

A comprehensive guide to later life

AMONG my extensive collection of books on ageing I found "A Survival Guide to Later Life" which was kindly presented to me in 2004 by Marion Shoard. It has been much cherished and referred to since then. That her new book, **How To Handle Later Life** (Amaranth Books, £22.99), comprises 1,143 pages, almost twice as many as the previous one, is testimony to the changes in social care and so much else for older people over the intervening 13 years.

The scene is so complex and bewildering that we do need a reliable and comprehensive guide which this book certainly is. The cover describes the contents as covering "money, housing, diet, companionship, care, transport, health and happiness". The book is arranged in 12 parts comprising 41 chapters

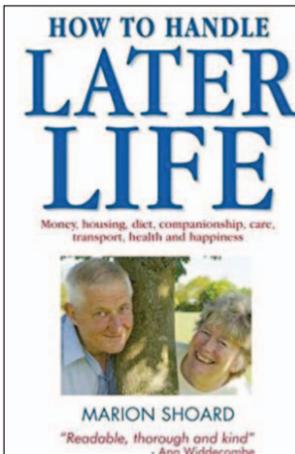
Valuable

Prior to all this there is a valuable introduction on "How this book works", which advises against ploughing through it at length rather than using the clear index, in which the key passages on any subject are indicated in bold-face, and to dip into it as required, though she does suggest that readers will benefit from taking time to read part one, some 80 pages in length, on "Growing older". Now aged 80, I endorse this as it paints a helpful background of the physical and psychological aspects of ageing.

As an experiment, I began

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by Albert Jewell



by looking up the references to a random cross-section of subjects, including vitamin D deficiency, macular disease, Parkinson's, universal credit and Lars Tornstam, the proponent of gerotranscendence. I was not disappointed! As my wife and I have recently struggled to remake our wills and set up powers of attorney, I can especially commend the clear advice the author gives on these matters.

Shoard addresses in a thorough-going and balanced manner the biggest concerns and decisions people face as they grow older. Where shall I live? How shall I manage financially? How will I be cared for when the need arises? What about end-of-life issues? The plethora of information and guidance offered is unequalled in any other publication I know. The detail is impressive, extending to the availability of all manner of gadgetry and equip-

ment and the valuable contribution that personal computers and having a pet can make to an older person's well-being.

As someone who has been involved in dementia care and research over the years, I find the author's chapter on this subject particularly impressive. Its 25 pages are essential reading not just for individuals and families for whom dementia is something they live with, but also for churches seeking to respond to the challenge of becoming more dementia-aware and dementia-friendly, as demonstrated by the example of St Stephen's church in Chatham in the case study found on page 237.

In a book produced for the general public one cannot expect too much emphasis upon specifically Christian matters. However, the valuable contribution of faith groups is recognised and the broad spiritual needs of older people in regard to being loved and valued, feeling secure and finding ongoing purpose in life are affirmed throughout.

As I see it, the one drawback of such a book is that inevitably the information, for example on pensions and benefits, social care and NHS provision, will change as time passes, sometimes quite rapidly. Hence the book is prefaced with a publisher's note advising readers that its contents are not a substitute for expert and up-to-date advice that readers should seek from qualified professional sources. As and when pub-

lishing becomes more digitised than it is at present, updating should become easier to make, as I doubt whether Marion Shoard would want to face writing yet another book of such a scale in a few years' time.

For those who are interested, details of the immense research involved in writing this book are given in the Notes section at the end of the book where there is also an appendix of "useful contacts".

Mainstream

As it stands, this book will be of great value to middle-aged and elderly individuals as well as to family carers of older relatives. As a great reference book it should be found in every public library. And since the age profile in mainstream churches, not least Methodist churches, is much higher than in the community at large, ministers' staff meetings, circuit resource centres (where they exist) and local church book-stalls would be well advised to possess a copy. It may cost almost £23, but at 2p a page it is well worth it. Don't be put off by its length and detail; it is truly "gentle and kind", in the words of Ann Widdecombe who commends it.

Now I must get on and read at greater depth those many pages that I have needed to skim over in preparing this review!

The Rev Dr Albert Jewell is a supernumerary minister in the Leeds South and West circuit and a former pastoral director of MHA.

When hip-hop moves in

Book review

by Tony Jasper

JOSEPH George, aka Joey G, has converted a dissertation for his Masters in Missions and Evangelism into a book that has the long title **Rap With a Mission: How Rap and Hip-Hop can be used in Missions and Evangelism** (£9.99 from www.lulu.com). His work bounces off 24 years working with 16-19 year-olds.

Hip-hop has been part of the mainstream market, yet has made little impact in the Christian world – he believes "many of the gate-keepers in the Christian community have resisted hip-hop because it is foreign to them".

He writes about the origins of rap and hip-hop and dissertates on its place and impact on youth culture. He examines rap/hip-hop in mission. He writes on page 63: "As the rappers engage with mission, they demonstrate the Church exists for God and others." He gives concrete examples, especially with the US based hip-hop crew Clique 116 and their trips to Haiti and Sudan.

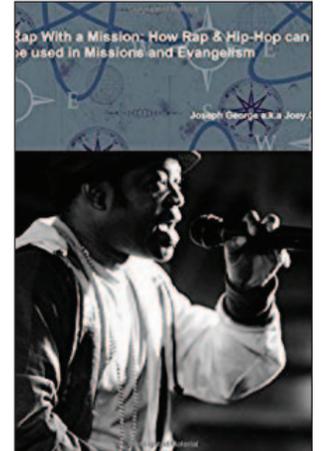
Along the way Joey G answers such questions as: "Is rap and hip-hop evil?" "Can hip-hop be Holy?" He is not oblivious (p 27) that some aspects of secular rap and hip-hop have encouraged crime, violence and misogyny.

Rap is predominantly male expression and it would be good to have fuller comment on this, as well as on the often said that it's hard for fully-dressed female rappers to find an audience, certainly those who follow Jesus. This impacts upon the question he asks on Page 66 as to "whether hip-hop is a worthy tool of communicating the Gospel". He might have said more.

Maybe he is unaware or thinks it fairly unimportant that in the 1990s there was strong Christian rap presence, especially via DC Talk and their acclaimed three albums of hip-hop to push the Gospel message and especially the Grammy award-winning album, "Free at Last". Their fourth, "Jesus Freak", took hip-hop into a mix of rock, grunge and pop. They gain no more than a mere name-check under

rap/hip-hop in the US (p 40). They sold into six figures!

He deals with the US scene where today Christian based hip-hop artists have infiltrated the mainstream and feature in the Billboard chart listings to include LeLeCrae, Drake, Rick Ross, Andy Mineo and Kendrick Lamar. In UK terms he writes well of GreenJade and the 29th Chapter and their success with British media and the general music scene.



Valuable

His chapter "The controversial issues about secular hip-hop artists" is particularly valuable. Here we can meet DMX and the so influential Kayne West. So lots of names, but these need to be brought together in a rap hip-hop record release guide that might have included secular input where there is a religious dimension, for that would be valuable. So, to, this being a book, an index is needed. However there is a good bibliography, but several major titles are missing and include: "Call Me Seeker" by Michael J Gilmour (Continuum) with Angela M Nelson's chapter on rap essential reading and chapter 15, "God in the Details" by Mazur and McCarthy (Routledge).

Joseph George, though, is to be praised for a valuable contribution.

Tony Jasper is Jesus Music and Beyond columnist for the Methodist Recorder.



The 'beauty and passion' of historic churches

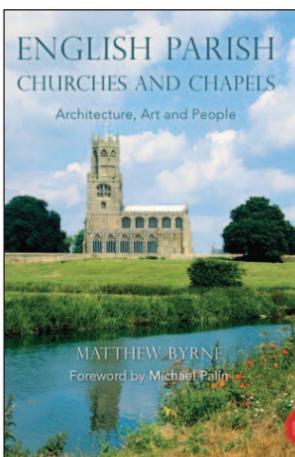
THE National Churches Trust (NCT) does valuable work in looking after and championing churches and chapels in the UK. Matthew Byrne's **English Parish Churches and Chapels: Architecture, Art and People** (National Churches Trust, £15) is a coffee table-style book that showcases the work of the trust in England where it has worked on the majority of those illustrated.

There are 26 churches featured starting with the Anglo-Saxon church of St Lawrence, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire, through the Norman and Mediaeval period up to the modern period with the Roman Catholic church of St Mary, Leyland, Lancashire.

It is a well-illustrated book with some stunning photographs of churches. Two that stand out are St Mary and All Saints, Fotheringhay, which sits as the River Nene flows past and St Thomas Becket, that stands all alone on Romney Marsh. There is also pl-

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by Keith Sellick



enty of photographs of the details inside these churches such as the Mediaeval carved panels at St Nonna, Altunun, in Cornwall, the wonderful interior and painted ceiling of the Baroque-style St Michael and all the Angels, Great Whitley, Worcestershire, and the Victorian-era vaulted nave of the red-bricked St Agnes,

Sefton Park, Liverpool.

The book includes some rarities and oddities such as St Mary at West Walton in Norfolk with its separate bell tower, the church of St Lawrence at Mereworth, Kent, which is really a copy of London's St Martin-in-the-Fields transposed to the countryside, and the Arts and Crafts stained-glass windows made by William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones at St Martin, Brampton, in Cumbria.

Simplest

Methodism is featured with the large chapel of St John, St Austell, built in 1828 with a portico taken from a locally demolished mansion and built to seat a congregation of 650 both downstairs and upstairs. The size of St John contrasts with the Quaker meeting house of Come-to-Good, also in Cornwall, built in 1710 and looking like the most simplest of cottages with its lime walls, thatched roof and at-

tached stable for worshippers' horses.

This book is in no way a history of church architecture, there are too few in number to cover more than 1,000 years of buildings and some regional styles are omitted all together (no Somerset towers for example). However, the 26 on display show the skill, beauty and passion invested in these buildings and pose questions that the author's text aims to answer about the sort of congregations that built and maintained them in the face of social, demographic and environmental pressures.

Byrne has provided a picturesque book that reminds us that the repairs carried out by the National Churches Trust (and also the Historic Churches Preservation Trust, which was also involved in some of renovations featured) stand in a line that links them to the work of earlier congregations.

Keith Sellick is a freelance writer.