



The Early Modern Section of the Research Group Polycentricity and Plurality of Premodern Christianities (POLY)

Frankfurt Lecture on Pathways through Early Modern Christianities

Tuesday 29 June 2021
6–8 pm CET, Zoom

Alexandra Walsham (Cambridge):
“Generation: Age, Ancestry, and Memory in England”

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, “generation” was a concept with many meanings rooted in Scripture: a moment of origin and birth, a body of descendants, a group of coevals, or the time period needed for children to grow up, become adults, and have offspring of their own. Yet, despite its pervasive presence in contemporary discourse, historians have been slow to recognise the potential of the concept of ‘generation’ as a key to understanding the evolution, fragmentation and pluralisation of Christianity in the early modern world. This lecture explores the value of this term for investigating the Protestant and Catholic Reformations in England, c. 1500–1700. After all, these were movements that did not merely extend across multiple generations—they were also transformed by them. By approaching the historical generation as both biological unit and social cohort, I aim to shed fresh light on the nexus of theology and lived experience and on intersections between families of faith and families of blood. Located in the present yet oriented towards past and future, generations served as both artefacts of memory and vehicles for eschatological thought and action. Today, they may help us explain religious change while escaping the trap of teleology as well as the genealogical paradigms that have long dominated the writing of religious history.

Registration for the online-event at:
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