

Revisiting “Puritan” Names in England, 1550–1600

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Puritan names

C.W. Bardsley:

We must at once draw a line between the Reformation and Puritanism. Previous to the Reformation, so far as the Church was concerned, there had been to a certain extent a system of nomenclature. The Reformation abrogated that system, but did not intentionally adopt a new one. Puritanism deliberately supplied a well-weighed and revised scheme (Curiosities of Puritan Nomenclature, pp. 42–43).

Bishop Corbett brought it as a distinct charge against the Puritans, that they loved to select the most unsavoury stories of Old Testament history for their converse (p. 71)

D.K. Dodge:

It is popularly supposed that most of [Puritan given names] come from the Old Testament, especially from the minor prophets (“Puritan Names”, p. 467).

Bardsley's Characteristic Puritan Names

Phase 1 (Genevan Bible on): “the Hebrew invasion”

- Biblical names

Phase 2 (mid-Elizabeth-I): “scriptural phrases, pious ejaculations, godly admonitions”

- Virtue names
- Phrase names

No such thing as Puritan names. . .

- Percy Scholes: Puritan names were very rare.
- Anne Harris's study of two Midlands parishes: No 'eccentric' Puritan names.
- Nicholas Tyacke: "most forcefully dispelled what might be termed the 'Bardsley myth'" (Smith-Bannister, p. 4)

...but *Protestant* names

- Prior to 1600 it *is* possible to identify a new style of Protestant names.
- Reformation: not only in England, but also on the continent.
- Same trends in naming patterns amongst the Dutch and the French as well.
- Of the names Bardsley identifies, only phrase names could be said to be specifically Puritan (and post 1600).

Sources

The names of 20,000 people between 1500 and 1600 in England, France, and the Low Countries, taken from data collected for the *Dictionary of Medieval Names from European Sources*, <http://dmnes.org>, primarily:

- English parish registers
- *The Registers of the Protestant Church at Caen*, volume 1: Births & Marriages 1560-1572, ed. C.E. Lart. (Huguenot Society of London, 1908)
- *The Marriage, Baptismal, and Burial Registers, 1571 to 1874, and Monumental Inscriptions, of the Dutch Reformed Church, Austin Friars, London*, ed. William John Charles Moens. (Lymington: Privately Printed, 1884).

Biblical names before the Reformation

- Medieval mystery plays: Adam, David, Samuel, Noah, Judith, Eve, Esther
- 1395: Wycliffite translation of the Bible.
- 1560: translation of the Genevan Bible.

Protestant names: Old Testament women

“The Hebrew invasion”:

| Name | Dutch | English | French |
|---------|-----------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Abigail | 1571–1597 | 1567–1580 | 1563 |
| Deborah | 1574–1595 | | 1567–1568 |
| Esther | 1573–1599 | 1546–1599 | 1561–1589 |
| Eve | | 1189–1381; 1598 | c823–1301; 1561–1568 |
| Judith | 1571–1598 | 1551–1599 | 1015–1173; 1561–1571 |
| Michal | | 1577 | |
| Naomi | | | 1564–1571 |
| Orpah | | 1541 | |
| Rachel | 1573–1597 | 1558–1588 | 1562–1570 |
| Rebecca | 1571–1597 | 1571–1594 | 1567–1568 |
| Ruth | | 1587–1597 | |
| Sara | 1572–1599 | 1185–1381; 1549–1599 | 1147–1301; 1562–1570 |
| Susan | 1571–1599 | 1189–1450; 1530–1599 | c823–1296; 1561–1595 |
| Tamar | | | 1564–1570 |

Protestant names: Old Testament men (part 1)

| Name | Dutch | English | French |
|----------|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Aaron | 1585–1599 | 1185x1186; 1582 | 1563 |
| Abednego | | | 1565 |
| Abel | | 1189–1222; 1598 | 1179; 1561–1588 |
| Abraham | 1572–1599 | 1563–1599 | c823–1378; 1561–1571 |
| Absalom | 1590 | 1155–1222 | 1133–c1156; 1565 |
| Adiel | | 1593 | |
| Assuerus | 1577 | | |
| Amos | | 1569–1576 | |
| Asa | | | 1564 |
| Benjamin | 1571–1599 | 1587–1598 | 1561–1567 |
| Caleb | | 1573–1578 | |
| Daniel | 1133; 1312–1371; 1540–1598 | 1189; 1545–1599 | c823–1588 |
| Eleazar | 1585 | 1597 | 1113–1124; 1563–1571 |
| Enoch | 1589 | | |
| Ezekiel | | | 1561 |
| Gabriel | 1572–1598 | 1548–1599 | 1313–1587 |
| Gamaliel | | | 1565 |
| Gideon | 1571–1598 | 1593–1596 | 1562–1588 |
| Hezekiah | | | 1565 |
| Isaac | 1572–1599 | 1222–1280 | 1378; 1562–1570 |
| Isaiah | | | 1560–1570 |

Protestant names: Old Testament men (part 2)

| Name | Dutch | English | French |
|----------|-----------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Israel | 1573 | 1597–1599 | c823; 1571 |
| Jeremiah | 1571–1598 | 1564–1599 | 1147–1164; 1562–1571 |
| Jesse | | 1570 | 1565–1567 |
| Job | 1578–1584 | | |
| Jonas | 1576–1588 | 1587 | c823–1123; 1563–1590 |
| Jonathan | 1597–1599 | | |
| Josaphat | | | 1565–1567 |
| Joshua | | 1551 | 1564–1566 |
| Josiah | 1591–1595 | 1573 | 1562–1571 |
| Meshach | | | 1563 |
| Mordecai | | | 1563 |
| Moses | 1572–1585 | 1189–1194; 1279–1280; 1560–1596 | 1563–1588 |
| Nathan | | 1567 | |
| Noah | | 1582 | 1565–1566 |
| Ruben | | | 1566 |
| Sampson | | 1155–1256; 1577–1594 | 1143–1392; 1561–1565 |
| Samuel | 1571–1598 | 1185–c1450; 1550–1599 | c823; 1563–1589 |
| Shadrach | | 1583 | |
| Uriah | | 1585–1587 | |
| Zachary | 1572–1599 | 1155; 1420; 1584–1599 | 1115–1126; 1561–1571 |

Protestant names: New Testament women

Names of non-Hebrew origin (not *just* the Hebrew invasion)

| Name | Dutch | English | French |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------------------------|
| Dorcas | | 1573–1592 | |
| Lois | | 1587 | |
| Lydia | 1589–1595 | | |
| Magdalene | 1580–1598 | 1548–1598 | c823; 1561–1587 |
| Martha | 1597–1598 | 1541–1599 | 814–823; 1274–1292; 1561–1571 |
| Phoebe | | | 1566–1568 |
| Priscilla | 1589 | 1564–1598 | |
| Sapphira* | | 1571 | |
| Tabitha | 1574–1575 | 1571–1599 | |

* one of “New Testament names, whose associations are of evil repute”
(Bardsley)

Protestant names: New Testament men

Non-apostle names

| Name | Dutch | English | French |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Ananias* | | | 1565 |
| Cleopas | | 1596–1599 | |
| Crescent | | 1584 | 1292 |
| Epaphras | | | 1565 |
| Joachim | 1573–1598 | | 1378–1587 |
| Theophilus | | | 1565 |
| Timothy | | 1541–1594 | 1565–1568 |
| Titus | | 1573 | |
| Tobias | 1572–1599 | | |
| Zacchaeus | | 1588 | 1567 |

* “Ananias had become so closely associated with Puritanism, that not only did Dryden poke fun at the relationship in the ‘Alchemist’, but *Ananias Dulman* became the cant term for a long-winded zealot preacher” (Bardsley).

Protestant names: Virtue names

| Name | Dutch | English | French |
|------------|-------|-----------|-----------|
| Charity | | 1540–1599 | |
| Faith | | 1566–1598 | |
| Grace | | 1530–1599 | 1287 |
| Hope | | 1598 | |
| Memorantia | 1583 | | |
| Mercy | | 1560–1591 | |
| Opportune | | | 1564–1570 |
| Patience | | 1595 | |
| Pleasant | | 1559 | 1179–1571 |
| Prudence | | 1340–1598 | |
| Sapience | | 1597 | |
| Temperance | | 1575–1583 | |

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