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CAMBRIDGE CENTRE FOR
CHRISTIANITY
WORLDWIDE

Webinar

**A 'Syncretism of Piety': Imagining Global
Protestantism in Early C18th Boston,
Tranquebar and Halle**

**Wednesday 4th May 2022
4 - 5.30pm (BST), Online**

Speaker:

Prof. Jan Stievermann

Professor of the History of Christianity
in the United States,
University of Heidelberg



Register to join: please email
centre@cccw.cam.ac.uk

The lecture will discuss a transoceanic network of churchmen that involved the Boston Congregational minister Cotton Mather, the leading Lutheran Pietist August Hermann Francke, several of the latter's associates in Halle and London, and Halle-sponsored missionaries in the Danish colony of Tranquebar, India. Prof. Stievermann is going to pursue the question what this network (which existed from circa 1710 into the 1730s) reveals about how the idea of a "Protestant religion" evolved as a theological construct, and how "Protestantism" as a category of religious identity came to have meaning and resonance across denominational and linguistic divides. As the lecture will propose, through the Boston-Halle-Tranquebar exchange, "awakened souls" from Anglo-American Reformed and German Lutheran churches converged toward a conservative but dogmatically minimalistic understanding of the Christian religion that combined an intensely Christocentric, biblicist, and experiential piety with an activist-missionary and eschatological orientation—a package which was now equated with being truly "Protestant" or "protestantisch," respectively. This reflects how the historical development of "Protestantism" intersected with larger philosophical and theological debates about "religion" and the different "religions" of humanity that involved Enlightenment thinkers as much as awakened Christians.

Jan Stievermann is also Director of the Jonathan Edwards Center Germany. He has written books and essays on many topics of American religious history and American literature, including a comprehensive study of the theology and aesthetics of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Schoeningh, 2007) and *Prophecy, Piety, and the Problem of Historicity: Interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures in Cotton Mather's Biblia Americana* (Mohr Siebeck, 2016). In the scholarly edition of the Biblia Americana manuscript, he is responsible for volumes 5 and 10, and serves as the executive editor of the whole project. Among other multi-authored volumes, he co-edited *A Peculiar Mixture: German-Language Cultures and Identities in Eighteenth-Century North America* (Pennsylvania State UP, 2013), *Religion and the Marketplace in the United States* (Oxford UP, 2014), *The Oxford Handbook of Jonathan Edwards* (2021) and *The Handbook of American Romanticism* (2021).