

“Historical” Dates in Medieval Liturgical Calendars

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Introduction

First and foremost, medieval liturgical calendars record occasions of liturgical celebration, for example, Easter, the “birthday” of a saint into heaven, the birth of Jesus or of John Baptist. The actual dates of the events being celebrated is secondary or even entirely unknown; precise chronology usually is not a major concern. In addition, however, liturgical calendars might include other types of calendrical information; individual calendars vary widely in this regard.

Here I consider two types of “non-liturgical” calendar entries. Thus some medieval liturgical calendars included items that are primarily “historical” in character and that are not intended for liturgical commemoration or celebration. The use of quotation marks here is intended to indicate that these dates were understood in a historical sense; whether their information is accurate by modern historical standards is another question, not considered here. Such “historical” dates are found in some, though not all, medieval liturgical calendars.

A consideration of such dates may be of interest to those using medieval liturgical calendars. As the dates in question are mostly biblical in origin or inspiration, they also show a concern for biblical roots. Finally, they provide further evidence for the richness of the medieval imagination.

First I identify the “historical” dates included in a number of medieval liturgical calendars and indicate the relatively frequency of their inclusion. I also provide some information on the rationale on which at least some of these dates were chosen. Finally, I give evidence that such dates were still remembered in later Anglican tradition, even though they were never actually included in liturgical calendars.

Finally, and at a more practical level, I also briefly consider calendar entries that indicate the earliest and latest dates of Easter and related feast days.

Documents Studied

My study was based on a sizable collection of medieval liturgical calendars that were at hand and easily accessible. Of these, 62 included one or more “historical” dates; roughly another twenty did not do so. Short titles and full bibliographic data for these are presented, in alphabetical order, in the *Appendix*. Only short titles will be used in the text.

“Historical” Dates

The following “historical” dates have been identified in the medieval liturgical calendars studied. The resurrection of Christ and events associated with it are listed first; they are the most common. Other dates from early Christian history are given next, following by dates of events of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament; First Testament). One nonbiblical date (foundation of Rome) is included as well. I repeat that these are dates that were thought to be when the actual, historical events happened.

March 27	Resurrection of Christ
March 25	Crucifixion
March 26	Christ’s Descent into Hell
May 5	Ascension
May 15	Pentecost
January 9	The Lord returns from Egypt
February 15	The Devil leaves Jesus
March 25	The Death of James

March 18	First Day of the World
March 18-24	The Seven Days of Creation
March 23	Creation of Adam
March 16	Noah enters the Ark
March 16	The Flood
April 29	Noah leaves the Ark
March 25	Sacrifice of Isaac
April 14	The Three Youth
May 6	Death of Job
April 21	Foundation of Rome

It should be noted that three of these entries, The Three Youth, and the Death of the prophet Job, are uncommon, and in some cases by later hands than the main manuscript; it is not certain if there were indeed intended to be “historical” dates or were given for liturgical commemoration. They are given here to be on the cautious side. Likewise, the date of the Foundation of Rome is given in only one source.

The date for the Sacrifice of Isaac is the same as that of the crucifixion of Jesus, hence is assigned for theological reasons; this is also true of the Death of James, the brother of the Lord. Adam’s creation on March 23, and the creation of the world, March 19-24, are likewise associated with the Annunciation and the Crucifixion on March 25.

Rationale

After encountering the “historical dates” of the resurrection in a medieval liturgical calendar, Christine M Rose studied the origins of this dating and concluded that it went back to the important calendar work of Dionysius Exiguus in the sixth century, as follows:

Dionysius Exiguus, “Cyclus Paschalis,” in J-P Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 67, 483-568.

Rose states:

In the sixth century A.D. Dionysius Exiguus, a romanized Scythian monk, compiled

tables for calculating Easter, and from these calculations arose the system of dating the current year from the birth of Christ (A.D.). A system of metonic cycles, Golden Numbers, and Dominical Letters allowed Dionysius to calculate back in time to the birth of Christ, which he set as his Year One. The point in time, however, which Dionysius designated as 1 Anno Domini was approximately four years short of our present reckoning of that year of Augustus 750 A.U.C. (Years of Rome), and thus any date which he calculated was off by a few years. Nevertheless, the Dionysian Easter Table, with its accompanying list of dates of important religious events, was adopted in England at the Synod of Whitby in A.D. 604.

Dionysius had calculated, using his Year One as a basis, that the Last Supper (Passover), the Passion and Death of Christ, and the Resurrection had occurred on March 24, 25 and 27, respectively, in the year one A.D. After Whitby, these dates must have been traditional in England and much of western Europe, through the Dionysian Easter Tables. From this information on the influence of Dionysius Exiguus and from the evidence of many medieval calendars it appears, then, that a tradition existed, from the sixth century, of dates assigned for the death and resurrection of Christ.

Christian M Rose, "March 27 as Easter and the Medieval Liturgical Calendar" in *Manuscripta* 30 (1986) 112-117

For additional information, Rose also refers to John J Bond, *Hand-Book of Rules and Tables For Verifying Dates with the Christian Era*. London: Ell and Daldy 1969

A somewhat different understanding of this matter is presented by H.A. Wilson in his notes for the calendar of St Willbrord. He adds information on some other "historical" dates as well. The entire Note follows:

March 25: Dominus crucifixus est: et sancti Jacobi fratris domini: et immolatio Isaac. Of this entry the first and second portions are by the original hand; the third is a later addition. It may be best to deal with the three parts separately.

The first is one of a group of entries in the Calendar which assign to particular days the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord, and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Liturgically, these events were commemorated in each year on days determined by the application of the Paschal cycle, and the entries by which they were ascribed to fixed dates are therefore historical rather than liturgical in character. They are intended to mark the actual anniversaries of the events and the date assigned to the Crucifixion is that on which the rest depend. Given that the Crucifixion took place on March 25, it follows that the Resurrection would have been on March 27, and from that date, by reckoning 40 days, the date of the first Pentecost is found to be May 15. The scheme really extends further, for (on the hypothesis that our Lord's life on earth, from the Incarnation to the Passion, extended over a term of completed years) the anniversary of his Crucifixion was held to be also the anniversary of his Conception, and that date being thus fixed at March 25, the anniversary of his Nativity was placed on December 25,

and this determined the dates of the Circumcision, and of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin. The Nativity of St John Baptist was placed on June 24 (viii Kal Iul.) six months before the Nativity of our Lord (viii Kal Ian).

The tradition that the Crucifixion took place on March 25 is connected with the tradition that the year of the Crucifixion was that of the consulship of “the two Gemini,” i.e., the year 29 A.D. Its existence in the time of St Willibrord is attested not only by this Calendar, but by the evidence of [certain MSS]. But the tradition was widely spread, and is of much earlier origin, going back, it would seem, certainly to the third, if not to the second century. The date is given in detail in the treatise *Adversus Iudaeus*, ascribed, though not without doubt, to Tertullian; it is given by St Augustines: “mortuus est ergo Christus duobus Geminis consulibus octavo Kalendas aprilis” (*De Civit. Dei XVIII*, liv). It appears also at Rome in the Bucherian calendar of the fourth century; in the Rhone valley in the fifth century calendar of Pollenius Silvius; and in the East Epiphanius tells us that certain Quartodecimans commemorated the Passion always on March 25, because that dates was recorded in the Acts of Pilate, though he remarks also that in some copies of these Acts the day mentioned is March 18. March 25 is the date accepted as that of the Crucifixion by Hippolytus in his Fourth book on Daniel.

Monsignor Duchesne (*Origines du Culte Chretien*, pp 262-263, ed. 1902) cites some evidence for the liturgical observance in Gaul, in the fifth and sixth centuries, of these fixed anniversaries of the Passion and the Resurrection, and the phraseology of Oen in the entry in his Martyrology for March 25 seems to contemplate something of this kind. But such observance would in any case be subordinate to that which was regulated by the Paschal cycle, and would tend to disappear. The introduction and general adoption in the West of the feast of the Annunciation also tended to eliminate from Church calendars the entry concerning the anniversary of the Crucifixion. The 27th of March is not infrequently noted in medieval calendars as *Resurrectio Domini*, sometimes with an indication of grading or a suggestion of a special office for the day. But even where this is the case (as in the Sarum breviary of 1531) it may be found that the office has not kept its place in the Breviary to which the calendar is prefixed.

St James, the brother of our Lord, was probably placed here in view of the fact that his martyrdom took place at the Passover, and therefore, it may have been argued, on the same day on which our Lord had been crucified.

The entry regarding the sacrifice of Isaac is one of the quasi-historical class, of which there are a few examples in the Calendar, all added by one or other of the later hands.

H.A. Wilson, *The Calendar of St Willibrord*. London: Harrison and Sons 1918, pp 24 ff

A fuller and more recent consideration of the subject is provided by the following work:

Georges Declercq, *Anno Domini: The Origins of the Christian Era*

Turnhout: Brepols 2000

He identifies the early third century writer Tertullian as an early source for 25 March as the date of the crucifixion of Jesus; he also refers to the “twin” consuls to fix the date of this event. He writes:

In his tract *Against the Jews*, [Tertullian] places the birth of Jesus in the forty-first regnal year of the emperor Augustus (5 BC) and dates the crucifixion with great precision on 25 March, at the time of Passover, on the first day of unleavened bread (14 Nisan), in the fifteenth year of emperor Tiberius (AD 28/29), during the consulate of Rubellius and Rufius Gemini (AD 29), when Jesus was about thirty years old. (p 12)

He considers the importance of 25 March again in a subsequent passage:

Nisan, the first month of the Jewish lunar calendar, during which according to the gospels the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus took place, also marked the end of winter and the beginning of spring. The early Christian tradition has apparently for that reason connected the death of Christ with 25 March, the spring equinox in the Roman or Julian calendar. The choice of this date is highly symbolic. Each year, from the vernal equinox onwards, days grow longer than nights. Translated into religious terms this represented a victory of light over darkness and of life over death, an interpretation which the early Christians shared with the worshippers of Cybele who celebrated the death and resurrection of her companion Attis at the same moment. The first attestations of this tradition are to be found early in the third century in the above-mentioned tract *Against the Jews* of Tertullian and in the Easter table of Hippolytus of Rome. (p 17)

Declercq then notes that:

In the West, 25 March thenceforth became the conventional date of the crucifixion and is often marked as such in medieval calendars. (p 17)

He also notes the dating of the creation to 25 March as well:

The symbolism attached to the Julian date of the spring equinox was not limited to the Passion or Resurrection of Jesus. The Alexandrian monk Annianus, for instance, dated the creation of the world and the incarnation (or conception) of Christ on 25 March as well. The vernal equinox was associated with the creation as early as the third century, but opinions differed on the day of the week of the creation on which 25 March had to be placed: some preferred the first day (Sunday), when God separated light from darkness, others decided in favour of the fourth day (Wednesday), on which God created the so-called luminaries, i.e., the sun, the moon and the stars. ...

The idea that Jesus was born (or conceived) and crucified on the same calendar day, and thus lived a perfect number of years, is first attested in the Easter table of Hippolytus of

Rome (AD 222). (p 21)

Later, it became more common to synchronize the Passion or Resurrection with the conception of Jesus. The identification of 25 March as the date of the incarnation i.e., the conception of Christ, became, however, only possible once 25 December, the winter solstice of the Julian calendar and the date of the pagan festival of the Unconquerable Sun, had been adopted as the birth day of Jesus. This happened in the course of the fourth century..... (P 22).

Declercq then considers the work of Dionysius Exiguus and others in some detail.

Relative Frequency

The “historical” dates identified above do not all occur in medieval liturgical calendars with equal frequency. The short titles of individual medieval liturgical calendars that include the “historical” dates given above are therefore listed below to provide information on the relative frequency with which each date is found in the sources studied.

Resurrection (March 27)

Abbotsbury - Resurrectio domini
Abingdon - Resurrexio Christi prima
Antissiodorensis - Hierosolymis Resurrectio Domini nostri Jesu Christi
Ashridge - Resurrectio domini
Athelstan - Surrexit Dominus
Benfeld - Resurrectio domini
Bruges - Resurrectio domini
Bury St Edmunds - Resurrectio Christi
Canterbury A - Resurrectio domini prima
Canterbury B - Resurrectio Christi
Canterbury C - Resurrectio Christi
Canterbury D - Resurrectio domini
Chertsey - Resurreccio domini
Chester - Resurrectio domini
Croyland B - Resurreccio domini nostri Iheus Christi
Croyland B - Resurreccio domini nostri Ihesu Christi
Deeping - Resurrectio domini nostri Ihesu Christi
Dunster - Resurrexio domini
Durham - Resurrectio Christi
Ely - Resurreccio Christi
Evesham A - Resurrexio Domini
Evesham B - Resurrectio domini prima
Exeter A - Resurrectio domini

Exeter B - Resurrectio Domini (Christi) prima
 Floriacense - Resurrectio Domini nostri Jesu Christi
 Glastonbury - Resurrectio Domini
 Gloucester - Resurrectio Christi
 Koln - Resurrectio Domini (nostri Jesu Christi)
 Lautenbach - Resurrectio domini
 Ludlow - La Resurreciton de n're Seignur
 Malmesbury - Resurrectio domini
 Mantuanum - Resurrectio domini
 North Country - Resurreccio domini
 Oberehnheim - Resurrectio Domini
 Old English Martyrology - Resurrection Day
 Peterborough - Resurrectio Christi prima
 Robert of Jumieges - Resurrectio Dni
 Rochester- Resurrectio Domini
 Rufach - Resurrectio domini
 St Albans - Resurrectio Christi
 St Willibrord - Resurrectio domini
 St Wulfstan - Resurrectio Dni
 Sarum A - Resurrectio domini principale duplex festum
 Sarum B - Resurrection of Our Lord
 Sherborne - Resurrection domini prima
 Stabulense - Resurrectio Domini
 Strassburg - Resurrectio Domini
 Titus – Resurrectio Xpi
 Verdinense - Resurrectio domini
 Wells - Resurrectio domini
 West Country A - Resurrectio domini nostri Ihesu Christi
 West Country B - Resurreccio domini nostri Ihesu Christi
 Westminster - Resurrectio domini
 Winchester A - Resurrectio Christi
 Winchester B - Resurrectio Christi
 Winchester C - Resurrextio domini
 Worcester A - Resurrectio domini prima
 Worcester B - Resurrectio Christi
 York - Resurrectio Domini

Crucifixion (March 25)

Antissiodorensis - Annuntiatio sanctae ac perpetuae virginis Mariae, et in Hierosolymis
 crucixio Domini nostri Jesus Christi
 Bede's Martyrology - Dominus Crucifixus est. Annuntiatio dominica
 Canterbury C - Crucifixus Christi
 Canterbury D - Crucifixio domini
 Evesham B - Crucifixus Christi

Koln - Dominus Iesus Christus crucifixus / Annunciatio s Mariae
Old English Martyrology - Annunciation Day. Crucifixion
St Neot - Annunciatio Christi et Crucifixio eius
Stabulense - Adununtiatio, conceptio et passio Domini
St Willibrord - Dominus crucifixus est
Verdinense - Annuntiatio S. Mariae. Passio domini
West Country A - Crucifixio domini
York - Annuntiatio Beatae Mariae . . . Hae die Christus passus est

Christ's Burial / Descent into Hell (March 26)

Old English Martyrology - Christ's Descent into Hell
Sherborne - Dominus sepulchro

Ascension (May 5)

Antissiodorensis - Ascensio domini ad coelos
Athelstan – Dominus coelos conscendit ad altos
Canterbury A - Ascensio domini ad caelos
Canterbury D - Ascensio dominica
Chester - Ascensio domini ad celos
Durham - Ascensio domini in celum
Evesham A - Prima ascensio domini ad celos
Exeter A - Ascensio domini
Exeter B - Ascensio D'ni in Coelum
Glastonbury - Ascensio domini
Koln - Ascensio Domini (in coelum)
Lautenbach - Ascensio Domini
North Country - Ascensio domini ad celos
Oberehnheim - Ascensio domini
Old English Martyrology - The Ascension of Christ
Rufach - Ascensio domini
St Willibrord - ascensio domini
St Wulfstan - Prima ascensio Dni ad celos
Sherborne - Ascensio domini ad celos
Titus – Prima Ascensio D'ne ad Celos
Wessex - i. Ascensio
West Country A - Ascentio domini ad celos
West Country B - Ascensio domini nostri Ihesu Christi
Winchester A - Prima ascensio domini ad celos
Winchester B - Prima ascensio domini ad celos
Winchester C - Prima ascensio domini ad celos
Worcester B - Primum ascensio domini

Pentecost (May 15)

Abingdon - Descendit spiritus sanctus super apostolos

Athelstan – Inluxit sanctis en gratia prima
Bede’s Martyrology - Primum a Pentecosten
Bury St Edmunds - Primum pentecosten
Canterbury A - Primum pentecosten
Canterbury B - Primum pentecosten
Canterbury C - Primus aduentus spiritus sancti super discipulos
Canterbury D - Aduentus spiritus sancti super discipulos
Chester - Descendit spiritus sanctus super apostolos
Durham - Primum pentecosten
Evesham A - Primum pentecosten
Exeter A - Primum pentecosten
Glastonbury - Primum pentecosten
Muchelney - Spiritus sanctus super apostolos venit
North Country - Primum Pentecosten
Oberehnheim - Adventus Spiritus sancti
Old English Martyrology - The Day of Pentecost
Robert of Jumieges - Primum pentecosten
Rufach - Adventus spiritus sancti
St Willibrord - Primum Pentecosten
St Wulfstan - Primum Pentecosten
Sherborne - Primum pentecosten
Titus – Prima pentecosten
Wessex - .i. Pentecosten
West Country A - Primum Pentecosten
West Country B - Primum pentecosten
Winchester A - Prima pentecosten
Winchester B - Prima pentecosten
Winchester C - Prima pentecosten
Worcester A - Primum pentecosten
Worcester B - Primum pentecosten

The Lord Returns from Egypt (January 11)

Antissiodorensis - Relatio Jesu ex Aegypto
Bede’s Martyrology - Eductio Jesu ex Aegyptio
Canterbury D - Eductio domini de egypto (Jan 11)
Durham - Deductio Christi de egypto (Jan 11)
Koln - Eductio Domini (Christi) de (ex) Aegypto
Robert of Jumieges - Eductio dni de aegypto
St Willibrord - Eductio domini de aegypto
Stabulense - Eductio Domini de Aegyptio
Verdinense - Eductio domini de Aegypto

The Devil Leaves Jesus (February 15)

Chester - Diabolus recessit a domino

Durham - Diabolus a domino recessit
Evesham A - Diabolus a Domino Recessit
Exeter A - Diabolus recessit a Domino
Koln - Diabolus recessit a Domino
Robert of Jumieges - Diabolus a domino recessit
St Willibrord - Retrorsum diabolus recessit a domino
St Wulfstan - Diabolus a dno recessit

The Death of James (March 25)

St Willibrord - Sancti iacobi fratris domini
Stabulense - Passio Jacobi fratris domini

First Day of the World (March 18)

Canterbury A - Primus dies seculi
Canterbury B - Primus dies seculi
Canterbury C - Primus dies seculi
Canterbury D - Primus dies seculi
Chester - Prima dies seculi
Durham - Primus dies seculi
Croyland A - Primus dies seculi
Ely - Primus dies seculi
Evesham A - Primus dies seculi
Exeter A - Primus dies seculi
Koln - Prima dies saeculi
Robert of Jumieges - Prima dies scli
St Wulfstan - pm dies scli
Sherborne - Primus dies seculi
Titus – Primus die s'cli
Winchester A - Primus dies seculi
Winchester B - Primus dies seculi
Worcester B - .I. Dies saeculi

The Seven Days of Creation (March 18-24)

Old English Martyrology -
First day of the Creation
Second day of the Creation
Third day of the Creation
Fourth day of the Creation
Fifth day of the Creation
Sixth Day of the Creation
Seventh Day of the Creation

Creation of Adam (March 23)

Bede's Martyrology - Adam plasmatus est
Bury St Edmunds - Adam creatus est
Canterbury C - Adam creatus est
Canterbury D - Adam creatus est
Chester - Adam plasmatus est
Croyland A - Adam creatus est
Durham - Adam creatus est
Evesham A - Adam creatus est
Evesham B - Homo creatus
Exeter B - Adam creatus est
Malmesbury - Psalmacio Ade
North Country - Adam creatus est
Robert of Jumieges - Adam creatus est
Sarum A - Hic adam creatur
Sarum B - Creation of Adam
St Wulfstan - Adam creatus est
Sherborne - Adam creatus est
Titus - Adam creatus est
West Country A - Adam creatus est
Winchester A - Adam creatus est
Winchester B - Adam creatus est
Worcester B - Adam creatus est

Noah Enters the Ark (March 16)

Sarum A - Introitus noe in arcam
Sarum B - Entry of Noah into the Ark

The Flood (April 12)

West Country A - Diluuium factus est

Noah Leaves the Ark (April 29)

Canterbury A - Egressio Noe de arca
Exeter A - Egressio Noe de arca
Glastonbury - Egressio Noe de arca
Koln - Egressio Noae de arca (April 27 and 28)
St Willibrord - Egresio noe de arca
Sarum A - Egressus noe de arca
Sarum B - Departure of Noah from the Ark
West Country B - Egressio Noe de arca

Sacrifice of Isaac (March 25)

St Willibrord - Immolatio Isaac

Three Youth

Antissiodorensis - Trium puerorum Ananiae, Azariae, Misaelis (December 16)

St Willibrord - Sedrac misac abdinago (April 14)

Death of the prophet Job (May 6)

Antissiodorensis - Obitus Job prophetae

Foundation of Rome (April 21)

Exeter B – Roma conditur

It has been stated above that these calendar entries refer to “historical” dates that are distinct from dates of liturgical celebrations. In a few cases, however, the calendar entries are given some indication of liturgical rank. The following entries are significant in this respect:

Bruges - Resurrectio domini duplex

Mulnechy - Resurrectio domini - cum processione

Sarum B - Resurrectio domini principalis duplex festum

York - Resurrectio domini - duplex festum principalis

While one could imagine a procession on this day, these liturgical books did not include collects, readings or other liturgical texts. – So exactly what these designations meant in practice is unclear.

Later Memories

Although Anglican liturgical calendars never include “historical” dates such as have been considered here, the memory of “historical” events associated with March 25 and 27 lasted for some time after the reformation. Thus the New Calendar 1561 includes a section on golden numbers, epacts and other data used in determining the date of Easter; it concludes with the following paragraph:

Note, that the Golden number and Dominicall letter doeth change euery yeere the first day of Januarie, and the Epact the first day of March for euer. Note also, that the yeere of our Lorde beginneth the xxv. day of March, the same day supposed to be the first day vpon which the worlde was created, and the day when Christ was conceived in the wombe of the virgin Marie.

William Keatinge Clay, ed., *Liturgies and Occasional Forms of Prayer set forth in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*. Parker Society.

Cambridge: University Press 1847, p 441.

In addition, the same source includes a 1578 supplemental calendar (thought to be of Puritan

origin) which has the following entry for March 27: “As vpon this day, was the resurrection of Christ” (p 446).

“Earliest Easter”

As indicated above, the “historical” ascension and pentecost on May 5 and 15, respectively, are sometimes referred to as prima ascensio and primum pentecosten – referring to the historical “first” or original events.

This language can be a source of confusion, however, because “first” can also be used to mean “the earliest date of”. Thus a number of medieval liturgical calendars contain the entry primum pascha on March 23. This does not mean the “historical Easter, the actual resurrection of Christ, which is noted on March 27. Instead, primum pascha here refers to the earliest possible date of Easter, as it is traditionally defined: the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox (which is defined as March 21). Such entries are listed below.

Earliest Date of Easter (March 22 / 23)

Abingdon - Primum pascha
Canterbury C - Primum pascha
Canterbury D - Primum pascha
Chertsey - Primum pascha
Chester - Primum pasche
Croyland A - Primum pascha
Durham - Primum pascha
Evesham B - Primum pascha
Gloucester - Primum pascha
Malmesbury- Primum Pascha
Sarum A - Primum pascha
St Neot - Primum pascha
Sherborne - Primum pascha
Titus – Primum pascha
Vitellius – Primum pascha
Winchester B - Primum pascha
Worcester B - Primum pasca

If primum pascha (earliest Easter) is on April 23, then earliest ascension and pentecost should fall on April 30 and May 10, respectively. (In some cases the words primus dies ascensio and dies .i. pentecosten are used.) Such entries are indeed found in the following liturgical calendars:

Abingdon; Canterbury C; Canturbury D; Chester; Durham;

Finally, it may be noted that the latest date of Easter (ultimum pascha) is also noted in some

liturgical calendars on April 24:

Evesham A; Exeter A; Glastonbury; Sherborne; Wessex; West Country A; Winchester A;
Winchester B

Discussion

The data presented here of the listing of “historical” dates in a number of medieval liturgical calendars raise more questions than they answer.

It is not surprising that the central events of Christ’s death, resurrection, ascension and pentecost are included more frequently than other events of his life and ministry. In view of the great emphasis that Christ’s death had in medieval piety, however, it is noteworthy that it is the resurrection that is listed most often. The creation of the world and of Adam receive considerable attention as well, as do dates associated with the flood. Why there should be so much variation among calendars with respect to which “historical” dates are included, is unclear. Why do some calendars include no such dates, while others include many?

What meaning did the practice of remembering “historical” dates have for medieval folks - whether monastics, clergy or laity? To what extent were such dates actually known to communities at large? After all, not everybody saw or needed to see liturgical calendars. How were these dates considered and valued in relation to the actual liturgical celebration of the same mysteries in the course of the liturgical year? What factors were important in choosing such dates: imagination, awareness of ancient tradition, biblical knowledge and piety, historical knowledge, interest in calendrical matters? It is hard to tell.

Appendix: Sources

Short titles of the individual liturgical calendars studied are given here, together with full bibliographic information.

Abbotsbury

In Francis Wormald, *English Benedictine Kalendars After A.D. 1100*. Vol I, pp 1-13.
Henry Bradshaw Society 77. London 1939.

Abingdon

In Francis Wormald, *English Benedictine Kalendars After A.D. 1100*. Vol I, pp 15-30.
Henry Bradshaw Society 77, London 1939.

Antissiodorensis

In “Kalendaria et Martyrologia Antiqua”, 1209-1258.
Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 138, col 1183-1302 .

Ashridge

In Eleanor Searle, “The Calendar, Martyrology and Customary of the Boni Homines of Ashridge,” *Mediaeval Studies* 23 (1961) 260-293.

Athelstan

In R. T. Hampson, *Medii Aevi Calendarium*, pp 397-420.
London: Henry Kent Causton 1841..

Benfeld

In Medard Barth, “Mittelalterliche Kalendare und Litaneien des Elsass”, pp 372-377.
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