



Old Age in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Contexts

Symposium 1 and 2 June 2022, Protestant Theological University in Amsterdam

Radboud University



Protestantse Theologische **Universiteit**

How did the various Jewish and Christian communities in the ancient Mediterranean world respond to the observed and/or imagined psychosomatic changes associated with old age? How was old age (in)formally signified in these respective communities? What social roles and attendant responsibilities, constraints, and privileges, were afforded the elderly? What sort of norms and values were associated with senescent identifications?

Abstract

This symposium, therefore, strives to map out the many conceptual varieties of old age among a diverse group of texts and contexts, particularly those coded as Jewish or Christian, but with the understanding that these communities and their discourses are part and parcel of a much larger historical and cultural continuum in the ancient Mediterranean world, broadly conceived. The speakers are invited to reflect on old age as it pertains to any number of literary, historical, and cultural settings, including (but not limited to): the body and the senses; social structures and social roles; ethics, morality, and behavior; theological and/or cosmological speculation; the construction of the self and group identities; etc. Bringing scholars of various disciplines together, the conference aims to offer more nuanced understandings of how ancient Jewish and early Christian conceptualizations of old age can be contextualized in the ancient Mediterranean world, perhaps even teasing out how such views may have developed along diachronic, geographic, or cultural lines. Of particular interest is how these studies may speak to the complexities of early Jewish and Christian identity formations from the Second Temple period through Late Antiquity. The symposium will be complemented by a formal, keynote lecture by Mira Balberg and Haim Weiss, whose recent study on "old age" in Rabbinic literature (*When Near Becomes Far*, Oxford UP 2021), has made a groundbreaking contribution to this under-researched area of inquiry.

Programme

Wednesday, 1 June, 19:00-20:30 (Virtual)

- 19:00-19:10 Opening
- 19:10-20:10 Mira Balberg, "The Ageless Self and the Selfless Age" ([register here for the online lecture](#))
- 20:10-20:30 Discussion



Thursday, 2 June, 09:15-17:00 (On Location)

- 09:00-09:30 Informal opening
- 09:30-09:40 Opening by A. Oegema and S. Bledsoe
- 09:40-10:50 Old Age & Masculinity
- 11:10-12:20 Old Age & the Family
- 12:20-13:30 Lunch Break
- 13:30-14:40 Old Age & Wisdom
- 15:00-16:45 Social Status of the Elderly
- 16:45-17:00 Final Words
- 17:00 Reception & light hors d'oeuvres

Registration

To attend the symposium on location, [please register via this link](#) by 25 May 2022 at the latest.

For questions or inquiries about the Symposium, please contact Seth Bledsoe (seth.bledsoe@ru.nl) or Albertina Oegema (a.oegema@pthu.nl)

Hosts/Organizers:

Dr. Albertina Oegema, Protestant Theological University, Amsterdam

Dr. Seth A. Bledsoe, Radboud University, Nijmegen

Date: Wednesday-Thursday 1 and 2 June 2022

Location: Protestant Theological University, Filmzaal. (De Boelelaan 1105, 1081 HV, Amsterdam)