

Presenter: Leonard V. Rutgers, Utrecht University

Title: **“Early Christianity and the Rise of Anti-Judaism in Europe”**

Panel: Ancient History

Anti-Jewish sentiments run deep in European history. This paper investigates the origins of such feelings. More specifically, it looks at a foundational chapter in the genesis of anti-Jewish rhetoric, by studying the dynamics that shape discourses on the Jews by the theologians of the early church. During a time when religion became the single most identifier in society, early Christian thinkers rapidly turned Jews into the quintessential other. As a result of this Jews were now pushed into the role of marginalized outsider. This development—which occurred during the transitional period that saw the demise of a lenient Roman Empire and the rise of a set of early Medieval Christian successor states—would change the history Jewish/non-Jewish relationships in Europe forever. This paper explores how and why this happened. It will conclude by detailing the manner in which this process represents a crucial phase within the larger history of anti-Jewish sentiments—one whereby the emergence of hate speech vis-à-vis the Jews soon turned into a fundamental first step towards creating a society in which actual hate crimes against Jews became a sad, yet all too prevalent fact of life.