

The Calendar of Christ and the Apostles

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Part II

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Section II

Chapter Eleven

The Early Quartodeciman Controversy

The push to paganize the fledgling Christian church began shortly after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The first hint of this sedition appears in the writings of the apostle Paul to the new fellowship of Thessalonica. The mystery of iniquity had already begun, he warns them. Furthermore, it had begun at Jerusalem and was spreading. Paul wrote the Thessalonians around 51 AD while on his second missionary journey. In the fall of 53 AD Paul returns to Palestine in time to observe the Feast of Tabernacles at Jerusalem. He winters in Antioch, Syria and then has a major confrontation with Peter at Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread season. To Paul's great horror, the mystery of iniquity he had warned the Thessalonians about was rapidly spreading into Asia Minor.

Paul immediately set out on his third missionary journey to revisit the churches he had established only a few years before. By the fall of 54 AD he had revisited these churches and determined to write a general letter of warning to all the churches of Galatia. The result was the book of Galatians. Paul details how some were leaving the true gospel of Christ for a false gospel and a false Christ. Some were returning to the yoke of the Old Covenant, while others, who had never known or practiced the Law of Moses returned to their former worship of the pagan gods of Galatia. In doing so they were turning again to the weak and beggarly elements of this world. Returning to a bondage in which they observed days, and months, and times, and years (Gal. 4:8-10).

The New Testament worship of Christ revolved around the weekly Sabbath and the holy days, a season that began in the month of Nisan and ended in the month of Tishri. Those who rejected the true worship of Christ

returned to their former bondage which revolved around the months of December through March. They did, however, continue to do so in the name of Christ.

The transformation from the Hebrew Calendar to the solar calendar began with a seemingly innocuous change in doctrine—the Passover was not to be observed before the equinox. At this point the death of Christ on Passover day was still acknowledged, but the observance of this day could not occur before the equinox! Simultaneous with this change was the insistence that the resurrection of Christ must also be celebrated on Wave Sheaf Sunday. In this manner, the fifty-day count to Pentecost began with the celebration of Christ’s resurrection. This new celebration was referred to as a celebration of the Passion of Christ’s resurrection. It was soon argued that it must be held on the first Sunday after the fourteenth moon of Nisan that also fell after the equinox. Letters to this effect were circulated among the churches of Galatia. A copy of one such letter, I believe, has been preserved down to our time.

What to do with the Passover and Unleavened Bread season—that was the thorny question. The full eight days of this festival season could not be ignored so the early church began to change the meaning and liturgy of the season—that of Passover in particular. The first act was to cast of the “Jewish” Calendar. They did so by beginning to shift the season of worship from Nisan through Tishri to December through March. This calendric shift from a luni-solar calendar to a solar calendar began in the churches of Asia Minor during the ministry of the Apostle Paul.

“Jewish” Passover and Unleavened Bread practice was condemned and was, it was argued, done away in Christ. Thus it was that a Christian Passover service in remembrance of the death of Christ was soon replaced in many churches with a celebration of his resurrection. Beginning with the churches of Galatia in Asia Minor this service was quickly moved to Sunday. This service was still referred to as the passion of Christ and was done so for centuries to come. The “Jewish” practice of feasting and eating unleavened bread for seven days was replaced with fasting. The full eight-day period was acknowledged for awhile but was quickly reduced to a 7-day period. The true meaning was gutted and replaced with pagan practices of sun worship.

As the early churches of Rome and Alexandria grew in power and influence in the Christian community, they set themselves on a deliberate path of separation from anything Jewish. Their temple had been razed to the ground as Christ had foretold. A priestly system that had served Israel for more than 1400 years vanished from the earth. The Jewish nation itself was destroyed and its people scattered across the face of the earth. And furthermore, the Jews had killed the Messiah. God had truly rejected the Jews, they reasoned, along with their ancient system of worship—especially the weekly Sabbath and the holy days. As history attests the Sabbath was quickly replaced by Sunday worship and the holy days were simply dropped but for the spring holy days and Pentecost.

The largest fly in the ointment, however, in this movement to separate themselves from everything Jewish, was the Passover and Unleavened Bread season. Christ had been crucified on Passover day, Nisan 14. This fact was obvious to them from the gospel accounts and their early writings freely acknowledge such. Christ lay in the tomb for three days and three nights extending through Nisan 15, 16 and 17. Again this is freely acknowledged in their writings. St. Ambrose of Milan, Italy attests to this fact as late as the 380's AD. The amount of time Christ was in the tomb was shortened at the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, 325 AD. Thereafter it was the official teaching of the church that Christ was crucified on Friday and resurrected on Sunday morning.

This chapter explores the history of this early transformation and its adoption by the early bishops of Rome and Alexandria. We begin with an analysis of a few critical paragraphs that bear on this question.

The Apostolic Constitutions is a compilation of ancient records carried down from early apostolic days. Tradition places the date of the earliest writings around 80 AD and attributes these writings to Clement of Rome, the third Pope. Although the exact year or years of publication cannot be determined, it is clear that the earliest of these documents date to a time before the destruction of Herod's temple in 70 AD. Other documents were added during the following centuries, and the collection was recompiled at least twice—first, around the 270's AD (probably around the time of the Cilician, Syrian and Mesopotamian reformation), and secondly, around the 380's AD.

The Apostolic Constitutions Didascalia Apostolorum

The following is an *Introductory Notice to Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*. The Constitutions is a historically layered document of great antiquity. For many years it was thought to be the sole compilation of the fourth and fifth centuries, and that by someone in the region of Antioch, Syria. This view has changed over the years, however, and for good reason—there are elements of the document which can only be placed in the first century AD.

Bunsen thinks that, if we expunge a few interpolations of the fourth and fifth centuries, "we find ourselves unmistakably in the midst of the life of the Church of the second and third centuries."⁹ "I think," he says, "I have proved in my analysis, more clearly than has been hitherto done, the Ante-Nicene origin of a book, or rather books, called by an early fiction Apostolical Constitutions, and consequently the still higher antiquity of the materials, both ecclesiastical and literary, which they contain. I have shown that the compilers made use of the Epistle of Barnabas,¹⁰ which belongs to the first half of the second century; that the eighth is an extract or transcript of Hippolytus; and that the first six books are so full of phrases found in the second interpolation of the Ignatian Epistles, that their last compiler, the author of the present text, must either have lived soon after that interpolation was made, or *vice versa*, or the interpolator and compiler must have been one and the same person."¹¹ This last circumstance renders it probable that at least **the first six books** of the Greek compilation, like the Ignatian forgeries,¹² were **the produce of Asia Minor**. Two points are self-evident-of-their Oriental origin, and that **they belong neither to Antioch nor to Alexandria**. I suppose nobody now will trace them to Palestine."¹³

Modern critics are equally at sea in determining the date of the collections of canons given at the end of the eighth book. Most **believe that some of them belong to the apostolic age**, while others are of a comparatively late date. The subject is very fully discussed in Krabbe.

<http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-07/anf07-39.htm#TopOfPage>

Statements in the Apostolic Constitutions give us insight into the conflict that existed among early Christians in regard to the observance of Passover. Some Christians were observing the Passover according to the calculations of the Hebrew Calendar, which in some years placed Passover before the spring equinox. Other Christians condemned this observance as a "Jewish" practice. In addition, those Christians who had begun to replace the Passover remembrance of Christ's death with the celebration of His resurrection

objected to the Passover being observed in the same week as their resurrection celebration.

In Book V, Section III, Paragraph XVII of the Constitutions, we find the following under the heading “How The Passover Ought to be Celebrated”:

XVII. It is therefore your duty, brethren, who are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, to observe the days of the passover exactly, with all care, after the vernal equinox, lest ye be obliged to keep the memorial of the one passion twice in a year. Keep it once only in a year for Him that died but once.

Do not you yourselves compute, but keep it when your brethren of the circumcision do so: keep it together with them; and if they err in their computation, be not you concerned. Keep your nights of watching in the middle of the days of unleavened bread. And when the Jews are feasting, do you fast and wail over them, because on the day of their feast they crucified Christ; and while they are lamenting and eating unleavened bread in bitterness, do you feast.

<http://www.piney.com/DocAposConstitu.html>

Reference is made in the first paragraph to “the precious blood of Christ” and to “the memorial of the one passion.” These phrases bespeak of a very early time when the memorial of Christ’s death was still being observed. According to the above letter, the memorial of Christ’s crucifixion was to be kept “once in a year” but only “after the vernal equinox.” These records demonstrate that some early Christians were observing the 14th Passover before the vernal equinox, according to the calculations of the Hebrew Calendar. But in the early movement away from a Nisan 14 observance, Christians were exhorted to always observe the Passover after the equinox—the first step toward what would eventually become known as Easter. This command leaves no doubt that the calendar of the Jews at the time of the early apostolic church would at times declare Passover before the equinox.

Those Christians who were observing the Passover according to the calculations of the Hebrew Calendar, even when the date fell before the spring equinox, are exhorted in these writings to follow the example of their “brethren of the circumcision.” This statement cannot be referring to the unbelieving Jews because Jews who did not profess Christ were not called “brethren.” Who were these “brethren”? It is clearly stated that these “brethren of the circumcision” were computing the date of the Passover. They were not observing the date calculated by the Hebrew Calendar but were observing the Passover according to their own computation:

Do not you yourselves compute, but keep it when your brethren of the circumcision do so: keep it together with them; and if they err in their computation, be not you concerned.

What method were these “brethren of the circumcision” using to compute their observance of the Passover? A clue to their method of computation is offered in the following paragraph:

...But no longer be careful to keep the feast with the Jews, for we have now no communion with them.... But do you observe carefully the vernal equinox....

The method of computation used by these “brethren of the circumcision” was designed to place the Passover memorial after the equinox so as to separate the Christian Passover from the Passover of the Jews. This was the pattern and example that all early Christians were admonished to observe. They were warned not to observe the Passover according to the Hebrew Calendar lest they observe the Passover before the equinox in some years and then observe it again with their “brethren of the circumcision” after the equinox, thus observing it “twice in the year.” This phrase demonstrates that the early Christians “of the circumcision” were utilizing a calendar that determined the year by the equinox; that is, their liturgical year ran from equinox to equinox and not from Nisan to Nisan.

Notice that the computation of the “brethren of the circumcision,” which placed the observance of Passover only after the equinox, is directly linked with the Sunday celebration of the resurrection:

But do you **observe carefully the vernal equinox**, which occurs on the twenty-second [moon] of the twelfth month, which is Dystros (March), observing carefully until the twenty-first of the moon, **lest the fourteenth of the moon shall fall on another week [i.e., before the equinox]**, and an error being committed, you should through ignorance celebrate the passover twice in the year [i.e., both before the equinox and after], **or celebrate the day of the resurrection of our Lord on any other day than a Sunday [i.e., Easter Sunday]**.

Here is a distinct record of the evolution from the 14th Passover memorial to an Easter Sunday celebration of the resurrection. This historical evidence shows that the first steps in the movement to an Easter Sunday celebration were made well before 100 AD. The movement began with an attempt to end the observance of the 14th Passover by Christians who followed the calculations of the Hebrew Calendar in accordance with the teaching and example of the apostles of Jesus Christ. This first step toward apostasy from

the true faith of Jesus Christ was initiated by false teachers who were already rising to power in the lifetime of the apostles Paul and John (I John 4:1-3, Gal. 1:6-7).

The statements in the Apostolic Constitutions give us insight into the subtle deception that was besetting the early Christian churches and help us to understand why Paul took a firm stand against the believers who were of the circumcision. In Paul's epistle to the Galatians, we find a direct reference to the circumcision party as a central force in the movement away from the true faith of Jesus Christ. Paul states very clearly that there were false brethren who had entered the churches of Galatia with one thing in mind—to destroy the work of Christ through Paul. They were of the circumcision party and were persuading the Galatian believers to become circumcised, although they themselves did not keep the law (Gal. 6:13). Some of the Galatians had accepted their teachings and had been circumcised. Paul warned these newly circumcised Galatians that they were actually rejecting the gospel of Christ (Gal. 5:1-4, 7). The Galatians who had joined the circumcision party had begun to accept a false gospel (Gal. 1:6-10). As Paul's words show, they were involved in a religion of works of law (Gal. 3:23). At the same time, they were returning to the idolatrous practices of their former Gentile religion (Gal. 4:8-10). Paul's condemnation of their departure from the true faith indicates that the Galatians who joined the circumcision party were embracing a religion that combined Jewish practices with Gentile traditions. This fact is confirmed by the account in the Apostolic Constitutions:

Do not you yourselves compute, but keep it when your brethren of the circumcision do so: keep it together with them; and if they err in their computation, be not you concerned. **Keep your nights of watching** in the middle of the days of unleavened bread.

The reference to “nights of watching [plural] in the middle of the Days of Unleavened Bread” has no counterpart in the Old Testament, which commands only the first night to be observed (Ex. 12:42). The “nights of watching” do have a correlation to the worship of Mithras, the sun god, who was also called Adonis, Logos and Attis, depending on the region of Asia Minor in which he was worshiped. The worship of this false god demanded that Nisan 14 fall on or after the spring equinox, as the day of his crucifixion was the equinox (thus Paul's reference to times or seasons in Gal. 4:10). This sungod was a "savior" who was born on Christmas Eve (a solstice), was

killed on March 21 (an ecclesiastical equinox), lay in the grave three days and three nights and was supposedly resurrected on the first Sunday following this ecclesiastical equinox (March 25).

The account in the Apostolic Constitutions directly links the “nights of watching” for Mithras with the circumcision party—those “brethren” who professed Christ but followed a perverted gospel (Gal. 1:7, 2:4). This group utilized the Hebrew Calendar, but only followed its calculations when Nisan 14 fell after the spring equinox. When Nisan 14 fell before the equinox, they computed their Passover service to fall after the equinox. To observe the Passover before the spring equinox would be to mourn their “savior” Mithras (now referred to as Christ) before the date of his death. In every year, their Passover observance followed the spring equinox, and their celebration of the resurrection of their “savior” was always held on the first Sunday after the equinox. This practice was later adopted by the Roman church and ultimately led to the decision of the Council of Nicaea regarding the formula for the calculation of Easter.

Despite the far-reaching impact of this movement, some of the Galatians and other brethren in the churches of Asia Minor remained faithful to the teachings of the true apostles of Jesus Christ. After the death of the apostle John, they followed in the tradition of Polycarp, who had been taught by John. They continued to observe the 14th Passover according to the Hebrew Calendar, as did John and Polycarp, and later became known as *Quartodecimani*. This group was persecuted by those of the circumcision party because they kept the Passover each year on Nisan 14, whether it fell before or after the equinox. They did not keep the “nights of watching” during the days of Unleavened Bread, but worshiped the true Savior in the true manner. They were persecuted by the circumcision party for disregarding the spring equinox and not following their practice of observing the Passover only after the equinox had occurred. Thus a conflict ensued that ripped the fellowships apart.

Dr. Zodhiates states in his introduction to Paul’s epistle to the Galatians that the influence of the circumcision party among the Galatians stopped with the fall of Judah and the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. This time frame leaves us with two possible dates for the section of the Constitutions we are now discussing—56 AD or 64 AD. Both are within the time period that Paul wrote his epistles to the churches of Asia Minor. Shortly after warning the Galatians to beware of the practices of the circumcision party,

Paul wrote to the Colossians from Rome, admonishing them not to allow anyone to judge or condemn their eating and drinking during the observation of the holy days or the new moon (Feast of Trumpets). His mention of the new moon indicates that some in the Roman churches were rejecting the calculations of the Hebrew Calendar for observing the annual holy days and were observing other dates. They were being deceived into observing the crucifixion of a false Christ on a calendar date that always followed the spring equinox, and into celebrating the resurrection of this false savior on the first Sunday afterward. The fact that they were still observing the Passover even after adopting the celebration of a Sunday resurrection also attests to a very early date for the apostasy.

Notice the prescription to observe carefully from the fourteenth moon “until the twenty-first of the moon.” This period of time was known as a Lunar Term, and shows that the circumcision party, or “brethren of the circumcision,” were composing Easter Tables; i.e., calendars for the observance of Easter. The only usage of a 14-21 Lunar Term in calendric history is in the Easter Calendars of St. Patrick, the Acts of the Council of Caesarea and the Tractate of St. Athanasius. According to these calendars, the beginning of the Paschal Term was March 22 (the date in March on the Macedonian Calendar on which Easter could fall at the earliest and with a lunar age of 14 to 21 inclusive). Thus the fourteenth moon could not fall on or before March 21, and the first Sunday after this date had to fall within an inclusive range of moons 14 to 21; that is, Easter Sunday could fall on moons 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21. These dates cover the entire period of Passover and Unleavened Bread, and bespeak of an Easter Sunday celebration as a very early practice that was still tied to the spring holy day season.

But do you observe carefully **the vernal equinox, which occurs on the twenty-second of the twelfth month, which is Dystros (March), observing carefully until the twenty-first of the moon, lest [lest] the fourteenth of the moon shall fall on another week,** and an error being committed, you should through ignorance celebrate the passover twice in the year, or celebrate the day of the resurrection of our Lord on any other day than a Sunday.

The use of a 14-21 Lunar Term shows that this passage in the Apostolic Constitutions did not originate from the province of ancient Syria. The calendar of the circumcision party could not have been that of Alexandria or Antioch of the 270's or 380's AD, as both of these later calendars used a Lunar Term of 15-21. Nor did it come from the apostle John of Ephesus to

Bishop Anatolius of Laodicea, Syria, whose *Liber Anatolii* used a Lunar Term of 14-20. Unlike the 14-21 and 15-21 Lunar Terms, the 14-20 Lunar Term allowed a pre-equinox Passover observance by the early Christians. Dates of contention from 56 AD through 94 AD are listed in Table 1.1 below. These Passover dates, calculated by the Hebrew Calendar, were in contention because they fall before the Galatian equinox date of March 21, the date given in the Apostolic Constitutions as the cut off date.

Table 11.0 Problem Passover Dates for a March 21 Equinox in Galatia—56-94 AD

Year AD	Passover Date	Easter Sunday
56	Friday, March 19	Sunday, March 28
64	Wednesday, March 21	Sunday, March 25
72	Saturday, March 21	Sunday, March 29
75	Monday, March 20	Sunday, March 26
83	Friday, March 21	Sunday, March 23
94	Wednesday, March 19	Sunday, March 23

For many decades after the death of John, the Christians of Ephesus and the rest of the province of Asia, continued to commemorate the death of Christ by partaking of the bread and the wine on the eve of Nisan 14, i.e., Nisan 13 after sunset. However, the leaders of the Roman church very early on picked up on the equinox heresy and began a campaign as well to add to this Christian Passover of remembrance of Christ’s death, a celebration of the resurrection of Christ—on the first Sunday after the equinox after the fourteenth moon of Nisan. For sometime a number of Christians in and around Rome kept both the 14th Passover in remembrance of Christ’s death, while others celebrated Christ’s resurrection on Wave Sheaf Sunday. Both sides referred to these observances as the Pascha of Christ. The remembrance of Christ’s death was quickly cast aside in favor of a celebration of His resurrection

Pontificate of Pius I ***Circa 142 – 157 AD***

The division among the early believers continued to widen and spread to churches outside Italy. Irenaeus, bishop of Gaul, reported that around 120 AD, Sixtus, bishop of Rome intervened in the dispute on the side of the celebration of Christ's resurrection on Sunday. The first official church records that relate to the 14th Passover controversy date to the time of Pius I (c. 140-154 AD). The writings reveal a growing movement to pressure any fellowships retaining a Nisan 14 remembrance of the crucifixion for a sole Sunday celebration of the resurrection. Supporting this movement was a complete disavowal of any and all "Jewish" practices, and a deep desire to eliminate any observance related to "Jewish" days of worship determined by their "Jewish" Calendar.

In order to do this, it was important to prevent the newly adopted celebration of the resurrection from falling on the same day or in the same week as the 14th Passover. The problem was that church authorities forbade the use of the Hebrew Calendar to determine the 14th moon of the first month; i.e., Nisan. For one thing the secrets of its construction had not yet been made public and even if they had been, the early Roman church wanted nothing to do with anything "Jewish."

This early division in the Christian community continued to fester until it erupted with great venom at the time of Pius I, bishop of Rome (*circa* 140 – 154 AD). Pius I issued a decree that the celebration of the resurrection be held after Nisan 14, on a Sunday after the spring equinox, to eliminate any possibility of its coinciding with the 14th Passover. This decree became canon law as it were of the early Catholic Church. This fact is so recognized by Pope Gregory XIII, Bishop of Rome in his Papal Bull entitled *Inter Gravissimus*, issued in 1582. The full text of this bull is presented in ***Appendix F***.

Rather than settle the dispute, the decree of Pius I only succeeded in fueling a growing division between those Christians who observed the 14th Passover in remembrance of Christ's death, and those who celebrated the resurrection of Christ on Sunday. A series of exchanges between the bishops of Rome and the Bishops of Asia Minor is preserved in the early

literature of the church. Dates of contention from 102 AD through 151 AD are listed in Table 1.2 below. These Passover dates, calculated by the Hebrew Calendar, were in contention because they fall before the Roman ecclesiastical equinox date of March 25.

Table 11.1 Problem Passover Dates for a March 25 Equinox in Rome—102-151 AD

Year AD	Passover Date	Easter Sunday
102	Monday, March 21	Sunday, March 27
110	Friday, March 22	Sunday, March 31
113	Friday, March 18	Sunday, March 27
118	Wednesday, March 24	Sunday, March 28
121	Wednesday, March 20	Sunday, March 31
129	Monday, March 22	Sunday, March 28
132	Monday, March 18	Sunday, March 31
137	Friday, March 23	Sunday, April 1
140	Saturday, March 20	Sunday, March 28
145	Wednesday, March 25	Sunday, March 29
148	Wednesday, March 21	Sunday, April 1
151	Friday, March 20	Sunday, March 29

Sometime around 160 AD Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, traveled to Rome to discuss the problem with bishop Anicetus. Polycarp argued in favor of a Nisan 14 observance, but to no avail. In 164 AD, Melito, an eminent supporter of a Nisan 14 Passover wrote that there was a discussion in Laodicea regarding the Passover. Melito recorded that the Passover was still being observed at its proper time—that is, on Nisan 14. In 174 AD, Apollinaris of Hierapolis, a city of Asia Minor next door to Laodicea, wrote a treatise in which he also supported the “proper date of the Passover.” Apollinaris wrote in support of a Nisan 14 Passover.

Sixteen years later, in 190 AD, another treatise was written in support of a Nisan 14 Passover, arguing that Christ was taken on the night of Nisan 14, suffered in the morning at the hands of the chief priests, was crucified on Nisan 14 and laid in the grave on the 14th at sunset. This treatise is attributed to Clement of Alexandria.

Pontificate of Victor I *Circa 189 – 198 AD*

In 196 AD Victor I, bishop of Rome, clashed with bishop Polycrates of Ephesus and the entire Christian community of the Province of Asia in Asia Minor. Polycrates refused to follow the Roman edict and continued to observe the 14th Passover in commemoration of Christ’s death. Victor subsequently threatened Polycrates, and those who stood with him, with “excommunication”, as well as issuing a decree similar to that of Pius I. This fact is again recognized by Pope Gregory XIII, Bishop of Rome in his Papal Bull entitled *Inter Gravissimus*, issued in 1582—the full text of which is presented in *Appendix F*.

Dates of contention from 156 AD through 197 AD are listed in Table 1.3 below. These Passover dates, calculated by the Hebrew Calendar, were in contention because they fall before the Roman ecclesiastical equinox date of March 25.

Table 11.2 Problem Passover Dates for a March 25 Equinox in Rome—156-197 AD

Year AD	Passover Date	Easter Sunday
156	Monday, March 23	Sunday, March 29
159	Monday, March 20	Sunday, March 26
164	Friday, March 24	Sunday, March 26
167	Saturday, March 22	Sunday, March 30
170	Monday, March 20	Sunday, March 26
175	Wednesday, March 23	Sunday, March 27
178	Friday, March 21	Sunday, March 30
186	Wednesday, March 23	Sunday, March 27
189	Wednesday, March 19	Sunday, March 30
194	Saturday, March 23	Sunday, March 31
197	Monday, March 21	Sunday, March 27

Bishop Polycrates’ letter was preserved in Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. I, pp. 505-507. St. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, intervened and

pleaded with Victor not to take any such action. Subsequently, the matter seems to have settled down, but in a manner extremely detrimental to the churches of Asia Minor. St. Anatolius, bishop of Laodicea, Syria, writing around 276 AD, informs us that many of the churches of Asia Minor conformed to Roman practice regarding the observance of Easter Sunday. An uneasy peace seems to have existed in the churches of Asia Minor for the next 80 years or so from 196 to 276 AD. Not all Christians there had lost their first love, but many had:

St Irenaeus, who was then governing the see of Lyons, pleaded for these Churches, which, so it seemed to him, had sinned only through a want of light; and he obtained from the Pope the revocation of a measure which seemed too severe. This indulgence produced the desired effect. In the following century St Anatolius, bishop of Laodicea, in his book on the Pasch, written in 276, tells us that the Churches of Asia Minor had then, for some time past, conformed to the Roman practice (*The History of Paschal Time*).

Chapter Twelve

The Quartodeciman Controversy of Cilicia Syria and Mesopotamia

The Reformation of 276 AD

The third and fourth centuries were ones of great climatological, political, and ecclesiastical turmoil. Asia, Africa and Europe were all deeply affected by catastrophic changes in the climate which contributed to the collapse of old empires, the rise of new ones and the migration of millions of people.

The Nubian Empire of extreme eastern Africa collapsed in 350 AD to be replaced by an Ethiopian power. In extreme north central Africa, the kingdom of the Garamantes (only recently rediscovered by archaeologists) reached its peak in the mid fourth century and then began a steep slide into the dust of history. We will examine this kingdom more closely in a bit.

The Roman Empire was divided into two administrative divisions by Emperor Diocletian in 284 AD.

Sometime around 270 AD, many of the churches of the Roman Provinces of Cilicia, Syria and Mesopotamia revolted against Rome and returned to the observance of the weekly Sabbath and the observance of the remembrance of Christ's Crucifixion on Nisan 14—even if it occurred before the spring equinox. This extremely serious challenge to Rome's dominance of the emerging Christian church was one of the main factors leading to the first Ecumenical Council at Nicea. Only 318 out of 1800 bishops convened at Nicaea in the fall of 325 AD to take up the matter as well as the Arian heresy. Attendance was less than 18% of the total bishops invited.

The matter was debated and legislated but not resolved. Rome made no attempt to follow her own canon law! Nor did she have astronomers

competent in the calculation of the dates of Easter Sunday. To top it off, Rome pegged the *ecclesiastical equinox* at March 25 while the Alexandrian astronomers pegged the *ecclesiastical equinox* at March 21. Thus, from 325 AD to 455 AD Rome and Alexandria quite often disagreed on the date of Easter Sunday, leading to the observance of Easter on varying dates. The records of this controversy provide us with historical crosschecks with the Hebrew Calendar that verify its accuracy. These points of synchronization are made possible by the preservation of Julian Calendar dates linked to Nisan 14.

Although the controversy between Rome and Alexandria subsided after 455 AD a third period of controversy arose with a vengeance among the Celtic Churches of Ireland and Scotland and later among the Anglo-Saxon Churches of Britain. This new Quartodeciman Controversy would not subside until 768 AD. By 768 AD most of the ancient churches of the British Isles had adopted the Dionysiac 19-year lunar cycle promulgated in Rome by Dionysius the Less (Little Dennis) and adopted by the church in 532 AD. Thus nearly 800 years elapse before the controversy of the Christian Passover verses Easter Sunday finally slips into the murky pages of history. Once again, the records of this controversy provide us with historical crosschecks with the Hebrew Calendar that verify its accuracy.

St. Anatolius bishop of Laodicea Syria, who died *circa* 282 AD wrote, that in 276 AD, the churches of Syria, Cilicia and Mesopotamia rebelled against the bishops of Rome and reverted to the observance of Passover on the fourteenth moon of March. They had again regained their first love:

About the same time [276 AD], and by a strange coincidence, **the Churches of Syria, Cilicia, and Mesopotamia gave scandal by again leaving the Christian and Apostolic observance of Easter, and returning to the Jewish rite of the fourteenth of the March moon.** This schism in the Liturgy grieved the Church; and one of the points to which **the Council of Nicæa directed its first attention was the promulgation of the universal obligation to celebrate Easter on the Sunday** (*The History of Paschal Time*).

The expanse of this reformation was immense. Churches in three of the largest Provinces of the Roman Empire had thrown off the yoke of Rome! This loss to Rome was so great that it was almost incalculable. To give the reader a glimpse of the magnitude of territory we are talking about we will look at the following facts. Two of these Provinces were at the very heart of Paul's early ministry!

The Roman Province of Cilicia was a long narrow strip of coastal land that ran along the extreme southeastern portion of Asia Minor—i.e., modern day Turkey. She was bordered on the west by the Province of Pamphylia and on the east by Province of Syria. The Province of Cappadocia lay to the north and of course the Mediterranean Sea lay to her south. Seleusia and Tarsus were the two largest cities.

The Roman Province of Syria was bounded on the east by the Province of Cilicia and along the west by the Mediterranean Sea south through Palestine to the Province of Egypt and bordered on the east by the Province of Mesopotamia and the Arabian Desert. She was bounded on the north by the Province of Cappadocia and on the extreme south by Arabia Petraea. The major cities of this province included from north to south; Berria, Seleucia, Antiochia, Apamea, Laodicea, Aradus, Emesa, Tripolis, Heliopolis, Damascus, Sidon, Tyrus, Ptolemai, Caesarea and Neapolis and Jerusalem.

The Roman Province of Mesopotamia was bounded on the east by the Province of Syria and the Arabian Desert and on the far western frontier by the kingdom of Media. She was bounded on the north by the Provinces of Cappadocia and Armenia and on the south by the Persian Gulf. The major cities of this province were from north to south: Edessa, Nineveh, Apollonia, Seleucia and Babylon.

<http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~vandersp/Courses/maps/fullmap3.jpg>

This huge territory covered more that 1000 miles from the western tip of Cilicia to the southern tip of Mesopotamia and 600 miles or so from the northern tip of Syria to the southern tip of Syria. For a rough comparison of the size of this territory picture a landmass half to three quarters that of the United States east of the Mississippi.

So great was this problem and so divisive was it that it was one of the main reasons if not the main reason for convening the Council at Nicaea in 325 AD—49 years after the reformation of 276 AD. It think it of great significance that this mighty and far reaching reformation occurred just some 82 years before Hillel II published the secrets of the Hebrew Calendar. Hillel worked and published in the Roman Province of Syria.

Thus, within an 82 year period many in the Churches of God of the Provinces of the entire near east of the Roman Empire repent of their heresy

and return to God, the Byzantine Text is published by Constantine the Great and Hillel II publishes the secrets of the Hebrew Calendar! Constantine, of course, sets his throne in Constantinople, not Rome. Not only are the bishops of Rome and Alexandria upstaged politically and theologically, but the empire of Rome herself is being threatened by so-called “barbarian” hordes and the ancient city of Alexandria is destroyed by a massive earthquake and by devastating fires around the time of 300 AD.

In two of his epistles, St. Athanasios touches on the matter of the celebration of Pascha. In a letter to the Bishops of Africa (Chapter 2), he writes:

The Synod of Nicaea was convened on account of the heresy of Arius and because of the issue of Pascha. **Because the Christians in Syria, Cilicia, and Mesopotamia were not in concord, at the same time that the Jews celebrated their Passover, they celebrated...[the Christian Pascha]..., too** (Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XXVI, col. 1029).

In his letter “On the Synods in Ariminum and Seleucia” (Chapter 5), the Saint comments:

The Synod in Nicaea was held not without manifest reason, but out of good reason and urgent need; for the Christians of Syria, Cilicia, and Mesopotamia were erring with regard to the holy days and celebrated the Pascha with the Jews (*ibid.*, col. 688).

It is evident from the context, here, that “met *with the Jews*, means precisely what the Church has always taught; the expression refers to nothing other than a common celebration with the Jews *at one and the same moment in time*. Moreover, it is this very *temporal* concelebration which invited reproach and which was one of the reasons for the convocation of a synod in Nicaea. (Sergius, Archimandrite, *The First OEcumenical Synod and the Feast of Pascha...not with the Jews*).

Those who refused to abide by this decree of the council, but continued to commemorate the death of Christ on the night of Nisan 14, or observed Easter on Nisan 14 were condemned as heretics and henceforth branded as *Quartodecimani*.

The decree was unanimously passed, and the Fathers of the Council ordained that ‘all controversy being laid aside, the brethren in the East should solemnize the Pasch on the same day as the Romans, the Alexandrians, and the rest of the faithful.’ So important seemed this question, inasmuch as it affected the very essence of the Christian Liturgy, that St Athanasius, assigning the reasons which had led to the calling of the Council of Nicæa, mentions these two: the

condemnation of the Arian heresy, and the establishment of uniformity in the observance of Easter (*The History of Paschal Time*).

Chapter Thirteen

The Quartodeciman Controversy Centered at Antioch

The Reformation of 387 AD

Against the Jews

by St. John Chrysostom

St. Chrysostom addresses a problem with the dates of Easter and the Jewish Passover coinciding next Julian year in the spring of 387 AD. Although preached in the fall of 386 AD, Chrysostom referred to the problem arising “this year” (Homily III, Section V, para (8), as though referring to the previous spring of 386 AD. He clearly writes, however, that this problem will arise in the future. In addition, Easter did not coincide with Passover in 386 AD. Thus, it is a future problem Chrysostom refers to, not a past problem. Scholars have always had difficulty with this expression. We believe all difficulty is removed when we realize that Chrysostom is referring to the Jewish Civil Year 4147, which he and his flock knew had just begun on Trumpets, September 10, 386 AD, the very month in which he was preaching. The following excerpts from his Homilies will give the reader a deep look into the depth of the problem faced by the Catholic Church of Antioch.

What is the Pasch; what is Lent? What belongs to the Jews: what belongs to us? Why does their Pasch come once each year; why do we celebrate ours each time we gather to celebrate the mysteries? What does the feast of unleavened bread mean? (Homily 3, Section 2, Paragraph 5).

...we put more importance on peace than on the observance of dates. And I say to you what Paul said to the Galatians: "Become like me, because I also have become like you." What does this mean? He was urging them to renounce circumcision, to scorn the sabbath, the feast days, and all the other observances of the Law (Homily 3, Section 3, Paragraph 1).

Three hundred Fathers or even more gathered together in the land of Bithynia and ordained this by law; yet you disdain their decrees [The Council of Nicea, 325 AD]. You must choose one of two courses: either you charge them with ignorance for their want of exact knowledge on this matter, or you charge them with cowardice because they were not ignorant, but played the hypocrite and betrayed the truth (Homily 3, Section 3, Paragraph 3).

(9) Christ did keep the Pasch with them. Yet he did not do so with the idea that we should keep the Pasch with them. He did so that he might bring the reality to what foreshadowed the reality. He also submitted to circumcision, kept the sabbath, observed the festival days, and ate the unleavened bread. But He did all these things in Jerusalem. However, we are subject to none of these things, and on this Paul spoke out loud and clear: "If you be circumcised, Christ shall be of no advantage to you." And again, speaking of the feast of unleavened bread, he said: "Therefore let us keep festival, not with the old leaven, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." For our unleavened bread is not a mixed flour but an uncorrupted and virtuous way of life (Homily 3, Section 3, Paragraph 9).

IV.

Why did Christ keep the Pasch at that time [Chrysostom arguing against a Nisan 14, once a year observance]? The old Pasch was a type of the Pasch to come, and the reality had to supplant the type. So Christ first showed the foreshadowing and then brought the reality to the banquet table. Once the reality has come, the type which foreshadowed it is henceforth lost in its own shadow and no longer fills the need. So do not keep pleading this excuse, but show me that Christ did command us to observe the old Pasch. I am showing you quite the opposite. I am showing you that Christ not only did not command us to keep the festival days but even freed us from the obligation to do so (Homily 3, Section 4, Paragraph 1).

The best time to approach the mysteries is determined by the purity of a man's conscience and not by his observance of suitable seasons [The "season" of Passover, Nisan 14, the "season" of Unleavened Bread, Nisan 15-21, the "season" of Pentecost, the "season" of Trumpets, Tishri 1, the "season" of Atonement, Tishri 10, the "season" of Tabernacles, Tishri 15-21 and the "season" of The Last Great Day, Tishri 22. Thus Chrysostom knew very well of the Hebrew Calendar and its "seasons"] (Homily 3, Section 5, Paragraph 1).

(4) Be sure that God takes no account of such observance of special seasons [As regulated by the Hebrew Calendar] (Homily 3, Section 5, Paragraph 4).

(5) But why speak of ourselves since we have been set free from all such necessity? We are citizens of a city above in heaven, where there are no months, no sun, no moon, no circle of seasons [Chrysostom is describing a luni-solar calendar] (Homily 3, Section 5, Paragraph 5).

Sunday

March 21 (Nisan 15), 387 AD

Catholic Christians of Antioch Turning to Sabbath and The New Moon Day and Other Holy Days

387 AD

Chrysostom continually charged these Christians with insisting on observing Passover, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles at the “proper time.” It is obvious that the proper holy day times were being set by the calculations, not observation—else why would they be charged with “proper time observance” and observing the Feast of Trumpets, the only holy day celebrating a new moon? If the holy days were declared by observation, then there would be all kinds of times declared for each holy day, not just one “proper time.”

According to the Hebrew Calendar, Trumpets was celebrated on Tuesday, August 31 in 387 AD. Rule 2, the 18-hour Rule, was in play. This Trumpets began civil year 4148. The year was the 6th of the intercalary cycle and was 384 days long—thus an intercalary year. The Hebrew Calendar year of 386 AD was 355 days in length and the Hebrew Calendar year of 385 AD was 353 days in length—thus Rule 1 was in play.

Remember, Chrysostom states that Nisan 15 in 387 AD occurred on a (Easter) Sunday. This fact correlates to the very day and length of the year with an August 31 Trumpets in 387 AD. We thus have a cross check with the current intercalary cycle and Rules 1 and 2.

When He was crucified it was the first day of the feast of unleavened bread and the day of preparation [Chrysostom acknowledging that Christ was crucified on Passover Day, Nisan 14] (Homily 3, Section 5, Paragraph 7).

(8) But it is not possible for both of these to fall always on the same day. This year the first day of the feast of unleavened bread falls on Sunday [Sunday, Nisan

15, March 21, 387 AD], and the fast must still last for a whole week; According to this, after Passiontide, after the cross and resurrection have come and gone, we are still fasting. And it has often happened that, after the cross and resurrection, our fast is still being observed because the week is not yet over. This is why no observance of the exact time is possible [Chrysostom's insistence in his homilies that the Jews kept the holy days at exact times demonstrates that they were determining these "exact times" by use of a calculated calendar and not by individual observation, for such practice could never produce "exact times" and he would have been accusing them of keeping the holy days whenever they wished] (Homily 3, Section 5, Paragraph 8).

(12) The Church does not recognize the exact observance of dates [I.e., as declared by the Hebrew Calendar!]. In the beginning the Fathers decided to come together from widely separated places and to fix the Easter date; the Church paid respect to the harmony of their thinking, loved their oneness of mind, and accepted the date they enjoined. My earlier remarks have proved adequately that it is impossible for us or you or any other man to arrive at the exact date of the Lord's day. So let us stop fighting with shadows, let us stop hurting ourselves in the big things while we are indulging our rivalry over the small (Homily 3, Section 6, Paragraph 12).

(3) This is why Stephen said to them: "You always oppose the Holy Spirit." This is the one thing, he says, in which you show your zeal: in doing the opposite to what God has commanded. And they are still doing that today. What makes this clear? The Law itself. In the case of the Jewish festivals the Law demanded observance not only of the time but also the place. In speaking about this feast of the Passover, the Law says to them something such as this: "You will not be able to keep the Passover in any of the cities which the Lord your God gives to you." The Law bids them keep the feast on the fourteenth day of the first month and in the city of Jerusalem. The Law also narrowed down the time and place for the observance of Pentecost, when it commanded them to celebrate the feast after seven weeks, and again, when it stated: "In the place which the Lord your God chooses." So also the Law fixed the feast of Tabernacles (Homily 4, Section 4, Paragraph 3).

(4) But the Passover comes to an end on the twenty-first of that month. **If they began the feast on the fourteenth day of the first month and then continued it for seven days, they then come to the twenty-first** [Chrysostom refers to all eight days as "Passover" but testifies that Passover and UB are separate observations]. Nonetheless, Daniel steadfastly continued his fast even after the Passover had come and gone. For if Daniel had begun his fast on the third day of the first month and then continued through a full twenty-one days, he passed the fourteenth, went on for seven days after that, and then kept fasting for three more days (Homily 4, Section 5, Paragraph 4).

Chrysostom speaks of the fall festivals of the Jews that will “soon be upon us.”

(4) ...Another very serious illness calls for any cure my words can bring, an illness which has become implanted in the body of the Church (Homily 1, Section 1, Paragraph 4).

The Upcoming Fall Festival Season 387 AD The Feast of Trumpets

(5) What is this disease? The festivals of the pitiful and miserable Jews are soon to march upon us one after the other and in quick succession: the feast of Trumpets, the feast of Tabernacles, the fasts....But now that the Jewish festivals are close by and at the very door... (Homily 1, Section 1, Paragraph 5).

If any of you, whether you are here present or not, shall go [future tense] to the spectacle of the Trumpets [Tuesday, August 31, 387 AD], or rush off to the synagogue, or go up to the shrine of Matrona, or take part in fasting, or share in the sabbath, or observe any other Jewish ritual great or small, I call heaven and earth as my witnesses that I am guiltless of the blood of all of you (Homily 1, Section 8, Paragraph 1).

Chrysostom is apparently preached the following on Sunday, August 29, 387 AD.

But now that the devil summons your wives to the feast of the Trumpets [Tuesday, August 31, 387 AD] and they turn a ready ear to this call, you do not restrain them. You let them entangle themselves in accusations of ungodliness, you let them be dragged off into licentious ways. For, as a rule, it is the harlots, the effeminate, and the whole chorus from the theater who rush to that festival (Homily 2, Section 2, Paragraph 4).

Catholic Christians of Antioch, Syria were observing the fall festivals in common with the Jews. This means that they were observing the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles season at the same time and on the same dates as the Jews.

The Day of Atonement

The wicked and unclean fast of the Jews is now at our doors. Though it is a fast, do not wonder that I have called it unclean. What is done contrary to God's purpose, be it sacrifice or fast, is the most abominable of all things. **Their wicked fast will begin after five days** [Atonement was Thursday, September 9, 387 AD.

Chrysostom is preaching this sermon five days earlier on Sunday, September 5, 387 AD]. Ten days ago [Sunday, August 22, 387 AD], or more than ten, I anticipated this and gave an exhortation with the hope it would make your brothers safe (Homily 2, Section 1, Paragraph 1).

(1) Is it not strange that those who worship the Crucified **keep common festival** [See Homily I, Section I, Paragraph 5 where Chrysostom defines *festivals* as the fall holy days] (Homily 1, Section 5, Paragraph 1).

(7) For when they see that you, who worship the Christ whom they crucified, are reverently following their rituals [Chrysostom now refers to the holy days as *rituals*], how can they fail to think that the rites they have performed are the best and that our ceremonies are worthless?...**If a man sees you that have knowledge come into the synagogue and participate in the festival of the Trumpets** [Chrysostom links rituals with the observation of Trumpets], shall not his conscience, being weak, be emboldened to admire what the Jews do? (Homily 1, Section 5, Paragraph 7)

(5) Finally, if the ceremonies of the Jews [the holy days in particular] move you to admiration, what do you have in common with us? If the Jewish ceremonies are venerable and great, ours are lies [Well said, Chrysostom, and never a truer statement was uttered] (Homily 1, Section 6, Paragraph 5).

(1)... But do their festivals have something solemn and great about them? They have shown that these, too, are impure. Listen to the prophets; rather, listen to God and with how strong a statement he turns his back on them: "I have found your festivals hateful, I have thrust them away from myself"

(2) Does God hate their festivals and do you share in them? He did not say this or that festival, but all of them together. Do you wish to see that God hates the worship paid with kettledrums, with lyres, with harps, and other instruments? God said: "Take away from me the sound of your songs and I will not hear the canticle of you harps". If God said: "Take them away from me", do you run to listen to the trumpets? (Homily 1, Section 7, Paragraphs 1 & 2).

(1) Again the Jews, the most miserable and wretched of all men, **are going to fast**, and again we must make secure the flock of Christ (Homily 4, Section 1, Paragraph 1).

(3) **That fast will not be upon us for ten days or more** (Homily 4, Section 1, Paragraph 3).

(4) But before I draw up my battle line against the Jews, I will be glad to talk to those who are members of our own body, those who seem to belong to our ranks although they observe the Jewish rites and make every effort to defend them (Homily 4, Section 3, Paragraph 4).

Are you a Christian? Why, then, this zeal for Jewish practices? (Homily 4, Section 3, Paragraph 5).

(2) I have said enough against those who say they are on our side but are eager to follow the Jewish rites (Homily 4, Section 4, Paragraph 2).

(4) What is it that you are rushing to see in the synagogue of the Jews who fight against God? Tell me, is it **to hear the trumpeters**? You should stay at home to weep and groan for them, because they are fighting against God's command, and it is the devil who leads them in their revels and dance. As I said before, if there once was a time when God did permit what is against his will, now it is a violation of his law and grounds for punishments beyond number. Long ago, when the Jews did have sacrifices, they did sound their trumpets; now God does not permit them to do this (Homily 4, Section 7, Paragraph 4).

(9) Is it some great burden I am asking of you, my beloved? Let each one of you **bring back for me one of your brothers to salvation**. Let each one of you interfere and meddle in your brother's affairs so that we may come to tomorrow's service with great confidence, because we are bringing gifts more valuable than any others, because we are bringing back the souls of those who have wandered away (Homily 4, Section 7, Paragraph 9).

(3) Brethren, do not become children in mind, but in malice be children, and rescue from their untimely anguish those who are frightened by these things. Teach them what should really terrify them and make them afraid. They should not be terrified by that ark but they should be afraid that they will bring destruction to the temple of God. How will they destroy the temple of God? **By constantly rushing off to the synagogue**, by a conscience which is inclined toward Judaism, and by the untimely observance of the Jewish rites [The Sabbath and the holy days].

(4) You who would be justified in the Law have fallen away from grace." This is what you must fear. On that day of judgment you must be afraid of hearing him who will judge you say: "Depart, I know you not." "You made common cause with those who crucified me. You were obstinate toward me and started up again the festivals to which I had put an end. **You ran [past tense] to the synagogues of the Jews** who sinned against me. I destroyed the temple and made ruins of that august place together with all the awe-inspiring things it contained. But you frequented shrines that are no better than hucksters' shops or dens of thieves (Homily 6, Section 7, Paragraph 4).

Sunday

September 20, 387 AD During the Feast of Tabernacles

(1) Have you had enough of the fight against the Jews? Or do you wish me to take up the same topic today? Even if I have already had much to say on it, I still think you want to hear the same thing again. The man who does not have enough of loving Christ will never have enough of fighting against those who hate Christ. Besides, there is another reason which makes a discourse on this theme necessary. **These feasts of theirs are not yet over [present tense]**; some traces still remain (Homily 7, Section 1, Paragraph 1).

(2) **Their trumpets [Tuesday, August 31, 387 AD] were [notice use of past tense] a greater outrage than those heard in the theaters; their fasts [Atonement, Thursday, September 9, 387 AD] were [notice once again the use of past tense] more disgraceful than any drunken revel. So, too, the tents which at this moment are [notice use of present tense] pitched [Tabernacles, Tishri 15, Tuesday, September 14 through Tuesday, September 21, 387 AD]** among them are no better than the inns where harlots and flute girls ply their trades. Let no one condemn me for the boldness of my words; it is the height of boldness and outrage not to suspect the Jews of these excesses. Since they stubbornly fight against God and resist the Holy Spirit, how can we avoid the necessity of passing such sentence upon them? (Homily 7, Section 1, Paragraph 2).

(3) This festival [Tabernacles] used to be a holy one when it was observed according to the Law and at God's command. But this is no longer true. All its dignity has been destroyed because it is observed against God's will. Those who, above all others, treat the Law and the ancient festivals with the least respect are the very ones who are ready today to observe the Law and festivals more than anyone else. But we are the ones who honor the Law above all others, even if we let it rest like a man who has grown old and infirm, even if we do not drag it, gray with age, to the arena, even if we do not force it to enter the contests which are not suited to its years. In my past discourses I gave adequate proof that today is not the day of the Law nor of the old commonwealth and the old way of life [Sabbath and holy days] (Homily 7, Section 1, Paragraph 3).

(6) Therefore, we must do the same. By God's grace, we made the prophets our warriors against the Jews and routed them. As we return from pursuing our foes, let us **look all around to see if any of our brothers have fallen**, if the fast has swept some of them off, if any of them have shared in the festival of the Jews (Homily 8, Section 1, Paragraph 6).

(8) **Even is those who did fall are in number**, we make them a multitude by the multitude of our rumors; we weaken those who resisted and we give a push to those on the point of falling. If one of our brothers hears the rumor that a large number joined in keeping the fast, he will be more inclined to be careless himself; again, if it is one of weak ones who hears the story, he will rush to join the strong of those who have fallen (Homily 8, Section 4, Paragraph 8).

St. Epiphanius of Cyprus (Circa 310-403 AD)

Epiphanius, an eyewitness to these events, condemns the Audiani, a heretical Christian sect, for celebrating their Pascha, or Christian Passover, on the same day the Jews prepared their unleavened bread—i.e., Nisan 14.

Born at Besanduk, near Eleutheropolis, in Judea, after 310; died in 403. While very young he followed the monastic life in Egypt. On his return to Judea he founded a monastery at Besanduk and was ordained to the priesthood. In 367 his reputation for asceticism and learning brought about his nomination as Bishop of Constantia (Salamis) the metropolis of the Island of Cyprus. For nearly forty years he fulfilled the duties of the episcopate, but his activity extended far beyond his island. His zeal for the monastic life, ecclesiastical learning, and orthodoxy gave him extraordinary authority; hence the numerous occasions on which his advice was sought, and his intervention in important ecclesiastical affairs. He went to Antioch, probably in 376, to investigate Apollinarianism and to intervene in the schism that divided that church. He decided in favour of Bishop Paulinus, who was supported by Rome, against **Meletius**, who was supported by the episcopate of the East. In 382 he assisted at the Council of Rome to uphold the cause of Paulinus of Antioch. About 394, carried away by an apparently excessive zeal, he went to Jerusalem to oppose the supposed Origenism of the bishop, John. In 402 he was at Constantinople to combat the same pretended heresy of St. John Chrysostom. He died on his return journey to Cyprus. (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1912 ed., vol. XIII, s.v. “Epiphanius of Salamis.”)

St. Epiphanius of Cyprus, a contemporary of St. John Chrysostomos, though a Jew by origin, denounces the **Audiani**, a heretical sect which flourished in his day, because **they “wish to celebrate Pascha together with the Jews; that is, they essay to prove that Pascha should supposedly be celebrated at the same time that the Jews prepare their unleavened bread”** (*Adversus LXXX Haereses*, Chap. 70, Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XLII, col. 360).

St. Epiphanius places particular emphasis on the ordinance concerning **the prohibition of the concelebration of Pascha with the Jewish Passover**: “The Holy Church of God...takes into consideration, not only **the fourteenth day**, but the week—the cyclical repetition of a series of seven days—, as well.... **The Church considers not only the fourteenth lunar day, but also the movement of the sun, so as to prevent the celebrations of two Paschas in the same**

year.... For, though we give attention to the fourteenth day, we pass beyond the equinox and then, further, assign the celebration of Pascha to God's holy day, that is, to Sunday" (*Adversus LXXX Haereses*, Chap. 50, Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XLI, col. 888).

St. Epiphanius continues: "Much could be said about how perfectly well the Fathers, or, more precisely, God Himself, through them, fixed for the Church the correct and true celebration of this loftiest and most holy Feast, such **that it might be celebrated after the equinox and that we not celebrate Pascha on the fourteenth day**"! (Sergius, Archimandrite, "The First Ecumenical Synod and the Feast of Pascha '...not with the Jews' ")

Socrates Scholasticus Born circa 379 AD

The Ecclesiastical History By Socrates Scholasticus Book V Chapter XXII.

The Author's Views respecting the Celebration of Easter, Baptism, Fasting, Marriage, the Eucharist, and Other Ecclesiastical Rites.

Please note that the original was not broken into paragraphs as you see here. Scholasticus' material is broken into paragraphs to make the reading a little easier. His observations of this period are quite revealing.

As we have touched the subject I deem it not unreasonable to say a few words concerning Easter. It appears to me that neither the ancients nor moderns who have affected to follow the Jews, have had any rational foundation for contending so obstinately about it. For they have not taken into consideration the fact that **when Judaism was changed into Christianity, the obligation to observe the Mosaic law and the ceremonial types ceased.** And the proof of the matter is plain; for no law of Christ permits Christians to imitate the Jews. On the contrary the apostle expressly forbids it; not only rejecting circumcision, but also deprecating contention about festival days. In his epistle to the Galatians⁹² he writes, **'Tell me ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?'** And continuing his train of argument, he demonstrates that the Jews were in bondage as servants, but that those who have come to Christ are **'called into the liberty of sons.'**⁹³ Moreover he exhorts them in no way to regard **'days, and months, and years.'**⁹⁴

Again in his epistle to the Colossians⁹⁵ he distinctly declares, that such observances are merely shadows: wherefore he says, **'Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of any holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath-days; which are a shadow of things to come.'** The same truths are also confirmed by him in the epistle to the Hebrews⁹⁶ in these words: **'For the**

priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.' Neither the apostles, therefore, nor the Gospels,⁹⁷ have anywhere imposed the `yoke of servitude⁹⁸ on those who have embraced the truth; but have left Easter and every other feast to be honored by the gratitude of the recipients of grace.

Wherefore, inasmuch as men love festivals, because they afford them cessation from labor: each individual in every place, according to his own pleasure, has by a prevalent custom celebrated the memory of the saving passion. The Saviour and his apostles have enjoined us by no law to keep this feast: nor do the Gospels and apostles threaten us with any penalty, punishment, or curse for the neglect of it, as the Mosaic law does the Jews. It is merely for the sake of historical accuracy, and for the reproach of the Jews, because they polluted themselves with blood on their very feasts, that it is recorded in the Gospels that our Saviour suffered in the days of `unleavened bread.⁹⁹ The aim of the apostles was not to appoint festival days, but to teach a righteous life and piety. And it seems to me that just as many other customs have been established in individual localities according to usage. So also the feast of Easter came to be observed in each place according to the individual peculiarities of the peoples inasmuch as none of the apostles legislated on the matter. And that the observance originated not by legislation, but as a custom the facts themselves indicate.

In Asia Minor most people kept the fourteenth day of the moon, disregarding the sabbath: yet they never separated from those who did otherwise, until Victor, bishop of Rome, influenced by too ardent a zeal, fulminated a sentence of excommunication against the Quartodecimans¹⁰⁰ in Asia. Wherefore also Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons in France, severely censured Victor by letter for his immoderate heat;¹⁰¹ telling him that although the ancients differed in their celebration of Easter, they did not desist from intercommunion. Also that **Polycarp**, bishop of Smyrna, who afterwards suffered martyrdom under Gordian,¹⁰² continued to communicate with Anicetus bishop of Rome, although he himself, according to the usage of his native Smyrna, **kept Easter on the fourteenth day of the moon**, as Eusebius attests in the fifth book of his *Ecclesiastical History*.¹⁰³

While therefore some in Asia Minor observed the day above-mentioned, others in the East kept that feast on the sabbath indeed, but differed as regards the month. The former thought the Jews should be followed, though they were not exact: the latter kept Easter after the equinox, refusing to celebrate with the Jews; `for,' said they, `it ought to be celebrated when the sun is in Aries, in the month called Xanthicus by the Antiochians, and April by the Romans.' In this practice, they averred, they conformed not to the modern Jews, who are mistaken in almost everything, but to the ancients, and to Josephus according to what he has written in the third book of his Jewish Antiquities.¹⁰⁴ Thus these people were at issue among themselves.

Theodosius' death in 495 [sic 395] brought the Empire into the less skilled hands of his sons Honorius and Arcadius, who compounded their lack of statecraft by their deep personal animosity. Their personal hostility was resolved by a decision to divide the Empire irrevocably into two parts. Arcadius became Emperor of the Eastern Empire, which soon became known as the Byzantine Empire. Honorius assumed the throne of the new Western Empire--just 81 years before its demise at the hands of Odoacer, leader of its rebellious barbarian mercenaries.
<http://www.boglewood.com/sicily/division.html>

Chapter Fourteen

The Quartodeciman Controversy of the British Isles The Synod of Whitby—664 AD

The Historical Background

A presentation of the evidence from the Synod of Whitby will yield two additional historical synchronizations with the 14th day of the month of Nisan on Hebrew Calendar—those of April 11, 651 AD and April 15, 664 AD. The Abbey of Whitby was located on the east coast of England in what was the ancient Anglian kingdom of Deira. This region is now known as Yorkshire, North Yorkshire to be exact. In fact, the city of Whitby is situated on the Atlantic coast only 45 miles northeast of the ancient city of York and about 55 miles southeast of Newcastle upon Tyne. Before we examine the evidence resulting from the Synod of Whitby, it would be good to place this event in its historical context.

During the 6th century, England was divided into seven kingdoms. These Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were: Wessex, Mercia, Kent, East Anglia, Essex, Deira and Bernicia. The kingdom of Kent was founded by the Jutes in 449 AD. Her first king was Hengest. The kingdoms of Wessex and Essex were founded by the Saxons. Wessex was founded in 510 AD by King Cerdic. Essex was founded 520 AD by King Aescwine. And the kingdoms of Mercia, East Anglia, Deira and Bernicia were founded by the Angles. Mercia was founded around 580 AD by King Creoda. East Anglia was founded in 570 AD by King Wuffa.

Bernicia was founded in 547 AD by King Ida. And Deira was founded in 557 AD by Aelle, one of Ida's generals. Of these seven kingdoms, the kingdoms of Bernicia, Deira, Mercia and Wessex were the most important. Many years later, all seven kingdoms were, for the first time, united for one year by Edward the Magnificent. The date was 944 AD. In 954 AD King Eadwig permanently united all the kingdoms by subduing Northumbria. King Eadwig was followed on the throne by Edgar, who was followed by

Aethelred the Unready, who was followed by Edmund Ironside who ruled from 978 to 1016 AD.

The kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia lay in the extreme northeastern portion of what is now England. Bernicia lay north and south of Hadrian's wall. It was bordered on the north and west by the Picts of Scotland. It was bordered on the east by the Atlantic Ocean. And was bordered on the south by the kingdom of Deira. Bernicia and Deira shared a common border at the River Tyne. The modern city of Newcastle upon Tyne sits astride the Tyne very near where it enters the Atlantic Ocean.

These first comers were Jutes, who inhabited the marshlands of Jutland, the extreme peninsula of Denmark. Their success excited the ambition and cupidity of the neighbouring tribes, and in 477, Ella the Saxon, with a host of his countrymen, landed on the island of Selsey, and, after an arduous struggle, established the kingdom of Sussex. Another Saxon immigration took place about the year 495, under Cerdic and Cyric, and, after many sanguinary battles, effected a settlement in the district extending from Surrey to the confines of Cornwall, which was called from its position the kingdom of Wessex, or West Saxons. Some time in the sixth century - the dates are very uncertain - other hordes of barbaric Saxons came and ousted the Britons from the districts now named Essex and Middlesex, and established there the kingdom of the East Saxons. The next invaders were the Angles, who seized upon the coast around the Wash, and formed the kingdom of East Anglia. Others proceeded into the interior of the country, and, after enslaving or exterminating the natives, erected the kingdom of Mercia.

The Britons of the north, however, aided by their mountain fastnesses, maintained their independence until 547, when **Ida, the Flamebearer, with a large body of Angles, landed on the coast, and took possession of the country north of the Roman Wall, which became the Anglian kingdom of Bernicia. Ten years later the country of Deira, stretching from the Tyne to the Humber, was wrested from its native owners by Ælla, one of Ida's generals, and a separate sovereignty established.** Ida fixed his castle and capital at Bebbanburh, now Bamborough, but there is no mention of Ælla's capital. The Romano-Britons of York were probably able to make terms with the invaders, and so retain possession of their city for a little while longer.

<http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/YKS/Misc/Descriptions/YKS/YKSHistory5.html>

The ancient kingdom of Bernicia is rich in history and legend as the following quote illustrates:

In the Dark Ages, after the Romans left Britain, Northumberland was first known as Bernicia and was ruled by various Anglo-Saxon kings. They are known to have had at least three castles.

Two of these were at Ad Gefrin and Maelmin, near Milfield, on the A697, 5 miles north of Wooler. The third was at Bamburgh, on the same site as the present castle. The Anglo-Saxons were, of course, regarded as invaders by the native Celtic Britons whose own kings are now remembered in the form of the legendary King Arthur. It was on the Milfield Plain that Arthur is supposed to have fought and won one of his greatest battles against the Anglo-Saxons and the Picts (from present day Scotland), after which he took possession of at least one Angle castle at Bamburgh. Legend relates that it was Bamburgh Castle that Arthur then gave to Sir Lancelot, in recognition of his defence of Queen Guenevire, and which Lancelot called "Joyous Gard". The legend may well be true for the Celtic name for Bamburgh was "Din Gardi".

<http://pages.zoom.co.uk/northumberland/anchor441914>

The kingdom of Deira lay immediately south of the kingdom of Bernicia. Deira was bounded on the east by the Atlantic Ocean and ran along the Atlantic from the river Tyne the tidal estuary of the river Humber. The kingdom was bordered on the west by Celtic Britons. Deira has also had its share of noteworthy history and legend.

Washington Village is situated 6 miles south of Newcastle upon Tyne and 5 miles west of Sunderland. The first stone hall at Washington was built in 1183 AD by a William de Hertburne, who became William de Washington upon gaining the lands Wessington—now Washington Village. The Washingtons had as their arms a white shield upon which were two bars and three stars in red, and are the original Washington family from which the more famous George Washington was later to spring.

The southern most district of the Ancient kingdom of Deira would one day be the birthplace of the Earl of Huntingdon, better known to us as Robin of Locksley—Robin Hood.

The region of Locksley, or Hallamshire, an area of South Yorkshire, is located about 120 miles south of Newcastle upon Tyne in the general area of the modern city of Sheffield. A few miles east of Sheffield is the village of Edwinstowe and what remains of Sherwood Forest. (see *Appendix H* for web addresses).

Hilda—Abbess of Whitby

We are now ready to study the history that led up to the Synod of Whitby and examine its consequences regarding the calendar. As we have learned, the kingdom of Deira was founded in 557 AD by Aelle, one of King Ida's generals. A mere 70 years later, in 627 AD, Hilda, and her great uncle, King Edwin, were baptized by a Roman monk from Kent by the name of Paulinus. Hilda, however, remained in the Celtic church—she did not convert to Rome. 30 years later, in 657 AD, Hilda founded Whitby Abbey.

Please remember, that we are not only presenting the history of the validity of the Hebrew Calendar, but how the observance of Nisan 14 was perverted by the Roman church with its insistence that no observance of the Pascha of Christ could fall before the spring equinox. In this light, the Synod of Whitby was essentially a Quartodeciman controversy. The following quote gives explicit details of her life as a Celtic Christian:

Hilda was born in 614 into the Deiran royal household in bloody and fractious times when the kingdom was under the subjection of neighbouring Bernicia. **Hilda's father was Hereric, the Anglo Saxon nephew of Edwin (future king of Northumbria), and her mother was Breguswith, a Celt.** Edwin had been banished from Northumbria since 588 when king Aethelric of Bernicia, and then his son Aethelfrith (who as if to add salt to the wound had taken Edwin's sister Acha to be his bride) controlled Deira. Hereric was also in exile under the 'protection' of British king Cerdic in 614 and was allegedly poisoned shortly after the birth of his daughter. Bede tells us that the death of Hereric and the destiny of the infant Hilda were foreseen by Breguswith in a dream in which she suddenly became aware that her husband was missing. After searching for him frantically without success, she discovered a precious necklace under her garment. When she gazed on the jewel it flashed a blaze of light that illuminated all Britain with its gracious splendour. A pointer if ever there was one to the light that Hilda was destined to shine on Northern Christianity and, as we shall see, indirectly on poetry in the native tongue.

Two years later in 616 Edwin defeated and killed Aethelfrith in a battle at the river Idle near Leeds and returned to rule both kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia as the united king of Northumbria and Hilda, just 2 years old, became part of the Northumbrian royal court. In 625, Edwin's first wife had died and he chose for his

second wife the Christian Aethelburgh, daughter of the King of Kent. As part of the marriage contract, Aethelburgh was allowed to continue her Roman Christian worship and she was accompanied to Northumbria with her chaplain Paulinus, a Roman monk sent to England back in 601 to assist Augustine's mission in England which was based in Kent. Edwin also promised that he would become a Christian if "on examination of his advisers decided that it appeared more holy and acceptable to God than their own pagan religion." (Bede).

Despite the urgings of Paulinus and letters from the Pope, it was another two years before Edwin was converted and then only after an assassination attempt on his life with a poisoned dagger on the night that his daughter Eanfled was born. Edwin was saved when Lilla, one of his nobleman, threw himself in front of the king and was slain instead. I mention this because there is a stone sentinal cross dedicated to Lilla, possibly named by Hilda, on the lonely moor track between Whitney and Hackness which I will refer to later. On 12 April 627, Edwin and a large number of his court including his great niece Hilda were all baptised by Paulinus in the river at York.

Just five years later in 632 Edwin was killed in battle against the combined armies of Cadwallon of Gwynedd and King Penda of Mercia and Paulinus, who was then bishop of York, the widowed Queen Aethelburgh, her daughter Eanfled and possibly other royal members including Hilda, fled Northumbria and the safety of Kent.

Hilda had a sister Hereswith who had a dynastic marriage to the king of East Anglia and had a son Eadwulf who became king of Mercia. When Hereswith was widowed she retired to a French convent at Chelles on the river Marne near Paris. In 647 at what was in those times a fairly advanced age of 33, Hilda prepared to join her sister in holy orders and spent a year at the court of her nephew Aldwulf, king of the East Angles, preparing for the arduous journey.

Nothing else seems to be known about Hilda in the 16 years after the death of Edwin in 632 up to 648; some conjecture that she did marry, was widowed and then, as was the custom for royal household, intended to retreat to a life in the church.

What we do know thanks to Bede was that back in Northumbria a great deal was happening! On the death of Edwin, and with the fleeing of Paulinus back to Kent, Roman Christian practices all but died away (save the efforts of James the Deacon at Catterick who continued with the Roman traditions). **Aethelfrith's sons Eanfrith, Oswald, and Oswiu returned from exile in Scotland after being educated in Celtic ways at Iona; Oswald became king of Northumbria in 633 and brought the Celtic monk Aidan from Iona to form a monastery at Lindisfarne and in 633/4 Wilfrid was born.** In 642 Oswald was killed by Penda and his brother Oswiu succeeded him as king of Bernicia but subordinate to Penda and continually troubled by him; Oswin, son of Osric of the house of Deira,

became king of Deira. The final twist was that Eanfled, daughter of the widowed Queen Aethelburgh and Aunt of Hilda, eventually returned from Kent to Northumbria to marry her cousin king Oswiu! Eanfled, like her mother before her, was a deeply committed Roman Christian and that year (648) her sponsoring of Wilfrid to Lindisfarne monastery began!

What was fortunate for Northumbrian Christian development was that on the eve of Hilda's departure to France she received an urgent request from bishop Aidan of Lindisfarne to return to Northumbria and form a monastery. Hilda accepted the call and was given a small parcel of land, enough for a small household, on the north bank headland at the mouth of the river Wear. Nothing now remains of Hilda's monastery but one possibly is that it is sited under the monastery built by Benedict Biscop in 674.

After just one year in 649, bishop Aidan made a further request to Hilda to become abbess of the much larger and established monastery at Hartlepool, another headland site at the mouth of the Tees estuary. It was sited on a peninsula called Herutea (island of the hart) and was a community of men and woman founded around 640. Hilda was to succeed Hieu, the first Northumbrian female to be consecrated to the religious life by Aidan. Bede says that Bishop Aidan and other devout men who knew her and admired her innate wisdom and love of God often used to visit and advise her. **Just two years later Aidan died and was succeeded by Finan as bishop of Lindisfarne in 651.**

Also in 651, Oswiu quarrelled with his neighbouring king Oswin of Deira and Oswin was murdered and Oswiu's son Alhfrith (Alcfrid) became king of sub-kingdom Deira. **Meanwhile, in 652/3 Queen Eanfled sponsored Wilfrid's visit to Rome which took him off the scene until his return in 657/8.**

After suffering enormous hassle and conflict with his Mercian overlord since his succession in 642, Oswiu finally in 655 defeated and killed the pagan Penda (who had previously slain both Edwin and Oswold) at a great victory at Winwaed in south Yorkshire. This made Oswiu king of a united Northumbria and overlord of southern England. **Before the battle Oswiu had made a vow that if he was victorious he would dedicate his one-year-old daughter Elfleda 'in perpetual virginity to the church' and also promised 12 grants of land to set up monasteries - 6 in the North and six in the South. This directly affected Hilda's fortunes because after the victory she was entrusted with bringing up the princess at her Hartlepool monastery. Also one of the grants of land of 10 hides (around 1,200 acres) was given to Hilda to form a monastery at Streonashalh (later renamed Whitby by the Vikings).**

In 657 Hilda moved to Whitby with her royal charge Elfleda and formed another double monastery for men and woman on the imposing headland site on the east side of the mouth of the river Esk.

At the advanced age of 43, Hilda set about her task with brisk energy and set the pattern of disciplined life as in her previous monastery; her abbey was to become one of the greatest religious and centre of learning of north eastern England and the known world.

Although Hilda had been baptised in the Roman tradition by Paulinus, the contact and influence in her very formative years was very much with great Celtic people like Aidan (who called her to the religious houses at Wear and Hartlepool) and Finan (Whitby) and later Cuthbert. **Although Oswiu, with his Iona background, was happy with the Celtic practices, a growing movement including his queen Eanfled, son Alhfrith and rising stars like Wilfrid supported changing to Roman practices.**

Oswiu, now seriously concerned about the religious differences that were threatening to destabilize his family and his kingdom decided to call a meeting of church leaders in 664 to resolve these differences once and for all. This became known as The Synod of Whitby as it was held at Hilda's monastery. Hilda very much supported the Celtic view put to the Synod by bishop Colman but it was the Roman view, championed by Wilfrid that won the day. Hilda accepted the change to Roman ways but remained a critic of Wilfrid and bishop Colman resigned his see.

Through the rest of Wilfrid's stormy life until Hilda's death in 680 she remained at Whitby continuing to build on her good works and offering council and advice to kings and bishops alike. **She was also responsible for nurturing the talents of a humble cowman called Caedmon who became England's first poet and famous for adaptation of the aristocratic-heroic Anglo-Saxon verse tradition to the expression of Christian themes.**

Footnotes:

<http://www.wilfrid.com/saints/hilda.htm>

Captain Cook from Whitby

<http://www.cookmuseumwhitby.co.uk/htmlpages/locationpage.html>

<http://www.eng-h.gov.uk/projects/whitby/wahpsae/>

<http://www.eng-h.gov.uk/projects/whitby/wahpsae/pd99v1/location.htm>

The Proceedings of the Synod of Whitby

The Venerable Bede, writing in 725 AD, recorded the proceedings of the Synod of Whitby in Book 3, Chapter 25, of his *Ecclesiastical History of England*. It is vital that we examine these records for two reasons: first, Bede documents how the Roman Church began the Romanization of Celtic Christianity; secondly, his writings illustrate the importance of the fourteenth moon of the first month to the calculation of Easter by both the Romans and the Celts.

Bede relates that before the Synod of Whitby, Easter was sometimes celebrated twice in the same year. This very thing happened in 651 AD when King Oswy, who followed Celtic customs, celebrated Easter on April 10¹ while Queen Eanfled, who followed Roman customs, celebrated Easter a week later on April 17². To make matters worse, this happened again a few years later when in 664 AD King Oswy celebrated Easter on April 14 while Queen Eanfled celebrated Easter on April 21. Bede begins his narrative by detailing the events that led up to the actual Synod.

At this time, a great and frequently debated question arose about the observance of Easter; those that came from Kent or Gaul affirming, that the Scots celebrated Easter Sunday contrary to the custom of the universal Church....James, formerly the deacon of the venerable Archbishop Paulinus, as has been said above, observed the true and Catholic Easter, with all those that he could instruct in the better way. Queen Eanfled and her followers also observed it as she had seen it practised in Kent, having with her a Kentish priest who followed the Catholic observance, whose name was Romanus.

¹ A practice based on “the Paschal principles of *De ratione paschali*, viz. Pascha on Sunday *luna xiiii-xx* computed using the Anatolian lunar year between 26 March and 23 April using an 84-year cycle of Severus” (McCarthy, *The lunar and Paschal Tables of De ratione paschali attributed to Anatolius of Laodicea*, p. 25).

² A practice based on the “Dionysiac cycle in which Pasch occurred on *luna xv-xxi* with a Roman lunar year between 21 March and 25 April and using a 19-year cycle which only coincided with *De ratione paschali* in the length of the cycle” (McCarthy, *The lunar and Paschal Tables of De ratione paschali attributed to Anatolius of Laodicea*, p. 25).

Thus it is said to have sometimes happened in those times that Easter was twice celebrated in one year; and that when the king, having ended his fast, was keeping

Easter, the queen and her followers were still fasting, and celebrating Palm Sunday.

Whilst Aidan lived, this difference about the observance of Easter was patiently tolerated by all men, for they well knew, that though he could not keep Easter contrary to the custom of those who had sent him, yet he industriously laboured to practise the works of faith, piety, and love, according to the custom of all holy men; for which reason he was deservedly beloved by all, even by those who differed in opinion concerning Easter, and was held in veneration, not only by less important persons, but even by the bishops, Honorius of Canterbury, and Felix of the East Angles.

But after the death of Finan, who succeeded him, when Colman, who was also sent from Scotland, came to be bishop, a greater controversy arose about the observance of Easter, and other rules of ecclesiastical life. Whereupon this question began naturally to influence the thoughts and hearts of many who feared, lest haply, having received the name of Christians, they might run, or have run, in vain. This reached the ears of the rulers, King Oswy and his son Alchfrid. Now Oswy, having been instructed and baptized by the Scots, and being very perfectly skilled in their language, thought nothing better than what they taught; but Alchfrid, having for his teacher in Christianity the learned Wilfrid, who had formerly gone to Rome to study ecclesiastical doctrine, and spent much time at Lyons with Dalfinus, archbishop of Gaul, from whom also he had received the crown of ecclesiastical tonsure, rightly thought that this man's doctrine ought to be preferred before all the traditions of the Scots. For this reason he had also given him a monastery of forty families, at a place called Inhrypum; which place, not long before, he had given for a monastery to those that were followers of the Scots; but forasmuch as they afterwards, being left to their choice, preferred to quit the place rather than alter their custom, he gave it to him, whose life and doctrine were worthy of it.

Agilbert, bishop of the West Saxons, above-mentioned, a friend of King Alchfrid and of Abbot Wilfrid, had at that time come into the province of the Northumbrians, and was staying some time among them; at the request of Alchfrid, he made Wilfrid a priest in his aforesaid monastery. He had in his company a priest, whose name was Agatho. The question being raised there concerning Easter and the tonsure and other ecclesiastical matters, it was arranged, that a synod should be held in the monastery of Streanaeshalch, which signifies the Bay of the Lighthouse, where the Abbess Hilda, a woman devoted to the service of God, then ruled; and that there this question should be decided. The kings, both father and son, came thither, and the bishops, Colman with his Scottish clerks, and Agilbert with the priests Agatho and Wilfrid. James and Romanus were on their side; but the Abbess Hilda and her followers were for the Scots, as was also the venerable Bishop Cedd, long before ordained by the Scots, as has been said above, and he acted in that council as a most careful interpreter for both parties.

Colman, Celtic bishop of Iona and bishop to King Oswy of Northumbria, was called on to speak first. He claimed that his Easter tradition had originated with the apostle John. The apostle John, of course, never kept Easter, but it is interesting that he called upon John as his authority in these matters and not the apostle Peter.

...The Easter which I keep, I received from my elders, who sent me hither as bishop; all our forefathers, men beloved of God, are known to have celebrated it after the same manner; and that it may not seem to any contemptible and worthy to be rejected, it is the same which the blessed John the Evangelist, the disciple specially beloved of our Lord, with all the churches over which he presided, is recorded to have celebrated."

When he had said thus much, and more to the like effect, the king commanded Agilbert to make known the manner of his observance and to show whence it was derived, and on what authority he followed it.

Agilbert answered, "I beseech you, let my disciple, the priest Wilfrid, speak in my stead; because we both concur with the other followers of the ecclesiastical tradition that are here present, and he can better and more clearly explain our opinion in the English language, than I can by an interpreter.

Wilfrid, a Roman priest, began his argument by asserting that both Peter and Paul lived and taught at Rome. His implication was that Peter and Paul had taught and practiced Easter and that the Roman observance carried their stamp of authority.

Continuing with his argument, Wilfrid reasoned that the Easter tradition of the Celtic Church, which conflicted with the Easter observance of the Roman Church, was in the minority. Wilfrid was upholding the primacy of Rome.

The Easter which we keep, we saw celebrated by all at Rome, where the blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul, lived, taught, suffered, and were buried; we saw the same done by all in Italy and in Gaul, when we travelled through those countries for the purpose of study and prayer. We found it observed in Africa, Asia, Egypt, Greece, and all the world, wherever the Church of Christ is spread abroad, among divers nations and tongues, at one and the same time; save only among these and their accomplices in obstinacy, I mean the Picts and the Britons, who foolishly, in these two remote islands of the ocean, and only in part even of them, strive to oppose all the rest of the world.

In response, Bishop Colman again asserted that the Celtic Easter tradition was derived from the teachings of the apostle John. Both Colman and Wilfrid were using flawed arguments to justify their observance of a very pagan practice.

It is strange that you choose to call our efforts foolish, wherein we follow the example of so great an Apostle, who was thought worthy to lean on our Lord's bosom, when all the world knows him to have lived most wisely.

Wilfrid then argued that the apostle John had observed the Passover according to the Mosaic Law to avoid offending the Jews.

Far be it from us to charge **John** with folly, for he **literally observed the precepts of the Mosaic Law**, whilst the Church was still Jewish in many points, and the Apostles, lest they should give cause of offence to the Jews who, were among the Gentiles, were not able at once to cast off all the observances of the Law which had been instituted by God, in the same way as it is necessary that all who come to the faith should forsake the idols which were invented by devils. For this reason it was, that Paul circumcised Timothy, that he offered sacrifice in the temple, that he shaved his head with Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth; for no other advantage than to avoid giving offence to the Jews. Hence it was, that James said to the same Paul, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the Law." "And yet, at this time, when the light of the Gospel is spreading throughout the world, it is needless, nay, it is not lawful, for the faithful either to be circumcised, or to offer up to God sacrifices of flesh.

So **John**, according to the custom of the Law, **began the celebration of the feast of Easter, on the fourteenth day of the first month, in the evening** [at the end of Nisan 14 by Roman reckoning], **not regarding whether the same happened on a Saturday, or any other weekday.**

Wilfrid again appealed to the apostle Peter as his authority. It was Peter, he argued, who first determined that Christians should celebrate the resurrection of Christ on the first day of the week rather than remember the death of Christ. In this argument, when Wilfrid uses the phrase "on the fourteenth day of the first month, in the evening" he is referring to the moon at the end of the fourteenth day, not the moon at the beginning of the fourteenth day. In this manner he dismisses the fourteenth day altogether as the Passover day and holds to the Judaic definition of "Passover" as the fifteenth through the twenty-first day of the first month. The bracketed comments are added for clarification. See Table 13.1 for evidence of the Celtic Church's observance of Easter on the thirteenth moon.

But when Peter preached at Rome, being mindful that our Lord arose from the dead, and gave to the world the hope of resurrection, on the first day of the week, he perceived that Easter ought to be kept after this manner: he always awaited the rising of the moon on the fourteenth day of the first month in the evening [at the end of Nisan 14 by Roman reckoning], according to the custom and precepts of the Law, even as John did. And when that came, if the Lord's day, then called the first day of the week, was the next day [Nisan 15], he began that very evening [at the beginning of Nisan 15] to celebrate Easter, as we all do at the present time. But if the Lord's day [Sunday] did not fall the next morning after the fourteenth moon, but on the sixteenth, or the seventeenth, or any other moon till the twenty-first, he waited for that, and on the Saturday before, in the evening, began to observe the holy solemnity of Easter.

Thus it came to pass, that Easter Sunday was only kept from the fifteenth moon to the twenty-first. Nor does this evangelical and apostolic tradition abolish the Law, but rather fulfil it; the command being to keep the passover from the fourteenth moon of the first month in the evening [at the end of Nisan 14 by Roman reckoning] to the twenty-first moon of the same month in the evening; which observance all the successors of the blessed John in Asia, since his death, and all the Church throughout the world, have since followed; and that this is the true Easter, and the only one to be celebrated by the faithful, was not newly decreed by the council of Nicaea, but only confirmed afresh; as the history of the Church informs us.

Thus it is plain, that you, Colman, neither follow the example of John, as you imagine, nor that of Peter, whose tradition you oppose with full knowledge, and that you neither agree with the Law nor the Gospel in the keeping of your Easter. For John, keeping the Paschal time according to the decree of the Mosaic Law, had no regard to the first day of the week, which you do not practise, seeing that you celebrate Easter only on the first day after the Sabbath.

Peter celebrated Easter Sunday between the fifteenth and the twenty-first moon, which you do not practise, seeing that you observe Easter Sunday from the fourteenth to the twentieth moon; so that you often begin Easter on the thirteenth moon in the evening, [at the beginning of Nisan 14 by Roman reckoning] whereof neither the Law made any mention, nor did our Lord, the Author and Giver of the Gospel, on that day either eat the old passover in the evening, or deliver the Sacraments of the New Testament, to be celebrated by the Church, in memory of His Passion, but on the fourteenth [at the end of Nisan 14 by Roman reckoning]. Besides, in your celebration of Easter, you utterly exclude the twenty-first moon, which the Law ordered to be specially observed [i.e., a High Sabbath]. Thus, as I have said before, you agree neither with John nor Peter, nor with the Law, nor the Gospel, in the celebration of the greatest festival.

To support the Celtic tradition, Colman then appealed to the writings of Anatolius, bishop of Laodicea in Syria during the late third century.

Did the holy Anatolius, much commended in the history of the Church, judge contrary to the Law and the Gospel, when he wrote, that Easter was to be celebrated from the fourteenth to the twentieth moon? Is it to be believed that our most reverend Father Columba and his successors, men beloved by God, who kept Easter after the same manner, judged or acted contrary to the Divine writings? Whereas there were many among them, whose sanctity was attested by heavenly signs and miracles which they wrought; whom I, for my part, doubt not to be saints, and whose life, customs, and discipline I never cease to follow."

Wilfrid, who followed the midnight-to-midnight reckoning that Rome had inherited from the Egyptians, argued that Anatolius referred to the fifteenth moon as the fourteenth moon.

He [Anatolius] so computed the fourteenth moon in our Lord's Paschal Feast, that according to the custom of the Egyptians [midnight to midnight reckoning], he acknowledged it to be the fifteenth moon on that same day in the evening;

so in like manner he assigned the twentieth to Easter-Sunday, as believing that to be the twenty-first moon, when the sun had set.

That you are ignorant of the rule of this distinction is proved by this, that you sometimes manifestly keep Easter before the full moon, that is, on the thirteenth day.

According to Dr. Daniel McCarthy, the lunar and Paschal tables of *De ratione paschali* demonstrate that Anatolius of Laodicea utilized a sunset-to-sunset cycle for days. (*The lunar and Paschal Tables of De ratione paschali attributed to Anatolius of Laodicea*, p. 25). The fourteenth moon for Anatolius was thus the moon at the beginning of Nisan 14, not the moon at the end of Nisan 14. Thus Wilfrid's argument is completely erroneous.

In arguing for the Roman tradition, Wilfrid implies that the Roman Church had always utilized a 19-year cycle for the calculation of Easter. This implication is not true. The early Catholic bishops of Rome utilized an 8-year cycle for more than 200 years to calculate Easter Sunday before switching to an 84-year cycle. The succeeding bishops at Rome utilized an 84-year cycle for close to 221 years from *circa* 235 AD to 456 AD. The Roman Church finally adopted the 19-year Victorian cycle in 456 AD. Rome did not adopt the 19-year Dionysian cycle until 532 AD—only 132

years before the Synod of Whitby! King Oswy, however, was convinced by Wilfred's persuasive arguments that the Roman tradition had been handed down from the apostle Peter.

It is evident," said Wilfrid, "that Anatolius was a most holy, learned, and commendable man; but what have you to do with him, since you do not observe his decrees? For he undoubtedly, following the rule of truth in his Easter, appointed a cycle of nineteen years, which either you are ignorant of, or if you know it, though it is kept by the whole Church of Christ, yet you despise it as a thing of naught.

Is it true, Colman, that these words were spoken to Peter by our Lord?" He answered, "It is true, O king!". Then said he, "Can you show any such power given to your Columba?" Colman answered, "None." Then again the king asked, "Do you both agree in this, without any controversy, that these words were said above all to Peter, and that the keys of the kingdom of Heaven were given to him by our Lord?" They both answered, "Yes." Then the king concluded, "And I also say unto you, that he is the door-keeper, and I will not gainsay him, but I desire, as far as I know and am able, in all things to obey his laws, lest haply when I come to the gates of the kingdom of Heaven, there should be none to open them, he being my adversary who is proved to have the keys." The king having said this, all who were seated there or standing by, both great and small, gave their assent, and renouncing the less perfect custom, hastened to conform to that which they had found to be better.

<http://www.ccel.org/b/bede/history/htm/v.iii.xxv.htm>

Thus it was that the Celtic Church of Northumbria was Romanized. King Oswy had not been swayed by the Pope or St. Augustine, the Pope's agent, but was swayed by Queen Eanfled and her Catholic agents, who were able to convince the king that the teachings of the Roman Church had been received from Peter and Paul. The king was thus convinced by a fallacious ecclesiastical argument of cunning words—not by a computational argument.

Table 14.0 Celtic Easter Dates that Fell on Nisan 13—438-521 AD

Celtic 84-Year Cycle	Alexandrian 19-Year Cycle
448 AD Sunday, April 4 Nisan 13	Sunday, April 11 Nisan 20
451 AD Sunday, April 1 Nisan 13	Sunday, April 8 Nisan 20
454 AD Sunday, March 28 Nisan 13	Sunday, April 4 Nisan 20
458 AD Sunday, April 13 Nisan 13	Sunday, April 20 Nisan 20
475 AD Sunday, April 6 Nisan 13	Sunday, April 6 Nisan 13
478 AD Sunday, April 2 Nisan 13	Sunday, April 9 Nisan 20
481 AD Sunday, March 29 Nisan 13	Sunday, April 5 Nisan 20
485 AD Sunday, April 14 Nisan 13	Sunday, April 21 Nisan 20
495 AD Sunday, March 26 Nisan 13	Sunday, March 26 Nisan 13
502 AD Sunday, April 7 Nisan 13	Sunday, April 14 Nisan 20
505 AD Sunday, April 3 Nisan 13	Sunday, April 10 Nisan 20
508 AD Sunday, March 30 Nisan 13	Sunday, April 6 Nisan 20
515 AD Sunday, April 12 Nisan 13	Sunday, April 19 Nisan 20

In AD 651, adhering to Celtic custom, King Oswy (Oswiu) of Northumbria celebrated Easter on April 10. His wife, however, who had been brought up in Kent, followed Roman practice and fasted that day. The Queen celebrated Easter on April 17. The reason for their celebrating Easter on different dates is found in the Dionysian formula for the calculation of Easter:

DE's [Diosynius Exiguus] definition of Easter date (per Council of Nicea): Easter is the Sunday following the first Luna XIV (the 14th day of the moon) that occurs on or after XII Kalendas Aprilis (21 March) (kalendas means the first day of the month, and the date given counts days backward starting with 1 on the first day of the given month, which is according to the Roman custom). The change from 15 Nisan of the Jewish Pesach to Luna 14 probably has to do with the fact that on the Hebrew calendar days start at sunset, while in the Christian A.D. calendar (which was also introduced by Dionysius) days start at midnight. DE's method of computing Easter is called the Julian method. (Chapter 2).

The spring equinox fell on a Monday, March 21 in 651 AD. However, the Sunday following the equinox, March 27, was rejected as the date for Easter. Why? Because the 14th moon of March fell before March 21. And, according to the Dionysian formula given above:

Easter is the Sunday following the first Luna XIV (the 14th day of the moon) that occurs on or after XII Kalendas Aprilis (21 March)

The declaration of Easter was thus postponed until the first Sunday after the 14th moon of April. According to Celtic custom, the King celebrated Easter on April 10. Why didn't the Queen celebrate Easter Sunday on April 10 with her husband? We look once again to the Dionysian formula for the answer—the first Sunday after the 14th moon of April was April 17, the day on which the Queen celebrated Easter. We can deduce from these facts that the 14th moon of Nisan fell sometime between April 10 and April 17 in 651 AD. Having identified the very week in which Nisan 14 fell, we can utilize the comments of Wilfrid the priest and the Hebrew Calendar to determine the very day. Passover fell on Monday, April 11 in 651 AD.

In AD 664, adhering to Celtic custom, King Oswy (Oswiu) of Northumbria celebrated Easter on April 14, 664 AD. His wife, however, who had been brought up in Kent, followed Roman practice and fasted that day. The Queen celebrated Easter on April 21, 664 AD. The reason for

their celebrating Easter on different dates is found in the Dionysian formula for the calculation of Easter:

DE's [Diosynius Exiguus] definition of Easter date (per Council of Nicea): Easter is the Sunday following the first Luna XIV (the 14th day of the moon) that occurs on or after XII Kalendas Aprilis (21 March) (kalendas means the first day of the month, and the date given counts days backward starting with 1 on the first day of the given month, which is according to the Roman custom). The change from 15 Nisan of the Jewish Pesach to Luna 14 probably has to do with the fact that on the Hebrew calendar days start at sunset, while in the Christian A.D. calendar (which was also introduced by Dionysius) days start at midnight. DE's method of computing Easter is called the Julian method. (Chapter 2).

The spring equinox fell on a Thursday, March 21 in 664 AD. However, the Sunday following the equinox, March 24, was rejected as the date for Easter. Why? Because the 14th moon of March fell before March 21. And, according to the Dionysian formula given above:

Easter is the Sunday following the first Luna XIV (the 14th day of the moon) that occurs on or after XII Kalendas Aprilis (21 March)

The declaration of Easter was thus postponed until the first Sunday after the 14th moon of April. According to Celtic custom, the King celebrated Easter on April 14. Why didn't the Queen celebrate Easter Sunday on April 14 with her husband? We look once again to the Dionysian formula for the answer—the first Sunday after the 14th moon of April was April 21, the day on which the Queen celebrated Easter. We can deduce from these facts that the 14th moon of Nisan fell sometime between April 14 and April 17 in 664 AD. Having identified the very week in which Nisan 14 fell, we can utilize the comments of Wilfrid the priest and the Hebrew Calendar to determine the very day. Passover fell on Monday, April 15 in 664 AD.

Table 14.1 places these two events in their chronological settings.

Table 14.1 84-Year Padua *Latercus* Lunar Cycle of Sulpicius Severus—646 to 664 AD

Cycle Year			Julian Year AD	
DI ¹	H ²	SU ³		
1	17	13	646	
2	18	14	647	
3	19	15	648	
4	1	16	649	
5	2	17	650	
6	3	18	651	April 10 Easter for King Oswy. Palm Sunday for Queen Eanfled
7	4	19	652	
8	5	20	653	
9	6	21	654	
10	7	22	655	
11	8	23	656	
12	9	24	657	Whitby Abbey founded by Hilda
13	10	25	658	
14	11	26	659	
15	12	27	660	
16	13	28	661	End of 28-year cycle 2
17	14	1	662	
18	15	2	663	
19	16	3	664	April 14 Easter for King Oswy. Palm Sunday for Queen Eanfled. Synod of Whitby. End of 84-year cycle of Severus at Whitby. Beginning of Roman 19-year cycle of Dionysius Exiguus at Whitby.

NOTE:

¹19-year cycle of Dionysian Paschal Canon.

²19-year cycle of the Hebrew Calendar.

³84-year cycle of the Sulpicius Paschal Table.

The 84-year lunar cycle of Severus was abandoned after the Synod of Whitby of 664 AD and was replaced by the Dionysian cycle. The first full 19 years of the newly adopted Dionysian cycle for the churches of Northumbria was thus implemented in 665 AD.

Table 14.2 The Dionysian 19-Year Cycle 1 of Northumbria England—665 to 683 AD

Cycle Year			Julian Year AD	
DI ¹	H ²	SU ³		
1	17	1	665	
2	18	2	666	
3	19	3	667	
4	1	4	668	
5	2	5	669	
6	3	6	670	
7	4	7	671	
8	5	8	672	Victorian and Dionysiac Easters differ.
9	6	9	673	Birth of The Venerable Bede.
10	7	10	674	
11	8	11	675	
12	9	12	676	
13	10	13	677	
14	11	14	678	
15	12	15	679	
16	13	16	680	
17	14	17	681	
18	15	18	682	
19	16	19	683	

NOTE:

¹19-year cycle of Dionysian Paschal Canon.

²19-year cycle of the Hebrew Calendar.

³84-year Sulpicius lunar cycle replaced by 19-year Dionysian Cycle. 84-year cycle still used by Iona.

Thus it was that 132 years after the Roman church adopted the Dionysian Cycle, the church of Northumbria also adopted it. The Iona church of Scotland would not succumb to Rome for another 52 years. The Welsh church would hold out for another 104 years before being Romanized.

Withdrawing to Iona on Scotland's far western shore, the Celtic church continued to insist on reckoning its own date for Easter and abided by the older cycle, an adherence to custom and tradition that nevertheless continued to challenge the ecclesiastical discipline of Rome. It was this recalcitrance and deviation from orthodoxy that so incensed Bede. Indeed, the church at Iona did not follow the paschal calendar of Rome until AD 716 and the Welsh church not until AD 768. <http://itsa.ucsf.edu/~snlrc/britannia/earlychurch/whitby.html>

Chapter Fifteen

The Quartodeciman Controversy that Arose Between Rome and Alexandria

326 AD to 532 AD

The Council had ruled that the observance of Easter must be on the first Sunday that falls after the spring equinox. The Council further stipulated that Easter must be celebrated after the fourteenth moon of Nisan which also fell after the equinox. The council also stipulated that Easter cannot be celebrated on the day immediately preceding this Paschal moon, the day of the Paschal moon or the day immediately following this Paschal moon. Thus, if the date for Easter Sunday does not meet all these requirements, the observance of Easter must be delayed for one month. Furthermore, it was agreed that all churches must celebrate Easter on the same Sunday.

Key to the universal observation of Easter Sunday, as decreed by Pius I, Victor I and now the 308 bishops of the Nicaean Council, was knowledge of the exact date on the Roman calendar of the fourteenth moon of Nisan. The Romans continued to utilize an 84-year lunar cycle for this purpose while the Alexandrians now utilized a 19-year lunar cycle. Based on the results of these calculations, Pascal or Easter charts were to be constructed, fixing the date of Easter for.

They did, however, disagree on the date of the spring equinox:

The bishop of Alexandria was commissioned by the Council to see to the drawing up of astronomical tables, whereby the precise day of Easter might be fixed for each future year. The reason of this choice was that the astronomers of Alexandria were looked upon as the most exact in their calculations. These tables were to be sent to the Pope, and he would address letters to the several Churches, instructing them as to the uniform celebration of the great festival of Christendom. Thus was the unity of the Church made manifest by the unity of the holy Liturgy; and the

Apostolic See, which is the foundation of the first, was likewise the source of the second. But, even previous to the Council of Nicæa, the Roman Pontiff had addressed to all the Churches, every year, a Paschal Encyclical, instructing them as to the day on which the solemnity of the Resurrection was to be kept. This we learn from the synodical Letter of the Fathers of the great Council held at Arles in 314. The Letter is addressed to Pope St Sylvester, and contains the following passage: ‘In the first place, we beg that the observance of the Pasch of the Lord may be uniform, both as to time and day, in the whole world, and that You would, according to the custom, address Letters to all concerning this matter.’⁵

This custom, however, was not kept up for any length of time after the Council of Nicæa. **The want of precision in astronomical calculations occasioned confusion in the method of fixing the day of Easter.** It is true, this great festival was always kept on a Sunday; **nor did any Church think of celebrating it on the same day as the Jews;** but, **since there was no uniform understanding as to the exact time of the vernal equinox, it happened some years, that the feast of Easter was not kept, in all places, on the same day.** By degrees, there crept in a deviation from the rule laid down by the Council, of taking March 21 as the day of the equinox. A reform in the Calendar was needed, and no one seemed competent to undertake it. Cycles were drawn up contradictory to one another; Rome and Alexandria had each its own system of calculation; so that, some years, Easter was not kept with that perfect uniformity for which the Nicene Fathers had so strenuously laboured: and yet this variation was not the result of anything like party-spirit (*The History of Paschal Time*).

The very best minds of the day could not resolve this major problem, but we have brethren who are very happy to undertake the “reformation” of the Hebrew Calendar although it is not needed.

Meanwhile the eastern churches, undoubtedly advised by Alexandrian astronomers, had found an even more accurate cycle: the familiar Metonic equation of 19 years = 235 months. This approximation has an error of only 1 day in 316.6 years.

Rome did not actually abandon their 84-year cycle or March 25th equinox (which, of course, led to periodic differences in date between the Alexandrian and Roman churches), but often they seem to have accepted Alexandrian calculations. Not always, however. From time to time, the Roman church expressed its unhappiness with dates that it considered unsatisfactory. Ironically, every time the Romans consulted experts, they were essentially told that their way was inaccurate, and that they should adopt the Alexandrian computation.

<http://www.polysyllabic.com/Easter.html>

The church historian Eusebius records a letter sent by Emperor Constantine I to bishops who were not present at the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, 325 AD. In this short letter Constantine appeals for unity. By this he means the celebration of Easter on the same day of the same month and only on Sunday. He also appeals for its celebration in the same manner. Obviously there had been quite a bit of disagreement in these areas and the Emperor had hoped that by calling the Bishops together at Nicaea, these differences could be resolved. However, not all Bishops attended, therefore the need for his letter:

When the question relative to the sacred festival of Easter arose, it was universally thought that it would be convenient that all should keep the feast on one day; for what could be more beautiful and more desirable, than to see this festival, through which we receive the hope of immortality, celebrated by all with one accord, and in the same manner? It was declared to be particularly unworthy for this, the holiest of all festivals, to follow the custom [the calculation] of the Jews, who had soiled their hands with the most fearful of crimes, and whose minds were blinded. In rejecting their custom, we may transmit to our descendants the legitimate mode of celebrating Easter, which we have observed from the time of the Saviour's Passion to the present day [according to the day of the week].

Constantine went on to complain that there were those who frequently celebrated two Passovers in the same year. It is significant that he did not complain that they were frequently celebrating two Easters in the same year. This fact reveals that as late as 325 AD many among the so-called Catholic Faith were observing a Nisan 14 Passover:

We ought not, therefore, to have anything in common with the Jews, for the Saviour has shown us another way; our worship follows a more legitimate and more convenient course (the order of the days of the week); and consequently, in unanimously adopting this mode, we desire, dearest brethren, to separate ourselves from the detestable company of the Jews, for it is truly shameful for us to hear them boast that without their direction we could not keep this feast. How can they be in the right, they who, after the death of the Saviour, have no longer been led by reason but by wild violence, as their delusion may urge them? They do not possess the truth in this Easter question; for, in their blindness and repugnance to all improvements, **they frequently celebrate two passovers in the same year.** We could not imitate those who are openly in error. How, then, could we follow these Jews, who are most certainly blinded by error? For to celebrate the passover twice in one year is totally inadmissible. But even if this were not so, it would still be your duty not to tarnish your soul by communications with such wicked people [the Jews].

Constantine further complains that many were feasting on Easter Sunday while others were fasting. Furthermore this feasting or banqueting continued after Easter Sunday while others were observing a strict fast. He concludes that those who profess Christ should have nothing in common with the Jews. Obviously, many, many Christians were still observing a Nisan 14 Passover as well as the days of Unleavened Bread:

Besides, consider well, that in such an important matter, and on a subject of such great solemnity, there ought not to be any division. Our Saviour has left us only one festal day of our redemption, that is to say, of his holy passion, and he desired [to establish] only one Catholic Church. Think, then, how unseemly it is, that on the same day some should be fasting whilst others are seated at a banquet; and that after Easter, some should be rejoicing at feasts, whilst others are still observing a strict fast. For this reason, a Divine Providence wills that this custom should be rectified and regulated in a uniform way; and everyone, I hope, will agree upon this point. As, on the one hand, it is our duty not to have anything in common with the murderers of our Lord; and as, on the other, the custom now followed by the Churches of the West, of the South, and of the North, and by some of those of the East, is the most acceptable, it has appeared good to all; and I have been guarantee for your consent, that you would accept it with joy, as it is followed at Rome, in Africa, in all Italy, Egypt, Spain, Gaul, Britain, Libya, in all Achaia, and in the dioceses of Asia, of Pontus, and Cilicia. You should consider not only that the number of churches in these provinces make a majority, but also that it is right to demand what our reason approves, and that we should have nothing in common with the Jews.

In summation, Constantine bemoans the fact that even among those who celebrate an Easter Sunday, it is not celebrated universally on the same date:

To sum up in few words: By the unanimous judgment of all, it has been decided that the most holy festival of Easter should be everywhere celebrated on one and the same day, and it is not seemly that in so holy a thing there should be any division. As this is the state of the case, accept joyfully the divine favour, and this truly divine command; for all which takes place in assemblies of the bishops ought to be regarded as proceeding from the will of God. Make known to your brethren what has been decreed, keep this most holy day according to the prescribed mode; we can thus celebrate this holy Easter day at the same time, if it is granted me, as I desire, to unite myself with you; we can rejoice together, seeing that the divine power has made use of our instrumentality for destroying the evil designs of the devil, and thus causing faith, peace, and unity to flourish amongst us. May God graciously protect you, my beloved brethren (Eusebius, *Constantine I: On the Keeping of Easter*, Vita Const., Lib. iii., 18-20.)

Emperor Constantine's efforts, however, availed little. The Roman church continued to utilize and 84-year lunar cycle even though they had agreed at Nicea to the adoption of the more accurate 19-year cycle of the Alexandrian church for the calculation of Easter dates.

The differences in the way of fixing the period of Easter did not indeed disappear after the Council of Nicea. Alexandria and Rome could not agree, either because one of the two Churches neglected to make the calculation for Easter, or because the other considered it inaccurate. **It is a fact, proved by the ancient Easter table of the Roman Church that the cycle of eighty-four years continued to be used at Rome as before.** Now this cycle differed in many ways from the Alexandrian, and did not always agree with it about the period for Easter--in fact (a), the Romans used quite another method from the Alexandrians; they calculated from the epact, and began from the feria prima of January.(b.) The Romans were mistaken in placing the full moon a little too soon; whilst the Alexandrians placed it a little too late. (c.) At Rome the equinox was supposed to fall on March 18th; whilst the Alexandrians placed it on March 21st (d.) Finally, the Romans differed in this from the Greeks also; they did not celebrate Easter the next day when the full moon fell on the Saturday.

Even the year following the Council of Nicea--that is, in 326--as well as in the years 330, 333, 340, 341, 343, the Latins celebrated Easter on a different day from the Alexandrians. In order to put an end to this misunderstanding, **the Synod of Sardica in 343**, as we learn from the newly discovered festival letters of S. Athanasius, took up again the question of Easter, and **brought the two parties (Alexandrians and Romans) to regulate, by means of mutual concessions, a common day for Easter for the next fifty years.** This compromise, after a few years, was not observed. The troubles excited by the Arian heresy, and the division which it caused between the East and the West, prevented the decree of Sardica from being put into execution; therefore the Emperor Theodosius the Great, after the re-establishment of peace in the Church, found himself obliged to take fresh steps for obtaining a complete uniformity in the manner of celebrating Easter.

In 387, the Romans having kept Easter on March 21st, the Alexandrians did not do so for five weeks later--that is to say, till April 25th--because with the Alexandrians the equinox was not till March 21st. The Emperor Theodosius the Great then asked Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria for an explanation of the difference. The bishop responded to the Emperor's desire, and drew up a chronological table of the Easter festivals, based upon the principles acknowledged by the Church of Alexandria. Unfortunately, we now possess only the prologue of his work. (Hefele: *Hist. of the Councils*, Vol. I., pp. 328 et seqq.)

The Synod of Sardica 343 AD

One of the series of councils called to adjust the doctrinal and other difficulties caused by the Arian heresy, held most probably in 343. (For date see Hefele, French Tr., "Histoire des conciles", II, pt. II, 737-42, and Duchesne, "Hist. ancienne de l'Eglise", II, 215.) It was convoked by the Emperors Constans and Constantius at the urgent entreaty of Pope Julius. **Hosius of Cordova** and other Western bishops, desirous of peace and hoping to secure a final judgment in the case of St. Athanasius and other bishops alternately condemned and vindicated by councils in the East and the West; desirous, also, of settling definitively the confusion arising from the many doctrinal formulx in circulation, suggested that all such matters should be referred to a general council. In order to make the council thoroughly representative, **Sardica in Dacia (now Sofia, in Bulgaria)**, was chosen as the meeting place. Athanasius, driven from Alexandria by the Prefect Philadrius in 339, was summoned by the Emperor Constans from Rome, where he had taken the latter place he met Hosius, who was commissioned by the pope and the emperor to preside over the council, and whom he accompanied to Sardica. Pope Julius was represented by the priests Archidamus and Philoxenus, and the deacon Leo. **Ninety-six Western bishops presented themselves at Sardica: those from the East were not so numerous.**

Being in the minority, the Eastern bishops decided to act as a body, and, fearing defections, they all lodged in the same place. On the ground of being unwilling to recognize Athanasius, Marcellus of Ancyra, and Asclepas, who had been excommunicated in Eastern synods, they refused to sit in council with the Western bishops. Hosius of Cordova attempted to effect a compromise by inviting them to present privately to him their complaints against Athanasius, and by promising, in case Athanasius should be acquitted, to take him to Spain. These overtures failed. The Eastern bishops -- although the council had been called expressly for the purpose of reopening the case in regard to those who had been excommunicated -- defended their conduct on the fictitious plea that one council could not revise the decisions of another. They withdrew from Sardica and met at Philippopolis, where they composed an encyclical and a new creed, which they falsely dated from Sardica. The Western bishops, thus abandoned, examined the cases of Athanasius, Marcellus, and Asclepas. No fresh investigation of charges against Athanasius was considered necessary, as these had already been rejected, and he and the other two bishops, who were permitted to present exculpatory documents, were declared innocent. In addition to this, censure was passed on the Easterns for having abandoned the council, and several of them were deposed and excommunicated.

The question of a new creed containing some additions of that of Nicxa was discussed, but although the formulx had been drawn up, the bishops wisely decided to add nothing to the accepted symbol, and thus gave the Arians no

pretext for saying that hitherto they had not been explicitly condemned. Though the form of the proposed creed was presented to the council, it was bit inserted in the encyclical addressed by the council to "all the bishops of the Catholic Church". Before separating, the bishops enacted several important canons, especially concerning the transfer and trial of bishops and appeals. These canons, with the other documents of the council, were sent to Pope Julius with a letter signed by the majority of the attending bishops. The council failed entirely to accomplish its purpose. **The pacification of the Church was not secured, and the Eastern bishops grew bolder and more contumacious.**

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The Great Crisis of 386/387 AD

A little more than 110 years after the reformation of 276, the church once again found herself griped in the throws of a major crisis. This time the crisis was more than that of Catholic professing Christians repenting en mass and returning to a Christian Passover—it also included a major rift between Rome and Alexandria over the dating of Easter Sunday. Sixty-one years after the Council of Nicaea, and after several revisions to the Paschal Lunar charts of the church, the powerful bishops and prelates of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Milan and Cyprus, to name but a few, were once again locked in deadly dispute.

St. John Chrysostom of Antioch, Syria, as well as St. Ambrose of Milan, Italy, were all aligned with St. Athanasius the Great of Alexandria. practice. In 387 AD both these men celebrated what they called Pascha (the resurrection of Christ) on Sunday, April 25. That same year, those who followed Rome celebrated Pascha on Sunday, March 21. Nisan 14 occurred on Saturday, March 20, in 387 AD.

This brief history of Paschal observance after the apostolic era is the setting in which both Ambrose and Chrysostom wrote in the months leading up to the crisis of 387 AD. In their writings, we find an abundance of evidence to support the validity and accuracy of the Hebrew Calendar. After exploring evidence preserved in their writings, we will examine the evidence preserved in the writings of many other early Church fathers.

We'll begin by looking at a brief summary of the history of Antioch, its ancient Jewish community and its very early connection with Christianity. Remember, it was at Antioch that the followers of Christ were first called Christian. Antioch was an important city in the Roman Empire, second only to Alexandria. As the following paragraph describes, Antioch was found at a very strategic location:

It is difficult to realize that in the modern Antakieh (28,000 inhab.), we have the once famous "Queen of the East", which, with its population of more than half a million, its beautiful site, its trade and culture, and its important military position, was a not unworthy rival of Alexandria, the second city of the Roman empire (cf. Josephus, *Bel. Jud.*, III, 2, 4). Founded in 300 B. C. by Seleucus I (Nicator), King of Syria, Antioch stood on the Orontes (Nahr el Asi), at the point or junction of the Lebanon and of the Taurus ranges. Its harbour, fifteen miles distant, was Seleucia (cf. Acts, xiii, 4). (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1907 ed., vol. I, s.v. "Antioch")

Not only had Jewish colonists been among the original settlers of Antioch, but they quickly grew into a sizable community with a governor of their own. This fact is important in understanding the atmosphere in which St. Chrysostom writes in his eight homily *Against the Jews* in 386/87 AD. By the time Chrysostom arrives on the scene, the Jews could boast of a history of some 687 years. Although the Jews had long been driven from Jerusalem, they were thriving in Antioch. Antioch also boasted a Christian community older than that of Rome.

The Jews had been among the original settlers, and, as such, had been granted by the founder here, as in other cities built by him, equal rights, with the Macedonians and the Greeks (*Jos. Ant.*, XII, iii, 1; *Contra Ap.*, II, iv). The influence of the Antiochene Jews, living, as in Alexandria, under a governor of their own, and forming a large percentage of the population, was very great (*Josephus, Ant. Rom.*, XII, iii, 1; *Bel. Jud.*, VII, iii, 3, VII, v, 2; Harnack, *Mission u. Ausbreitung d. Christenthums*, p. 5, note 2). Unknown disciples, dispersed by the persecution in which Stephen was put to death, brought Christianity to Antioch (Acts, xi, 19). Cf. Acts, vi, 5, where the author characteristically

mentions the place of origin of Nicholas, one of the seven deacons. In Antioch the new Faith was preached to, and accepted by the Greeks with such success that Christianity received here its name, perhaps originally intended as a nickname by the witty Antiochenes (Acts, xi, 26). The new community, once acknowledged by the mother-church of Jerusalem (Acts, xi, 22 sq.), soon manifested its vitality and its intelligence of the faith by its spontaneous act of generosity toward the brethren of Jerusalem (Acts, xi, 27-30). The place of apprenticeship of the Apostle of the Gentiles (Acts, xi, 26), Antioch, became the headquarters of the great missionaries Paul and Barnabas, first together, later Paul alone. Starting thence on their Apostolic journeys they brought back thither the report of their work (Acts, xiii, 2 sq.; xiv, 25-27; xv, 35 sq.; xviii, 22, 23). Acts, xv (cf. Gal., ii, 1-10) clearly evidences the importance of the Antiochene Church. There arose the great dispute concerning the circumcision, and her resolute action occasioned the recognition of the "catholicity" of Christianity. (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1907 ed., vol. I, s.v. "Antioch")

A short biography of St. Chrysostom will round out our information as we get into the details of the controversy then swirling around the Christian and Jewish communities of Antioch.

(*Chrysostomos*, "golden-mouthed" so called on account of his eloquence). Doctor of the Church, born at Antioch, c. 347; died at Commana in Pontus, 14 September, 407.

John -- whose surname "Chrysostom" occurs for the first time in the "Constitution" of Pope Vigilius (cf. P.L., LX, 217) in the year 553 -- is generally considered the most prominent doctor of the Greek Church and the greatest preacher ever heard in a Christian pulpit. His natural gifts, as well as exterior circumstances, helped him to become what he was.

At the time of Chrysostom's birth, Antioch was the second city of the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. During the whole of the fourth century religious struggles had troubled the empire and had found their echo at Antioch. Pagans, Manichaeans, Gnostics, Arians, Apollinarians, Jews, made their proselytes at Antioch, and the Catholics were themselves separated by the schism between the bishops Meletius and Paulinus. Thus Chrysostom's youth fell in troubled times. His father, Secundus, was an officer of high rank in the Syrian army. On his death soon after the birth of John, Anthusa, his wife, only twenty years of age, took the sole charge of her two children, John and an elder sister. Fortunately she was a woman of intelligence and character. She not only instructed her son in piety, but also sent him to the best schools of Antioch, though with regard to morals and religion many objections could be urged against them. **Beside the lectures of Andragatius, a philosopher not otherwise known, Chrysostom followed also those of Libanius, at once the most famous orator of that period and the most tenacious adherent of the declining paganism of Rome. As we may see from the later writings of Chrysostom, he attained then considerable Greek**

scholarship and classical culture, which he by no means disowned in his later days. His alleged hostility to classical learning is in reality but a misunderstanding of certain passages in which he defends the *philosophia* of Christianity against the myths of the heathen gods, of which the chief defenders in his time were the representatives and teachers of the *sophia ellenike* (see A. Naegele in "Byzantin. Zeitschrift", XIII, 73-113; Idem, "Chrysostomus und Libanius" in *Chrysostomika*, I, Rome, 1908, 81-142). (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1910 ed., vol. VIII, s.v. "St. John Chrysostom.")

A short biography of St. Ambrose follows. Ambrose was instrumental in resolving Paschal problems of the time of St. Chrysostom.

Bishop of Milan from 374 to 397; born probably 340, at Trier, Arles, or Lyons; died 4 April, 397. (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1907 ed., vol. I, s.v. "St. Ambrose.")

Ambrose was descended from an ancient Roman family, which, at an early period had embraced Christianity, and numbered among its scions both Christian martyrs and high officials of State. At the time of his birth his father, likewise named Ambrosius, was Prefect of Gallia, and as such ruled the present territories of France, Britain, and Spain, together with Tingitana in Africa. It was one of the four great prefectures of the Empire, and the highest office that could be held by a subject. Trier, Arles, and Lyons, the three principal cities of the province, contend for the honour of having given birth to the Saint. He was the youngest of three children, being preceded by a sister, Marcellina, who became a nun, and a brother Satyrus, who, upon the unexpected appointment of Ambrose to the episcopate, resigned a prefecture in order to live with him and relieve him from temporal cares. About the year 354 Ambrosius, the father, died, whereupon the family removed to Rome (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1907 ed., vol. I, s.v. "St. Ambrose.")

Ambrose, the celebrated bishop of Milan, said that when he was in Milan he observed Saturday, but when in Rome observed Sunday. This gave rise to the proverb "When you are in Rome, do as Rome does" (Heylyn, Peter, *The History Of The Sabbath. In Two Bookes*).

"It was the practice generally of the Easterne Churches; and some churches of the west...For in the Church of Millaine (Milan); ...it seems the Saturday was held in a farre esteeme... Not that the Easterne Churches, or any of the rest which observed that day, were inclined to Iudaisme (Judaism); but that they came together on the Sabbath day, to worship Iesus (Jesus) Christ the Lord of the Sabbath" (Heylyn, Peter, *The History Of The Sabbath. In Two Bookes*, part 2, par. 5, pp. 73-74).

Ambrose sanctified the seventh day as the Sabbath (as he himself says). Ambrose had great influence in Spain, which was also observing the Saturday Sabbath

(Wilkinson, Benjamin G., *Truth Triumphant : The Church In The Wilderness*, p. 68).

The following letter details the Paschal problems that still plagued the church as late as 451 AD. The letter was written by Pope Leo I to bishop Paschasinus of Lilybaeum, Sicily.

Bishop Paschasinus of Lilybaeum Sicily

**THE FOURTH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL
THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON
Written AD 451**

Letter LXXXVIII. To Paschasinus, Bishop of Lilybaeum.

IV. He Asks Him to Settle the Discrepancy Between the Alexandrine and the Roman Calculation of Easter for 455, by Consulting the Proper Authority.

This also we think necessary to enjoin upon your care that you should diligently inquire in those quarters where you are sure of information concerning that point in the reckoning of Easter, which we have found in the **table⁴ of Theophilus**, and which greatly exercises us, and that you should discuss with those who are learned in such calculations, as to the date, when the day of the Lord's resurrection should be held four years hence. For, whereas the next Easter is to be held by God's goodness on **March 23rd [452 AD]**, the year after on **April 12th [453 AD]**, the year after that on **April 4th [454 AD]**, Theophilus of holy memory has fixed **April 24th to be observed in 455**, which we find to be quite contrary to the rule of the Church; but in our Easter cycles⁵ as you know very well, Easter that year is set down to be kept on **April 17th [455 AD]**. And therefore, that all our doubts may be removed, we beg you carefully to discuss this point with the best authorities, that for the future we may avoid this kind of mistake. Dated June 24th in the consulship of the illustrious Adelfius (451).

⁴ His *Laterculum Pashale* is meant, in which he calculated Easter for 100 years from 375. A similar dispute had occurred in 444, in which we have S. Cyril's and Paschasinus' Letters (II and III. Of series) to Leo, but not Leo's answers.

⁵ The latin Easter cycles were calculated for 84 years.

455 AD

The *Laterculum Pashale* compiled by Theophilus for years 375 to 475 AD places Easter Sunday on April 24 in 455 AD. The 84-year lunar cycle of Rome, however, places Easter Sunday on April 17. The Celtic Christians of northern Ireland observed Easter on April 17.

St. Paschasinus, Bishop of Lilybaeum, Sicily is asked by the Pope to settle this discrepancy between the Alexandrine and Roman calculation of Easter. As a result of his work, Rome accepts the 24 April date of the Alexandrians. Alexandria and Rome both celebrate Easter on 24 April in 455 AD. Thus ends hundreds of years of disagreement between Rome and Alexandria as to when Easter should be observed.

456 AD

Rome “abandons” the 84-year lunar cycle which she had adopted *circa* 204 AD. The 84-year calendar composed by Augustalis was replaced by the Victorian 19-year cycle of Victorius of Aquitaine. Rome would in turn replace the Victorian cycle with the Dionysian 19-year cycle in 532 AD.

The lunar calendar used to track the new moons was also a subject of debate. The earliest surviving Easter tables show the approximation $8 \text{ years} = 99 \text{ months}$ was used. This approximation results in an error of 1 day every 5.2 years. Clearly, for any long-term calculation of the moon, this rule will very quickly accumulate significant errors. In the early third century, a Roman named **Augustalis** introduced a new approximation: $84 \text{ years} = 1039 \text{ months}$. This equation leads to an error of 1 day every 64.6 years--a significant improvement. Meanwhile the eastern churches, undoubtedly advised by Alexandrian astronomers, had found an even more accurate cycle: the familiar Metonic equation of $19 \text{ years} = 235 \text{ months}$. This approximation has an error of only 1 day in 316.6 years.

Rome did not actually abandon their 84-year cycle or March 25th equinox (which, of course, led to periodic differences in date between the Alexandrian and Roman churches), but often they seem to have accepted Alexandrian calculations. Not always, however. From time to time, the Roman church expressed its unhappiness with dates that it considered unsatisfactory. Ironically, every time the Romans consulted experts, they were essentially told that their way was inaccurate, and that they should adopt the Alexandrian computation.

<http://www.polysyllabic.com/Easter.html>

Chapter Sixteen

Evidence Found in the Writings of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers

Passover 455 AD
Civil Year
4215

The Testimony of Pope Leo I Application of Rule 2

In 451 AD, Pope Leo I (the Great), 440-461 AD, wrote a letter to Bishop Paschasinus of Lilybaeum Sicily. Leo asks Bishop Paschasinus to settle the discrepancy between the Alexandrian and Roman churches in the calculation of Easter for 455 AD. According to Roman calculations (the Romans were still using an 84-year lunar cycle), Easter was to be celebrated on April 17, 455 AD, while the *Laterculum Pashale* or Easter table of St. Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria, placed the celebration on April 24, 455 AD. Bolding of dates and bracketed years have been added by the author:

This also we think necessary to enjoin upon your care that you should diligently inquire in those quarters where you are sure of information concerning that point in the reckoning of Easter, which we have found in the **table of Theophilus**, and which greatly exercises us, and that you should discuss with those who are learned in such calculations, as to the date, when the day of the Lord's resurrection should be held four years hence. For, whereas the next Easter is to be held by God's goodness on **March 23rd [452 AD]**, the year after on **April 12th [453 AD]**, the year after that on **April 4th [454 AD]**, Theophilus of holy memory has fixed **April 24th to be observed in 455**, which we find to be quite contrary to the rule of the Church; but in our Easter cycles as you know very well, Easter that year is set down to be kept on **April 17th [455 AD]**. And therefore, that all our doubts may be removed, we beg you carefully to discuss this point with the best authorities, that for the future we may avoid this kind of mistake. Dated June 24th in the consulship of the illustrious Adelfius (451).

St. Athanasius the Great, one of the main participants at the Council of Nicea calculated, at the request of the Council of Nicea, an Easter table for years 329 to 373 AD. Athanasius died in 373 AD. Shortly after his death, Theophilus of Alexandria calculated the next Easter table known as the *Laterculum Pashle*. This table ran from 375 to 475 AD. 61 years later, in 436 AD, Theophilus' nephew, St. Cyril, abridged the tables and fixed the time of Easter for the next 95 years; i.e., 436 to 531 AD. In 532 AD, Rome adopted the Dionysian cycle of Dionysius Exiguus. It was the table abridged by St. Cyril that Pope Leo I refers to when he writes that Theophilus fixed Easter for April 24 in 455 AD.

The Nicean Council of 325 AD, 126 years previous to 451 AD had ruled that the observance of Easter must be on the first Sunday that falls after the spring equinox. The Council further stipulated that Easter must be celebrated after the fourteenth moon after the equinox. The council further stipulated that Easter cannot be celebrated on the day preceding this Paschal moon, the day of the Paschal moon or the day immediately following this Paschal moon. What was the foundation of reason for those conclusions? An event before the equinox. In this manner the maximum separation could be achieved between Easter and the Jewish" Passover—an event that often fell before the equinox. Thus, if Easter Sunday does not meet all these requirements, the observance of Easter must be delayed for one month. Furthermore, it was agreed that all churches must celebrate Easter on the same Sunday.

Canon law of the Nicean Council was broken by Rome the very next year in 326. This was repeated by Rome in 330, 333, 340 341 and 343 AD. The Roman Church celebrated Easter on a different day than the Alexandrian Church during these years. Rome placed the Equinox on March 25, the Alexandrians on March 21. Thus Rome celebrated Easter when the fourteenth moon of Nisan fell on or just before March 21, while the Alexandrians did not. Rome celebrated Easter Sundays that fell just before, on or just after the fourteenth moon of Nisan—the Alexandrians did not, in conformance with the decrees of Nicea.

In an attempt to clear up this misunderstanding, the Synod of Sardica was convened in 343 AD. Rome and Alexandria each gave concessions and agreed to celebrate Easter on a common day for the next fifty years. The compromise of Sardica lasted but a very short time. It was not until until

387 AD that Emperor Theodosius the Great asked Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria to clarify and explain the differences. The reason for this request was that in 387 AD the Roman Church celebrated Easter on March 21st, while the Alexandrians did not celebrate Easter until five weeks later on April 25th 387 AD. St. Cyril in a letter to the Pope explained why the Roman calculations were defective. This demonstration of Rome's defective calculations was taken up again by order of the Emperor thus instigating a letter to Pope Leo I the Great, by Paschasinus, Bishop of Lilybaeum, Sycily and Bishop Proterius of Alexandria. Leo's response of 451 AD is given at the beginning of this debate.

The Alexandrian equinox, March 21, fell on a Monday in 455 AD. The Roman equinox, March 25, fell on a Friday, in 455 AD. Neither the Alexandrians nor the Romans chose March 27 for the celebration of Easter Sunday. This was obviously due to the fact that both equinox dates were well after the fourteenth moon of the month of March. The rule was the Equinox must always precede the fourteenth moon. Only the Romans opted to postpone Easter Sunday until April 17—the Alexandrians opted for April 24. Why didn't the Alexandrians choose April 17 as well? The simple answer is that April 17 was the fourteenth moon of the next month! As Iyar and Nisan both have fixed lengths this would place the fourteenth moon of the previous month on Friday, March 18.

When we apply the 177-day Rule of the Hebrew Calendar we should find that Trumpets 455 AD has been declared for Monday, August 29. Indeed this is what we find. The Molad of Tishri, civil year 4216, fell on a Monday, August 29, 455 AD at 3 hours and 640 parts. The Feast of Trumpets was therefore declared for Monday, August 29, 455 AD. This declaration set the length of civil year year 4215, which ran from Thursday, September 9, 454 AD (declared by Rule 2) to Monday, August 29, 455 AD, thus giving civil year 4215 a total length of 354 days. Civil year 4215 was the 16th year of the 19-year lunar cycle.

We have thus historically documented the accuracy of the Hebrew calendar 18 years before 358 AD. We have also documented a year in which Passover was observed before the spring equinox and that both the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day were observed before the fall equinox.

What emerges loud and clear in all of this is that while there were many objections to the observance of God's feast days, we find no disagreement or question as to whether or not they had been accurately calculated and correctly declared dates of the Inar calendar. Those issues seem to be totally moot. The entire Roman world of that day appears to have given full credence to the validity of the calculations of the "calendar of the Jews."

Passover 444 AD
Civil Year
4204

The Testimony of Bishop Paschasinus of Lilybaeum Sicily
The Application of Rule(s) 1 & 2

Bishop Paschasinus relates that Easter Sunday was celebrated on April 23 in 444 AD (Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. LIV, col. 609). This date was after the spring equinox, after the fourteenth moon of the Hebrew month following the equinox and on a Sunday—and was not conjoined with Passover day. It thus fulfilled all the requirements for the declaration of Easter Sunday celebration as laid down by the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. Yet, the Roman Church considered this date late. Why?

The answer lies in the fact that Paschasinus adhered to the Alexandrian calculation of a March 21st equinox. The fourteenth moon of the previous Hebrew month fell on Monday, March 20th (it conjoined with Easter Sunday) and did not therefore meet the requirements for Easter observance as laid down by the Church Fathers at Nicaea. March 20, 444 AD was Passover day.

Applying the 177-day Rule of the Hebrew Calendar we should find that Trumpets 444 AD has been declared for Thursday, August 31. Indeed this is what we find. The Molad of Tishri, civil year 4205, fell on a Tuesday, August 29, 444 AD at 23 hours and 792 parts and was therefore postponed by the application of Rule 2 to Wednesday, August 30, 444 AD and by Rule 1 to Thursday, August 31, 444 AD. This declaration extended the length of civil year year 4204, which ran from Saturday, September 11, 443 AD (declared by Rule 1) through Wednesday, August 30, 444 AD by 2 days, thus giving civil year 4204 a total length of 355 days. Civil year 4205 was the 6th year of the 19-year lunar cycle.

Again we see that the historical dating of Bishop Paschasinus also supports the fact that there are always 177 days between Nisan 1 and Tishri 1 and that this mathematical rule was being applied in 444 AD. It took the application of Rules 1&2 in the declaration of Tishri 1, 444 to place Passover day 444 on March 20. We know that Rule 1 was applied in 443

AD since the calculated molad fell about 8:52 AM Jerusalem Time, Friday. Had Friday been declared, civil year 4205, running from 443 to 444 AD, would have been 356 days long, a mathematical impossibility.

444 AD happens to be 86 years after Hillel II's publication of the secrets of the Hebrew Calendar in 358 AD.

Passover 387 AD
Civil Year
4147

The Testimony of St. Chrysostom of Antioch Syria
The Application of Rule 2

In the fall of 386 AD, St. John Chrysostom, pastor of the church at Antioch Syria, preached a series of eight homilies, or sermons, which he entitled *Against the Jews*. These messages were partly occasioned by a centuries long debate among the bishops of Rome Italy, Milan Italy, Alexandria Egypt and Antioch Syria regarding the date of Easter Sunday.

The bishops of Rome placed the spring equinox on March 25, while the bishops of Milan, Alexandria and Antioch, placed the spring equinox on March 21. This arrangement caused great consternation among the various bishops when the fourteenth moon fell after the spring equinox but conjoined Easter Sunday. Such an occurrence was to take place in 387 AD.

Accordingly, the bishops of Rome placed the spring equinox on Thursday, March 25, in 387 AD, the fourteenth moon of Nisan on Saturday, March 20 followed immediately by Easter Sunday, March 21. The bishops of Milan, Alexandria and Antioch, on the other hand, placed the spring equinox on Sunday, March 21, one day after the fourteenth moon of Nisan. These bishops subsequently postponed Easter Sunday to April 25, 387 AD. This date met all the requirements of the Nicaean Council in their view: i.e., Easter Sunday could not be on or conjoin the “Jewish Passover,” and must be placed on the first Sunday following the fourteenth moon after the spring equinox.

Based on recent experience, St. Chrysostom knew many of his flock would opt to observe a Nisan 14 Christian Passover in compliance with those Christians of Antioch who did. Furthermore, this observance would take place on Friday evening, March 19, 36 days before an April 25, Easter. Thus in Chrysostom’s case the issue was even more critical, for many of his flock were beginning to observe the Christian Passover on Nisan 14 instead of or along with Easter Sunday:

The late date of Pascha in 387 prompted St. John Chrysostomos, **while he was still a Presbyter in Antioch, to deliver three sermons “Against the Jews” in**

the autumn of 386. Out of ignorance, many Christians in that city celebrated Pascha simultaneously with the Jewish Passover. On this account, they began Great Lent earlier than the correctly appointed time. In order to correct them, St. John Chrysostomos invokes the decree issued by the Synod in Nicaea in this regard: “More than three hundred Fathers, assembled in the land of Bythinia (at Nicaea), decreed this [that is, that **Pascha must not be celebrated simultaneously with the Jewish Passover—author’s note**], and you dishonor them in this way. You convict them either of ignorance, as if they were unaware of what they were appointing, or of cowardice, as if they knew the truth, but only by pretense, and betrayed it. This is the implication, if you do not respect their decree. Great wisdom and manliness are *evidenced in all of the Acts of the Synod...* Beware, then, of what you do, for you are bringing accusation against a great many wise and manly Fathers. If Christ is found among the two or three [St. Matthew 18:20], all the more was He found among the more than three hundred, when they determined and established all of these things. Furthermore, you accuse not only them, but the whole *ecumene*, for it approved their decree. *Do you consider the Jews more intelligent than the Fathers who were assembled from every part of the inhabited world?*” (*Third Sermon Against the Jews*, Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XLVIII, col. 865).

In hopes of precluding such an event, St. Chrysostom, preached to his flock in Antioch, Syria in the fall of 386 AD, arguing against the observance of the exact day on which Christ was crucified. Chrysostom believed that Christ was crucified on a Friday and that this day of preparation was for the weekly Sabbath and that this Friday coincided with Nisan 15, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. However, in the coming spring of 387 AD, Chrysostom argued, Nisan 15 would fall on a Sunday, not on a Friday. So you see, it is impossible to observe Christ’s crucifixion on the same day on which it originally occurred:

(7) But why must I speak of the Jews? No matter how eagerly and earnestly we wish it, it is not altogether possible for us to observe that day on which He was crucified. This will make it clear. Let us suppose the Jews had not sinned, that they were not hard of heart, nor senseless, nor indifferent, nor despisers; suppose they had not fallen from their ancestral way of life but were still carefully observing it. Even if this was the case, we could not, by following in their footsteps, put our finger on the very day on which He was crucified and fulfilled the Pasch. Let me tell how this is the case. **When He was crucified [Friday in Chrysostom’s thinking] it was the first day of the feast of unleavened bread [Nisan 15] and the day of preparation [for the weekly Sabbath].**

(8) **But it is not possible for both of these to fall always on the same day [of the week]. This year the first day of the feast of unleavened bread [Nisan 15] falls on Sunday, [Sunday, March 21, 387 AD—not Friday] and the fast must still last for a whole week [a week of fasting during lent still remained when**

normally lent would be over]; According to this, after Passiontide, after the cross and resurrection have come and gone, we are still fasting. And it has often happened that, after the cross and resurrection, our fast is still being observed because the week is not yet over. This is why no observance of the exact time is possible (Homily III, Section 5, Paragraphs 7,8).

St. Chrysostom had no doubt that Nisan 15 would fall on a Sunday in 387 AD. Nor for that matter did the bishops of Milan, Cyprus or Alexandria. The question remains then, “does Nisan 15 fall on a Sunday in 387 AD on the Hebrew Calendar?” The answer is yes, it does. The Hebrew Calendar we use, once again matches up perfectly with the facts of history.

Civil year 4147, year 5 of the 19-year cycle, ran from Trumpets, Thursday, September 10, 386 AD through Monday, August 30, 387 AD. The Molad of Tishri, civil year 4148, fell on a Monday, August 30, 387 AD at 22 hours and 87 parts and was therefore postponed by the application of Rule 2 to Tuesday, August 31, 387 AD. The activation of Rule 2 added one day to Heshvan 386 AD making civil year 4147 a year with 355 days. Atonement was thus declared on Thursday, September 10. The High Sabbath of the Feast of Tabernacles began Monday evening, September 13, 387 AD—10 days before the Fall Equinox of September 23, 387 AD.

Once again we have evidence a 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17 and 19 year intercalary cycle, evidence of a 384 day intercalary year, evidence of the application of Rule 2 and evidence that the Feast of Tabernacles began before the Fall Equinox—all from Chrysostom of Antioch, an eye witness to the facts just presented.

The above dating places Nisan 14, 387 AD before the vernal equinox—Saturday, March 20, 387 AD. And, places Tishri 22 on the fall equinox—Tuesday, September 21, 387 AD. Also, the conjunction of Tishri, 387 AD fell a little after sunrise on Monday, August 30, but Trumpets was declared on Tuesday that year.

The most important thing derived from this information is that we have an additional historical record that molad calculations, not conjunctions or crescent moons, were used to declare the lunar calendar dates and that Tabernacles in 387 AD was over by the time of the fall equinox. These facts are verified by the writings of an eyewitness who lived at the time.

In his writings, Chrysostom does not blast the dissenters of the flock for having denounced Christ, as would be expected if one goes back to the Jews wholesale, but rather that they were trying to observe the feast days according to an exact science; i.e., the calculated Hebrew Calendar. Please recall his earlier reference of belief that it is not possible to know the exact day of Jesus' death. Hence, he obviously thought they were disagreeing with Easter and going back to Nisan 14, but not for the purpose of rejection the name of Jesus.

This again tells us that an intercalary cycle of years 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17 and 19 (the same cycle we use) was being employed at this time. 387 AD was the 6th year of this intercalary cycle and had 384 days. Now, it so happens that a calendar utilizing years 2, 5, 7, 10, 13, 16 and 18 in a 19-year cycle, coincides with a cycle of 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17 and 19 in 387 AD. This phenomenon occurs ever so often, but does not vindicate its use as an intercalary cycle.

Trumpets 386 AD Civil Year 4147

The Testimony of St. Chrysostom of Antioch Syria

Our story does not end with the events of 387 AD. In an attempt to justify his belief that Christ was born on December 25, John Chrysostom links Tishri 15, 386 AD with September 24 on the Julian Calendar. Tishri 1 was a Thursday and Tishri 15 was a Thursday. This was civil year 4147 on the Hebrew Calendar. In checking the Hebrew Calendar for this date we find there is a match. Here is another historical link that demonstrates that the current intercalary cycle was in use in 386 AD--a mere 27 years after Hillel II released the secrets of the calendar. Kenneth F. Doig writes the following of St. Chrysostom's arguments in his *New Testament Chronology*. Bracketed comments are those of the author:

John Chrysostom was born in Antioch in about 345 CE and later became a preacher there. Chrysostom, or "golden mouthed," practiced asceticism in the nearby desert. In 398 he became bishop of Constantinople, but in 407 was banished to die in exile in Armenia. Of interest here, **in 386 he delivered a sermon in Antioch on December 25**, which he claimed as the day of the birth of Jesus. In his sermon Chrysostom gave support for that date by beginning with the burning of incense by Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. He placed this event at the time of the Fast for the Day of Atonement [**Wednesday, September 21, 6 BC**] and the following Feast of Tabernacles [**Monday, September 26 through Monday, October 3, 6 BC**]. He then worked forward six months to the conception of Jesus [**Saturday, March 25, Nisan 17, 5 BC**] and then nine months to the birth of Jesus on [**Monday**] December 25 [**Tevet 25, 5 BC**]. Here that possibility will again be examined.

I. Chrysostom's Solution

Chrysostom said that the Fast of Tishri 10 and the Feast of Tishri 15-21 fell in the later part of the month Gorpaios. In the later version of the Syro-Macedonian calendar this month had become fixed according to the Julian calendar, and always began on September 1. Earlier in 386 CE the Feast of Tabernacles had begun on the evening of September 25. Chrysostom said this date marked the conception of John the Baptist, as announced to Zacharias by the angel Gabriel. He then counted forward six months to the conception of Jesus, naming the six intervening months,

Hyperberetaios, Dios, Apellaios, Audynaios, Peritios and Dystros, to March 25 [387 AD]. Chrysostom then counted forward nine months, naming the months **Xanthikos, Artemisios, Daisios, Panemos, Loos, Gorpaios, Hyperberetaios, Dios and Apellaios, which began December 1 [387 AD]. The birth of Jesus he placed on the twenty-fifth of that month.** A similar path can be followed in an attempt to demonstrate that Chrysostom was essentially correct. (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990). ?xml:namespace prefix = o ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" /> Chapter 7.

This excerpt is taken from: Kenneth F. Doig's, *New Testament Chronology*. We obviously do not concur with his conclusion that Christ was born on December 25. St. Chrysostom is reaching back into history in an attempt to justify current belief and practice of the Catholic Church. It is interesting, however, that his analysis suggests that he understood that Christ was born in 5 BC as this is the only year in which his analysis works.

Of particular interest to us is Doig's analysis of St. Chrysostom's argument that concludes the Feast of Tabernacles began on the evening of September 25 in 386 AD. Doig is a day off in his calculations (the actual beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles was on September 24) but this is of no great concern to us as the beginning of no other Feast of Tabernacles falls anywhere near either September 24 or September 25, therefore the year referred to had to be 386 AD.

Passover 377 AD
Civil Year
4137

The Testimony of St. Ambrose of Milan Italy
The Application of Rules 1 2 & 3

The Bishops of the district of Emilia, Italy had written St. Ambrose of Milan, Italy in 386 AD regarding the late date for the upcoming Easter of 387 AD. Their concern was Easter's synchronization with the Passover of Nisan 14, an observance forbidden by canon law since the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea.

The determination of the Feast of Pascha according to the teaching of Holy Scripture and *the Holy Tradition of the Fathers who assembled at the Synod in Nicaea* requires not a little wisdom. Aside from other marvelous rules of Faith, the Holy Fathers, with the aid of eminently experienced men appointed to determine the aforementioned Feast Day, produced a calculation for its date of nineteen years' duration and established a cycle of sorts that became a model for ensuing years. This cycle they called the "*nonus decennial*," its goal being...the sacrifice of the Resurrection of Christ at all places on the same night" (*Epistle XXIII*, Chap. 1, Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. XVI, col. 1070).

St. Ambrose relates to the bishops that Easter Sunday fell on April 9, 377 AD, but that its observance was postponed to Sunday, April 16, 377 AD:

...in 377, when the fourteenth moon [of Nisan] fell on April 9, the Pascha of the Lord was celebrated on the following Sunday, April 16 (*Epistle XXII*, Chap. 11, Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. XVI).

The reason for moving Easter Sunday to April 16 was that the fourteenth moon of Nisan fell on April 9 in 377 AD, thus synchronizing with the calculated observance of Easter. As Archimandrite Sergius relates:

We must observe a rule, such that the fourteenth moon [i.e., the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan, the Jewish Passover] be not set on the day of the Resurrection, but on the day of the passion of Christ, or on another preceding day, since the celebration of the Resurrection is celebrated on Sunday."

Further on, he justifies the rule in question by reference to the Feast of Pascha in 373 and 377, which fell on late dates....In essence, St. Ambrose confirms the correctness of the basic condition set by the “Alexandrian *Paschalion*” and universally accepted by the Synod in Nicaea: that *the Pascha of Christ must never coincide with the Jewish Passover* and that it must not only follow the Jewish Passover, but be celebrated on *Sunday*, at that (The First Ecumenical Synod and the Feast of Pascha “...not with the Jews”).

377 AD happens to be a mere 19 years after Hillel II’s publication of the secrets of the Hebrew Calendar in civil year 4119, 358/359 AD. Once again, Ambrose’ date agrees perfectly with the Hebrew Calendar we currently use. On the Hebrew Calendar the Passover day fell on Monday, April 10, 377 AD. Ambrose’ record that April 9 was the fourteenth moon of Nisan tells us that he regarded the beginning of Passover as the evening of Sunday, April 9 at sunset, Hebrew reckoning.

Tishri 1, 376 AD, was declared for Thursday, September 1. Trumpets would have been declared for August 31 had it not been for the activation of Rule 2, the 12 noon Rule. Civil year 4137, September 1, 376 AD to September 20, 377 AD, was the 14th year of the 19-year cycle and had 385 days. This meant that a day was added to the month Heshvan giving it 30 days and that an additional Adar of 30 days was added to the calendar—thus 31 days in all were added. This fact meant that there would be 208 days from Tishri 1 to Nisan 1:

Passover day on the Hebrew Calendar was therefore declared for Monday, April 10, 377 AD, beginning the evening before on Sunday, April 9. Passover day was also declared by the calculations of St. Ambrose on April 10, 377 AD. This declaration placed the Passover day a full 20 days after the spring equinox, which occurred on March 20 at 2 hours, 10 minutes and 25 seconds! This tells us that an intercalary cycle of years 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17 and 19 was being employed.

Now, to skip ahead six months, the Molad of Tishri, civil year 4138, fell on a Tuesday, September 19, 377 AD at 15 hours and 828 parts and was therefore postponed by the application of Rule 3 to Thursday, September 21, 377 AD. This declaration extended the length of civil year year 4137, September 1, 376 to September 20, 377 AD, by 2 full days thus giving it a total length of 385 days. Counting back 177 days from Thursday, September 21, 377 AD places Nisan 1 on Tuesday, March 28 and Passover day on April 10!

We thus see that the historical dating of St. Ambrose also supports the fact that there are always 177 days between Nisan 1 and Tishri 1 and that this mathematical rule was being applied in 377 AD. It took the application of Rule 2 in the declaration of Tishri 1, 376 AD and the application of Rule 3 in the declaration of Tishri 1, 377 AD to place Nisan 14 on April 10, 377 AD.

If Postponement Rule 3 had not been applied in the fall of 377 AD and 378 AD, 377 AD would have been a 355-day year. We know this would have been the case as Trumpets 377 AD would have been declared on Tuesday (the day on which the molad fell) and Trumpets 378 AD would have been declared on Sunday (the day on which the molad fell.)

Had Trumpets been declared for Tuesday, September 19, 377 AD, Tishri 15 would have fallen on Tuesday, October 3. A moon rising Monday evening, October 2 would have had a disc illumination of 98.90% waxing. A moon rising Wednesday evening, October 4 would have had a disc illumination of 98.19% *waning*.

Tuesday 377 AD to Sunday 378 AD is a 5-day advance from the day of the week in one year to the day of the week in the next year. Civil year 4138, 377 AD would have been a 355-day, 12-month year.

Because the Molad of Tishri, 378 AD fell on a Sunday, Rule 1 would have been activated moving the molad from Sunday to Monday. This action would have created a 356-day year—which is an astronomical impossibility.

The application of Rule 3 in 377 AD, however, cut the length of the year down from 356 days to 354 days. The reason for this is that in 377 AD, civil year 4138 and the 15th year of the cycle, thus a common year, the Molad of Tishri fell on a Tuesday at 15 hours and 828 parts. Rule 3 states that the declaration of Tishri 1 must therefore be advanced from Tuesday to Wednesday. The application of Rule 1 then advances Tishri 1 one more day to Thursday. Thus when Rule 1 is applied in 378 AD, advancing the molad from a Sunday to a Monday is simply created a 354-day year out of a 353 day year.

This combined action prevented civil year 4138 from being extended from a 355-day year to a 356-day year by the application of Rule 1 in 378

AD—a year one day too long. Thus Rule 3 anticipates the action of Rule 1 at these times and “course corrects” the calendar to prevent the addition of an extra day to a 6940 day, 19-year cycle.

Passover 373 AD
Civil Year
4133

The Testimony of St. Ambrose of Milan Italy
and St. Athanasius the Great

The Application of Rules 1 & 2

The Bishops of the district of Emilia had written St. Ambrose in 386 AD regarding the late date for the upcoming Easter of 387 AD. Their concern was the calculated lateness of Easter and therefore the synchronization of Easter Sunday with what they called the Jewish Passover of Nisan 14, an observance forbidden by canon law.

The determination of the Feast of Pascha according to the teaching of Holy Scripture and *the Holy Tradition of the Fathers who assembled at the Synod in Nicaea* requires not a little wisdom. Aside from other marvelous rules of Faith, the Holy Fathers, with the aid of eminently experienced men appointed to determine the aforementioned Feast Day, produced a calculation for its date of nineteen years' duration and established a cycle of sorts that became a model for ensuing years. This cycle they called the "*nonus decennial*," its goal being...the sacrifice of the Resurrection of Christ at all places on the same night (*Epistle XXIII*, Chap. 1, Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. XVI, col. 1070).

Writing in 386 AD to his Bishops in the district of Emilia, a region south of Milan and northwest of Bologna, Ambrose states that Easter Sunday fell on March 24 in the year 373 AD. Ambrose relates that Easter Sunday was postponed one week to March 31 because the date happened to correspond with Nisan 14, 373 AD. This then was an example of how to address the problem of 387 AD:

Thus, in 373, when the fourteenth moon fell on March 24, we celebrated Pascha on March 31 (*Epistle XXII*, Chap. 11, Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. XVI).

St. Athanasius the Great corroborates St. Ambrose' Passover date of March 31, 373 AD. Following is Athanasius' entry for the year 373 AD from the *Chronicon Athanasianum*:

Table 16.0

Number of Letter.	Year of Diocl.	Year of our Lord.	Egyptian Calendar.	Easter Day.		Day of Lunar Month.	Epact (age of Moon on <u>Mar. 22</u>).	Sunday Letter and Concurr-entes.	Indict ⁿ .	Golden Num-bers.
				Roman Calendar.	Modern Reckon- ing.					
XLV	89	373	5 Pharm.	Prid. Kal.	31 March	21	12	1 F	1	13
					April					

The reason for moving Easter Sunday to March 31 was that the fourteenth moon of Nisan fell on March 24 thus synchronizing with the calculated observance of Easter.

373 AD happens to be a mere 14 years after Hillel II’s publication of the secrets of the Hebrew Calendar in 358/359 AD. St. Ambrose’ date agrees perfectly with the Hebrew Calendar we currently use. On our Hebrew Calendar the Passover day itself fell on Monday, March 25, 373 AD. Ambrose’ record that March 24 was the fourteenth moon of Nisan tells us that he regarded the beginning of Passover as the evening of Sunday, March 24.

Applying the 177-day Rule of the Hebrew Calendar we should find that Trumpets 473 AD has been declared for Thursday, September 5. Indeed this is what we find. The Molad of Tishri, civil year 4134, fell on a Wednesday, September 4, 373 AD at 3 hours and 58 parts and was therefore postponed by the application of Rule 1 to Thursday, September 5, 373 AD. This declaration extended the length of civil year 4133 (declared by Rule 2), which ran from September 15, 372 through September 4, 373 AD, by 1 day thus giving it a total length of 355 days. It took the application of Rule 1 in the declaration of Tishri 1, 373 AD to place Nisan 14 on March 25, 373 AD. 373 AD was the 10th year of this intercalary cycle and had 355 days.

Passover 341 AD
Civil Year
4101

The Testimony of St. Athanasius the Great
Circa 295-373 AD

In 341 AD the Roman and Alexandrian churches once again celebrated Easter on different dates (*The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church*, Vol. XIV of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, 2nd series, Eerdmans, 1998). The Alexandrian equinox fell on Saturday, March 21 while the Roman equinox fell on Wednesday, March 25. The Roman church probably celebrated Easter on Sunday, March 29 while the Alexandrian church celebrated Easter Sunday on April 19. This fact is verified by St. Athanasius the Great wrote in his *Paschal Epistles* that Easter Sunday, 341 AD was celebrated on April 19.

Why the different dates for the celebration of Easter Sunday?

The Nicean Council of 325 AD had just ruled that the observance of Easter must be on the first Sunday that falls after the spring equinox. The Council further stipulated that Easter must be celebrated after the fourteenth moon after the equinox. The council further stipulated that Easter, cannot be celebrated on the day preceding this Paschal moon, the day of the Paschal moon or the day immediately following this Paschal moon. Thus, if Easter Sunday does not meet all these requirements, the observance of Easter must be delayed for one month. Furthermore, it was agreed that all churches must celebrate Easter on the same Sunday.

The Roman Church did not obey the ruling of the Council of Nicea. Thus the Roman's observed Easter on March 29 (by their own rules they should have celebrated it on April 19 as did the Alexandrian church). The Alexandrian's postponed their observance of Easter to April 19 because the fourteenth or Paschal moon fell before March 21. The Roman's ignored this fact and observed Easter on March 22 anyway.

St. Athanasius the Great, one of the main participants at the Council of Nicea placed Easter Sunday on April 19 in 341 AD. This fact is recorded in his Easter table (which he calculated at the request of the Council of Nicea) for years 328 to 373 AD. Theophilus of Alexandria calculated the next Easter Canon known as the *Laterculum Paschle*, the Paschle Table of which ran from 375 to 475 AD. Following is Athanasius' entry for the year 341 AD from the *Chronicon Athanasianum*:

Table 16.1

Number of Letter.	Year of Diocl.	Year of our Lord.	Easter Day.		Modern Reckoning.	Day of Lunar Month.	Epact (age of Moon on <u>Mar. 22</u>).	Sunday Letter and Concurr-entes.	Indict ⁿ .	Golden Numbers.
			Egyptian Calendar.	Roman Calendar.						
XIII	57	341	24 Pharm.	XIII Kal.	19 April	16	18	3 D	14	19
				Mai						

Athanasius' calculations testify that the age of the moon of Nisan on Sunday, March 22 was 18 days. Counting back four days places the fourteenth moon of Nisan on a Wednesday. When we check this date on the Hebrew Calendar we see that Sunday, March 22 was indeed the 18th of Nisan and the Wednesday, March 18 was Nisan 14. Athanasius' first hand testimony once again verifies the veracity of the Hebrew Calendar. Passover day in 341 AD was therefore Wednesday, March 18 according to Athanasius' own testimony—a date that agrees perfectly with the Hebrew Calendar!

When we apply the 177-day Rule of the Hebrew Calendar we should find that Trumpets 341 AD has been declared for Saturday, August 29. Indeed this is what we find. The Molad of Tishri, civil year 4102, fell on a Saturday, August 29, 341 AD at 0 hours and 310 parts. The Feast of Trumpets was therefore declared for Saturday, August 29, 341 AD. This declaration set the length of civil year 4101, which ran from Monday, September 8, 340 AD to Saturday, August 29, 341 AD, thus giving civil year 4101 a total length of 355 days. Civil year 4101 was the 16th year of the 19-year lunar cycle.

We have thus historically documented the accuracy of the Hebrew calendar 18 years before 358 AD! We have also documented a year in which Passover was observed before the spring equinox and that both the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day were observed before the fall equinox.

What emerges loud and clear in all of this is that while there were many objections to the observance of God's feast days, we find no disagreement or question as to whether or not they had been accurately calculated. Those issues seem to be totally moot. The entire Roman world of that day appears to have given full credence to validity of the "calendar of the Jews."

**Passover 333 AD
Civil Year
4093**

**The Testimony of St. Athanasius the Great
Circa 295-373 AD**

The Application of Rule 1

In 333 AD the Roman and Alexandrian churches once again celebrated Easter on different dates (*The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church*, Vol. XIV of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, 2nd series, Eerdmans, 1998). The Alexandrian equinox fell on Wednesday, March 21 while the Roman equinox fell on Sunday, March 25. We are not told when the Roman church celebrated Easter but we do know they observed Easter on a different day than the Alexandrian church. St. Athanasius the Great wrote in his *Paschal Epistles* that the Alexandrian church celebrated Easter Sunday, 333 AD on April 15. This fact is recorded in his Easter table (which he calculated at the request of the Council of Nicea) for years 329 to 373 AD. Theophilus of Alexandria calculated the next Easter Canon known as the *Laterculum Paschle*, the Paschle Table of which ran from 375 to 475 AD. Following is St. Athanasius' entry for the year 333 AD from the *Chronicon Athanasianum*:

Table 16.2

Number of Letter.	Year of Diocl.	Year of our Lord.	Egyptian Calendar.	Easter Day.		Modern Reckoning.	Day of Lunar Month.	Epact (age of Moon on <u>Mar. 22</u>).	Sunday Letter and Concurr-entes.	Indict ⁿ .	Golden Numbers.
				Roman Calendar.							
V	49	333	20 Pharm.	XVI I Kal.		3819 15	15	20	7 G	6	11
				Mai		April					

Why Athanasius did not postpone the celebration of Easter to April 22 is a mystery to scholars. Notice the footnote number “3819” in the above table. It states the following:

3819 According to the usual Antegregorian rule, Easter would fall on April 22.

By the reckoning of St. Athanasius, who helped define the rules of the Nicean Council just 8 years previous, Easter Sunday, April 15, 333 AD fell the day before the fourteenth moon, yet Athanasius did not, for whatever reason, postpone Easter to April 22. When we check the Hebrew Calendar we learn that April 16 is the Passover day!

Applying the 177-day Rule of the Hebrew Calendar we should find that Trumpets 333 AD has been declared for Thursday, September 27. Indeed this is what we find! The Molad of Tishri, civil year 4094, fell on a Wednesday, September 26, 333 AD at 0 hours and 356 parts. The Feast of Trumpets was therefore postponed by the application of Rule 1 to Thursday, September 27, 333 AD. This declaration extended the length of civil year year 4093, which ran from Thursday, September 7, 332 AD through Wednesday, September 26, 333 AD by 1 day, thus giving civil year 4093 a total length of 385 days. Civil year 4093 was the 8th year of the 19-year lunar cycle.

Trumpets 333 AD, which determined all lunar dates for 333 AD, was postponed by Rule 1 to Thursday thus placing Passover on Monday, April 16 instead of Sunday, Sunday, April 15. We have thus historically documented the application of Rule 1—25 years before 358 AD!

What emerges loud and clear in all of this is that while there were many objections to the observance of God's feast days, we find no disagreement or question as to whether or not they had been accurately calculated. Those issues seem to be totally moot. The entire Roman world of that day appears to have given full credence to validity of the "calendar of the Jews."

This fact alone is fantastic in its own right. However, the icing on the cake is the validation of how St. Athanasius counted Pentecost in his Festal Letter of 329 AD. In his letter he states in a simple matter of fact, accepted practice manner that Pentecost is counted in whole weeks and that the first day of that count is Sunday, the 20th day of the Egyptian month Pharmuthi—April 15. Notice what is written in paragraph 6:

LETTER V.—For 333. Easter-day⁴⁰⁵⁰, Coss. Dalmatius and Zenophilus; Præfect, Paternus⁴⁰⁵¹; vi Indict.; xvii Kal. Maii, xx Pharmuthi; xv Moon; vii Gods; Æra Dioclet. 49.

6. We begin the holy fast on the fourteenth of Pharmuthi (Apr. 9), on the [first] evening of the week⁴⁰⁷¹; and having ceased on the nineteenth of the same month Pharmuthi (Apr. 14), the first day of the holy week dawns upon us on the twentieth of the same month Pharmuthi (Apr. 15), to which we join the seven weeks of Pentecost; with prayers, and fellowship with our neighbour, and love towards one another, and that peaceable will which is above all. For so shall we be heirs of the kingdom of heaven, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom to the Father be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. All the brethren who are with me salute you. Salute one another with a holy kiss. Here endeth the fifth Festal Letter of holy Athanasius (*Festal Letters* of St. Athanasius the Great).

As we have already demonstrated, April 16 is the fourteenth moon of the month, the Paschal moon as the church fathers called it or the Passover day. April 21 is the weekly Sabbath and April 22 is the Wave Sheaf day from which St. Athanasius begins the whole week count to Pentecost. His dates agree perfectly with the Hebrew Calendar dates for Passover, the weekly Sabbath, Sunday Wave Sheaf day and with the count to Pentecost!

**Passover 330 AD
Civil Year
4090**

**The Testimony of St. Athanasius the Great
Circa 295-373 AD**

The Application of Rules 1 & 2

In 330 AD the Roman and Alexandrian churches once again celebrated Easter on different dates (*The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church*, Vol. XIV of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, 2nd series, Eerdmans, 1998). The Alexandrian equinox fell on Saturday, March 21 while the Roman equinox fell on Wednesday, March 25. We are not told when the Roman church celebrated Easter, but the probably did so on Sunday, March 29. St. Athanasius the Great wrote in his *Paschal Epistles* that Easter Sunday, 330 AD, was celebrated on April 19 by the Alexandrian church:

Table 16.3

Number of Letter.	Year of Diocl.	Year of our Lord.	Egyptian Calendar.	Easter Day.		Modern Reckoning.	Day of Lunar Month.	Epect (age of Moon on <u>Mar. 22</u>).	Sunday Letter and Concurr-entes.	Indict ⁿ .	Golden Numbers.
				Roman Calendar.							
II	46	330	24 Pharm.	XIII Kal.	19 April	15	17	3 D	3	8	
				Mai							

As we noted above, the Alexandrian equinox fell on Saturday, March 21 in 330 AD. March 22 was the next Sunday. One would think that the Alexandrians would have observed Easter on this date. But they did not do so. Easter Sunday was postponed until April 19. The Alexandrians postponed their Easter celebration to Sunday, April 19, because Sunday, March 22, 330 AD fell a day after the fourteenth or Paschal moon! And, canon law as agreed to by the Council of Nicea forbade the celebration of

Easter on the day immediately following Nisan 14. The testimony of St. Athanasius thus places Nisan 14 on Friday, March 20. When we check the Hebrew Calendar this is exactly what we find!

Applying the 177-day Rule of the Hebrew Calendar we should find that Trumpets 330 AD has been declared for Monday, August 31. Indeed this is what we find! The Molad of Tishri, civil year 4091, fell on a Sunday, August 30, 330 AD at 20 hours and 462 parts. The Feast of Trumpets was therefore postponed by the application of Rule 2 to Monday, August 31, 330 AD. This declaration extended the length of civil year 4090, which ran from Thursday, September 11, 330 AD through Sunday, August 30 AD by 1 day, thus giving civil year 4090 a total length of 354 days. Civil year 4090 was the 5th year of the 19-year lunar cycle.

Trumpets 330 AD, which determined all lunar dates for 330 AD, was postponed by Rule 2 to Monday thus placing Passover on Friday, March 20 instead of Thursday, March 19. We have thus historically documented the application of Rules 1 & 2—25 years before 358 AD! We have also documented a year in which Passover was observed before the spring equinox and that both the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day were observed before the fall equinox. Thus these Hebrew Calendar calculations were also approved by the church fathers of Alexandria, Egypt!

What emerges loud and clear in all of this is that while there were many objections to the observance of God's feast days, we find no disagreement or question as to whether or not they had been accurately calculated. Those issues seem to be totally moot. The entire Roman world of that day appears to have given full credence to validity of the "calendar of the Jews."

Passover 329 AD
Civil Year
4089

The Testimony of St. Athanasius the Great
Circa 295-373 AD

The Application of Rule 1

In 329 AD the Roman and Alexandrian churches celebrated Easter on different dates. The Alexandrian equinox fell on Friday, March 21 and the Roman equinox fell on Tuesday, March 25. The Roman church celebrated Easter on Sunday, March 30 while the Alexandrian church celebrated Easter Sunday on April 6. This fact is verified by the work of the French scientist V. Gumel who uses a table of Paschal and Passover dates published by Swartz for the nineteen consecutive years between 328 and 346 AD (*Journal of Byzantine Research*, Vol. VIII, pp. 165-166).

St. Athanasius the Great wrote in his *Paschal Epistles* that are preserved in the *Chronicon Athanasianum* that Easter Sunday, 329 AD, was celebrated on April 6 by the Alexandrian church:

Table 16.4

Number of Letter.	Year of Diocl.	Year of our Lord.	Egyptian Calendar.	Easter Day.		Modern Reckoning.	Day of Lunar Month.	Epact (age of Moon on <u>Mar. 22</u>).	Sunday Letter and Concurr-entes.	Indict ⁿ .	Golden Numbers.
				Roman Calendar.							
I	45	329	11 Pharm.	VIII Id.	6 April	22	6	2 E	2	7	

As we noted above, the Alexandrian equinox fell on Friday, March 21 in 329 AD. March 30 was the first possible Sunday for the celebration of Easter. One would think that the Alexandrians would have observed Easter on this date. But they did not do so. Easter Sunday was postponed until

April 6. The Alexandrians postponed their Easter celebration to Sunday, April 6, because Sunday, March 30, 329 AD fell a day before the fourteenth or Paschal moon! And, canon law as agreed to by the Council of Nicea forbade the celebration of Easter on the day immediately preceding Nisan 14. The testimony of St. Athanasius thus places Nisan 14 on Monday, March 31. When we check the Hebrew Calendar this is exactly what we find!

Further confirmation that Monday, March 31 is Passover day is found in the fact that Athanasius calculates that the age of the moon at the close of Saturday, March 22 was 6 days—i.e., the moon's age on Sunday, March 23 was 6 days or the 6th of Nisan. Counting eight days forward from Sunday places the 14th moon on Monday, March 31—Passover day!

If we apply the 177-day Rule of the Hebrew Calendar we should find that Trumpets 329 AD has been declared for Thursday, September 11. Indeed this is what we find! The Molad of Tishri, civil year 4090, fell on a Wednesday, September 10, 329 AD at 11 hours and 666 parts. The Feast of Trumpets was therefore postponed by the application of Rule 1 to Thursday, September 11, 329 AD. This declaration extended the length of civil year 4089, which ran from Saturday, September 21, 328 AD through Wednesday, September 10, 329 AD by 1 day, thus giving civil year 4089 a total length of 355 days. Civil year 4089 was the 4th year of the 19-year lunar cycle.

Trumpets 329 AD, which determined all lunar dates for 329 AD, was postponed by Rule 1 to Thursday thus placing Passover on Monday, March 31 instead of Sunday, March 30. We have thus historically documented the application of Rule 1—29 years before 358 AD! The Roman world before Hillel's publication of 358 AD thus approved of the use of postponements in lunar calendar calculations.

What emerges loud and clear in all of this is that while there were many objections to the observance of God's feast days, we find no disagreement or question as to whether or not they had been accurately calculated. Those issues seem to be totally moot. The entire Roman world of that day appears to have given full credence to validity of the "calendar of the Jews."

This fact alone is fantastic in its own right. However, the icing on the cake is the validation of how St. Athanasius counted Pentecost in his Festal Letter of 329 AD. In his letter he states in a simple matter of fact, accepted practice manner that Pentecost is counted in whole weeks and that the first

day of that count is Sunday, the 11th day of the Egyptian month Pharmuthi—April 6. Notice what is written in paragraph 10:

LETTER I.—*For 329. Easter-day xi Pharmuthi; viii Id. April; Ær. Dioclet. 45; Coss. Constantinus Aug. VIII. Constantinus Cæs. IV; Præfect. Septimius Zenius; Indict. II.*

10. We begin the holy fast on the fifth day of Pharmuthi (March 31), and adding to it according to the number of those six holy and great days, which are the symbol of the creation of this world, let us rest and cease (from fasting) on the tenth day of the same Pharmuthi (April 5), on the holy sabbath of the week. And when the first day of the holy week dawns and rises upon us, on the eleventh day of the same month (April 6), from which again we count all the seven weeks one by one, let us keep feast on the holy day of Pentecost—on that which was at one time to the Jews, typically, the feast of weeks, in which they granted forgiveness and settlement of debts; and indeed that day was one of deliverance in every respect. Let us keep the feast on the first day of the great week, as a symbol of the world to come, in which we here receive a pledge that we shall have everlasting life hereafter. Then having passed hence, we shall keep a perfect feast with Christ, while we cry out and say, like the saints, ‘I will pass to the place of the wondrous tabernacle, to the house of God; with the voice of gladness and thanksgiving, the shouting of those who rejoice;’ whence pain and sorrow and sighing have fled, and upon our heads gladness and joy shall have come to us! May we be judged worthy to be partakers in these things (*Festal Letters* of St. Athanasius the Great).

As we have already demonstrated, March 31, 329 AD is the fourteenth moon of the month, the Paschal moon or the Passover day. April 5 is the weekly Sabbath and April 6 is the Wave Sheaf day from which St. Athanasius begins the whole week count to Pentecost. His dates agree perfectly with the Hebrew Calendar dates for Passover, the weekly Sabbath, Sunday Wave Sheaf day and with the count to Pentecost!

Passover 326 AD
Civil Year
4086

The Application of Rules 1, 2 & 3

In 326 AD the Roman and Alexandrian churches once again celebrated Easter on different dates (*The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church*, Vol. XIV of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, 2nd series, Eerdmans, 1998). The Alexandrian equinox fell on Monday, March 21 in 326 AD and the Roman equinox fell on Friday, March 25. The first Sunday after the equinox fell on March 13 on the eve of the fourteenth moon of month.

The Nicean Council of 325 AD had just ruled that the observance of Easter must be on the first Sunday that falls after the spring equinox. The Council further stipulated that Easter must be celebrated after the fourteenth moon after the equinox. The council further stipulated that Easter, cannot be celebrated on the day preceding this Paschal moon, the day of the Paschal moon or the day immediately following this Paschal moon. Thus, if Easter Sunday does not meet all these requirements, the observance of Easter must be delayed for one month. Furthermore, it was agreed that all churches must celebrate Easter on the same Sunday.

The Roman church celebrated Easter on Sunday, April 3 while the Alexandrian church celebrated Easter Sunday on April 10.

Why the different dates for the celebration of Easter Sunday?

The Roman Church did not obey the rules laid down by the Nicean Council! Thus the Roman's observed Easter on April 3 (by their own rules they should have celebrated it on April 10). The Alexandrian's postponed their observance of Easter to April 10 because Monday, April 4, by their own calculations, was the fourteenth or Paschal moon of Nisan. The Roman's ignored this fact and observed Easter on April 3 anyway.

When applying the 177-day rule of the Hebrew Calendar we should find that Trumpets 326 AD has been declared for Thursday, September 15.

Indeed this is what we find! The Molad of Tishri, civil year 4087, fell on a Tuesday, September 13, 326 AD at 20 hours and 485 parts. The Feast of Trumpets was therefore postponed by the application of Rule 3 to Wednesday, September 14, 326 AD and then to Thursday by Rule 1 to Thursday, September 15. This declaration extended the length of civil year 4086, which ran from Saturday, September 25, 325 AD (which had been postponed by Rule 1 from Friday to Saturday) through Wednesday, September 14, 326 AD by 2 days, thus giving civil year 4086 a total length of 355 days. Civil year 4086 was the 1st year of the 19-year lunar cycle.

Trumpets 326 AD, which determined all lunar dates for 326 AD, was postponed by Rule 3 and 1 to Saturday thus placing Passover, 326 AD on Monday, April 4 instead of Saturday, April 2. We have thus historically documented the application of Rules 1, 2 and 3—32 years before 358 AD! Furthermore, we have demonstrated by historical facts that postponement rules were approved by Jew and Gentile alike!

What emerges loud and clear in all of this is that while there were many objections to the observance of God's feast days, we find no disagreement or question as to whether or not they had been accurately calculated. Those issues seem to be totally moot. The entire Roman world of that day appears to have given full credence to the validity of the "calendar of the Jews."

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