

Growing Old in Christ. Edited by Stanley Hauerwas, Carole Bailey Stoneking, Keith G. Meador, and David Cloutier.
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Reviewed by Johan D.Tangelder.

We live in a generation where adults embrace all that is youthful and avoid anything associated with their age. Everything that is young is good, and if you are older, you may be irrelevant. Many of the elderly even suffer from the forever-young syndrome, a denial of aging. They want to look and act young, judging by the way they dress. They put a premium on youth and surface beauty, rather than acknowledge our aging as a gift from God. Aging is paradoxical.

We all want to live longer but none of us want to grow old. Aging is associated with the fear of dependence, the fear of abandonment and neglect, and the fear of death.

How should Christians look at aging? *Growing Old in Christ* is one of those rare books that treats in depth the phenomenon of aging from a Christian perspective. Its contributors explore how aging has been seen in Scripture, in the early church, in the Middle Ages, and in contemporary life. The volume is divided into three parts. The essays in Part I, "Biblical and Historical Perspectives on Aging," focus on scriptural, early church, and medieval perspectives on growing old. Since old age in the early church was attained by a few rather than the many in the early church, it was considered a gift. Nowhere in the Bible are the elderly pitied, patronized, or treated with condescension. They are seen as bearers of wisdom by virtue of their age. The essays in Part II, "Critical Perspectives on Modern Problems of Aging," examine modern views of aging, which often take the form of a fear of aging and of the aged. We should not see aging as an evil that we are to fight. Part III, "The Christian Practice of Growing Old," gathers constructive accounts of Christian practices that not only confront modern understanding of aging but also sustain the gift of a long life by providing meaning, solace, celebration, and challenge. We should live each moment of time in its fullness, as disciples of our Lord, witness to the truth, even if such witness bearing may lead to death. In old age, as throughout our lives, we must continue to pursue the way of service, conforming our own lives to the self-giving patterns of Jesus.

Furthermore, we can look death in the face without fear, because we trust in the promise of the resurrection. The contributors also show the importance of friendship building between the elderly and youth.

Since the volume is written by a team of Christian thinkers from various theological backgrounds, our Reformed readers will certainly have their disagreements with some of their perspectives. But the discerning pastor and professional caregiver will find the essays valuable and insightful.