

## Dr Jonathan Willis BA (Hons), MA, PhD

Lecturer in Early Modern History

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### About

I am a historian of the English reformation, with an interest in the history and theology of late-medieval and early modern Europe more broadly. My research focuses on the religious and cultural history of England over the course of the long-sixteenth-century.

### Qualifications

- PhD in History, University of Warwick
- MA in Religious and Social History 1500-1700 (Distinction), University of Warwick
- BA (Hons) (First Class) in History, University of Warwick

### Biography

I joined the Department of History at Birmingham in September 2011 as Lecturer in Early Modern History. I grew up in Sprowston, just outside the city of Norwich in Norfolk, and studied history as an undergraduate at the University of Warwick, where I remained for my MA and PhD studies, as well as teaching on the BA and MA programmes there. Following the award of my PhD in 2009 I spent six months as an early career fellow at Warwick's Institute of Advanced Study, and in 2009/10 I lectured in reformation history and theology at Durham University's Department of Theology and Religion. Between September 2010 and August 2013 I held a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship (for one year at Durham, then for two years at Birmingham) for a project entitled 'The Ten Commandments and the English Reformation.' I formally took up my post as lecturer in early modern history at Birmingham in September 2013.

### Teaching

During 2014-15, I am teaching on the following courses:

#### Undergraduate:

- First Year: core course, 'Reformation, Rebellion and Revolution: the Making of the Modern World'
- Second Year: autumn and spring options, 'Reformation and Rebellion in Tudor England'; dissertation preparation
- Third Year: special subject, 'Protestants, Papists and Puritans: Religious Change under Elizabeth I and James I'; dissertation supervision

#### Postgraduate:

- I convene the MA Renaissance, Reformation and Early Modern Studies, the MRes Early Modern History, the MA History of Christianity and the MRes History of Christianity
- I teach on the courses 'Religious Reformations in Britain and Europe' and 'Writing the History of Christianity'

### Postgraduate supervision

I am interested in supervising research projects on most aspects of the social, cultural and religious history of reformation-era England, especially concerning questions of theology, popular belief, religious practice, Puritanism, parish religion, material and musical cultures, and religious education.

I have been/am currently involved in supervising MA dissertations and PhD theses on the following topics:

#### MA Dissertations:

- 'The doctrine-making of 1537-8: the "Bishops' Book"'
- 'The material significance of stringed instruments in the domestic environment in early modern England'
- 'The Early Elizabethan Voyages of Exploration'
- 'Female virtue and the ideal woman as presented in seventeenth-century English funeral sermons'
- 'Divine wrath and punishment: a warning to mankind'

#### PhD Theses:

- 'The changing interior of the English parish church, 1560-1640'
- 'Representations of Hell in Post-Reformation England'
- 'Early English Drama and the Supernatural, 1530-1642'

## Research

My research explores the nature of religious, social and cultural change during the period of the Reformation, both in the lofty realm of doctrines and ideas, and also in terms of the effect of religious change on the lives, values and beliefs of the great majority of the people; who lived and died without ever reading, much less writing, a work of sophisticated theology. On the most fundamental level, I am concerned with questions of belief and identity, and the relationship between the two.

My doctoral research looked at the relationship between church music and Protestant religious identity formation in England during the reign of Elizabeth I. This involved considering the philosophical and theological origins of ideas about music, as well as a detailed exploration of the practice of music-making in key religious sites, the parish and cathedral church. I also explored the ways in which music was used as a tool of religious instruction, propaganda and devotion, as well as its ability to foment both harmony and discord in a range of different communities. A monograph and a number of essays and articles stemming from this research are either already published or in preparation for publication, and this is an area in which retain an active interest.

My current research project, for which I was awarded a three-year Early Career Fellowship from 2010-2013 by the Leverhulme Trust, is on the Ten Commandments and the English Reformation. The Commandments were a vitally important text, little known for most of the middle ages due to the pre-eminence of the Seven Deadly (or Cardinal) Sins. All that changed around the time of the Reformation. In England especially, the Decalogue rapidly became ubiquitous: a staple of religious education, church decoration, liturgical invocation, theological speculation and moral instruction. Taken separately, the commandments speak to some issues of enormous significance for early modern belief and society – iconoclasm, violence, criminality, gender relations – but, taken together, the Law of God also assumed a central role in determining the new Protestant interpretation of key theological concepts such as faith, good works, justification and sanctification.

## Other activities

I regularly speak at conferences and seminars in Europe and North America, and I am a member of Birmingham's Centre for Reformation and Early Modern Studies (CREMS), for which I currently manage the [website \(http://www.crems.bham.ac.uk/\)](http://www.crems.bham.ac.uk/) and [social media \(https://twitter.com/CREMS\\_bham\)](https://twitter.com/CREMS_bham).

I am a member and also (for 2011-2015) General Secretary of the [European Reformation Research Group \(http://www.errg.org.uk/\)](http://www.errg.org.uk/) (ERRG).

I am a frequent reviewer of books for journals including *English Historical Review*, *History*, *Journal of British Studies*, *Reformation and Renaissance Review* and *Journal of Early Modern History*.

I contribute to a collaboratively-authored early modern blog, [the many-headed monster \(http://manyheadedmonster.wordpress.com/\)](http://manyheadedmonster.wordpress.com/).

### Some recent conference papers:

- September 2014. 'Illustrating the Ten Commandments in Post-Reformation England.' *Reformation Studies Colloquium*, Murray Edwards College, Cambridge.
- May 2014. 'Music in the post-reformation parish church: a theme and variations...' *Warwick Symposium on Parish Studies - Parish Soundscapes*, University of Warwick.
- April 2014. 'Picturing the Ten Commandments in the Post-Reformation English Parish Church.' *The Ten Commandments in medieval and early modern culture*, University of Ghent.
- October 2013. 'Keeping it Holy: Remembering the Sabbath in Reformation England.' *Sixteenth Century Studies Conference*, San Juan, Puerto Rico, US.
- June 2013. 'Which sin is it anyway? Constructing morality through the Ten Commandments in Reformation England', *Sin and Salvation in Reformation England*, Shakespeare Institute, Stratford-upon-Avon.
- October 2012. 'Reforming the Decalogue: Painted Commandment Boards in English Parish Churches in the Long Sixteenth Century.' *Sixteenth Century Studies Conference*, Cincinnati, Ohio, US.
- September 2012. 'Music and the Reformation in England'. *Luther im Kontext*, Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt, Weimar, Germany.

### Some recent seminar papers

- 16 October 2014, 'Picturing the Ten Commandments in the Post-Reformation English Parish Church.' *Thursday afternoon seminar*, Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham.
- 20 November 2013, 'The Ten Commandments in the Post-Reformation English Parish Church.' *Early Modern British and Irish History Seminar*, University of Cambridge.
- 3 May 2012. "'Our Schoolemaster Unto Christ": Evangelical uses (and abuses) of the Decalogue in Reformation England.' *Religion in the British Isles 1400-1700 Seminar*, University of Oxford.
- 24 January 2012. 'Puritanism and Music in Post-Reformation England.' *Institute of Medieval and Renaissance Studies Seminar*, Durham University.

## Publications

### Monographs

- Jonathan Willis, *Church Music and Protestantism in Post-Reformation England: Discourses, Sites and Identities* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

### Edited volumes

- Jonathan Willis and Elizabeth Tingle (eds), *Dying, Death, Burial and Commemoration in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Britain and Europe* (Ashgate, forthcoming).
- Jonathan Willis (ed.), *Sin and Salvation in Reformation England* (Ashgate, forthcoming).

### Articles

- Jonathan Willis, 'The Decalogue, Patriarchy, and Domestic Religious Education in Reformation England', in John Doran and Charlotte Methuen (eds), *The Church and the Household* (Studies in Church History vol. 50. Woodbridge: Boydell, 2014), pp. 199-209.
- Jonathan Willis, 'Nature, Music, and the Reformation in England', in Peter Clarke and Tony Claydon (eds), *God's Bounty? The Churches and the Natural World* (Studies in Church History vol. 46. Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), pp. 184-193.
- Jonathan Willis, "'By These Means the Sacred Discourses Sink More Deeply into the Minds of Men": Music and Education in Elizabethan England', *History*, 94.3 (2009), pp. 294-309.

### Essays

- Jonathan Willis, 'Repurposing the Decalogue in Reformation England', in Dominik Markl (ed.), *The Influence of the Decalogue: Historical, Theological and Cultural Perspectives* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), pp. 190-204
- Jonathan Willis, 'Protestant Worship and the Discourse of Music in Reformation England', in Natalie Mears and Alec Ryrie (eds), *Worship and the Parish Church in Early Modern Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 131-150.

- Jonathan Willis, "A Pottle of Ayle on Whyt Sonday": Everyday Objects and the Musical Culture of the Post-Reformation Parish Church', Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (eds), *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 211-220.

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