

Religious and Secular Events in an 1578 Anglican Calendar

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Outline

- Introduction
- Religious History
 - Noah and the Flood
 - The Exodus and Subsequent Jewish History
 - The Life of Christ
 - The Reformation
- Secular History
 - Ancient
 - Medieval
 - Contemporary
- Discussion

Introduction

Medieval liturgical calendars sometimes included not only dates of liturgical celebrations but also dates that were thought to be historical. For example, though the liturgical celebration of Easter varied, the historical date of the actual resurrection of Christ was believed to be March 27. In contrast, The liturgical calendars of early editions of the Book of Common Prayer did not include such "historical" dates.

An Anglican calendar published in 1578, however, listed a variety of biblical and secular events and did so as if they were historical events that had occurred on particular days of the year. Though there are some echoes of the "historical" events of some medieval calendars, the 1578 calendar is much more comprehensive - and in my view, quite ingenious.

Here I present the 115 entries of this calendar in full. They are not listed day by day through the year, as in the original document, but rather according to the several types of events that are included. These may be outlined as follows:

- Religious History
 - Noah and the Flood

Exodus and Subsequent Jewish History
Life of Christ
The Reformation
Secular History
Ancient
Medieval
Contemporary

“Contemporary” here is relative to the date of the calendar in question, 1578.

The source of this calendar is the following:

William Keatinge Clay, ed., *Liturgical Services: Liturgical and Occasional Forms of Prayer Set Forth in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*. Parker Society. Cambridge: University Press 1847, pp 444-455.

At the top of each page the “New Calendar 1561” is printed, one month at a time. The 1578 calendar is then printed underneath, one month at a time, and simply titled “1578” followed by the name of the month. Thus the 1578 calendar itself is not identified as to author, original publication, purpose, or intended use. In the preface to this volume, however, the editor does describe briefly (pp xv-xvii) an unofficial and unauthorized Prayer Book of 1578 put out by Puritan elements within the Church of England. The editor notes that this includes “A Calendar of their own [i.e., Puritan]; this, however, they intended rather as an accessory to that of the church [i.e., the New Calendar 1561], than as a substitute for it, placing the section applicable to each month at the bottom of its appropriate page.” He adds, “This Calendar...is very curious, and on many accounts worthy of attention.”

Spelling is as in the 1847 edition of *Liturgical Services*.

Religious History

Noah and the Flood

Some medieval liturgical calendars included dates for “Noah enters the Ark” on March 16, and “Noah leaves the Ark” on April 18. The 1578 calendar, however, gives thirteen dates for events associated with the Ark and the Flood. Furthermore, it bases these very closely on the biblical narrative and gives appropriate biblical references for each date. It takes “the first month” as April, as was common at the time. The second month, when several important events occurred, therefore was May. In order to demonstrate how carefully the 1578 calendar following the biblical account, I also give the appropriate biblical verses.

May 10 [second month]

God commaunded Noah, as vpon this day, to carrie foode into the Arke for himselfe his

household, and for such as were preserved with him. Gene 6:21

Gen 6:21. Also take with you every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up and it shall serve as food for you and for them.

May 17

Noah, as vpon this day, at God's commaundment entred the Arke. Gene 7:7,11

Gen 7:7. And Noah with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood.

Gen 7:11. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened.

June 27 [third month]

After the flood had been fourtie dayes vpon the earth, the waters were so increased, that Noah's arke was lifted vp as vpon this day, aboute the earth. Gene 7:17

Gen 7:17. The flood continued forty days on the earth, and the waters increased, and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth.

October 17 [seventh month]

As on this day, Noah's Arke, after 160 daies, rested on the mountainies Ararat, in Armenia. Gene 8: 4

Gen 8:4. and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.

January 1 [tenth month]

The first day of this moneth, Noah, after he had bene in the Arke 150 dayes, began to see the toppes of the high mountaines. Gene 7:24, and 8:3, 5.

Gen 7:24. And the waters swelled on the earth for one hundred fifty days.

Gen 8:3. and the waters gradually receded from the earth. At the end of one hundred fifty days the waters had abated.

Gen 8:5. The waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains appeared.

February 9 [eleventh month]

As vpon this day, Noah (fourtie daies after he had seene the toppes of the mountaines) sent out of the Arke the Raven, and after the Doue, of the which only the Dove returned. Gene 8:7,8

[Gen 8:6. At the end of forty days Noah opened the windows of the ark that he had made]

Gen 8:7. and sent out the raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth.

Gen 8:8. Then he sent out the dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground,

February 17

Noah, as vpon this day, sent out of the Arke againe the Doue, which returning vnto him, brought an Oliue branche in her bill, whereby he knewe, that the waters were abated vpon the earth. Gene 8:10,11

Gen 8:10. He waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove from the ark
Gen 8:11. and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth.

February 25

Noah, as vpon this day, sent the Doue out of the Arke the third time, and she returned no more. Gene 8: 12.

Gen 8:12. Then he waited anohter seven days, and sent out the dove; and it did not return to him any more.

April 1 [first month]

In this first day, Noah opened the couer of the Arke. Gene 8: 13

Gen 8:13. In the six hundred first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried upon from the earth, and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and saw that the face of the ground was drying.

May 27

Noah, as vpon this day, was commaunded by God, to go forth of the Arke. Gene 8:14, 16

Gen 8:14. In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.

[Gen 8:15. Then God said to Noah,]

Gen 8:16. Go out of the ark; you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you.

The Exodus and Subsequent Jewish History

The 1578 calendar gives April 15 as the date when Moses brought the people of Israel out of Egypt. It goes on to list a total of 14 dates when specific events of the exodus took place,

plus another four having to do with the entry into the promised land.

Another group of entries lists events associated with the conquest of Jerusalem, exile and return, plus several that I have separately listed as coming from the book of Esther. These are followed here by dates of events associated with the Maccabees and then with the Roman period. Finally, a number of Jewish liturgical celebrations are identified and given “historical” dates.

I have therefore subdivided these entries as follows:

- Exodus
- Entry into the Promised Land
- Period of the Monarchy
- Conquest, Exile and Return
- Book of Esther
- Maccabees
- Roman Period
- Jewish Liturgical Celebrations

Some references are to Josephus.

I am not aware of any medieval liturgical calendar that includes any of these events, though some list March 22 as “the first passover.”

Exodus

April 15: Moses, as on this day, brought the Israelites out of Egypt. Exod 12: 37, 41

April 16: As on this day, they departed from Succoth into the desert of Etham. Exo. 13:20; Nom 33:6

April 17: As on this day, they passed into the mountaines and daungerous places. Exodus 14:2; Nom 33:7

April 18: As on this day they went through the red Sea. Exod 14:29. Nomb 33:8

April 19: As on this day, they wander in the desert of Shur, and come to Marah. Ex 15:22; Nom 33:8

May 14: Those that had not kept the feast of Passeouer the first day of the first moneth, kept it as vpon this day of the second moneth. Nomb. 9:11 and so did Hezekiah. 2 Chron 30:15

May 15: As vpon this day, ye Jewes kept their Whitsontide. And also as vpon the same day, God sent the Jewes Quailes for their foode. Exod 16:13; Nomb 11:31

May 16: God, as vpon this day, rained ye foode Man [manna] from heauen. Exod 16:13, 14, 15

May 20: As vpon this day, ye Israelites departed from Sinai. Nomb 10: 11, 12

May 22: As vpon this day, part of the Israelites, for their murmuring, were consumed with fire. Nomb 11:1

June 1: The people of Israel, as vpon this day, came unto ye mount Sinai, which afterward was called the hill of Casius, and there taried almost a yeere, as apeareth, Exod 19:1; Nomb 10:11; Deut 1:19

July 17: As on this day, Moses in his anger, being thereunto prouoked by the Idolatrie of the people, brake the two Tables of stone, which hee had receved of the Lorde in the mount. Exod 32:19

April 1: Also as vpon this day, Moses reared the Tabernacle. Exod. 40, 2, 17

May 1: As vpon this day, Moses and Aaron numbred the people of Israel, the second yeere after their comming out of Egypt. Nom 3 and 4 Chapters

August 1: Aaron as vpon this day, being 123 yeeres olde, dyed vpon the mountaine Hor, 40 yeeres after the children of Israel's coming out of Egypt. Nomb 20:25, 28 and 33, 38, 39

Entry into the Promised Land

April 6: Joshua and the Jewes camped before Jordan, the space of three dayes. Joshua 3:1

April 10: The Israelites as vpon this day, passe Jordan with a great multitude, the yeere before the Nativitie of our Lord Jesus Christ 1457. Joshu 3:17, and 4:1, 11

April 11: Joshua circumcised the people nigh Jericho. Joshua 5:3

April 14: The Israelites vpon this day kept passover, and Man ceased. Joshua 5:10, 12

Period of the Monarchy

November 15: Jeroboam, after that he had turned the people from ye obedience of Rehoboam their king unto him self, deuised and ordained this day to be kept holy of the people, and because they should not goe unto Jerusalem to worship, he caused two golden calues to be set vp, the one at Dan, and the other at Bethel, and so he & the people committede Idolatrie. 1 Kings 12:32, 33

Conquest, Exile and Return

January 10: Nebuchad-nezzar the king of Babel as vpon this day, besieged the Citie of Jerusalem. 2 Kings 25:1. Jere. 52:4

July 9: As on this day, Jerusalem was besieged by the king of Babel, the space of eighteene moneths, and at length was taken. 2 Kings 25:3
and Zedekiah's son slayne before his face, and after had his owne eyes put out. Jeremi 39:2, 7

August 7: Nebuzar-adan, as on this day, setteth ye citie and Temple of Jerusalem on fire. 2 King 25:8, 9

March 27: Also as vpon this day, Jehoachin, king of Judah, was deliuered out of prison, by Euil Merodach King of Babylon, who after had his allowance at the Kinges table, all the dayes of his life. II King 25:27, 29, 30

March 3: As vpon this day, the Temple of Jerusalem was finished and holied, 597 yeeres before Christ his birth. Ezra 6:15 and 1 Esdr 7:5

August 10: As on this day also, Ezra the Scribe entreth into Jerusalem with a great multitude of the Jewes, and is honorably receaved of those that about 50 yeeres before, came thither with Zerubabel before the incarnation of Christ, 596 yeeres. Ezra 7:9

December 16: Ezra as on this day, commaundeth ye Israelites to leaue their strange wiues. Ezra 10:11 and 1 Esdr 9:8, 9

September 25: As vpon this day, Nehemiah finished the walles of Jerusalem, 444 yeeres before Christ. Nehe 6:15

October 23: As on this day, the Jewes which returned from the capiuitie of Babylon, made a newe couenant with God. Nehe 9:1

Book of Esther

April 13: King Ahashuerosh as vpon this day, commanded all ye Jewes to be slaine. Ester 3:11, 13

June 23: The King Ahashuerosh, as on this day, sent forth a proclamation throughout all his countrey and prouinces, in ye favour of the Jewes, and against Haman and his conspiracy, as

appeareth, Ester 8:9 etc

February 14: The Jewes, as vpon this day, slewe three hundreth of their enemies, in Shusahn, but yet on the spoyle they layd not their hand. Ester 9:15

Maccabees

December 25: Antiochus Epiphanes entred also as vpon this day into Jerusalem, with a great armie, and spoyled it. Joseph lib 12 chap 6

December 15: Antiochus Epiphanes, as on this day, placed the Idole of Jupiter vpon ye Altar of God in Jerusalem. 1 Macca 1:57

December 25: Also he caused sacrifice on this day to be made vpon the Altar, which was in the steade of the Altar of sacrifices, looke 1 Macc 1:62

Roman Period

September 8: Jerusalem was as upon this day, sacked with fire and sworde, and utterly rased, 73 yeeres after the birth of Christ: who prophesied the same 40 yeeres before. Matt 24:2, 34; Joseph. lib 7 chap 26

August 10: Titus soldiours, as on this day, set the Citie and Temple of Jerusalem on fire, sithens which time neither of them haue euer bin reedified. Joseph. lib. 6, Chap 26

October 23: Also Titus, sonne to Vaspasian, after the destruction of Jerusalem, slaieth 3000 Jewes on the birth day of his brother Domition. An. 73

November 18: Titus as vpon this day, vsed no lesse crueltie against the Jewes his prisoners, in the citie of Beryte in Syria, keeping the birth day of his father Vespasian, then he did on the birth day of his brother Domition. Jospeh. Lib 7, Chap 20

Jewish Liturgical Celebrations

October 1: The feast of Trumpets was kept his day. Leuit 23:24

October 15: As on this day the Jewish feast of Tabernacles was kept, lasting 7 dayes. Leuit 23:24

October 10: As on this day the fast of reconciliation, the onely fast commaunded by God, was kept. Leuit 23:27

February 15: The Jewes kept this day for a feast, because nowe the sappe riseth in the trees.

March 13: As vpon this day, was the fast of Ester. Ester 3:12 and 4:16

October 4: The Jewes fast and mourne, as on this day, for the death of Gedaliah. Jere 41:1, 2

October 21: As on this day, the Jewish great feaste of palmes was kept.

The Life of Christ

Some medieval liturgical calendars include the supposed historical date of the Christ's resurrection (on March 27), and occasionally give "historical" dates for the crucifixion, ascension and pentecost are also named, calculated from this date for Easter. Even more rarely, the return of Jesus from Egypt and the departure of Satan following the temptations are dated. The 1578 calendar gives a much more extensive list of supposed historical dates for various events in the life of Christ. A few entries for additional events of early Christian history are also included in this section.

December 25: Christ borne as on this day, of the Virgin Marie, in the yeere from the worldes creation 4018.

January 1: Also as vpon this day, Christ was circumcised according to the Lawe. Luke 2, 21

January 6: The Magians as vpon this day (haung ben guided vnto Bethlehem by the direction of a starre) worshipped Christ, and offered vnto him golde, mirrhe, and frankensense. Matth 2:1 usque 13

February 2: As vpon this day, Christ our Saviour was offered vnto the Lord in the Temple at Jerusalem, and his mother, the Virgin Marie, was purified according to the law. Luke 2:22.

December 28: This day Herod slewe the Immocents, two yeeres after the birth of Christ, among whom he had thought to haue murthered Christ. Mat 2:16, 17, 18.

January 6: Also as vpon this day, Christ was baptized by John in Jordan, being about xxx. yeeres of age. Matth 3:13. Luke 3:21,23

January 6: Also Christ as vpon this day, wrought his first miracle, in turning water into wine, at a marriage in Cana of Galile. John 2:2, 11

March 10: As vpon this day, Christ being on the other side of Jordan, was aduertised of the sicknesse of Lazarus. John 11:3

March 16: As vpon this day, Lazarus was raised from death. John 11:44

March 20: As vpon this day, Christ entred into Jerusalem. John 12:14, 15

March 22: Marie Magdalen, as on this day, annointed Christ with precious oyntment. John 12.3. Matth 26:7, 13

March 24: Christ held his last supper, as vpon this day, and was taken. Matth 26:29

March 25: Christ was crucified, dead and buried, as vpon this day. Luke 23:33. Mark 15:25. Mat 26:7, 12

This day was also the day of preparation. John 19:31, 34

March 26: Christ as on this day, lay in the Sepulchre. Matth 27:62

March 27. As vpon this day, was the resurrection of Christ. Matth 26:1, 2

April 4: Christ, as vpon this day, which was eyght dayes after his resurrection, appeared to his disciples, Thomas also being present. John 20:26

May 5: As vpon this day, Christ ascended into heauen, in the sight of his Apostles, and many others. Mark 16:19. Actes 1:9

Other Christian History

January 27: Saint Paul, as vpon this day, of a persecuter was conuerted, as he iourneyed vnto Damascus. Actes 9:3.

December 26: Steuen was stoned to death by the Jewes, for professing Christ, in the yeere after Christ his ascension. Acts 7:58, 59

December 27: As vpon this day Saynt John the Euangelist, being of the age of lxxxix, yeeres, died at Ephesus, in the reigne of Traiane the Emperour, xxx. yeeres after the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Reformation

Most of the following entries have to do with the Reformation on the continent. References to Elizabeth I are not so clearly related to the Reformation in England, but are given here together with one annotation having to do with Edward VI.

July 8: John Hus was burnt as on this day, at the councill holden at Constance, for professing the Gospel of our Lord Jesus. Anno 1415

November 10: Also as vpon this day Martin Luther was borne. Anno 1463

February 16: The learned Clerke, Philip Melanthon, as vpon this day, was borne. Anno 1497

October 31: This day, in the yeere of ou Lord God 1517, & CL yeeres after ye death of John Hus, Martin Luther gaue his propositions in ye Uniuersitie of Witemberg, against ye Pope's pardons.

February 18: Martin Luther, the seruant of God, died as vpon this day. Anno 1546

February 22: Martin Luther his body, as vpon this day, was translated to Witemberg, and buried in the chappell of the Castell there.

August 27: Religion, as on this day, was reformed, according to God's expresse truth, in the most renoumed citie of Geneva, 1535

October 11. As on this day was the first conflict of the Tigurines with ye fiue Townes of Heluetia, wherein Zwinglius was slaine. Anno 1532

July 6: The vi day of this moneth, the Josias of our age, Edward the sixt, King of England, dyed. Anno 1553

September 7: Our Soueraigne Lady QUEENE ELIZABETH, was borne as vpon this day, at Greenewich. Anno 1532 [1533]

November 10: Also as vpon this day Martin Luther was borne. Anno 1483

November 17: As vpon this day, began most properously our most Soueraigne Ladye QUEENE ELIZABETH, to reigne ouer vs, anno 1558, whom we beseech God long to continue in that gouernment.

Secular History

The 1578 calendar, finally, lists 26 events that I here give under the heading of "secular history." I have subdivided these into the following categories: ancient, medieval, and contemporary (i.e., with respect to 1578). They are listed in calendrical order.

Ancient

January 25: Caius Caligula, his wife and daughter, as vpon this day, were slaine. Anno Do. 42

February 8: As vpon this day, the Romanes began their spring, after Plinie.

June 6: The Temple of Diana in Ephesus, which amongst all Panains Temples was the most magnificent and renoumed, as vpon this day, was consumed with fire liiii yeeres before the Natiuitie of Jesus Christ.

July 12: As on this day was the birth of C. Julius Caesar, the first Emperour of Rome, of whome this moneth is so called.

July 19: As on this day, the great hurt by fire began at Rome in Neroe's reigne.

July 27: As vpon this day, the Athenians receyved a great ouerthrowe in Sicilia, of the Syracusians.

September 2: Augustus Caesar this day, ouerthrew Antonius and Cleopatra, in a battel by sea at Actium, 28 yeeres before Christ was borne. Dion

September 13: Titus the Emperour, sonne to Vespasian, as vpon this day died, after Christes birth 83 yeeres.

September 18: Domition the Emperour as vpon this day, was slaine, by ye treason of his wife and seruants

September 20. The noble Oratour L. Crassus, as vpon this day, died of a pleurisie. Cicero lib 3 de Orat.

September 23: Octavius Cesar, as vpon this day, was borne 60 yeeres before the Natiuitie of Christ. Gel lib 15 chap 7

September 30: As vpon this day, Pompeius surnamed the great, was borne, before Christ, 103 yeeres.

November 16: As vpon this daye Tiberius Cesar was borne, before the birth of Christ 39 yeeres.

Medieval

June 20: Godfrey and Baldwine with their Christian armie, as vpon this day, ouercame the Persians at Antiochia, in a memorable conflict. Benedic. de Aculf.

June 25: As on this day, was the conflict at Mersbrough, betweene the Emperour Henrie the fourth and Rodolfe duke of Sueuia, stickled forth by the Pope. Anno 1030.

July 23: As on this day, Pope Alexander the third treadeth upon Frederick Barbarossa the

Emperour.

August 8: Henrie the 4. Emperour, as on this day dyed with sorowe, constrained thereunto by the Pope's iniuries.

September 14: Chyrsostome being chased out of his Church of Constantinople, as vpon this day, died

Contemporary

January 17: The good Prince Scanderbeg king of Epyrus, a scourge to the Turke, as vpon this day, died. 1466

January 22: The Duke of Somerset as vpon this day, was beheaded. 1552

July 15: About this time the great Sweat began in England. Anno 1551

August 29: The citie Buda in Hungarie, as on this day, yeelded vnto ye Turke in the yeere of our Lord God, 1526.

September 24: Angelus Politan, as vpon this day, died. Anno 1509

November 10: This day happened the woful slaughter of Varna, where Ladislaus king of Hungarie was slaine by the Turke. Anno 1444.

December 9: In the yeere of our Lord God, 1437, Sigismund King of Hungarie, and Emperour of Rome, as on this day dyed.

Discussion

The 1578 Anglican calendar considered here required a very good knowledge of the bible, including a scheme for relating biblical and postbiblical events to the (supposed) date of the birth of Christ. It also required a knowledge of postbiblical Jewish history and of Jewish liturgical feasts, and of events and personages of secular history as well. Finally, the assignment of events to specific days of the year required good biblical and historical knowledge, in some cases, and a creative imagination in others.

While certain events were chosen because of their centrality and importance, it is not clear why other events - biblical and nonbiblical - were included in the 1578 calendar. Certainly it is ingenious, comprehensive and learned. Why the 1578 calendar was composed, and by

whom, is not known. What was its purpose? Who read it, and how were its dates observed – if at all? Was its composition an abstract academic exercise, or did it have some real function in the community from which it arose? At the present time these questions remain unanswered.