contains an old sink, a scullery and a bedroom/sitting room. This has ill-fitting French windows that open on to an unkempt garden. Josephine loves the garden and encourages the wildlife into the house; mice, cats and birds are all welcome. She is incontinent of urine at night, and has cataracts that she will not have removed because she fears (understandably) that admission into hospital will precipitate an insistence that she move into residential care. The authorities, she says, are desperate to get her out of her home, whereas she wishes fervently to remain. She washes her own bedclothes by hand and dries them in front of her gas fire. She is accustomed to (and therefore unaware of) the smell of infected urine, which is overpowering to visitors. She knows that the district nurse team are worried about her safety, and are keen to move her on. She feels under siege.

She has good neighbours, who bring her soup and meals. Her daily living is a precarious balancing act. She has a home help, who does what she can. Josephine has a daily prayer schedule, which she performs as part of her religious community duties. This means that she insists that visitors and official 'help' must make an appointment to see her. Her relationship with God is tangible and very present. She is in control of herself.



Angus and Josephine are having different experiences of ageing, but also share the common threads that bind us together as we grow older. They are both experiencing loss of freedom, in one form or another. The response to this loss of freedom is very different in each 'case', as it is to some extent in the 'cases' of each individual we encounter.

We will revisit Angus and Josephine many times during this book and their stories will unfold as we do so.

Disassociation from ageing: managing our fears

Of course, our patterns of ageing reflect our patterns of living; the two are inextricably linked. The kind of personhood each of us exhibits in youth and in old age tends to remain constant, sometimes even when we have striven to make changes; personality, insofar as it can be measured (a practical possibility nowadays, many authorities assert), does not change very much over a lifetime.

Developmental psychology is helpful in providing a framework for us to think about our own ageing. Melanie Klein describes two extreme psychological positions adopted by people of any age, two psychological lenses that we use to occupy, understand and importantly to manage our world.⁸ First, she describes the ‘paranoid-schizoid’ position; essentially, this stance is a defensive position, where understanding of the world and ourselves within it requires judgement of others as good or bad, right or wrong. This is, of course, a very concrete way of our looking at the world, a view of the world that privileges certainty and absolutes. In this world, should she so choose it, an individual would tend to locate herself by way of comparison with others; for example, in this mindset, for me to think of myself as beautiful, slim and gifted, you would need to be less beautiful, less slim or less gifted than me; for me to be clever, you would need to be seen as being less clever, and so on. For me to be right, you must be wrong; for me to have the toy, you can’t have it. For me to be ageing well, you must be ageing less well. Even though we are the same age, I look so much younger than you do, and am therefore probably a better person than you. (An alternative mindset, we shall see, might of course acknowledge that we are both ageing individuals, doing the best we can.)

One of our grandmothers gave a classic illustration of this, while she was an elderly woman living in a care home. She insisted on our helping 'that old woman over there' who was struggling with her coat. While this made us laugh, what was really going on was that Grandma saw herself as different, specifically not the same as the other older woman, whereas we from our younger perspective saw these two older women as very similar. Identifying this difference between her and the other older woman was important to Grandma, and helped her feel good about herself. This goodness was dependent on not being as old or infirm as the others. Age itself became a bad thing, almost a moral failing. This way of seeing the world is very common.

Klein's theory of human development suggests that developmental maturation, rather like ballet, involves a shift to a second, less extreme position, where one can be more accepting of both similarity and difference. This second position Klein calls the 'depressive position': a more 'mature' position, which we can easily see seems more restful and less exhausting for all concerned. I can be beautiful and you can be beautiful too, but in different ways. I can share my toys with you without feeling compromised. I can be right or wrong about things, irrespective of what others think or feel. And there can be negotiation: I can, perhaps like you, be both a little bit right and a little bit wrong. My 'goodness' need no longer be determined by others' 'badness'. I can experience my ageing in various ways over time, without having to set myself up in competition with other ageing people. My world might perhaps be a little less exciting with this perspective, less combative and competitive; it also becomes a world of uncertainty and compromise, but it arguably offers a much more manageable, more peaceful and less exhausting psychological situation. Klein, of course, portrayed this as a dynamic, rather than a once-and-for-all shift, with individuals moving positions according to circumstances and stresses.

We can see how this dynamic is specifically applicable to ageing. For me to feel younger and good about my (possibly immature) self and

my unusually unwrinkled face, you must look older and have more wrinkles. Pressed by our Western culture, we all tend to think other people are ageing, while somehow we are not. For we, it seems, are 'worth it'. We spot people on television who seem to us to have aged (often once-famous actresses in ads for make-up), and we gladly persuade ourselves that we have not aged in the same way. It is only when we catch our former bloom in an old photograph or see our current image in the mirror, and find our mother or father looking back at us, that the reality of ageing momentarily looms up into consciousness, before being hurriedly repressed. Our sense of personal immortality is hard to lose.

It seems, then, that we need a sense of endlessness, of eternity, to plan and live in some sort of balance with our culture. We also need a sense of mortality, for just the same reason! Finding this balance is one of the tasks of ageing (see Chapter 8). Speaking to one of our daughters about what our situation might be in 20 years' time, and realising that one or both of us might well be dead by then, having lived full and healthy lives to 85, came as quite a shock to us. We seem to need to hang on to our immortality and to our sense of a unique position in the world. The fact that we are all ageing, that we are all the same, is a difficult lesson to learn. Of course, the truth is that although we are all the same, we are also unique – all entirely different in our experience of that same inevitable route.

In the next chapter, we will think in more detail about the nature of ageing, how the psychological arises from the biological and how it determines to some extent our experience of ageing. Eventually, inevitably, often reluctantly, we come to the question of our meaning and place in the world. What is life all about? What has my life been about, and what does the future hold, both in this world and after my death? It is best that we do at least some of this questioning before rushing to impose our half-baked ideas on others. For us to be well and to age well, things must change as we grow older. Our outlook on and approach to the world should alter. Should you doubt this, just imagine if we were condemned to remain as adolescents! We are

required to become resilient: resilience means being realistic, finding a meaning to our lives and being creative with our lives.

Carl Jung, psychiatrist and psychotherapist, said:

We cannot live the afternoon of life according to the programme of life's morning: for what was great in the morning will be little at evening, and what in the morning was true, will at evening have become a lie.⁹

Walking the ageing path together, old and young, carer and cared-for can tell their stories. Conversations help us to reinterpret the past, to understand more truly what happened to us in the light of another's opinion. Therefore, we talk to each other, and not just to therapists. We 'improve our biographies', to paraphrase James Hillman, an American psychologist who we will come to later. We can begin to understand the past and the future better and, more importantly, to live more fully in the present. Carers or cared-for, we must share the restless journey of our lives.

Endnotes

- 1 From Douglas Abrahams (ed.), *The Book of Joy* (Avery, 2016), pp. 207–208, which reports a meeting between Archbishop Desmond Tutu and His Holiness the Dalai Lama.
- 2 Erik and Joan Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed* (extended version) (W.W. Norton and Co., 1998).
- 3 Helen Small, *The Long Life* (Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 21.
- 4 David Ogston, *Scots Worship: Advent, Christmas and Epiphany* (St Andrews Press, 2014), pp. 10–14.
- 5 Richard Rohr with Mike Morrell, *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and your transformation* (SPCK, 2016).
- 6 Steve Aisthorpe, *The Invisible Church: Learning from the experiences of churchless Christians* (St Andrew Press, 2016).
- 7 Paul Heelas, Linda Woodhead, et al., *The Spiritual Revolution: Why religion is giving way to spirituality* (Blackwell, 2005).
- 8 See www.melanie-klein-trust.org.uk. This website introduces her work and key concepts and is a good resource for further enquiry.
- 9 Carl Jung, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8 'Structure and dynamics of the psyche' (Bollingen Series), p. 399, paragraph 784.



Transforming lives and communities

Christian growth and understanding of the Bible

Resourcing individuals, groups and leaders in churches for their own spiritual journey and for their ministry

Church outreach in the local community

Offering three programmes that churches are embracing to great effect as they seek to engage with their local communities and transform lives



Teaching Christianity in primary schools

Working with children and teachers to explore Christianity creatively and confidently

Children's and family ministry

Working with churches and families to explore Christianity creatively and bring the Bible alive

Visit brf.org.uk for more information on BRF's work

brf.org.uk

The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) is a Registered Charity (No. 233280)

This positive, affirming book explores and reviews the meaning and purpose of our lives. As Christians, ageing gives us the opportunity to deepen and even transform our spiritual lives. *The Freedom of Years* helps those who want to undertake the journey by examining the ageing task, the inevitable changes and the possibilities of joy along the way. Read this book, see the potential and seek to age in the light of your Christian faith.

Harriet Mowat is a social scientist and gerontologist. Her doctoral fieldwork was carried out in care home settings. She has contributed to the research and development of NHS Chaplaincy Services, and been an advisor to BRF in developing its programme *The Gift of Years*, which resources the spiritual journey of older people.

Donald Mowat is a recently retired general practitioner and an NHS consultant in Old Age Psychiatry.

Harriet and Donald have both been involved in dementia service research and development. They live in the north-east of England and are learning themselves to grow older and enjoy the freedom of their years.



Cover images © Thinkstock



brf.org.uk

The Bible Reading Fellowship is a Registered Charity (233280)