

**PONTIFICAL UNIVERSITY
ST. PATRICK'S COLLEGE**

MAYNOOTH

**A question of time or a question of theology:
A study of the Easter controversy in the Insular Church**

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A Scriptum submitted
to
the Faculty of Theology
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of

PhD in Theology

June, 2007

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have supported and helped me throughout my work on this thesis. Firstly I acknowledge the support and encouragement given to me by the Regional Team of the Holy Faith Sisters, Ireland, and my community in Celbrige. Professor Liam Tracey, OSM as my director has been a constant source of encouragement. He has been available and helpful at all times. Other members of the Faculty of Theology, St. Patrick's College, have been helpful, supportive and have shown interest in my work, especially the Dean of the Faculty, Dr. Brendan McConvery, CSSR.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Fr. Patrick Jones and Sr Moira Bergin RSM of the National Centre for Liturgy for allowing me access to the facilities in the National Centre for Liturgy

Over the course of my research I was surprised and gratified at the helpfulness of those that I approached concerning my topic. Those who stand out are:

Dr. Daniel McCarthy, Computer Science Department, Trinity College, Dublin.

Dr. Jacinta Prunty, History Department, National University of Ireland Maynooth.

Dr. Ann Buckley, Music Department, National University of Ireland.

Dr. Paul Bradshaw, University of Notre Dame, Indiana/London.

Dr. Kevin Seasoltz, OSB, St. John's Abbey, Minnesota.

Dr. Thomas Ó Loughlin, University of Lampeter, Wales

Immo Wartnjes, National University of Ireland, Galway.

Finally I acknowledge the support of all my friends and the other students of the National Centre for Liturgy and above all Anne O'Neill, Maureen Burke, and Fr. Michael Gilroy.

List of Abbreviations

<i>ANF</i>	<i>The Ante Nicene Fathers, the writings of the fathers down to AD 325</i>
<i>CCSL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina.</i>
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>
<i>DPC</i>	<i>De Pascha Computus,</i>
<i>DRC</i>	<i>De ratione computandi,</i>
<i>DRP</i>	<i>De ratione paschali,</i>
<i>DRT</i>	<i>Bedae, De ratione temporibus,</i>
<i>DCP</i>	<i>De controversia paschali</i>
<i>EH</i>	<i>Bede, The Ecclesiastical History of the English People</i>
<i>NPNFa I</i>	<i>Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series</i>
<i>NPNFa II</i>	<i>Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series.</i>
<i>SCO</i>	<i>Sancti Columbani Opera</i>

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Introduction

Time and theology are the twin pillars on which this thesis rests. It will explore how different scriptural interpretations led to theological and computational differences between the Insular¹ and continental/Roman churches. The Insular Church believed in and strictly adhered to the tradition passed on to them by their ‘fathers.’ What were the origins of these traditions and the theology that formed them? To apprehend Easter controversies, whether it is the early Quartodeciman controversy or the controversy in the Insular Church, an understanding of how biblical exegesis and different theological perspectives shaped the minds and hearts of those involved, is necessary. The Exodus story as portrayed in the Old Testament formed the basis for a theological interpretation of the Christian Passover, inheriting from Judaism a rich heritage of images and symbols used and developed in early paschal homilies. To gain insight into this particular theology the writings of those directly involved in the Insular controversy will be explored.

Medieval monasteries distinguished between festal time and ordinary time. It is against this sense of ‘festalism’ and the passionate need to get it right that the dating of Easter is argued. The discussion hinges on a fixed point of reference for the Easter full moon. The cultural sensitivities of the time must be taken into account. To celebrate ‘out’ of time was to break the unity of the Church. More importantly, it

¹ The term ‘insular church’ refers throughout to the churches of Ireland and Great Britain.

raised the question of one's eternal salvation. Monastic life, which strongly influenced the early Irish Church was in a very real sense caught up in the great 'drama' enacted between heaven and hell in which the cycle of the Christian year was a vital weapon.

To date scholarly research has approached this topic from a medieval historical perspective. It has, however, never been approached from a purely theological stance. Questions regarding the Insular 84-year cycle have occupied scholars over the past one hundred years or so. A review of the literature reveals an advance in understanding the techniques of the *computus* of the Insular church. The work of Dáibhí Ó Cróinín is well documented and his findings have considerably enriched the body of knowledge on this question. The discovery in Padua of a *latercus* provided for the first time an example of an Irish *computus*. Accompanying this text was the text of the *Paschal Canon of Anatolius*: this text is essential to an understanding of the Insular *computus*. Anatolius' contribution was not simply technical but he provides valuable insight into the cosmological considerations behind a theological understanding of the Easter feast as a feast of light.

Chapter one focuses on Christian time, especially as understood in the Christian liturgical year and emphasises the centrality of Easter within that year. How the Christian community developed ways of calculating the date of Easter will be investigated. The thesis addresses the history and development of Easter as a feast and distinguishes between Sunday celebrations and Quartodeciman practice. It addresses the Christian year as revealed in relation to Irish monasticism in a selection of Irish texts. The chapter ends with an exploration of the lunar-solar calendar, which is an essential prerequisite for any understanding of Easter tables.

Chapter two explores the history of Easter tables and the theology, which accompanied them. The powerful religious symbolism of light over darkness, the

Easter feast occurring in spring at the time of the equinox and full moon, becomes in the writings of some of the fathers a rich source of homilistic material, but also provides the basis for at least some of the controversy in relation to Insular Easter dating. The theology behind early Easter tables will be examined. The tables themselves are technically complex, and the dating process is also highly significant. This thesis will explore both the technical aspects of the 84-year cycle, and the deeper theological questions. The study of selected texts of the Hiberno-Latin tradition, studied from this dual perspective, will allow a deeper exploration of the time issue and theological underpinning.

Chapter three will develop the theological issues of *luna* fourteen, fifteen and sixteen, in the writings of Anatolius, Columbanus, other early Irish texts together with Abbot Coelfrid and Bede. *Luna* fourteen, fifteen and sixteen acted as ciphers for theological issues based on particular biblical exegesis. *Luna* fourteen, fifteen and sixteen together with the chronology of the synoptic gospels, over and against the chronology of John's gospel provide one area where the Insular and the Roman churches differed. These differences are explored in this chapter.

Chapter four investigates the charge of Quartodecimanism against the Insular church. This thesis intends to show that this charge was untrue, but that personalities and misunderstanding of both the term itself and the Insular practice led to a condemnation of the proponents of the Insular Easter, which had considerable theological consequences for the Insular church.

CHAPTER I

CHRISTIAN TIME

1.1 ‘What then is time’?

By the mystery of the incarnation God broke into cosmic time and human history; God dwelt as one of us in the cosmic and human space.²

Speculations about time have occupied thinkers for centuries from scientists and mathematicians to theologians and philosophers. Yet time remains a mystery. Augustine (d. AD 430) Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, added considerably to the Church’s understanding of time and its theological foundations. Augustine pondered his experiences trying to understand how past, present, and future relate to one another in the Christian experience.³

What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks me, I do not know. Yet I say with confidence that I know that if nothing passed away, there would be no past time; and if nothing were still coming, there would be no future time; and if there were nothing at all, there would be no present time.⁴

² Anscar J. Chupungo, ed. *Liturgical Time and Space: Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, Vol. 5 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), Introduction, xvii.

³ Martin Connell, *Eternity Today: On the Liturgical Year*, Vol. 1. *On God and Time: Advent and Christmas, Epiphany, Candlemas* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 19.

⁴ Augustine. *Confessions*, 11.14 trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin, eds. Robert Baldick, Betty Radice (London: Penguin Books, reprint, 1975), 264. See Connell, *Eternity Today*, Vol. 1, 18.

Time is a gift of God to the world and humanity, but the understanding and measurement of time is an altogether different matter. Ancient cultures depended on events occurring in time. For the Israelites all time belonged to God, and their history was the history of God's involvement in their lives. This view still finds expression in the liturgy of the Church, 'all time belongs to him and all ages.'⁵ The Jews viewed sacred events, the creation, the exodus, and the giving of the covenant, as fixed points in time, with their history as the pilgrimage movement of a people towards the Promised Land, ultimately towards a relationship with God. The Jewish religion is rooted in historical events or historicized rites, but time for them does not flow in an endless cyclic course, it is linear; it moves from one stage or moment to the next. These stages are: the time before creation - historical time as manifested to them by God, present time, the Day of the Lord, and the future time or 'last times.' It is the event that determines time; because God is actively at work in time all time and history belong to God. The religious significance that was part of the Jewish tradition was carried forward into the Christian era.

The Christian tradition relates time to eternity and sees history as the manifestation of the temporal in the eternal. Augustine in his *Confessions* discusses the question of time and eternity and their relationship to God.

Nor do you precede any given period of time by another period of time. Otherwise you would not precede all periods of time. In the eminence of your ever-present eternity, you proceed all times past, and extend beyond all future times, for they are

⁵ *Roman Missal*, Texts approved for use in England & Wales, Scotland, Ireland, South Africa (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1974), 209. As the priest traces the Greek letter alpha above the cross, and the letter omega below, and the numerals of the current year between the arms of the cross during the blessing of the Paschal Candle at the Easter Vigil, he says: "Christ yesterday and today, the beginning and the end, Alpha and Omega; *all time belongs to him, and all ages*; to him be glory and power through every age and forever. Amen." Italics mine.

still to come - and when they have come, they will be past. But "You are always the Selfsame and your years shall have no end." Your years neither go nor come; but ours both go and come in order that all separate moments may come to pass. All your years stand together as one, since they are abiding. Nor do your years past exclude the years to come because your years do not pass away. All these years of ours shall be with you, when all of them shall have ceased to be. Your years are but a day, and your day is not recurrent, but always today. Your "today" yields not to tomorrow and does not follow yesterday. Your "today" is eternity. Therefore, you did generate the Coeternal, to whom you said, "This day I have begotten you." You made all time and before all times you are, and there was never a time when there was no time.⁶

History for the Jews and Christians alike is the place where God is at work, God speaks and we listen and respond. Time begins with creation and reaches its fulfilment in the *παρουσία* (*parousia*). In between stretches the redemptive action of God in Christ Jesus.

Christians see God's covenant with the human race as having its roots and background in the Old Testament and as being the fulfilment and completion of the former covenant. Consequently, if we want a full and rounded understanding of the Christian liturgical year we must have some knowledge of the Jewish festal year.⁷

Time is ultimately tied to the development of religious symbols and ritual performances such as the celebration of spring festivals; this can apply to all religions, not just to Judaism and Christianity. The Passover festival calibrated to natural phenomena commands the remembrance of historical significance. Time organizes chronology (calendar) but the organization of the calendar speaks of deeply held beliefs and is more than simply a succession of chronological units. There are many ways in which groups express their identity. It may be in language, dress, emblems or badges, dietary laws or the keeping of specific calendars. By regulating social life, through adherence to certain calendrical arrangements, groups mark themselves off as

⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.13, 263.

⁷ Adolf Adams, *The Liturgical Year: its history and its meaning after the reform of the liturgy*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 5.

different to other groups around them.⁸ This is a point of major importance in the Insular controversy. An attack on the calendrical practices of the Insular church was tantamount to an attack on their deeply held religious beliefs and those of their ‘fathers in faith.’

Julius Caesar realized that control of the calendar gave one power over many human activities, and with this in mind he set about reforming the calendar in 45 BC. In that year a new civil calendar was introduced, developed by the astronomer Sosigenes. Throughout the Middle Ages this calendar provided the basic framework of the year.⁹

The stable Julian calendar also provided the framework within which the Christian ritual calendar evolved, sometimes in conscious opposition to the pagan Roman ceremonials within that calendar. The Christian calendar, like other ceremonial calendars, was faced with the incommensurability of the annual cycle of the solar calendar, the monthly cycle of the lunar calendar, and the conventual cycle of the seven-day week.¹⁰

Religious calendars, with their uneven distribution of religious festivals, reveal more than ‘clock time’ at work. Festival time was a portion of time set apart, marked by distinctive characteristics and had a particular power in regard to daily ordinary time; the feast is *tempus par excellence*.¹¹ The feast lifts the ‘ordinary’ out the realm of the mundane and carries it into a sense of festival ‘extraordinary,’ of its essence the

⁸ Eviatar Zerubavel, “Easter and Passover: On Calendars and Group Identity,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (April, 1982), 284.

⁹ Stephen C. McCluskey, *Astronomies and Cultures in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 25. The Julian calendar adopted a schematic year in which the months lose all connection with the phases of the moon. The application of such a calendar would be of little use if it could not be connected to the changes of the seasons. In the Julian calendar the changes of the seasons fell on fixed dates: 25 March, 24 June, 24 September, and 25 December.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹¹ Susan Roll, *Toward the Origins of Christmas* (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1996), 17.

feast is woven into the fabric of a community. To celebrate a feast is to enter into a segment or rhythmic cycle of time; it involves personal engagement in the relatively impersonal structure of cosmic or social time.¹² Reflection on time grew out of a profound sense of God's action in the world. There is a law in nature created by God, which requires that all created beings are in tune with the creation and its Creator. This leads as it did Augustine to develop a particular philosophy and theology of time. Columbanus (d. AD 615) in his first Sermon says: "understand the creation, if you wish to know the Creator; if you will not know the former either, be silent concerning the Creator, but believe in the Creator."¹³ The Munich *Computus* also asks the question, "What is time? To which the reply is given: "Time is an interval stretching from the beginning to the end."¹⁴

1.1.1 How was time viewed in earlier centuries?

The early Church expected the immanent return of Christ, and so was a Church in waiting, looking forward to the moment of Christ's return, the *παρονοσια*. "Then I saw *a new heaven and a new earth*; the first heaven and the first earth had

¹² Susan Roll, *Toward the Origins of Christmas*, 17.

¹³ G. S. M. Walker, ed., "Sermon I, 5, LL 28-30" *Sancta Columbani Opera, Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*, Vol. 2 (Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies, 1970), 64, 65. "Intellege, si vis scire Creatorem, creaturam; si nec illam, tace de Creatore, sed crede in Creatorem. "

¹⁴ Immo Warntjes, *Munich Computus*, Clm. 14456 (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 2007) this is a work in progress. Immo has kindly allowed me access to his draft copy of the Latin edition of the text, and in some sections his English translation. "Interrogatio: Tempus, quid est? Responsio: Tempus est spatium tendens de principio usque in finem." The author then goes on to ask about the divisions of time. The reply is "Divisiones temporum sunt xiiii: Atomus, momentum, minutum, punctum, hora, quadrans, dies, ebdoma, mensis, vicissitudo triformis, annus, seculum, aetas, mundus, indictio." There are fourteen divisions of time, atoms, moments, minutes, puntas, hours, quarters, days weeks, months, 3-month period, year, century, ages, universe, indiction. Translation mine. This type of definition of time is also found in Cummian's letter, *De controversa paschali*, Maura Walsh and Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, eds.; together with related Irish computistical tract, *De ratione computandi*, ed. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1988).

disappeared now,” Apoc. 21.1. Some writers believe that the celebration of Easter existed from early apostolic times;¹⁵ others believe that because of the expectation of the *παρονοσια* there was no reason to establish a ritual of celebration for the Resurrection. Paul Bradshaw summarises the situation in this manner:

Many scholars have taken the view that the Christian festival Easter goes back to the apostolic age, even though explicit testimony to its observance only appears in the second century, and that its celebration on a Sunday was normative from the first, with the Quartodeciman practice being merely a local aberration from this, part of a general Judaizing tendency observable in early Christianity.¹⁶

The perception of time is a vital element in the study of the Easter question. The medieval perception and understanding of time was closer to the natural rhythms of day and night, heat and cold, the rhythms of the human body, heartbeat, breathing, eating, sleeping, than is our understanding today. Their lives were in tune with the

¹⁵ Adolph Adam, *The Liturgical Year*, 57. New Testament sources do not, however, make any direct references to such a celebration, though St Paul, 1 Cor. 5:7 does refer to “Christ our Passover has been sacrificed.” See also, A. G. Martimort, *The Liturgy and Time: The Church at Prayer*, An Introduction to the Liturgy, Vol. IV (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1982).

¹⁶ Also Paul Bradshaw, *Search for the Origins of Christian Worship Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*, 2d (London: SPCK, 2002), 51, 52. Bradshaw points out the dangers of taking later liturgical practices and applying them to an earlier time with insufficient evidence to back up the claims. Bradshaw says: “Behind this approach lies the assumption of a basic unity of liturgical practice within the apostolic period,” on the contrary there is evidence that early Christian worship was not uniform but pluriform. In the supposition that early Christian and early medieval liturgy was uniform, lies the seeds of misunderstanding and confusion. Bradshaw stresses that “Christianity did not develop at the same speed in every place and hence a more primitive theology does not necessarily mean an earlier date.” Bradshaw, *Search for the Origins*, 78. It has been concluded by many scholars not least among them being the Venerable Bede, that because Ireland was an isolated island that her people, her calendar, her theology were ‘backward.’ He refers to the Irish as ‘barbarous,’ making the assumption that Irish traditions developed later than on mainland Britain. While historically mainland Britain did receive Christianity at an early stage, the origins of Christianity in Ireland have not been fully researched.

cosmic rhythms of sun, moon and stars, light and dark, all time was God's time, his gift.

Celebrations – festal time segments set apart and marked off – derive directly from the symbiotic rhythms of the human person and the cosmos in harmony. Festal time by giving meaning and depth to time and uniting subjective and objective time-perception shatters dualism and forms of alienation.¹⁷

Medieval Christians saw history as purposeful from beginning to end. Time was dependant on God's creative action. History was the unfolding of God's plan in the world. They waited for the return of the Saviour, and their question was how long before he comes? Their prayer 'Maranatha,' Come Lord Jesus, was a prayer of longing. Adomnán describes Columba's longing to be gone and to be with the Lord, but through the intercession of his brethren his time on earth was extended by four years.¹⁸ His passing was such a special event that it took three days to celebrate.

1.1.2 Pre-Christian Ireland

The 'pagan' religion of Ireland appears to have been widespread. Mountains and rivers bore the name of a goddess and tribes traced their descent back to Lug and kingship was sacral. The king would regularly summon an assembly where public business was transacted. These assemblies, generally held at ancient burial grounds, appear to have had a religious as well as a practical significance.¹⁹ There were sacred

¹⁷ Roll, *Toward the Origins of Christmas*, 16.

¹⁸ Adomnán, *Life of St Columba*, trans. Richard Sharpe (Harmondsworth, Middlesex:, Penguin Books, 1995), 224.

¹⁹ Clare Stancliffé, "Religion and society in Ireland," *The New Cambridge Medieval History: c.500-c.700*, Vol. 1, ed. Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 399.

trees and wells.²⁰ The four main festivals of the pagan year, Samain (1 November), Imbolc (1 February), Beltaine (1 May) and Lughnasad (1 August) correspond to the beginning of the four seasons; consequently the ‘religious’ aspect of pre-Christian Irish society cannot be separated out from daily living. The land people lived in, the calendar of the year’s cycle, the king who was the focal point of their existence as a distinct *túath*, and the assemblies where they met – all had religious significance. It follows that conversion to another religion required a complex set of adjustments.

1.2 Dualistic approach to time

Susan Roll in *Toward the Origins of Christmas*²¹ sees dualism as the enemy of festal time. Simon De Vries agrees with Roll’s diagnosis when he says:

In the wide ranging debate over the meaning of time and history for Christian theology, various polarities have been proposed, such as ‘God’s history’ versus ‘man’s history’, ‘super-history’ versus ‘secular event,’ ‘linear time’ versus ‘cyclic time’; but none of these seems to be fully satisfactory.²²

However, in his writing he then also takes a dualistic approach, dividing time into quantitative and qualitative time. Roll offers a critique of the work of Mircea Eliade,²³ and his contemporary Oscar Cullman.²⁴ Cullman’s contribution to our understanding of time within a Christian perspective is considerable. In these two authors Roll encounters a dualistic approach to time. Eliade contrasts sacred and

²⁰ *Tireachán, Collectanea*, cc. 39 and 51.1, Low (1966).

²¹ Roll, *Toward the Origins of Christmas*, 22.

²² Simon De Vries, “Time and the Bible,” *Concilium*, 13 (1982/3), 4

²³ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1959), 68-70.

²⁴ Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Concept of Time and History*, trans. Floyd V. Filson. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), 39.

profane time, within a subschema of cyclic and linear time. Cullman's research is specifically on the concept of time and historicity in the early church and the nature of linear time in its Hellenistic and Hebrew forms. According to Roll, Cullman "bracketed the question of the experience of cyclic time in order to posit a shift in the orientation point in a linear time concept carried over from Judaism into early Christianity."²⁵ This way of viewing time disagrees with other writers, who see parallels between the Jewish festivals set in an annual lunar cycle, and later Christian feasts occurring annually on the solar calendar.²⁶ Here there is an assumption that for both Christian and Jewish traditions the cyclic way is the normative way.

In New Testament thinking the opposite of time is not eternity, but instead the duality consists of limited time and unlimited time, both of which are linear concepts. In the wide ranging debate over the meaning of time and history for Christian theology, various polarities have been proposed.

1.2.1 *Chronos vs Kairos*

We exist in *Chronos*, but we long for *Kairos*. *Chronos* is clock-time, billable hours, deadlines, schedules, and calendars. *Chronos* requires speed so that time will not be wasted. It is time at the hands of the world – time that you actually think about, and parcel out. *Chronos* time is wristwatch and alarm clock time. Most of our lives are lived in *Chronos* time. *Kairos* requires space so that it might be savoured. *Kairos*

²⁵ Roll, *Toward the Origins of Christmas*, 22.

²⁶ Susan Roll, here cites two authors D. Monschouwer, "Parallelen tussen het synagogale en het kerkelijke feestjaar," *Tijdschrift voor Liturgie* 72/3 (May 1988) 130-43; and Lambert Leijssen, *Zndag vieren* (Tiel: Lannoo, 1984), 23-26. These works are not available in English so have been not been consulted.

is God's time. It is the "in breaking" of God into time; it is the point of contact between humanity and God. *Kairos* indicates a point in time filled with significance, charged with a meaning derived from its relation to eschatological time, "eternal time," it is time in which certain beautiful moments last for hours. When Paul asks in Rm. 13:11-14,²⁷ "Do you know what time it is?" he is referring not to *Chronos*, but to *Kairos*, it is the opportune time, the appointed time.²⁸ *Kairos* time is real time that reaches beyond time. It is those moments when the holy breaks through into our lives and fills them with joy and presence. *Kairos* demands a personal statement of the relationship between man or woman and God, the foundation of our being. Space and time are two dimensions that delineate human existence. To enter into the spirit of the liturgy is to enter into a world where time is much less linear and rigid, more 'malleable', than in our ordinary experience. Time is collapsed into what has been called the 'eternal present.'²⁹ Morning and evening, spring and autumn, the waning and waxing of the moon, the time of birth, or the time of some great undertaking are *kairos* – special moments in the flow of ordinary time. In medieval times it was this sense of *kairos* that coloured how they lived and how they celebrated, daily, weekly, yearly. A consciousness of God who was above all and in all permeated the lives of

²⁷ Throughout this paper wherever scripture quotes are used they are taken from *The New Revised Standard Version* (New York: Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, 1989), unless they form part of a quote from earlier sources, in which case the text is taken as printed in the original text.

²⁸ Cullman, *Christ and Time*, 41. Cullman looks at the word *kairos* in the New Testament as Christ used it.

²⁹ Susan White, *The Spirit of Worship: The Liturgical Tradition* (London: Dartman, Longman and Todd, 1999), 77.

early Irish saints, who desired to seek God first above all else. Columbanus writes in Sermon VIII:

Yet let us beseech Him, since God the Trinity, though imperceptible and imponderable, is known and present to each one, in proportion to the deserts of our purity. Let us beseech Him, I say, at least here, that there we may more closely approach, or more clearly understand, and singing on our journey let us, say, Let us run after Thee towards the odour of Thy perfumes, and, My soul has clung to Thee, and, Draw me after Thee [...]³⁰

Columbanus is a pilgrim in another land, but the image of life as a pilgrimage moving towards 'our homeland' is a constant theme in his writings especially his sermons. It expresses the desire to accomplish God's will and to find heaven at the end of the road.

Then, lest we be concerned with human things, let us concern ourselves with things divine, and as pilgrims ever sigh for and desire our homeland; for the end of the road is ever the object of travellers' hopes and desires, and thus, since we are travellers and pilgrims in the world, let us ever ponder on the end of the road, that is our life, or the end of our roadway is our home.³¹

1.2.2 Qualitative vs quantitative approach

Simon De Vries' approach to time is dualistic; it is a quantitative versus a qualitative approach. The quantitative approach sees time as a succession of

³⁰ Walker, "Sermon VIII, LL, 30-35," *OSC*, 94-95. *Pulsemus tamen illum, quia unicuique pro merito puritatis notus adest, invisibilis licet, inaestimabilis licet, Deus Trinitas. Pulsemus, inquam, vel hic, ut illuc vel familiarius intremus, vel manifestius intellegamus, et nos in via cantantes dicamus, Post te in odorem unguentorum tuorum curremus, et, Post te adhaesit anima mea, et Trahe me post te:*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 96-97. *Occuperemus itaque nos divinis, ne forte humanis, et quasi peregrini semper patriam suspiremus, semper patriam desideremus; finis enim viae semper viatoribus optabilis et desiderabilis est, et ideo quia sumus mundi viatores et peregrini, de fine viae, id est, vitae nostrae semper cogitemus, viae enim finis nostrae patria nostra est.*

essentially commensurate entities – a given number of days, months, and years.³² This is time as a *quantum*.³³

The qualitative approach sees time as a succession of essentially unique incommensurate experiences; the day is a unity primitively conceived according to the event that gives it character. The essence of the qualitative, non-objectifying apprehension of time is an awareness that God has done something from beginning to end. One day is not simply related numerically or categorically to another day. Rather, each day is seen as transcendently significant in itself, as potentially revelatory of God's purpose. A day may be different from all other days, not only because it may be the occasion of a decisive event in the history of humans and nations, but because it may be the opportunity for crucial confrontation between God and humans. The qualitative approach is the biblical one, 'now the acceptable time, this is the day of salvation.' In the liturgy, certain times are set apart giving to particular liturgical celebrations a specific quality that delineate them as special moments. It is in this sense that the liturgy of Holy Thursday refers to *hodie*, "that is today," the Exsultet sung at the Easter Vigil announces, "This is the night," again *hodie*.³⁴ These are moments when memory is called forth and evoked, and this *anamnesis* extends back to the original founding moment, *Hodie*, the Passover of the Jews and the

³² De Vries, "Time and the Bible," 12.

³³ The etymology of the term quality comes from (Latin *qualis* meaning, of what sort?). Quantitative, on the other hand, comes from *quantum*, meaning, how much?

³⁴ Jerome, *De Exodo*, in *Vigilia Paschae*, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 84 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1975), 536, 537. In the tract on Exodus, Jerome makes a play on the word '*hodie*' a word that still retains its importance in the celebration of the *Easter Triduum*. Jerome explains "Today the people were led out of Israel, today the Lamb of God saved us, today his blood is painted on the doorposts that is on our foreheads, today the people of God are led out of Egypt and the servitude of Pharaoh."

Resurrection of Christ. These two dimensions of time depend upon and complement each other.

1.3 Liturgical time

1.3.1 Liturgical time: ‘the time of Christ’ extends into ‘the time of the Church’

Christ lived and accomplished our redemption in time and space. In Christianity time and space are the stage where God and humankind meet each other. God’s action of breaking into time is essential to our understanding of the liturgy. We recall the saving deeds of God (*anamnesis*) in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist. Our prayers in the course of the day and night remind us of Christ’s own prayer to the Father. All our encounters with God take place in time and space, because it was in time and space that God proclaimed his word and offered his life in sacrifice.³⁵ The liturgy is not confined to the Eucharist, the sacraments and the sacramental. The liturgy consists of other celebrations in time when the Church recalls so many of Christ’s words, prayers and miracles. Leo the Great takes pleasure in stressing the sacramental ‘day’ of Christmas as a ‘mystery.’ Christmas is not a Christian feast except as bearing the first fruits of the *sacramentum pascale*; it is only from within the ‘today’ of the resurrection that the *hodie Christus natus est* the

³⁵ Anscar Chupungco, *Shaping the Easter Feast* (Washington, DC: The Pastoral Press, 1992), 17.

Church sings at Christmas vespers can be proclaimed.³⁶ “And so that which until then was visible of our redeemer was changed into a sacramental presence.”³⁷

For the ancient world nature was the locus of divine interventions and of human encounter with God. Nature and time were not only signs of God’s dealings with people; they were symbols that embodied, manifested, and brought along his salvation. In short, they enjoyed a sacramental quality and played a sacramental role. This is the theology upon which the early church’s understanding and celebration of Easter were firmly built.³⁸

Every liturgical celebration is ultimately centred on the paschal mystery. This is so because all of Christ’s messianic activities find their completion and perfection in the paschal mystery. For Christians, time has become the privileged moment in which they experience the presence and saving power of Christ’s mystery (*καιρος*), the time of Christ has given birth to the time of the Church that is to the liturgical time that embodies the ‘time of Christ.’ Liturgical time is therefore ‘the time of Christ’ which extends itself into ‘the time of the Church.’ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Article 83 says: “by his incarnation Christ the high priest introduced into our time the timeless liturgy of the halls of heaven.”³⁹ There is technically no ‘sacred space’ or

³⁶ Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 483.

³⁷ Pope Saint Leo, “Sermon LXX, II,” *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, II, Vol. XII, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing), 188. Hereafter this title will be abbreviated to *NPNFa*. G. Hudon, *La Perfection chrétienne selon les sermons de saint Léon* (Paris: Cert, 1959), 191-200. “*Christian Perfection according to the sermons of St Leo*.” The sermons of Leo the Great for the anniversary of his ordination as bishop of Rome exemplify an interpretation of liturgy, which integrates the proclamation and reading of the scriptural text into the meaning of the sacrament. See David Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God’s Giving* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1999), 117. Leo the Great, *Tractatus in Natale eiusdem*, I-V, *CCSL*, 138, 1-25.

³⁸ Chupungco, *Shaping the Easter Feast*, 17.

³⁹ Austin Flannery ed., “*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, art. 83,” *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents of the Second Vatican Council*, 2d (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1998), 24.

‘sacred time’ in Christianity: all time and space has been sanctified in Christ.⁴⁰ In the liturgy we move from *κρονος* to *καιρος*, from clock time to divine time, that is to special moments in time.⁴¹

We who live in the twenty-first century, with its high-speed technology and communications, find it difficult to enter into the mindset of those who lived in medieval times. Our lives are so governed and ruled by technology, the mechanical clock and its digital counterpart, that to live without the ‘tyranny of time,’ is unimaginable. We have lost touch with the rhythms of the seasons, day is turned into night by the constant supply of electricity; summer and winter disappear when cushioned by the luxury of central heating. Food that formerly was only available in season is now available all through the year, so we forget what season it is. In medieval times the sun, the moon, the stars, the seasons, were the celestial reckoning by which people regulated their lives.

⁴⁰ Juan Mateos, *Beyond Conventional Christianity*, trans. Sr. Kathleen England (Manila: East Asian Patroral Institute, 1974), 118-119.

⁴¹ Cullman, *Christ and Time* discusses the frequency with which all the available words for time in the Greek language occur in the New Testament. These words have a fundamentally quantitative nature to them. The Hebrew words for time (Old Testament), on the other hand, are words, which describe the quality of time. The shift from Old Testament to New Testament via the Septuagint, introduces a quantitative element to the words for time e.g. *chronos* and *aion*. Within a biblical context, it is not so much the words for time that are important, but the biblical understanding of these words, i.e. the biblical perception of factors that make time meaningful and distinctive. Set out below some important Greek words for time as used in the Septuagint (LXX) and the New Testament.

χρῶνος	<i>Chronos</i>	time or duration
νυν	<i>nun</i>	now
ἡμερα	<i>hēmera</i>	day
σημερον	<i>sēmeron</i>	today
καιρος	<i>kairos</i>	point of time, decisive moment, opportunity
αιων	<i>aion</i>	age, indefinite time
αιωιος	<i>aiōnios</i>	eternal

The liturgy of the Church not only embraces a particular spirituality of time, but also encourages particular patterns of time keeping. In liturgical time past, present and future coalesce and we are taken beyond the here and now, into the eternal now. The liturgy includes in its compass the celebration of times and seasons, festive times and ordinary times, unfolding different aspect of Christ's life and mission, and the life and work of his saints. Easter is the centre and summit of Christian time, it is the "solemnity of solemnities."⁴² To keep time with the liturgy involves being in tune with the liturgical year.

1.3.2 The Christian year⁴³

The tradition is clear that to keep time with the liturgy is to avail of a rich treasure of words, gestures, symbols and rituals, which are designed to bring meaning to the times of our lives. While liturgical celebration makes remembrance of the past and a present unfolding of the future, the New Testament concentrates on the fullness of time; "when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son born of a woman, to redeem those subject to the law" (Gal. 4.4).

From early Christian times three main areas were celebrated in Christian liturgy; the daily round of prayer (*synaxis*), the weekly celebration of Sunday (celebration of the Lord's Day) and the yearly celebration of the Paschal Mystery at

⁴² A. G. Martimort, *The Liturgy and Time*, 5.

⁴³ The primitive church took the week as the significant liturgical cycle not the year. The eighth day was not a "little Easter" in third century the fundamental celebration of the resurrection took place on Sunday.

Easter.⁴⁴ Sunday celebrations in the early church were dominated by a powerful sense of being in and with the risen Lord and standing in expectation of the *παρουσία*. The weekly gathering of the church was in an eschatological rather than in a historical and commemorative time model.⁴⁵ Cyrille Vogel has observed that what is astonishing about the Christian year is not that it developed so slowly, but that it developed at all, since every celebration of the Eucharist is a celebration of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord.⁴⁶

1.3.3 The daily synaxis

Early monastic rules, not least among them the Rule of St. Columbanus, reflect the daily, weekly and yearly cycles of prayer. In liturgy, time is the mode of sanctification; time itself does not need to be sanctified as suggested by Dom Gregory Dix, in *The Shape of the Liturgy*. Writing about the growth of the divine office in the fourth century he says, “It is nothing less than the reception, for the first time into the public worship of a secular church, the monastic ideal of sanctifying human life as a

⁴⁴ Thomas J. Talley, “History and Eschatology in the Primitive Pascha,” *Worship*, Vol. 47, no. 1 (1973), 213. Not all scholars would agree that Easter was celebrated from the earliest times, some arguing that it did not develop until about AD 165. Talley suggests, that prior to AD 165, the *Pascha* was not observed at all at Rome and that this was a more serious conflict than any disagreement about the date.

⁴⁵ Talley, “History and Eschatology,” 217. Talley asks “when and how did the Christian observance of pascha, appear, apart from the weekly celebration of the resurrection, and what was the content of the annual celebration that distinguished it from that weekly observance?”

⁴⁶ Cyrille Vogel, *Introduction aux sources de l’histoire du culte chrétien au moyen Age* (Spoleto: 1966), 264, n. 77. *Introduction to the sources of the History of Christian Liturgy of the Middle Ages*, trans. William G. Storey, Niels Krogh Rasmussen (Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1986), cited in Talley, “History and Eschatology,” 213.

whole and the passage of time by corporate worship.”⁴⁷ Thomas Talley takes issue with Dix’s viewpoint, he says:

It does not appear that historical commemoration in the liturgy is a function of new outlooks in the fourth century, nor does it appear that that period saw a radical decay of eschatology in spiritual. Such a need for qualification, at any rate, is my concern in this consideration of liturgical time in the earlier centuries of the church’s life, and especially as regards the primitive pascha.

On the contrary it is we who need to be and are being sanctified by Christ in time. Aidan Kavanagh puts it this way, “The liturgy does not sanctify time. Time is a holy creature with which the liturgy puts one in meaningful touch.”⁴⁸

1.3.3.1 Time in the Irish monastic tradition

The dominant feature of many early monastic sites in Ireland is the Round Tower. The bells that tolled from these towers regulated time in the monastery. The bells called the monk to rest, to work, and to prayer. The Monastic practice of the early medieval period bears witness to the importance of celebrating at the ‘right time.’ These times were regarded as being ordained by God. Saying the ‘hours’ at the correct time was considered essential to one’s eternal salvation. Medieval monasteries distinguished between festal time and ordinary time. It is against this sense of

⁴⁷ Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 3d (London: Continuum, reprint 2005), 329. Louis Duchesne, and Pierre Batiffol (1861- 1929) agree with Dix’s assessment, but Paul Bradshaw does not: he argues that a line of continuity can be traced from early Jewish patterns of daily prayer through primitive Christianity to the post-Constantinian practices. See Bradshaw, *Search for the Origins*, 172. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, art. 84 “The divine office, in keeping with ancient Christian tradition, is so devised that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praise of God.” The Introduction to the Divine Office, does refer to the ‘hours’ as sanctifying the day, but seems to be out of synchronization with more recent research and scholarship. *The Divine Office, The Liturgy of the Hours According to the Roman Rite*, Vol. 1 (London: Collins, 1974), xxxix. *General Instruction on the Divine Office*, Chapter 2, “The Sanctification of the Day – The Various Liturgical Hours.”

⁴⁸ Aidan Kavanagh, *Elements of Rite: A Handbook of Liturgical Style* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1990), 24.

‘festalism’ and the passionate need to get it right that the dating of Easter is argued. The discussion hinges on a fixed point of reference for the Easter full moon. Technically complex, the dating process was also highly significant. The Monastic life was one of discipline. The monks lived with a time-discipline that would be found only in the most pressured and time-regulated groups today. There were fixed times of work, collective meal times and the daily gathering for prayer, the ‘*Opus Dei*’ and the Eucharist. These times spread over twenty-four hours were invariable. To omit any of them was to fall down on one’s task. Each day was set out by the holy rule, there was a routine, the *horarium*, and the day was the basic unit of time.⁴⁹ The bell was a ‘holy sound’, *vox Dei*, “the voice of God.” In the *Life of St Columba*, written by Adomnán, we read how the saint frequently orders the bell to be rung to summon the monks to the church for special prayers. “‘Strike the bell.’ Summoned by this sound, the brethren ran quickly to the church, with the saint going on ahead. Kneeling down before them, he spoke: ‘Let us pray fervently to the Lord for this people and for King Aedán, for even now they are going into battle.’”⁵⁰ Adomnán also recounts how the saint was faithful to the ‘hours’ even as he approached death. On the evening of his death he went to the church with his community to recite vespers, afterwards he

⁴⁹ Thomas O’Loughlin, *Celtic Theology: Humanity, World and God in Early Irish Writings* (London: Continuum, 2000), 169.

⁵⁰ Adomnán of Iona, *Life of St Columba*, 1:8, 119, and 2:42, 196. This second episode recounts how Columba had the gift of clairvoyant knowledge. Cormac was in danger at sea, “at that time Columba was there in spirit, in the boat with Cormac, though his body was far away. In the moment of his worst trouble he sounded the bell to call the brethren to come to the church.” Brethren he said: “pray with all your might for Cormac.”

returned to his cell to rest, when the bell sounded for the midnight office, he ran to the church ahead of the others and there he died.⁵¹

Monastic life was in a very real sense caught up in the great ‘drama enacted between Heaven and Hell’ in which the cycle of the Christian year was a vital weapon.⁵² Thus, the degree to which the liturgical calendar was accurate some anxiety about the salvation of both the individual, and the world as a whole could be alleviated. “Time was viewed as the background to an unfolding programme running from the moment of creation, the Alpha to the moment of the final consummation, the Omega.”⁵³ The individual’s task was to regulate the time pattern of a personal life so that it was aligned with the harmony of the divine metronome.

In monastic practice, ritual was not primarily a symbol system aimed at the production of meaning, but a technology – an acquired aptitude or embodied skill – aimed at the production of a “virtuous self,” one who is obedient, humble, chaste, charitable, compassionate, hospitable, and wise. The liturgy is not a species of enacted symbolism to be classified separately from activities of the monks but is a practice among others essential to the acquisition of Christian virtues.⁵⁴ Monastic rules aimed at forming the Christian self, and the liturgical services played a great part in this

⁵¹ Ibid., 231.

⁵² This phrase cited in Susan White, *Christian Worship and Technological Change* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 61, belongs to R. W. Southern, in *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953). Southern believed that the monastic liturgy had salvific implications on a very large scale.

⁵³ O’Loughlin, *Celtic Theology*, 167.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 63.

formation. “It is the liturgy that gives unity to all monastic culture.”⁵⁵ The liturgy becomes the “crucible” where each monk is transformed little by little, and where the monks are reconciled with God and with each other. Through the psalms, their voices and their thoughts in harmony sing the same praise.⁵⁶

1.3.4 Time in early Irish texts

When we enter the foreign world of early Irish texts we note that there are some similarities in time perception to those we find in our world today; the order of the daily, weekly, and annual cycle of the liturgical year. There are also many differences in perceptions. Differences arise because our modern perception of time is confined to time as *chronos*, that is time as a quantity to be filled, theirs was on time as a gift from God, to be used to return him praise and thanks, “always and everywhere.” (2 Thes. 1.3)

The Rule of Columbanus, sets out in detail how the Divine Office is to be celebrated:

Thus, in accordance with the nature of man’s life and the succession of the seasons, the same will be variously suggested by myself also in writing. For it should not be stereotyped in view of the mutual changes of the seasons; for it is fitting, that it be longer on the long nights and shorter on the short ones.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. Catharine Misrahi, 3d (London: S.P.C.K., 1996), 71.

⁵⁶ Phillippe Rouillard, “Prière et Communauté la Règle de Sainte Benoît,” *Notitiae*, Vol. 16, no. 6 (June 1980), 314. “Dans les psaumes, nous trouvons tous les sentiments de la prière: louange, adoration, reconnaissance, mais aussi imploration, misère, epuisement. Toutes ces attitudes doivent trouver leur place dans la prière d’une communauté monastique.” “In the psalms we find all the sentiments of prayer: praise, adoration, recognition, but also petition, and sorrow. All these attitudes must find their place in the prayer of a monastic community.”

⁵⁷ Walker, “Rule VII: Of the Choir Office,” *SCO*, 129.

Columbanus in his Rule then outlines the changes in the Office at the different seasons of the years.⁵⁸ The seasons outlined follow fairly closely the Pre-Christian calendar. Columbanus names the mid point of each of the seasons, the solstices and equinoxes; 25 March, spring equinox, 24 June, mid-summer day, 24 September, autumn equinox, but rather than name the winter solstice he names the beginning of winter, 1 November. Columbanus stresses that it is imperative to know “*sed quia orationum canonicarum noscendus est modus, in quo omnes simul orantes horis conveniunt statutis.*”⁵⁹

The *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* is a “spectacular example of how liturgical time can stand in the forefront of understanding.” Thomas O Loughlin describes this text as an allegory of the monastic life “which sees the sanctification of time as the ongoing task of all the monks it describes.”⁶⁰ Written in the tenth century it describes the wandering of Brendan and his monks for seven years. The *Navigatio* clearly delineates festivals, special times and seasons within a cyclical journey. Christmas,

⁵⁸ Columbanus’ system of six ‘hour-offices’ (at the third, sixth and ninth hours of the day, at nightfall and midnight, and early morning) agrees with the earliest Irish accounts. See *Eriu: The Journal of the School of Irish Learning* ed. Kuno Meyer and John Strachan, Vol. iii (1907), 116. This short note is taken from Codex H.3.17, Trinity College Collection, Col. 675. The text is in Irish but the article gives a translation. The author notes that the ‘hours’ of the Irish Church correspond with the primitive ‘hours’ of the Eastern Church. “Why is celebration made at these hours rather than any other hours is not hard to say, Terce, because it was then that Christ was given up by Pontius Pilate and then grace came upon the apostles. Sext, for it was then that Christ was placed on the Cross. None, for then he yielded up his spirit. Vespers and Sext, Nocturns, for then the elements were created. Matins, for then Peter denied Christ and shed tears of blood, then Christ was beaten in the house of Caiphaz.” Translated from Irish, by R. L. Best. The *Antiphonary of Bangor* adds a further two ‘hours’. The glory of Bangor was the celebration of a perfected and refined *Luas Perennis* (perpetual praise) and in singing this the monks of Bangor entered into a covenant of mutual love and service in the Church of Jesus Christ. Ian Adamson, *Bangor Light of the World* (Bangor: Fairview Press, 1979), 59.

⁵⁹ Walker, “Rule VII: Of the Choir Office,” *SCO*, 130-131. “But since we must know the manner of canonical prayers, in which all gather together at appointed hours in common prayer”

⁶⁰ O’Loughlin, *Celtic Theology*, 177.

Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, and the feast of St. Peter and Paul are in the forefront of their celebration and practice. The text indicates that the characteristic of good monks is to pray constantly, that is to keep up the daily cycle of praise wherever they are. Columbanus also echoes these sentiments, “we are bidden by the Author of our salvation to watch and pray at all times.”⁶¹ In the *Navigatio* the places where the Divine Office is well ordered are places of exemplary holiness, and the monastic life is ordered by the routine use of the bell. The *Navigatio* is rich in biblical imagery. The monks are, miraculously fed, protected, shown the way, given guides to lead them and are served by God’s messengers. Central to this account is the daily round of prayer.

The second cycle of time kept since the earliest Christian time is the celebration of Sunday.⁶² Sundays and feasts are marked off as special days in the Rule of Columbanus:

But on the most holy nights, namely on those of the Lord’s Day or the Sabbath, three times the same number if performed at morning, that is, with thrice ten and six psalms.⁶³

And later on he says:

[...] while more, as I have already said, are always ordained for the night of the Lord’s Day and Sabbath vigil, on which seventy-five are sung individually in the course of one office.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Walker, “Rule: VII, LL 15-16,” *SCO*, 130-131. “Igitur iuxta vires consideranda vigilia est, maxime cum ab auctore salutis nostrae iubemur vigilare et *orare omni tempore*.”

⁶² Vincent Ryan, *The Shaping of Sunday: Sunday and Eucharist in Irish Tradition* (Dublin: Veritas, 1997), 15.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 132-133. “Noctibus vero reverentissimis dominicis scilicet vel sabbatis ad matutinum per idem volvitur numerus, id est ter denis et VI psalmis.”

⁶⁴ Walker, “Rule: VII, LL 1-2,” *SCO* 132-133. “pluribus, iam ut dixi, semper nocti dominicae ac sabbati vigiliae deputatis, in quibus sub uno cursu LXXV singillatim cantantur.”

Also in the *Navigatio*, Sunday is a special day. The story narrates that on the Island of the Birds, “on feast days and Sundays we receive bodies like the ones you see and we celebrate our Creator here, singing his praises.”⁶⁵ The feasts are celebrated at fixed places each year, places appointed by God. Is this an indication that these feasts are fixed points along the Christian journey, special moments of *sollemnitatis* that bring the monks into contact with the divine mysteries?

There are numerous other Irish texts dealing with the importance of Sunday, *The Cáin Domhnaigh*, ‘*Law of Sunday*,’ is perhaps the best known, dated to the beginning of the ninth-century, while beyond the time frame of this thesis it does reveal a number of paschal themes. *The Cáin* consists of three parts, anecdotes relating to violations of the Sabbath rest, a legal treatise listing prohibitions and penalties pertaining to work on Sunday. Possibly the most well known is the *Epistil Ísú*, ‘*Epistle of Jesus*.’ What is especially interesting about this text is that it associates with Sunday the great events in creation and redemption, all of which were said to have taken place on Sunday. It was on this day that God created light, that the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, that manna fell from heaven, on this day the Son of God was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, that Jesus was baptised in the Jordan, and it was also the day of his Transfiguration, Resurrection, and the descent of the Holy Spirit. What is remarkable is that the events that are here associated with Sunday are those associated in the writings of the fathers with themes of the Pasch.

On Sunday all created things will be renewed in a better and more beautiful form than they were fashioned in their first creation, when the stars of heaven will be like

⁶⁵ Oliver Davies, Thomas O’Loughlin, trans. “The Voyage of Brendan,” *Celtic Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 16.

the moon, the moon like the sun, and the sun like the brightness of seven suns, as was the first light of the sun before the sin of Adam.⁶⁶

The association of these ‘wonders’ with Sunday is not hard to understand, when we realise that all sacred history converges on, and is contained in, the paschal mystery of the Passion, Death and glorification of Jesus. The paschal mystery is celebrated not only once a year at Easter, but also every Sunday.⁶⁷

1.3.5 Irish texts which deal with the Easter controversy

Several Irish texts deal with the Easter question. The letters of Columbanus, especially letters one, two, three, and five, set out clearly his position on Easter. Cummian’s letter outlines the position of the southern Irish in the mid seventh-century. *De ratione computandi*, a slightly later text deals specifically with the intricacies of the *Computus*. This text does not favour the 84-year cycle of the Insular Church. Other texts that deal with the question of Easter in an Irish context are the Munich *Computus*, and the Padua *laterculus*: the text of *De ratione paschali* of Anatolius is not an Insular text, as suggested by Bartholomew MacCarthy,⁶⁸ who described it as a fabrication written in Ireland. Insular reckoning of Easter depends to a large extent on this text. Other texts that are mentioned concerning Easter in the

⁶⁶ *Epistula Jesu*, See also Thomas O’Loughlin, ‘The Significance of Sunday: Three Ninth-Century Catecheses,’ *Worship*, 64, no. 6 (November, 1990), 533-44. These texts by their linking of key moments in the history of salvation with Sunday, which is an event in our own lives, bring to our attention the sacramentality of time. We do not celebrate sacramentally the ‘deed that is recalled’ but by setting the event in the temporal context, the time when the event took place becomes present sacramentally.

⁶⁷ Ryan, *The Shaping of Sunday*, 17.

⁶⁸ Bartholomew MacCarthy, *Annals of Ulster*, Vol. IV, xlix. He writes, “that it gave occasion and furnished data to an unscrupulous partisan of the Irish Paschal system to fabricate a new solar cycle and a new cycle of nineteen years in the name of Anatolius.”

Irish context are *Acts of the Synod of Caesarea*, *Tractatus Athanasii*, and a letter with the title *De sollemnitatibus sabbatis and neomensis*.

The *Navigatio* gives no indication of any doubt regarding the date of Easter. Presumably the Easter controversy had died out by the time the *Navigatio* was written. Reading this account one is touched by the all-prevailing sense of God's presence, and their desire to praise and worship him, at all times and in all places where personal time and liturgical time have been so completely dovetailed that a seamless robe binds them together. Here one is in the presence of those whose lives were lived before the face of God.

1.4 The origins of Easter

1.4.1 Easter not simply a *festivitas* but a *sollemnitas*

Easter is the festival par excellence of the Church's year. It is the time when we look back to the root metaphor of the Christian story; namely, that Christ overcame sin and death and rose that we might have "life and have it to the full" (Jn. 10.10). It is the feast beyond all feasts when Christ has united the time here and now with the eternal times in heaven, a place beyond time. Athanasius (AD 329) opens his first Festal Letter as follows:⁶⁹ "Come, my beloved, the season calls us to keep the

⁶⁹ The variations of practice, which had rendered the Paschal Feast a subject of controversy from very early times, had given rise to the custom of the announcement of Easter at a convenient interval beforehand by circular letters. In the third century the Bishops of Alexandria issued such letters and at the Council of Nicæa, where the Easter question was dealt with, the Alexandrian see was requested to undertake the duty of announcing the correct date to the principal foreign churches as well as to its own suffragan sees. Athanasius first Festal Letter announces the date of Easter for AD 329, Easter-day is given in both Egyptian and Roman calendar months, xi Pharmuthi; viii Id. April; Ær.

feast. Again, ‘the Sun of Righteousness’, causing His divine beams to rise upon us, proclaims before hand the time of the feast, in which, obeying Him, we ought to celebrate it, least when the time has passed by, gladness likewise may pass us by.” His fifth letter written in (AD 333) says: “We duly proceed, my brethren, from feast to feasts, duly from prayers to prayers, we advance from fasts to fasts, and join holy-days to holy-days.”⁷⁰

Easter is not simply a *festivitas* or feast like others; it is a *sollemnitas* or solemnity in the full sense of a term that indicates that it is a celebration unparalleled in the annual cycle.⁷¹ This view of the liturgy has an enormous impact on the synchronisation of the Easter festival. To keep time with the liturgy was to be in harmony with God and with each other. Being in time with God meant carefully seeking out through prayer and study the times and the seasons of celebration. This is precisely what Cummian did. His letter *De Controversia Paschali* (AD 632) to Abbot Ségéne, abbot of Iona, reveals his desire to follow God’s will in his Easter practice.

Hence, having cloistered myself for a year and having entered the sanctuary of God (that is sacred Scripture) I studied as much as I was able, then I examined the histories, and finally the cycle, which I could find.⁷²

For these early writers, the correct time could only be the time ordained by God, as shown in sacred scripture. Such texts are to be found in the Old Testament,

Dioclet. 45; Coss. Constantinus Aug. VIII. Constantinus Cæs. IV; Præfect. Septimius Zenius; Indict. II, the information includes the names of the emperor, the Prefect of the Province and the Indiction.

⁷⁰ Athanasius, “Athanasius: Select Works and Letters,” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. IV, 506, 517.

⁷¹ A. G. Mortimort, *The Liturgy and Time*, 5.

⁷² Cummian, *DCP*, 59. “Hinc per annum secretus sanctuarium Dei ingressus, hoc et scripturam sanctam, ut valui inuolui, deinde historias, postremo cyclos quos inuenire potui.”

that is those texts relating to the prescriptions for Passover. At a later date, as recorded in Bede's, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, the 'correct time' also involved ecclesial authority. God's word, however, is always regarded as the absolute authority. For Cummian it was a combination of scriptural exegesis, and a study of the decrees and synods of the Church that ultimately persuaded him to change his Easter practice from the Insular tradition.

The issue over Easter was part of the history of sacred time, and, in particular, of the transformation of a pagan calendar into a Christian one. The ordering of time was an even more potent instrument in the development of opposing identities than was variation in the cutting of hair.⁷³ Easter is the pivot of the ecclesiastical calendar, and three quarters of the entire Christian liturgical year revolves around it. As a celebration of the Paschal mystery it was essential that no discordant note should surround such a feast.

Christians had in the early fourth century experienced periods of intense persecution and periods of tolerance. When Constantine defeated his rival for the empire, Maxentius in AD 312 he let it be known to Christians that he attributed his success in battle to the Christian God. Constantine became Emperor in AD 324, he saw in Christianity a symbolism of the unity, which he wanted to achieve within the empire. Consequently, Christianity became the religion of the empire. In AD 325

⁷³ The tonsure controversy was closely related to the Easter controversy. Peter Brown *The Rise of Western Christianity: Triumph and Diversity, AD 200-1000*, 2d (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing), 360-361. Brown says: "In an almost illiterate society, the precise nature of visible gestures and the precise timing of festivals spoke volumes. Conflicts over fully visible practices counted for more than any conflict of ideas. Styles of hair had never been neutral. All over Europe, and not only in the British Isles, each hairstyle made a clear declaration of identity, distinguishing laity from clergy, warrior from farmer, 'Roman' from barbarian."

Constantine gathered together the Christian bishops of the empire at Nicæa. Technically this gathering was supposed to be an “ecumenical” council, but it only included a token number of bishops from outside the empire. What Constantine wanted was uniformity. Even the Easter date was agreed upon, so that all Christian churches in all regions should celebrate the principal festival of the Church at exactly the same time. Lack of uniformity in the calendar was not to be tolerated.

1.4.2 Easter in the early Christian writings

There are two major questions concerning the celebration of Easter (or Pascha, as it was called) in primitive Christianity. How early in the history of the Church did it begin? And which came first – its observance on the Sunday closest to the date of the Jewish Passover or its observance on the actual day of the Passover (the fourteenth day of the Jewish month Nisan) found in some churches in Asia Minor, a practice consequently termed Quartodecimanism?⁷⁴

The Passover was a Jewish feast, with its attendant Jewish lunar calendar, as a result the ecclesiastical calendar is a combination of two calendars, one Jewish and

⁷⁴ Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins*, 179. Thomas Talley, “Liturgical Time in the Ancient Church: The State of Research,” *Studia Liturgica* Vol. 14 (June 1981), 34. Talley describes Pascha as the earliest annual festival of the Christian Church, but from this point on, however, the literature presents a wide range of opinions. One view sees the Easter celebration going right back to apostolic time, even though explicit testimony to its observance only appears in the second century. Sunday celebration was normative with the Quartodeciman practice only being a local aberration. A. A. McArthur, *The Evolution of the Christian Year* (London: 1953) 98-107, Joseph Jungmann, *The Early Liturgy*, 25-26. For the next group of authors the Quartodeciman practice originated in Palestine and was an early Christian adaptation of the Passover festival. Bradshaw, *Search for the Origins*. Another group views the celebration of Easter as stemming from the weekly celebration of the eucharist/resurrection on Sunday, but the celebration of Easter on Sunday was a much later development, possibly around 165 in Rome. Talley puts the Quartodeciman Pascha as the original practice of the primitive community, not a deviation limited to the province of Asia. Talley cites Karl Holl as a proponent of a Sunday Pascha originating at Jerusalem and only in the fourth decade of the second century. Thomas Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 13-27. A proposal put forward by Kenneth A. Strand, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 84, No. 3 (September, 1965) is based on the work of Annie Jaubert *La date de la Cenè* and J. van Goudoever, *Biblical Calendars* (Leiden: 1959), this proposal is that the two traditions arose out of two different calendars in use by the Jewish community. One calendar laid emphasis on the killing of the passover lamb, on fourteen Nisan. This was a ‘roving calendar.’ The other calendar arose from a reckoning, which stabilized *omer* (first fruits) on Sunday in the Jewish tradition. This later becomes the Christian Sunday tradition.

the other Christian. The moveable feasts correspond to the Jewish calendar and the Christian feasts correspond to the fixed calendar. God had given the moment for the Passover to his people and it was to be calculated with the celestial reckoner, the moon. Early Christian writings refer to the Jewish feast as a type, or prefiguration of the Christian Easter. The death and resurrection of Jesus is seen as the antitype that brought the Jewish Passover to fulfilment.⁷⁵ Fixing any festival, much less the central festival of Easter, was not just a matter of ecclesiastical decision, but of tuning in to the law in the universe. Christ's 'hour,' his triumph over the powers of death, had taken place within a particular time in history. Getting the arithmetic right was a matter of the basic law of creation, and the divine plan.⁷⁶

Thomas Talley argues that the Pascha is the earliest annual festival of the Christian Church.⁷⁷ A custom, first noticed in the second century, that the Crucifixion occurred in the consulship of the Gemini (AD 29) long dominated the West. Hippolytus and Tertullian both record this event. It is also recorded in the apocryphal Acts of Pilate that the Crucifixion occurred on Friday, 25 March.⁷⁸ In John's gospel the death of Jesus takes place on fourteen Nisan, which is translated in the Julian

⁷⁵ Chupungco, *Shaping the Easter Feast*, 1.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*,

⁷⁷ Talley, "Liturgical Time in the Ancient Church.," 34-48.

⁷⁸ Johannes Quasten, *The ante-Nicene literature after Irenaeus: Patrology*, Vol. II (Utrecht, Antwerp: Spectrum, 1950-1975), 177. Hippolytus of Rome was the first patristic writer to give the dates of Christ's birth and death, in his *Commentarius in libro Danielii* IV, xxiii, where he stated that Christ was born on Wednesday, 25 December, in the forty-second year of the Emperor Augustus and died on 25 March. Eusebius in his *Church History* mentions two works of Hippolytus *On the Pasch*, and on his *Determination of the Date of Easter*. Charles Martin in 1926 was deemed to have discovered his lost homily on the Pasch, but Pierre Nautin has shown that the theology in this homily was not that of Hippolytus. A point to note in this homily, whoever the author was, Easter falls on fourteen Nisan. Pierre Nautin, ed., "Homélie Pascales, I: Une Homélie Inspirée Du Traite Sur La Paque D'Hippolyte," *Source Chrétiennes* 27 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1950).

calendar to 25 March. Thomas Talley argues that the text of 1 Cor. 5.7 reflects Paul's familiarity with a tradition in the primitive Church based upon the chronology of John.

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed, let us celebrate the feast, then, by getting rid of all the old yeast of evil and wickedness, having only the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 1 Cor. 5.7

Furthermore, according to Talley, the early celebration of Pascha by Christians seems to presuppose that chronology.⁷⁹ In the Synoptic Gospels, Christ's death takes place on the fifteen Nisan. The theological significance of fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth Nisan will be discussed in a later chapter.

Early Christian sources reveal two quite distinct ways of celebrating Easter. The first is to keep Easter on the Sunday after the Jewish Passover, the focus of this celebration being the Resurrection of Christ, which took place on the first day of the week, namely Sunday. The other ancient time-honoured form of celebrating Easter derives from Asia Minor, and focuses on the Passion and death of Jesus, and was celebrated during the night of fourteenth Nisan to fifteenth Nisan, at the time of the Jewish Passover.⁸⁰ According to Epiphanius:

For even from the earliest times various controversies and dissension were in the church concerning this solemnity, which used yearly to bring laughter and mockery. For some, in a certain ardour of contention began it before the week, some after the

⁷⁹ Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 3-4.

⁸⁰ The bishops involved in this controversy were Polycarp of Smyrna (d. between 155 and 168) and Pope Anicetus (d. c. 166) and Polycrates of Ephesus, Asia Minor (d. ca. 200), and Bishop Victor I leading bishop of Rome (d. ca. 200), each of the protagonists in the controversy appealed to apostolic tradition in support of their claims. See *ANFa*, Vol. I, 310, and Vol. VIII, 773.

week, some at the beginning, some in the middle, some at the end. To say in a word, there was a wonderful confusion.⁸¹

Justin Martyr is the first to give an account of Christian worship in his First Apologia to the emperor Antoninus Pius. These accounts present problems of interpretation. Paul Bradshaw asks the question: “Is Justin referring specifically to the type of worship that his readers are likely to encounter in various parts of the world, or is he referring specifically to those found at Rome?”⁸² A further question could be asked, are we justified in speaking of a single church in Rome at this time or was there a loose federation of churches?⁸³

Late in the second century the bishop of Rome, Victor, tried to exert some control over the way in which the feast of the Resurrection was kept. Asian Christians in particular kept the festival on the fourteenth Nisan. Those who followed this custom became known as Quartodecimans by other Christians. The Quartodeciman practice claims its authority from the chronology of the Passion according to John. Our primary source for the controversy between Bishop Victor and Polycrates is the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius. An epistle written by Polycarp to Bishop Victor around the last decade of the second century claims a detailed pedigree for the apostolicity of the Quartodeciman observance. Scholars are divided as to which of the two customs is the oldest, though modern scholarship seems to opt for the Quartodeciman celebration being the earlier one, not a deviation limited to the

⁸¹ William Smith, Samuel Cheetham, eds., “Easter” *A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, Vol. 1 (Hartford: J. B. Burr, Publishing Co., 1880), 588.

⁸² Bradshaw, *Search for the Origins*, 139.

⁸³ A Hamman, “Valeur et signification des renseignements liturgiques de Justin,” *Studia Patristica* 13 (1975) 364-374 and also G. La Piana, “The Roman Church at the End of the Second Century,” *Harvard Theological Review* 18 (1925), 214-77.

province of Asia.⁸⁴ Thomas Talley comments that we possess no witness to claims of apostolicity of the Sunday Pascha, which various authors have claimed since the fourth century.⁸⁵

The desire for accuracy in the ecclesiastical year promoted the writing of many treatises. Chronology was the subject of disputes as early as the second century. Apollinarius the bishop of Hierapolis in Asia (d. ca. AD 160) in his treatise on the Pascha says:

There are some, therefore, who, on account of ignorance, stir up disputes about these things, but what they do is excusable since ignorance does not receive accusation but requires instruction. They say, then, that the Lord ate the sheep with his disciples on the fourteenth and suffered on the great day of the Unleavened Bread, and they explain Matthew's words (Matt. 26.17) according to their interpretation. Wherefore their opinion is contrary to the Law and according to them the Gospels seem to disagree.⁸⁶

Clement of Alexandria (d. ca. AD 217) also favoured the Johannine reckoning:

Suitably, therefore, to the fourteenth day, on which He also suffered, in the morning, the chief priests and the scribes, who brought Him to Pilate did not enter the

⁸⁴ Talley, "Liturgical Time in the Ancient Church," 34. Talley warns against accepting too rigidly evidence for festivals at particular times in the early Church, since even after the acceptance of the Julian calendar, there were local variations in the calendar which make universal observances difficult to envision. In the first century of our era, the first day of the first month was equivalent to Julian 29 August at Alexandria; 23 September in Asia; 28 October in Gaza; 18 November in Tyre; and 1 January in Rome. There were differences concerning the start of the day; some began the day at midnight, some at daybreak and others at sunset.

⁸⁵ Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 19. Pope Saint Leo the Great in the fifth century claimed that the Roman tradition together with their paschal and lunar terms had come down to them from the apostles Peter and Paul.

⁸⁶ Cantalamessa, *Easter in the Early Church*, trans. James Quigley and Joseph Leinhard, 46, 141. Also in Jacques Migne, ed., *Patrologiae Graeca Cursus Completus, "Chronicon Paschale,"* Vol. 92 (Paris: Bibliothecae Cleri universae, 1860), 79-81. "Rursum in eodem libro sic ille scripsit decima Quarta veri Paschatis Domini sancrificium magnum pro agno Dei Filius." Apollinarius "writes that the true Pascha consists in the immolation of Christ in place of the lamb; since this occurred on the fourteenth of Nisan, the Pascha should be celebrated on that date." Eusebius says of Apollinarius: "A number of works of Apollinarius have been preserved by many, and the following have reached us: the *Discourse* addressed to the above-mentioned emperor, five books *Against the Greeks, Truth*, a first and second book, and those which he subsequently wrote against the heresy of the Phrygians, which not long afterwards came out with its innovations, but at that time was, so to speak, in its incipency, since Montanus, with his false prophetesses, was then laying the foundations of his error."

Praetorium, that they might not be defiled, but might freely eat the passover in the evening. With this precise determination of the days both the whole of Scripture agrees, and the Gospels harmonize. The resurrection also attests it. He certainly rose on the third day, which fell on the first day of the weeks of harvest, on which the law prescribed that the priest should offer up the sheaf.⁸⁷

Clement in the next extract from these Paschal Fragments assigns the day of the preparation for the feast to the thirteenth day:

Accordingly, in the year gone by, Jesus went to eat the passover sacrificed by the Jews, keeping the feast. But when he had preached He who was the Passover, the Lamb of God, led as a sheep to the slaughter, presently taught His disciples the mystery of the type on the thirteenth day, on which also they inquired, "Where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the passover?" It was on this day, then, that both the consecration of the unleavened bread and the preparation for the feast took place. Whence John naturally describes the disciples as already previously prepared to have their feet washed by the Lord. And so on the following day our Saviour suffered, He who was the Passover, propitiously sacrificed by the Jews.⁸⁸

Shortly after the middle of the second century contention arose in Asia Minor as to whether the rite of the Paschal Lamb should be retained.⁸⁹ The theological focus of these early celebrations was not on the resurrection of Christ but on his death, "Christ, the Passover lamb, sacrificed for us," 1 Cor. 5.7. Tertullian in his early writings presupposes Johannine chronology. His text *Adversus Judaeos* sets the 25 March as the date of the Lord's passion.⁹⁰ Other later writings of Tertullian, from

⁸⁷ Clement of Alexandria, "On the Pascha, Fragment XI," *ANFa*, Vol II, 581. Also in Cantalamessa, *Easter in the Early Church*, 52, 149. "Paschal Chronicon" in *PG*, Vol. I, 31-198. "Sed et Clemens sanctissimus Alexandrinae Ecclesiae presbyter, vir antiquissimus, et qui non multum abfecit ad Apostolicis temporibus in libro de Paschate consimilia docet ita scribens: Praeteritis ergo temporibus immolatum a Judaeis Pascha festam agens, manducavit Dominus sed postquam praedicavit, ipse qui erat Pascha Agnus Dei." "But Clement the most holy priest of the Church of Alexandria a very old man and not much removed from Apostolic times, tells us approximately the same things in his treatise on the Pasch: When the time came for the Jews to immolate the Paschal lamb, the Lord ate, but afterwards he proclaimed, that he was the Lamb of God."

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 581.

⁸⁹ Louis Duchesne, *The Origins of Christian Worship*, 232.

⁹⁰ Tertullian, "Adversus Judaeos, 8," *ANFa*, Vol. III, 160. "And the suffering of this "extermination" was perfected within the times of the lxx hebdomads, under Tiberius Caesar, in the consulate of Rubellius Geminus and Fufius Geminus, in the month of March, at the times of the Passover, on the eighth day before the calends of April, on the first day of unleavened bread."

North Africa, suggest that he accepted the synoptic chronology at some time before his death. Cyprian and the anonymous author of *De Pascha computus* agree with synoptic chronology.

Hippolytus clearly followed the Johannine chronology.⁹¹ The tradition of John plays an important role in the Insular celebration of Easter. The argument used by Colman against Wilfrid at the Synod of Whitby (AD 664) cited the Irish tradition as a continuation of the practice of the apostle John, “the example of that apostle who was reckoned worthy to recline on the breast of the Lord.”⁹² Columbanus also appeals to Johannine tradition in his controversy with the bishops of Gaul. He follows the “traditions of his fathers in faith,” a plea distinctly reminiscent of bishop Polycarp (d. ca. AD 165) to Pope Anicetus (d. ca. AD 166). Polycarp the predecessor of Irenaeus of Lyons (d. ca. AD 202) claimed that he followed the tradition of the apostle John. Those who followed the customs of Rome argued that their heritage was that of the apostles Peter and Paul.

The theme of Jesus as the paschal lamb was central to the Quartodeciman’ celebration and can be seen not merely from the date on which the festival took place, but also in Quartodeciman writings. The *Peri Pascha* of Melito of Sardis (d. ca. AD

Supporting this same tradition is Augustine, *The City of God*, 18.54, “Now Christ died when the Gemini were consuls, on the eighth day before the kalends of April.” Also Sulpicius Severus (d. AD 420) “*World Chronicle*, 2.27”, *NPNFa*, II, Vol. “Under him (Herod) in the eighteenth year of his reign, the Lord was crucified, Fufius Geminus and Rubellius Geminus being consuls.”

⁹¹ Thomas Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 8.

⁹² Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. Leo Shirley-Price (London: Penguin Books, rev. ed. 1990), 186.

165) makes it clear that the Passion was not celebrated in isolation, but encompasses the whole redemptive act, from incarnation to glorification.

This is the one made flesh in a virgin,
who was hanged on a tree,
who was buried in the earth,
who was raised from the dead,
who was exalted to the heights of heaven.

This is the lamb slain,
this is the speechless lamb,
this is the one born of Mary the fair ewe,
this is the one taken from the flock,
and led to the slaughter.
Who was sacrificed in the evening,
and buried at night?⁹³

This theological interpretation of the feast as a celebration of the Passion also occurs in the writings of early Christians who keep Easter on a Sunday. Irenaeus of Lyons says:

And it would be endless to recount the occasions upon which the Son of God is shown forth by Moses. Of the day of His passion, too, he was not ignorant; but fortold Him after a figurative manner, by the name given to the passover; and at that very festival, which had been proclaimed such a long time previously by Moses, did our Lord suffer, thus fulfilling the passover.⁹⁴

Towards the end of the second century in Alexandria a different understanding of the feast emerged, one that emphasised “passage” rather than “passion,” the passage from death to life. Clement of Alexandria (d. AD 217) describes it as “being

⁹³ Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha: With the Fragments of Melito and Other Material Related to the Quartodecimans*, trans. Alistair Stewart-Sykes (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), 56.

⁹⁴ Irenaeus, “Against Heresies, 4.10.1,” *ANFa*, Vol. I, 473. Also in Cantalamessa, *Easter in the Early Church*, 50. Louis Duchesne, *The Origins of Christian Worship*, his hypothesis that the date of Christ’s birth was computed from that of his death. “Computational hypothesis” was expanded by Engberding as a alternative to the History-of-Religions hypotheses, see also an article by Thomas Talley, “Liturgical Time in the Ancient Church,” 34-47. It was thanks to Irenaeus, who came from Asia Minor, as well as Tertullian and Hippolytus who got their spirituality from that region, that the first paschal theology to take root in the West was the Asiatic, detached from its Quartodeciman praxis and adapted to the observance of Easter on Sunday. The evidence for this is that all these writers use the word *Pascha* to mean *passio*.

the transition from all trouble and all objects of sense.”⁹⁵ He refers to the feast of Easter as a transition from death to life and at other times as the sacrifice of Christ. This change of theological emphasis may have emanated from a more accurate exegesis of the Hebrew Scriptures, a tendency among the Alexandrians to de-historicize and allegorise the Christian mysteries, and the interpretation of new life given to the weekly celebration of the resurrection on Sundays.⁹⁶

Origen in the third century explains “most if not all of the brethren think that the Pascha is named Pascha from the passion of the Saviour. However, the feast in question is not precisely called Pascha by the Hebrews, but *phas[h]* ...translated it means ‘passage,’ because on that feast the Israelites were led forth from Egypt.” By the third century we encounter computations that aim at determining the Julian dates on which the fourteenth day of the moon occurred in the various years, Christ’s Passion was set on 25 March, the spring equinox in the Julian calendar.⁹⁷

There were others in the ante-Nicene period, however, such Alexandrians as Clement and Origen, who would take from Philo of Alexandria an understanding of pascha as *diabasis, transitus*, passage, a concept which Philo had treated as spiritual renewal, a passage from carnal passions to the exercise of virtue.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Clement, “Stromata, 2.11,” *ANFa*, Vol. II, 359.

⁹⁶ Paul Bradshaw, “The Origins of Easter,” *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Time*, Two Liturgical Traditions, Vol. V, eds., Paul Bradshaw, Lawrence A. Hoffman (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 83.

⁹⁷ The medieval world inherited from the Roman world not only its system of reckoning the years, but also its method of describing the months and days. Our modern calendar is based on the Julian calendar (Julius Caesar 46-45 BC). It was during the reign of Constantine (d. AD 321) that the astrological week became fully established in Roman law. The Roman Year was named after the *Consules Ordinarii*; this information is useful when attempting to date events from the early Roman period. See Appendix I, Table 2 for Roman Calendar.

⁹⁸ Chupungo, *Cosmic Elements of the Christian Passover*, See also McCarthy and Breen, *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, 7, 104.

1.4.3 Early ecclesiastical calendars

By the third century the ecclesiastical calendar had set 25 March – Passion; 25 December – Nativity; 24 June - Nativity of John the Baptist; and the 24 September - Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary.⁹⁹ The viii Kalends April, July, October and December mark the official occurrences of the two solstices and two equinoxes according to Roman literature. As the Nativity of Christ brought light to the world and was celebrated as a great feast of light, so too the Crucifixion brought the light of Redemption to a fallen world. The first day of the Hebrew year occurs at the full moon, for twenty-four hours the world was flooded with light.¹⁰⁰ When two parties disagreed about the date of Easter they often were divided about an interpretation of the Gospels and the passages in the Septuagint referring to the Passover. However, Christians in the third and fourth centuries were highly sensitive to the charges that because their calculations for Easter were related to both solar and lunar phenomena

⁹⁹ *De solstitiis aequinoctiis*, a fourth century document, was discovered in a tenth-century manuscript and was grouped for centuries with the sermons of John Chrysostom. It intrinsically links the date of the spring equinox with the Passion. The argument of *De solstitiis* begins, with the conception of the Baptist, identifying the time of the annunciation to Zechariah by reference to his priestly duties in connection with the festivals of *Tirhri*. This sets the conception of the Baptist at the autumnal equinox, and that is the “historical anchor of the entire scheme.” The autumnal conception places the birth of John at the summer solstice. However, since Gabriel announced to Mary that Elizabeth was in the sixth month of her pregnancy Lk. 1:36, the conception of Jesus was six months after the Baptist’s conception, that is at the spring equinox. The birth of Jesus was therefore nine months later, at the winter solstice, thus placing the conception and birth of both John and Jesus at the four cardinal points of the year. See appendix to Bernard Botte, *Noël, Épiphanie: retour du Christ*, Lex Orandi 40 Paris 1967 25-42, *Les origines de la Noël, et de l’Épiphanie* (Louvain, 1932) L. Duchesne, *Christian Worship, Its Origin and Evolution* (London: 1949), 258. Roll, *Towards the Origin of Christmas*, 97-99, offers a critique of *De solstitiis et aequinoctiis*. This document has been used as a support for the origins of Christmas, from both the supporters of the History of Religions hypothesis, and the Calculation hypothesis. Both Engberding and Talley found in it a conceptual support structure for the patristic mindset that could have reckoned the birthdate of Christ on the basis of its congruity with cosmic and scriptural symbolism.

¹⁰⁰ The first month in the Hebrew calendar was Nisan, and for early Christians who continued to follow the Jewish calendar Nisan, was also the first month, the month in which the Pasch occurred.

they were in fact worshipping the sun and the moon. Several works were written to counter this image, include *De solstitiis et aequinoctiis* of the early fourth century, and later Ambrose of Milan and Leo the Great insisted that the cosmic bodies were not worshipped by the Christians as gods in themselves, but were intended by their Creator to serve humans in calculating time.¹⁰¹

By the end of the fifth century both Rome and Alexandria had set the date of the equinox as 21 March. Easter calculated using the earlier equinoctial date could in fact fall before the 25 March. The Insular church continued to keep 25 March as the spring equinox, because of its strong historical links with the date of the Passion. A study of the Martyrologies of Gorman, Tallaght, and Durrow show a fixed date for the Passion on 25 March and Easter on 27 March, but these are historical dates, not calculated according to Easter tables.¹⁰² This provides evidence that even as late as the ninth and tenth centuries, 25 March was associated with the Passion. The earliest limit of Easter according to Insular reckoning was 26 March, celebrating Easter before that

¹⁰¹ Roll, *Towards the Origins*, 63. Pope Saint Leo Great, “Sermon 22.6” see Antoine Chavasse, ed. “*Sancti Leonis Magni Romani Pontificis Tractatus Septem et Nonaginta*,” *CCSL*, 138, 99.

¹⁰² The *Martyrology of Tallaght: From the Book of Leinster and MS 5100-4 in the Royal Library Brussels*, trans. Richard Irvine Best, Hugh Jackson Lawlor, Henry Bradshaw Society, Vol. LXVIII (London: Harrison and Sons, 1931), 27. “*Dominus noster Jesus Christus crucifixus est.*” (Our Lord Jesus Christ is crucified) viii Kl. Ap., 25 March, The text also gives his conception on the same day. *Martyrology of Gorman: From a manuscript in the Royal Library Brussels*, trans. Whitley Stokes, Henry Bradshaw Society, Vol. IX (London: Harrison and Sons, 1895), 25 March. “Jesus’ Conception on the same day as His crucifixion without respect,” 63. *Four Irish Martyrologies: Drummond, Turin, Cashel, York*, ed. Pádraig Ó Riain, Henry Bradshaw Society, Vol. CXV (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2002), 50. viii Kl. Ap. (25 March). Firstly the text records the day as the feast of the Annunciation, and then continues: “*Eodem quoque die, Dominus noster Jesus Christus sub Tiberio Caesar, et Pontio Pilato preside, Anna et Caipha sacerdotibus, pro salute mundi crucifixus est.*” “On that same day, Our Lord Jesus Christ, is crucified for the salvation of the world, under Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate, governor, and Annas and Caiphas in the priestly office.”

date was anathema to Columbanus. Columbanus accuses the bishops of Gaul of celebrating the Resurrection before the Passion. It was also a point of friction between the *Hibernensis* and the *Romani*¹⁰³ at the Synod of Whitby (AD 664).

1.4.4 God orders everything by weight and measure

Passover had no fixed date in the solar calendar, it could occur on any day of the week or any date of the first month Nisan. Since God created the luminaries to be signs of the days and years, we would expect these signs to be intelligible. But to the author of the book of Job the decrees that “tell the daystar when to shine out, the evening star when to rise over the sons of the earth” (Job 38.32) are beyond human comprehension. The author of the Book of Wisdom, with his faith that God orders everything by “weight and number and measure” prayed for true knowledge of the “disposition of the world [...] the changes and divisions of the seasons, the course of the year and the position of the stars” (Wis. 11.21, and 7.17-19). Number especially as used in sacred scripture became of extreme importance to early writers, many developing a numerology as it applied to scripture. Augustine (d. AD 430)¹⁰⁴ Eucharis of Lyons (d. AD 449) both developed a treatise on the symbolism of numbers.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 396-405. The differently shaped tonsures – a way of cutting the hair that served as a badge of clerical and monastic status – were a visible sign of their ‘Roman’ or ‘Irish’ (*Hibernensis*) origin. These two groups also differed in their exegetical method and approach.

¹⁰⁴ Augustine, *City of God*, 11.31, 465. Because many of the texts are a mixture of Biblical chronology and creative symbolic numbers in random combinations, they tell us a good deal about the mentality of this era concerning the religious function of numbers. Susan Roll, *Toward the Origins*, 82.

¹⁰⁵ He was chosen Bishop of Lyons probably in AD 434; it is certain, at least that he attended the First Council of Orange (AD 441) as Metropolitan of Lyons, and that he retained this dignity until

The contrasting themes of order, intelligibility, and divine dominion appear frequently in the scriptural commentaries, sermons, and other writings of medieval churchmen. In expounding the various senses of scripture, they touched on such concepts as the reckoning of time and of the calendar, the structure of the heavens, astrological determination and even broader philosophical issues.¹⁰⁶ It became customary to accept the practical use of the sun, moon and stars for finding time and directions, since God had established them as signs to govern the day and the night.

1.4.5 Calculating the age of the moon

The actual length of the tropical year differs from the length of the calendar set by the Julian calendar. Bede, writing in *De Temporibus Ratione* (AD 725), was aware that there was a discrepancy between the solar Julian calendar and the tropical year, but did not know how much.¹⁰⁷ The Julian calendar had set the equinox at 25 March, or the viii Kalends of April. The Council of Nicea (AD 325) had reset the date as 21 March, or the xii Kalends of April.¹⁰⁸ The task of the computist was to predict the age

his death. Eucherius wrote "Formularium spiritualis intelligentiæ ad Veranium", and "Institutiones ad Salonium", besides many homilies. His works have been published both separately and among the writings of the Fathers. There is no critical edition but the text is most accessible in Migne, *PL*, 50, 685-894. In the same volume (appendix, 893-1214) is to be found a long series of works attributed to Eucherius, some of doubtful authenticity, others certainly apocryphal.

¹⁰⁶ McClusky, *Astronomy and Cultures*, 31.

¹⁰⁷ By the time of Bede, the Roman world had lost the ability to use complex fractions, tending to round everything off. The method of calculation used by Bede, i.e. finger calculation is described in detail in, *Bede, Reckoning of Time* trans. Faith Wallis, Translated Texts for Historians, Vol. 29 (Liverpool: University Press, 1999). The two numbering systems in use in the Western world were, Roman numerals, and the Greek alphabetic-numeric system. Both systems were too cumbersome to use for calculations. See *Reckoning of Time*, 9-13.

¹⁰⁸ Even though the Council of Nicea had adopted 21 March as the equinox, the Roman church continued to observe 25 March for several years after the council. In 346 Rome refused to celebrate Easter Sunday before 25 March on the grounds that the spring equinox had not yet passed. Even after Rome had accepted 21 March as the equinox its Easter tables up to the time of Isidore of Seville (†636), consistently exhibited 25 March as the spring equinox.

of the moon on a past date, namely the vernal equinox, so as to know whether that lunation qualifies as the lunation of Easter or not. If the moon is full on, or after, the equinox, it does; if not, it will have to wait for the following lunation.¹⁰⁹

The source of this problem was that Easter depended on both lunar and solar cycles. The solution was to discover a lunar-solar cycle, that is, a whole number of solar years into which a whole number of lunar months can be inserted, so that the lunar phases will fall on the same calendar date after the end of the cyclic period. Contrary to later interpretation of its Easter criteria, the only criteria that the Council of Nicea laid down was that it should not be celebrated “with the Jews” even if that day fell on a Sunday. Alexandria interpreted this to mean that if fourteen Nisan fell on a Sunday, Easter should be postponed to the following Sunday effectively making the lunar limits, *xv–xxi*.

For the Romans who thought only of their solar calendar, the equinox was the early limit of Easter itself. The Alexandrians thought in terms of the Jewish lunar calendar,¹¹⁰ for them the equinox was the early limit of fourteen Nisan, not of Easter. In principle the Roman and Alexandrian systems diverged greatly. For Alexandria the

¹⁰⁹ *Bede, Reckoning of Time*, xix, Wallis suggests that Bede was familiar with the works of Irish computists, and may even have been inspired by them. Dáibhí O Cróinín has shown conclusively that Bede’s computus was of Irish provenance, Ó Cróinín “Bede’s Irish Computus,” *Chronology*. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 201-212. Bede accomplished a mammoth task of predicting the dates of Easter for 532 years. Even as late as the thirteenth century Roger Bacon was seriously concerned with the state of the calendar “But this is a most serious disadvantage; because thus not only Easter, but Lent and all the movable feasts will recede in a shocking manner from their positions and the whole order of the ecclesiastical office will be confused.” Roger Bacon, *Opus Majus*, trans. Robert Belle Burke (London: Oxford University Press, 1928). Bacon was ashamed that the outside world had such contempt for the mathematics of western Christendom: “Unbelieving philosophers, Arabs, Hebrews, and Greeks who dwell among Christians, as in Spain, Egypt, parts of the East, and in many other regions of the world, abhor the folly which they behold in the arrangement of the chronology followed by the Christians in their festivals.”

¹¹⁰ Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, xxxviii.

date of the equinox was 21 March, which was the *terminus a quo* for the Paschal full Moon. Easter Sunday could not fall before the 22 March, and with their lunar limits *xv-xxi* plus one full week to accommodate the following Sunday if fifteen Nisan fell on 21 March. The Romans held that 25 March was the equinox and the *terminus a quo* for Easter itself. Their lunar limits were *xvi-xxii* but their upper calendar limit was 21 April. These differences should have produced very different dates for Easter, but in fact, records show that the actual Easter date in the fourth and fifth centuries were almost always those of Alexandria.¹¹¹

1.5 Lunar-solar calendars

The calculation of the dates of Easter involved the coincidence of lunar, solar, and weekdays. A lunar calendar such as that used by the Jews tries to keep step with the observable synodic period of the moon that is 29.5306 days between repetitions of the same lunar phase. The average period of this calendar moon is 29.5 days this gives an error of .0306 days in one month, equivalent to 483 lunations or about thirty-nine years. The calendar month must lengthen its average period by including more full moons than hollow moons.¹¹² The solution employed in the West used the Julian solar

¹¹¹ Andre van de Vyver, 'L'evolution du comput alexandrin et romain du IIIe au Ve siècle' *Revue d'histoire ecclesiastique*, 52 (1952), 5-25.

¹¹² A full month has 30 days and a hollow month 29 days, this gives an average of 29.5 days for a lunar month.

calendar to control the introduction of these full months.¹¹³ Three methods were used to bring this about, the *embolism*, the *bisextus* and the *saltus*.¹¹⁴

1.5.1 *Embolism*

The solar year with three-hundred-and-sixty-five days is eleven days longer than the lunar year of three-hundred-and-fifty-four days: this means that if the lunar and solar years begin together, the lunar year will be eleven days older than the solar year at the beginning of the second year, that is, it will be twelve days old. If this is carried on from year to year the age of the moon will increase incrementally by eleven, so that in the third year it will be twenty-three, the fourth thirty-four etc, since this is greater than the number of days in a full lunar month an extra month an embolismic one is inserted at this point and the new moon will be four days old at the beginning of the fourth year. This extra month is called the embolismic month from the Latin *embolismus* 'interlude'. The embolismic month will be inserted in any year that starts with *luna* greater than or equal to twenty. In the medieval *computus* this embolismic month occurred after different months, January, March, August, September, November and December.

¹¹³ Daniel McCarthy, "Easter Principles and a Fifth-Century Lunar Cycle used in the British Isles," *Journal for the History of Astronomy*, XXIV (1993), 207. McCarthy while checking the *Munich Computus* for references to the *latercus* discovered the following lunar table which made the full and hollow moons in the *Pauda latercus* different to those of the Roman lunar year. Starting from January, these are as follows; 30, 29, 29, 29, 30, 29, 30, 30, 29, 30, 29, 30. The March lunation for the *latercus* is hollow in contrast to the Roman lunar year that takes it to be a full lunation. In the Roman system the full and hollow months alternate, January is full, February hollow, etc. McCarthy, "Easter Principles and a Fifth-Century Lunar Cycle," 211.

¹¹⁴ These terms are discussed in most standard texts on *computus*. Faith Wallis's translation of and commentary on Bede, *De Temporibus Ratione*, gives a concise summary of their meaning, see also Bartholomew MacCarthy, *Annals of Ulster* Vol. IV. McCarthy "Easter Principles and a Fifth Century Lunar Cycle," 207.

1.5.2 *Bissexthus*

The inclusion of an embolismic month approximately every third year in the lunar calendar is not enough to extend the average calendar month to correspond with the real moon. The solar year is three hundred and sixty-five and one quarter, one day is added to one year in four to make up for the fraction. If no account were taken of this extra day following the bissextile year, at the start of year five, the solar year would be twelve days ahead of the lunar year, rather than eleven. To compensate for this extra day the average lunar year was lengthened further, so that the pattern of lunar ages in bissextile years matched that in common years commencing with the same age, except for some days between the intercalated solar day and the intercalated lunar day. Unfortunately the joint effect of the *embolism* and the *bissexthus* produces a lunar month that is now longer than that of the real moon by an amount that will produce an error of about one day in 18 years, so that after 18 years the real moon will be one day older than the calendar moon.

1.5.3 *Saltus* or ‘leap of the moon,’

The role of the *saltus* is to shorten slightly the average calendar month: this is done by making one of the lunar months a hollow rather than a full month, this results in the moon’s age at the beginning of the solar year increases by twelve; as a result the calendar keeps better synchronism with the real moon. The name comes from the Latin *saltare*, to jump, since the moon jumps over the thirtieth day of the full month to make it hollow. The best interval for the *saltus* would be every eighteenth year, but if a slightly lower rate of saltus was accepted this would result in a short closed circle of lunar ages would result, because $18 \times 11 + 12 = 210 = 7 \times 30$ so that seven full embolismic years and a single *saltus* mean that the moon’s age at the start of the

twentieth year is the same as the moon's age in year one. This still leaves an error, but this error is considerably smaller than previously amounting to about one day in two hundred and eighty six years. This was the basis of the nineteen-year cycle of Alexandria, Dionysius, Bede, and it was by far the most successful cycle.

There were other cycles too. One credited to Augustalis was an 84-year cycle with the *saltus* every fourteen years, and second 84-year cycle had the *saltus* every twelve years. The first of these is the one adopted by the Insular churches but not necessarily that of Augustalis as research, in the last two decades of the twentieth-century especially the work of Dáibhí Ó Cróinín and Daniel McCarthy show. The rate of *saltus* every fourteen years is too high and results in the calendar moon advancing ahead of the real moon, one day in about sixty-three years, making these tables considerably less accurate astronomically than the 19-year cycle. However, the fact that eighty-four years is equal to three solar cycles makes them considerably easier and convenient for any computations involving weekdays, such as Easter calculations.¹¹⁵ In discriminating between various forms of Easter reckoning the frequency of the *saltus* within a definite term of year is important, in fact decisive.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ A cycle ascribed to Meton, 430 BC is at the root of Easter reckoning. In a 19-year cycle there are $(19 \times 12) + 7$ lunar months, or 235 months. The average lunar month being 29.5 makes 6939.7 days, 19 solar years of 365.24 days gives 6929.6 days. The Roman Empire set their dates in terms of the Julian calendar, whose lunar months alternated between 29 and 30 days each. 114 months of 29 day and 114 months of 30 + 7 intercalary months of 30 days make 6936 days plus 4.75 leap year days is 6940.75 this day must be got rid of so every 19 years the moon skipped a day. This is the ecclesiastical moon as distinct from the astronomical moon.

¹¹⁶ Kenneth Harrison, "Epacts in the Irish Chronicles," *Studia Celtica*, 12-13 (1997-8), 17-32.

1.5.4 *Epact*

Because the lunar calendar is managed in terms of the solar calendar it is convenient and useful to have a simple relationship between them. For this simple repeating pattern to be regular and numerical, the solar date must be carefully chosen so that it falls during a full lunar month, to avoid coincidence with the *bissextile*, *embolism* or *saltus*. When this is done the *epacts* increase regularly in increments of eleven except following the insertion of the *saltus* when it increases by twelve. As usually defined the *epact* is the age of the moon on 1 January in any particular year, though different calendars used different fixed dates upon which to evaluate their *epact*. The Greeks counted *epacts* from 22 March, but the Romans and the Insular Church enumerate them from 1 January. A new moon can occur both on 1 January and 31 March in the same year, the *epact* can be referred to one or other of these dates. For most ecclesiastical calendars (later than the fourth century) the equinox was taken as 21 March, since Easter was not allowed to fall on that day the earliest possible date for Easter was 22 March.

1.6 Conclusion

Time is a concept with which we are all familiar, but like Augustine when asked to define time we are at a loss for words. This chapter looks at time under a number of headings, some of which are dualistic in form. It provides a basis to understand the medieval perspective of time especially in relation to liturgical time. Early Irish texts were examined to obtain an understanding of the medieval Irish approach to time. Liturgical time is defined as the ‘time of Christ’ that extends into the time of ‘church’ this section endeavours to explore liturgical time, and how *hodie* and *anamnesis* within a liturgical celebration makes the Christ present to worshipers

today, “what is invisible has passed over over into the mysteries.” Some of the questions that faced the early Church are addressed and the answers given by early fathers to these questions. The underpinning of this controversy is essentially theological, but of necessity a time element is also involved. Attention is given to the similarities and differences in the perception of time between our modern world and the world of the Irish text. The medieval perception of time and its relationship with biblical exegesis are at the centre of the Easter controversy; this concept will be explored in more detail in chapter three.

Changes in theological understanding of the paschal mystery are reflected in a shift emphasis from the *Pascha* being essentially a celebration of the Passion, encompassing the Resurrection, to an emphasis on the Resurrection alone. Writings of the early church fathers reveal such a change. An amendment to the meaning of *Pascha* from *paschein*, meaning to suffer, to *transitus*, crossing over resulted in an altered theological understanding.

The challenges presented by the change from a purely Jewish lunar calendar to a lunar-solar calendar are also discussed. The early Christian community expected the immanent return of Christ, removing any immediate necessity of predicting future Easter dates. With this in mind some modern authors take the view that the early Church did not celebrate Easter until well into the second-century. By the middle of that century, controversy and squabbles over both the theological meaning and the dating were beginning to emerge. To those computists charged with the job of synchronising the date of Easter the task was a difficult one. The source of the difficulties between the Alexandrian and Roman churches are pointed out and in these differences lay the seeds of misunderstanding and mistrust.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of lunar-solar calendars and some of the technicalities of these calendars. An understanding of these technicalities is necessary to approach the discussion in chapter two of the history of the Easter tables with particular emphasis on the Insular Easter table.

2 CHAPTER

EASTER TABLES

2.1 Why Easter tables?

Christ died at the time of the Jewish Passover, and all Easter tables that have been drafted since then have the objective of selecting a date each year whose solar, lunar and weekday character matches as closely as possible the conditions that prevailed at the time when Jesus died. Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria (d. AD 265) published the first known Easter table developed by Christians, accompanied by a Paschal letter stating that it was not licit to celebrate Easter before the equinox, the astronomical marker for spring.¹ Behind different Easter tables lie a particular understanding of time, its relationship to Jesus, and the relationships of early Christian communities to each other. These tables also provide evidence of the level of astronomical science available to medieval computists.

At the heart of the question of *computus* - the dating of Easter - was a desire to bring about a harmony between human and heavenly time. Just as the winter solstice was selected for the feast of the Nativity, so Christ's Resurrection set at the time of the spring equinox and the astronomical full moon is significant. All Christian

¹ William Smith and Samuel Cheetham eds., "Paschal Letters," *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, 1462-1464.

churches simultaneously, their prayers and praises flowing upwards in a glorious worldwide chorus, should celebrate this feast together. The writings of the early church fathers used, expanded on and developed the symbolism of these astronomical phenomena. Cyril of Jerusalem asks: “At what season does the Saviour rise?” He develops the idea of spring as the time of creation, the time when sin entered the world, but also the time of the restoration of humankind:

At what season does the Saviour rise? Is it the season of summer, or some other? In the same Canticles immediately before the words quoted He says, the winter is past, the rain is past and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the pruning is come. Is not then the earth full of flowers now, and are they not pruning the vines? Thou seest how he said also that the winter is past. For when this month Xanthicus is come, it is already spring. And this is the season, the first month with the Hebrews, in which occurs the festival of the Passover, the typical formerly, but now the true. This is the season of the creation of the world.²

In Jewish Paschal theology the full moon had a decidedly symbolic character. Philo of Alexandria explored this symbolism, leaving a cherished legacy to Christianity. In his book *The Special Laws* he writes:

The feast begins at the middle of the month, on the fifteenth day when the moon is full, a day purposely chosen, because then there is no darkness, but everything is continuously lighted up as the sun shines from the morning to the evening, and the moon from the evening to the morning, and while the stars give place to each other, no shadow is cast upon their brightness.³

Quatrodecimans celebrated the Pasch on fourteen Nisan and also claimed an apostolic origin for their tradition. Socrates, a fifth-century historian writes:

² Cyril of Jerusalem, “Catechetical Lectures, Mytagogic Catechesis, 14.10,” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. VII, 96. Also in Cantalamessa, *Easter in the Early Church*, 169. See George Ogg, *Pseudo Cyprian’s De Pascha Computus*, which makes use of and takes advantage of the connection between creation and the spring equinox.

³ Philo of Alexandria, “The Special Laws II,” *Philo, The Loeb Classical Library*, Vol. 7 trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, eds. T. E. Page, E. Capps, W. H. Rouse (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Loeb, 1958), 401.

Moreover the Quartodecimans affirm that the observance of the fourteenth day was delivered to them by the apostle John: while the Romans and those in the Western parts assure us that their usage originated with the apostles Peter and Paul. Neither of these parties, however, can produce any written testimony in confirmation of what they assert.⁴

Thomas Talley suggests that fourteen Nisan was not always what it seems; certain Quatrodecimans following an Egyptian calendar celebrated on 6 April in the month of Artemois, 9 days ahead of the Julian calendar.

The determination of the correct date to celebrate Passover was difficult for the Jews living outside of Jerusalem, since the calculation depended upon the sighting of the new moon in Jerusalem.⁵ The average lunar cycle being 29.5 days, the new moon appeared on either the thirtieth or thirty-first day after the old one. The Passover occurred two weeks after the new moon. Communities living far from Jerusalem had no means of knowing which of the two days was declared the new moon. These communities unaware of the insertion of an extra month into the Jewish year

⁴ A. C. Zenos, "The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus, 5.22," *NPNFa*, II, Vol. II, 131. A fourth century Quartodeciman Terentius, wrote to Peter of Alexandria in defence of their observance: "We have no other purpose than to keep the memory of the passion at the time which has been handed down to us by its witnesses, even before the Egyptians [Alexandrians] received the faith." Preserved in the *Paschal Chronicle PG*, Vol. 92, 70. "Sozomen, Ecclesiastical History, 7.19," *NPNFa*, II, Vol. II, 390, *PG*, Vol. 67, 626-627 also attests to different practices: "We have now described the various usages that prevailed in the celebration of the Passover. It appears to me that Victor, bishop of Rome, and Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, came to a very wise decision on the controversy that had arisen between them. For as the bishops of the West did not deem it necessary to dishonour the tradition handed down to them by Peter and by Paul, and as, on the other hand, the Asiatic bishops persisted in following the rules laid down by John the Evangelist, they unanimously agreed to continue in the observance of the festival according to their respective customs, without separation from communion with each other. *PG*, Vol. 18, 7.19, 517.

⁵ Eviatar Zerubavel, "On Calendars and Group Identity," 288, argues that what seems to be a trivial dispute about the calendar actually played a central role in the general efforts of the Church to establish its own unique identity as distinct from the Synagogue. The temporal segregation of Easter from Passover was an attempt to free the ecclesiastical calendar from the Jewish calendar. He concluded that: "It succeeded in achieving the social segregation of Christians from Jews. This approach I think is a bit too simplistic and neat, there were many factors at play in this process of separation, not least of which is one described by Anscar Chugungo, as the "celebration of two Easters in one year." See n. 17.

celebrated Passover a month early. Having the date of Easter dependent upon the determination of the Passover presented an even greater problem for early Christians.⁶

2.1.1 Task of calendric computus

Christians tried to solve the problem of the calendar by calculating the date of the first full moon after the spring equinox each year, and computing the date of Easter from that. Central to the cosmology of the middle ages was the reckoning of time. The creation of Paschal tables led to the development of an early medieval science that became known as *computus*. It was a science with which the West, especially Rome, was never fully at home, relying for the most part relied on the skill in mathematics and astronomy of their eastern counterparts.

Computus starts with a problem and ends with a product, namely, dates of Easter for a discrete number of years. Faith Wallis in her introduction to *The Reckoning of Time* describes the *computus* as follows: “*Computus* then, is not an observational science, or a physics of time, but a technique of patterning time into repeating cycles according to certain conventions.”⁷ The chief task of the calendric *computus* was the calculation of the future dates of Easter and its dependent moveable feasts. A variety of tables for finding the date of Easter were produced, with the result

⁶ Paul Bradshaw, “The Origins of Easter,” *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Medieval Time*. Two Liturgical Traditions, Vol. 5, eds. Paul Bradshaw and Laurence Hoffmann (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 92.

⁷ Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, xx.

that the feast was often celebrated on divergent dates in different parts of the world.⁸ Time also can be a means of political control; it is a common attribute of imperial power that it organizes time. Such political control over time requires the development of a luni-solar calendar. Organizing the dates of public occasions was important to ensure that ‘subject people’ were notified of their occurrence.

The Paschal tables produced showed such diversity that they added to the general confusion rather than clarified the matter. Very few clerics even bishops possessed the skills or understanding necessary to tackle the problems of the *computus*. The *computus* was a complex question and many volumes of supporting material surrounding the basic Paschal tables were written in the Middle Ages. These include calendars, with charts, diagrams, astronomical works, extracts from the bible, writings of Church fathers, and polemical letters, genealogies, world histories even medical texts. Charles Jones, in his introduction to *Bedae, Opera Didiscalia*, estimates that there were about 2500 separate writings circulating in the West by the tenth century from which the masters selected the contents of their *computus* manuscripts.⁹

The focus of medieval science was to build a cosmological picture that harmonized with Christian theological texts of the ‘fathers,’ other writings from antiquity, and from observation. Modern writers in their rush to write about those

⁸ T. C. G. Thorton, “Problematical Passovers; Difficulties for Diaspora Jews and Early Christians in Determining Passover Dates during the First Three Centuries A. D.,” *Studia Patristica* 20 (1989), 402-8.

⁹ Charles W. Jones, ed., *Bedae Venerabilis Opera, Part 6, 1:Opera didiscalicia*, CCSL, 123A (Turnholti: Brepols, 1975), preface xiv.

people, like Galileo and Newton, they consider ‘true’ scientists, often miss this point. David Lindberg, in his work the *Beginnings of Western Science*, has only a single reference to *computus*, and refers to Bede’s works as being simply about ‘timekeeping and calendar control.’¹⁰

This thesis aims to show that a focus on ‘timekeeping’ and the ‘technicalities of the *computus*’ reflect only part of the debate. The main concern of those who studied the *computus* was theological, a theology formed and informed by reflection on God’s word, within the constraints of the medieval method of biblical exegesis. The model that emerged from these reflections detailed man’s role in the cosmos, where everything had a meaning, and every event was symbolic of a greater and more profound truth. Writers such as Augustine could develop a whole theology from one line of scripture and using an allegorical method of biblical exegesis elaborate on it. Augustine writing to Januarius in reply to his questions on Easter develops a complete schema using the number seventeen, “For in this number (17) there is found, as in other numbers representing a combination of symbols, a wonderful mystery.”

For if the number 17 itself be the side of an arithmetical triangle formed by placing above each other rows of units, increasing in number from 1 to 17, the whole sum of these units is 153: since 1 and 2 make 3; 3 and 3, 6; 6 and 4, 10; 10 and 5, 15; 15 and 6, 21; and so on: continue this up to 17, the total is 153. The celebration of Easter and Pentecost is therefore most firmly based on Scripture. As to the observance of the forty days before Easter, this has been confirmed by the practice of the Church; as also the separation of the eight days of the neophytes, in such order that the eighth of these coincides with the first. The custom of singing the Alleluia on those 50 days

¹⁰ David C. Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Western Science: the European Scientific Tradition in Philosophical, Religious, and Institutional Context, 600 BC to AD 1450* (Chicago: 1992), 159. See 156-5 for his opinion of medieval science. In Lindberg’s case he is rushing to get to the twelfth century.

only in the Church is not universal; for in other places it is sung also at various other times, but on these days it is sung everywhere.¹¹

Augustine enumerates several symbolic meanings for the number seventeen, which forms an arithmetical triangle the integers contained in it adding up to 153, the number of fish caught, in the post-Resurrection account in John 21.11.

2.1.2 Easter dating and ecclesiastical authority

Marimis, Bishop of Arles presided at the Council of Arles, which took place in AD 314. Pope Sylvester sent legates to represent him. Afterwards a covering letter was sent to the pope along with the decisions of the council:

To their most holy lord and brother Sylvester, from the assembled bishops who were gathered in the city of Arles. What we have decreed in common counsel we signify to your Charity, so that for the future all may know what must be observed.¹²

Canon one of the Council of Arles states:

Firstly on the observance of the Sunday Pasch, it should be observed on one day, and at the same time so that the entire world may observe with us. You should send letters to the entire world about this.

¹¹ Augustine frequently built a whole schema of doctrine around one line in a psalm, or using a quote from the book of Wisdom, built an allegorical interpretation of numbers as used in scripture. The Ps-Cyprian author of *De Pascha Computus* also used number symbolism and developed the triple association of the cross, the Greek letter tau, and 300. Eighteen as the sum of the numbers represented in the letters of the name of Jesus in Greek; and the significance of his death in the sixteenth year of Tiberius reign and the thirty-first year of his life. See George Ogg, ed. *The Pseudo-Cyprianic: De Pascha Computus* (London: SPCK, 1955), introduction vii-viii, 17.

¹² See the *Canones ad Silvestrum (Incipit synodus Arelatensis)*. The Canons were conducted to Rome in cover of the short letter that precedes the canons in Giovanni Domenico Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima Collectio*, Vol. 2 (Florence-Venice: 1795-98), 471-476.

“Domino sanctissimo fratri Silvestro coetus episcoporum qui ad uniti ferunt in oppido Arelatensi. Quid decreuerimus communi consilio caritati tuae significauimus, ut (omnes) episcopi sciant quid in futurum obseruare debeant.”

“Primo in loco de obseruatione Paschae dominicae: Ut uno die uno tempore per omnem orbem a nobis obseruaretur, ut iuxta constuetudinem litteras ad omnes tu dirigas.”

The Council of Nicea summoned by Constantine in AD 325 reaffirmed that the Christian church should everywhere observe Easter on the same day. It states: “at this meeting the question concerning the most holy day of Easter was discussed, and it was resolved by the united judgment of all present, that this feast ought to be kept by all and in every place on one and the same day.”¹³ Eusebius writing about the controversy says:

But before this time another most virulent disorder had existed, and long afflicted the Church; I mean the difference respecting the salutary feast of Easter. For while one party asserted that the Jewish custom should be adhered to, the other affirmed that the exact recurrence of the period should be observed without following the authority of those who were in error, and strangers to gospel grace.¹⁴

Uniformity was to be achieved by the acceptance of the principle that paschal dating should depend ultimately on ecclesiastical authority, and by leaving to the Church of Alexandria, chief centre of science, the duty of determining the date of each Easter, this date to be then communicated to the rest of the world by letters.¹⁵ Nicea also decreed that Easter should be kept on the first Sunday after the full moon after the spring equinox. This canon aimed at eliminating the Quartodeciman practice of celebrating on the fourteen Nisan irrespective of the day of the week on which it fell. There was a strong anti-Jewish polemic at this Council. Easter should not be celebrated with the Jews:

At this meeting the question concerning the most holy day of Easter was discussed, and it was resolved by the united judgment of all present, that this feast ought to be kept by all and in every place one and the same day [...] And first of all, it appeared

¹³ Eusebius, “The Life of Constantine, 3.18,” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. 1, 524.

¹⁴ Eusebius, “The Life of Constantine, 3.5,” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. I, 521.

¹⁵ Athanasius, “*Chronicon Athanasianum*,” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. IV, 501. In the fourth century uniformity was not all that easy to find when it came to practices of the Church. Few churches kept to the same equinox or the same moon.

an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are therefore, deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul [...] Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Saviour a different way.¹⁶

The Life of Constantine describes Constantine interpreting the decrees of Nicea as forbidding the celebration of Easter twice in one year:

So it is that on this point as well as others they [the Jews] have no perception of the truth, so that, being altogether ignorant of the true adjustment of this question, they sometimes celebrate Easter twice in the same year. Why then should we follow those who are confessedly in grievous error? Surely we shall never consent to keep this feast a second time in the same year.¹⁷

The only way to avoid celebrating “twice in one year” is to observe the equinox – the computistical year being defined as the period from one spring equinox to the following one. However, since there was considerable disparity as to the actual date of the equinox, this did not solve the problem but only added to the general confusion.

No particular table appears to have been prescribed by the Council of Nicea,¹⁸ and history offers evidence that “to celebrate the feast in perfect accord” did not mean

¹⁶ Eusebius, “The Life of Constantine,” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. I, 524.

¹⁷ Eusebius, “The Life of Constantine, 3.18,” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. 1, 524. In the case of the Easter date, there was more serious reasons for the church’s “repudiation of the Jewish reckoning of Passover,” other than antipathy towards the Jews. Constantine’s letter shows that the Jews “err” seriously in intercalation and thus celebrate two Passovers, or in the case of the Church, two Easters in one year. Two Easter celebrations in one year would be an embarrassment for the church. In a calendar that extends from 1 January to 31 December there is no danger of this happening, but when the year was calculated from one spring equinox to another, two Easters in one year could easily happen. If the full moon rises after the spring equinox, this will be considered the Easter full moon; and so Easter will be held at the beginning of that year. If at the end of that year the full moon rises just before the next spring equinox, it is mistakenly reckoned the Easter full moon. Easter will be celebrated a second time within the span of one year. Anatolius of Laodicea and Peter of Alexandria were both of the opinion that the ancient Hebrews kept the Passover after the equinox, Van der Goudoever, *Biblical Calendars*, 9.

¹⁸ Chupungo, *Shaping the Easter Feast*, 47. Chupungo maintains that the mechanics of determining the Easter date were not discussed at the Council of Nicea. It sanctioned no Easter table, and its only tangible achievement was the consensus reached by the bishops that Easter should be kept after the spring equinox. This was not the position taken by later commenators on the Council of Nicea. Dionysius in the *Prologue to his Easter tables* states that: “he follows in all things the decree of the 318

“everywhere on the same day.” Confusion arose when the full moon fell on a Sunday: should Easter be kept on that day, or on the following Sunday? As a result in the year AD 387 Easter was observed at Alexandria and in North Italy on 25 April, in Gaul on 21 March, and at Rome on 18 April. The issuing of a decree by Council or a Synod did not necessarily mean that this decree would be carried out. Local customs were sometimes preferred to those handed down from on high. There is evidence that places such as North Africa, North Italy, Gaul, Britain and Ireland, at one time or another calculated and followed different Easter dates to those celebrated at Rome or Alexandria.¹⁹

In the fourth century the Patriarch of Alexandria was responsible for sending letters to the “whole world” announcing the date of Easter. Athanasius (d. AD 373) in his festal letters sometimes referred to the feast of Easter “as a transition from death to life” and at other times “as the sacrifice of Christ.” In AD 386, Ambrose of Milan (d. AD 397) responding to a question regarding the lateness of the Pascha in the coming year (AD 387) writes to the Bishops of the district of Emilia. This letter explains the rules for calculating Pascha:

Nicene Pontiffs, who composed a decemnovennial cycle of Paschal fourteenth moons to last for ever, - a rule sanctioned by them, not so much owing to secular knowledge, as to illumination of the Holy Spirit.” “Sequentes per omnia venerabilium ccc.x.et viii, pontificum, qui apud Nicaeam, civitatem Bithyniae [...] convenerunt, etiam rei huius absolutam veramque sententiam, qui quartas decimas lunas Paschalis et ixx. annorum redeuntem semper in se circulum stabiles immotasque fixerunt.” MacCarthy, *Annal of Ulster*, Vol. IV, lvi-lvii. MacCarthy comments, “The opening sentence of the first epistle contains one of the most audacious falsifications on record.”

¹⁹ Bedae, *Opera de temporibus*, ed. Charles W. Jones (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1943), 15-16, cites Augustine, and Augustinus, *Studien I*, 5-23, an Ambrosian 84-year cycle is preserved in Codex Amrosiae H. 150, Anatolius, *DRP*, 1.10, attacks certain computist of the region of Gaul, and the Insular cycle is well attested by Bede, Columbanus, Colman. Daniel McCarthy and Aidan Breen, *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch: De ratione paschali: The Paschal tract of Anatolius, bishop of Laodicea*, 1.10 (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 63,73.

We must then keep this law of Easter, not to keep the fourteenth day as the day of the Resurrection, but rather as the day of the Passion, or at least one of the next preceding days, because the feast of the Resurrection is kept on the Lord's day; and on the Lord's day we cannot fast; for we rightly condemn the Manicheans for their fast upon this day. For it is unbelief in Christ's Resurrection to appoint a rule of fasting for the day of the Resurrection, since the Law says that the Passion is to be eaten with bitterness that is, with grief, because the Author of Salvation was slain by so great a sacrilege on the part of men; but on the Lord's day the Prophet teaches us that we should rejoice, saying, *This is the day which the Lord hath made: let us rejoice and be glad in it.*²⁰

Ambrose's letter is clear testimony that Alexandrian rules and the 19-year tables that embodied them were used in the West before the end of the fourth century, and that other tables were also in use at the same time.²¹

2.2 A history of Easter tables

2.2.1 Table of Hippolytus

The earliest design of a Paschal table for which we have any knowledge is that of Hippolytus. These tables covered one hundred and twelve years, from AD 222 – 333. A statute discovered in Rome in AD 1551 was identified as that of the Roman theologian Hippolytus, a catalogue of his works is inscribed on the right rear corner of the chair.²² Each of the panels of that chair bears tables for the computation of the

²⁰ Ambrose, “*Epistula XXIII*,” J. P. Migne, ed., *PL*, 16, Col. 1026 C, Unde haec lex paschae nobis servanda est, ut non quartamdecimam observemus in die resurrectionis, sed in die magis passionis, aut certe aliis proximis superioribus diebus; quia resurrectionis celebritas die Dominica celebratur: Dominica autem jejuna non possumus; quia Manichaeos etiam ob istius diei jejunia jure damnamus. Hoc est enim in resurrectionem Christi non credere, si legem quis jejunii die resurrectionis indicat; cum Lex dicat pascha edendum cum amaritudine (Exod. XII, 8), hoc est, cum dolore, quod tanto sacrilegio hominum auctor salutis sit interemptus: die autem dominica exultandum Propheta docet, dicens: *Hic est dies, quem fecit Dominus; exultemus et laetemur in eo*

²¹ Ó Cróinín, “New light on Palladius,” *Chronology*, 31.

²² Bartholomew MacCarthy, *Annals of Ulster*, Vol. IV, xxxiii also Louis Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church: From its foundation to the end of the Fifth Century*, Vol. 1 (London, John Murray, reprint, 1965), 231. Duchesne describes the statue as having being found in the sixteenth century near Hippolytus' tomb; it is now in the Lateran Museum, ‘the head is modern.’ *The Apostolic*

paschal date. The last column of that table assigns Christ's passion to the viii Kalends of April.²³ Hippolytus took the 25 March to be the date of the Passion but also the fourteenth of the moon. 13 April, AD 222 was set as the date of the full moon, virtually the true astronomical moon and the first year of these tables. These tables extended over sixteen years, and had lunar limits, *luna xvi* to *luna xxii*. No intercalation was included to take account of the differing length of the solar and lunar years. Hence discrepancies arose early on in these tables, moving the calculated dates out of alignment with the true astronomical dates. The cycle lost three days in eight years, thereby making these tables quite useless. The cycle was actually two cycles of eight years each:

$$16 \text{ Julian years} = (365 \times 16) + 4 \text{ for leap years} = 5844 \text{ days}$$

$$12 \times 16 = 198 \text{ synodic months} = (198 \times 29.53) = 5846.96 \text{ days}$$

That is, almost three days were lost even within the first cycle. Such an inaccurate system could not be tolerated. For an Easter table to be truly cyclic not only must the dates of the moon recur, but they should fall on the same day of the week. In the Hippolitan table the dates of the moon repeated every sixteen years, but on different days of the week, which was a serious drawback: a combination of the day of the week and the date repeated every one hundred and twelve years, 7×16 years.

Tradition: A Commentary, Paul F. Bradshaw, Max E. Johnson, L. Edwards Philips, ed. Harold W. Attridge (Minneapolis: Fortree Press, 2002) Introduction, 5, discusses the status of the writings of Hippolytus.

²³ See Paul Bradshaw for a discussion of the validity of this claim that the statue is that of Hippolytus, *Search for the Origins*, 82.

2.2.2 *De pascha computus* (AD 243)

The next known calendar is that of pseudo-Cyprian, formally included in the works of Cyprian. *De Pascha Computus*, hereafter *DPC*, can be reliably dated to AD 243.²⁴ This document combines traditional chronology and symbolic number configurations in such a way as to produce a system for Christians to determine the date and the day of the week of fourteen Nissan according to the Julian calendar.²⁵ Formerly included in the works of Cyprian, but as it is not certain that Cyprian had embraced Christianity by AD 243, it is unlikely that he is the author. Daniel McCarthy claims a North African authorship for *DPC*, possible a Novatanist. One school of thought believes this work to be a revision of the Paschal tables of Hippolytus. Charles Jones ascribes to this theory as also Anscar Chupungo and George Ogg.²⁶ *DPC* expresses the motive for the study of the calendar and the Easter cycles as a need to silence the humiliating boast of the Jews:

We desire to show to those who love and are eager for divine studies that Christians need at no time stray from the way of truth or *walk in blindness and stupidity behind the Jews as though they did not know what was the day of the Passover.*²⁷

Behind this calendar is the thesis that the world was created at the spring equinox, that is the first day of creation was March 25.²⁸ A literal interpretation of

²⁴ George Ogg, *The Pseudo-Cyprianic: De Pascha Computus* (London: SPCK, 1955), vii.

²⁵ Roll, *Toward the Origins of Christmas*, 81.

²⁶ Bedae, *BOT*, 12. Chupungo, *Shaping the Easter Feast*, 51. George Ogg, *DPC*, ix. See also Roll, *Towards the Origins of Christmas*, 81.

²⁷ Ogg, *DPC*, 1.

²⁸ Ogg, *DPC*, 1. Ps-Cyprian writes: "For a period of time that has been by no means inconsiderable we have been searching anxiously and zealously not in secular writings but in the holy and divine Scriptures to discover what was the first day of the new month, the month in which the Jews in Egypt were instructed to slay the Passover on the fourteenth day of the moon."

Genesis puts the creation of the moon on the fourth day making March 28 equivalent to the day when the moon was created. The first chapter of Genesis says, “the moon to light the night.” This thesis argues that the moon was created full (28 March):

O splendid and divine providence of the Lord, that on that day, even the very day, on which the sun was made, the 28 March, a Wednesday, Christ should be born.²⁹

The next day March 29 was fourteen Nisan, the first month of the lunar year was inaugurated on 16 March. Since that first year of creation had neither 16 March, or fourteen Nisan, it was the next year following that had first and fifth Nisan. The following year Nisan fell eleven days back relative to the solar year to 5 March. This table places the earliest new moon on 5 March or the last hours of 4 March. *DPC* shows *luna xiv* as Crucifixion, *luna xv* as entombment, *luna xvi* as the Resurrection. Such a fracturing of the feast into separate historical entities reveals a marked change in theology.³⁰ Earlier treatises emphasised the celebration of the Passion, but the Passion encompassing the entire mysteries of salvation, Incarnation, Resurrection and Ascension.³¹

According to the author his work was divinely inspired, “*In qua re non derelicti sed potius ab ipso deo inspirati [...] cumque a Deo nos evidenter*

²⁹ Ogg, *DPC*, 17.

³⁰ Ogg, *DPC*, 18. This fracturing of the unity of the Paschal celebration is revealed in this text, and the fracture becomes more widespread in the fourth century. The earlier theology as expressed in the *Pascal Homily of Melito of Sardis*, was displaced when the span of Easter was extended to ‘three days’ in the fourth century. The theology revealed in Melito’s homily shaped the deepest stratum of Christian worship at Easter, “the lamb slain for our salvation.” It remains central, to this day, at the Communion Rite during the Eucharist. Martin Connell, *Eternity Today*, 112.

³¹ Bedae, *BOT*, 13.

*incipiamus.*³² Whatever their origins, the ideas expressed in this document carried the force of divine inspiration in the Roman world. During the next two centuries the doctrine of *DPC* about Creation appears in every purely Roman *computus* and is also used by Bede.³³ Taking 18 March as the earliest Paschal full moon, or fourteen Nisan, the Easter full moon occurred as early as the night of 17 March and as late as 12 April, the *lunar* limits were *luna xvi–xxii*. The author of *DPC* reflects an adaptation in the theology of Easter, the focus was now on the festival of the Resurrection. *DPC* introduced the use of numbers for the days of the week, one being assigned to Sunday and seven to *Sabbata*, previously the days were named using the names of pagan gods.³⁴

In the East also there were experiments with tables. Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria (d. AD 232)³⁵ used an eight-year cycle known as an *octaeteris*. It was his custom to send letters to the churches of Egypt announcing the date of Easter. He believed emphatically that Easter should not be celebrated until after the equinox.³⁶

³² Ogg, *DCP*, 1, *CCSL*, Vol. III, 248-249, “In it, not forsaken, but rather inspired and enlightened by God.

³³ Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, 6:30, 24-25, 273.

³⁴ Since imperial times, the days of the week had carried the names of the pagan gods. They reminded humans of the gods who ruled the earth from their thrones on the ominous, unblinking orbs of the planets. However, the practice of *DPC* must have only met with very limited acceptance, since in the sixth century, Caesarius of Arles (d. A.D. 542) following Augustine, urged Christians to count the days of the week from the Lord’s Day, as *prima feria*, *secunda feria*. This manner of naming the days had been adopted only in Portugal. Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 150.

³⁵ Dionysius became bishop about AD 189. The length of his episcopate corresponds with the eras of Popes Victor, Zephyrinus, Callistus, and Urban.

³⁶ Eusebius, “*Church History*, 7.20-22,” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. I, Louis Duchesne, 20.

This is the first recorded Christian reference to an astronomical concept in determining the Paschal term.³⁷

2.2.3 *De ratione paschali* ³⁸

The equinox is the point on the celestial sphere where the celestial equator intersects the ecliptic. Twice a year the sun, which moves in the ecliptic, crosses the celestial equator, once toward the north about 21 March, when it enters the zodiac of Aries (vernal or spring equinox) and once toward the south about 23 September (autumnal equinox). At either of these points of intersection the sun is directly above the equator, and day and night are of equal length everywhere.³⁹ To determine the correct date of Easter in any given year, the first step is to know when the spring equinox will occur. In the past this has not always been an easy task. Easter calendars and tables based on different lunar and solar cycle were invented with a view to lessening or resolving the difficulty of setting the Easter date.

Anatolius of Laodicea towards the year AD 270 composed a highly respected Easter table, from which the church of Alexandria never departed. This calendar consisted of a cycle of 19 years comprising 235 lunations $19 \times 12 = 228 + 7$ intercalated months, called a second Adar (Adar is the twelfth month in the Jewish calendar). These months were added in the third, sixth, eighth, eleventh, fourteenth,

³⁷ McCarthy, and Breen, *The ante Nicene Christian Pasch*, 102.

³⁸ The Paschal Canon of Anatolius is of vital importance in the understanding of the Insular method of calculating the dates of Easter. Anatolius and the apostle John were ultimately considered the authors of the Insular paschal table.

³⁹ Chupungo, *Shaping the Easter Feast*, 43.

seventeenth and nineteenth years.⁴⁰ Intercalation is the normal device to synchronize the months of Nisan with spring, the religious festivals, and with the appropriate seasons of the year. The system of intercalation was regarded as an act of compliance with the command that the feast of the Passover should be kept “at its appointed time from year to year” (Ex. 13.10). This 19-year cycle was subsequently developed into a cycle of ninety-five years 19×5 and became the basis of the Easter table in the west from AD 437 to AD 1581.⁴¹

2.2.4 Further Alexandrian tables

After the Council of Nicea, Athanasius, then a deacon, was given the task of drawing up tables based on the 19-year cycle of Anatolius. These tables of Athanasius were until the middle of the nineteenth century to all intents and purposes lost, but fragments were discovered in an Eastern Orthodox monastery, and can now be found under the heading *Chronicon Athanasianum* in standard texts in Greek and Latin.⁴² These tables contain the dates of Easter from AD 328 to AD 373. This volume also contains the Festal Index and the Festal letters sent by Athanasius, after he became bishop, to the far corners of the then known globe.⁴³

⁴⁰ McCarthy, “Origin of the *Latercus* Paschal Cycle,” 35. McCarthy says that the arrangement of the months of the lunar year in *De ratione paschali* is quite different from that of the Greek Metonic and Kallipic cycles. A. E. Samuel, *Greek and Roman Chronology: Calendars and Year in Classical Antiquity* (Munich: 1972), 29-50.

⁴¹ The Paschal Cycle of Victorius of Aquitaine was written in this year, at the request of Leo the Great. The Gregorian reform of the calendar took place AD 1582, by which time the equinox had slipped back to 11 March. In that year as a result of the Papal Bull, *Inter gravissimas* ten days were removed from the calendar to adjust it to the true solar course.

⁴² *Chronicon Paschale*, PG, Vol. 92, 548, Krusch, *Studien zur der Christlich altermutterlichen Der 84-jährige Ostercyclus und sein Quellen*, I (Leipzig: 1880). 337-343.

⁴³ Athanasius “*Chronicon Athanasianum*,” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. IV, 501.

Alexandria perfected the nineteen-year cycle of Anatolius in the tables of Theophilus and Cyril. These tables differed from the tables of the West in the length of the cycle, but also in their basic criteria. Theophilus (d. AD 412) succeeded Athanasius as bishop of Alexandria. In a letter addressed to the emperor Theodosius he says that he has applied himself to diligent study of Scripture for the purpose of ascertaining the truth. Once again the author claims biblical exegesis and divine authority as the rationale for these new tables. The result was tables of one hundred years, commencing at AD 375 and extending to AD 475. With the publication of these tables Alexandria signalled a final and definitive decision to observe Easter only on those dates calculated by their own 19-year table.⁴⁴

Cyril of Alexandria, a nephew of Theophilus, compiled a 95-year Easter-table, AD 437 to AD 531. The African *Praefatio Cyrilli* (ca. AD 450) claims that the Apostles observed Easter on a Sunday between 21 March and 25 April, this table was known and used in the Latin world.⁴⁵

2.2.5 *Laterculus of Augustalis*

Another widely known cycle the *Latercus Augustalis* consisting of 84 years (28*3) was used in Rome in the third and fourth century. The author of this table is unknown, though Charles Jones says he was probably African.⁴⁶ The table begins in AD 213 and runs for one hundred years to AD 312. The *latercus* is based on an 84-

⁴⁴ Ó Cróinín, "New Light on Palladius," *Chronology*, 31.

⁴⁵ Bedae, *BOT*, 38-49. "There are two major identifications of this table the words of Dionysius Exiguus and the *Prologus Cyrilli*"

⁴⁶ Bedae, *BOT*, 15-16.

year cycle, which would create a perpetual table of Easters, since the date for Easter Sundays recur in order after 84 years. The year AD 213 was chosen for the beginning because in that year the Paschal data agreed with the established date of the Crucifixion, 25 March, in the Consulship of the Gemini, which he set as AD 28.

The table gave way to another 84-year table used in Rome (AD 312-342). In this table the criteria of Augustalis was changed so that Easter would never come before the Roman equinox, 25 March, and the moon of Easter Sunday varied from *xiv* to *xx*.⁴⁷ These two 84-cycles were the basis of many arguments and attempts to understand Insular Easter dating. Bruno Krusch researched these tables and concluded that an 84-year cycle was used in the Insular Church based on these Roman 84-year cycles.⁴⁸

2.2.6 Roman Easter limits

The history of Roman calculations makes it clear that Roman computists never understood what was meant by a ‘year’. The Orientals and the Council clearly meant the Hebrew lunar year. The Roman computists maintained that the equinox was the early limit for Easter Sunday, whereas the Oriental churches maintained that the equinox was the early limit for the Easter full moon, or fourteen Nisan. If Easter is to be the Sunday after a particular date in the lunar month, it will vary a full thirty-five days that is, twenty-eight days of Julian month on which a lunar date falls, plus seven days to accommodate the following Sunday. The Romans did not realise that to

⁴⁷ The 84-year cycle is a true Paschal cycle in the sense that the dates of Easter repeat themselves every 84-years.

⁴⁸ Bruno Krusch, *Studien I*, 98.

celebrate on Sunday, to preserve their lunar limits, and hold on to their equinoctial date of 25 March, their paschal term had to be extended. The Roman Paschal term was only 31 days, and their paschal limits 26 March to 21 April. Pope Leo cited these limits as an ancient regulation from which the Romans could not depart:

For we know that viii kal. May exceeds the limits set by a powerful ancient convention, but in our cycles it is legitimately fixed for xv Kal May for by an ancient law the festival day cannot deviate from the xi Kl April up to the xi Kal May.⁴⁹

In another letter to Paschasinus Bishop of Lilybaeum, Bishop Leo writes:

For, whereas the next Easter is to be held by God's goodness on March 23rd, the year after on 12 April, the year after that on 4 April, Theophilus of holy memory has fixed 24 April to be observed in 455, which we find to be quite contrary to the rule of the Church our Easter cycles. Easter that year is to be kept on 17 April.⁵⁰

The first appearance of this regulation occurs in the *Syriac Chronicle*,⁵¹ which states that in the year AD 349 the Alexandrians had set Easter on 23 April,⁵² but when they

⁴⁹ Pope Saint Leo, "Epistulae CXXI," *NPNFa*, II, Vol. XII, 90. This letter was written to Julian the Bishop of Alexandria, asking him for further information regarding the proper date of Easter in 455. Krusch, *Studien*, IV, *Incipit Epistola Papae Leonis Ad Marcianum Imperatorem per Darianum*, "Nam diem octavum kalendarium maiarum ab eo cognoscimus praefinitum, qui nimiae limitem antiquae constitutionis excedit, cum alli xv. Kl maias huic festivitati deputaverint diem; siquidem ab xi. Kl ap usque in xi. Kl maias legitimum spatium sit praefixum." The dates - viii kl mai. is 24 April., xi kl mai., 21 April, xv kl mai., 17 April, xi kl. ap., 22 March. See Appendix I.

⁵⁰ Pope Leo the Great, "Epistulae, LXXXVIII, IV," *NPNFa*, II, Vol. XII, 69, Krusch, *Studien*, *Leo Episcopus Pascasino Episcopo Lilibetano*, 256-7. "Nam cum venturum pascha propitio deo decimum kalendarum aprilium die sit tenendum, sequenti autem prid id ap, tertio prid non ap, quarto sanctae memoriae Theophilus vii. Kl mai as constituit observandum, quod a regula ecclesiastica penitus invenimus alienum; in nostris autem paschalibus cyclis quod bene nosse dignaris, xv. Kl maias eius anni pascha celebrandum esse sit scribturn."

⁵¹ *Syriac Chronicle*, now in the British Library, narrates the most important deeds in the life of Bishop Athanasius, gives part or the whole of many of his Paschal Letters, and contains an index of Easters. Angelo Mai published a Latin translation of this text reprinted in *PG*, 26, cols. 1351.

⁵² Henri Leclercq, "Paques," *Dictionnaire D'Archeologie Chretienne et De Liturgie*, Tome, XIII, Deuxième partie, eds. Fernand Cabrol, Henri Leclercq (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1939), col. 1545-1573.

consulted Rome, the later objected on the grounds that it was outside their Easter limits, which they had inherited from St. Peter (*ab traditionam a Petro apostolo.*)⁵³

2.2.7 Victorious

As shown in the letters of Pope Leo, Rome and Alexandria did not always agree on the date of Easter, differences arising in AD 349 and AD 444. In the former Alexandria agreed to celebrate Easter with Rome on 26 March, but in the latter case Alexandria could not be persuaded, they celebrated on 23 April, a date which was outside the Roman Paschal limits 26 March–21 April. In AD 444 Pope Leo wishing to avert a crisis of disunity agreed to celebrate according to the Alexandrian date, the latter insisting that theirs was the true canonical date. He communicated this decision and the ‘correct’ date to all the priests of the Western Church. Pope Leo, tired of the constant wrangling over the Paschal date, detailed his archdeacon Honorius to solve the problem. Honorius requested Victorious to draw up new tables for use in Rome. These tables did not solve the problem, but created additional ones.

Victorious confused the issue by setting *luna xvi* to *luna xxii* as the limits of the Paschal moon, and by providing dual sets of dates, one which he called Alexandrian and the other Latin dates. Those dates which he described as Alexandrian were in fact dates which were celebrated nowhere in the world, and those he termed Latin dates

⁵³ Bede, *EH*, 3.25, 186-192. The question of which tradition was correct, the Petrine tradition, or the tradition of the Apostle John and Anatolius is a point of major disagreement and controversy between Columbanus and the bishops of Gaul. This major controversy surfaced again at the Synod of Whitby AD 664, between Colman, Bishop of Lindisfarne, and Wilfrid, later bishop of York.

were in fact the Alexandrian dates.⁵⁴ Victorius sitting unhelpfully on the fence left the choice of the date to the pontiff. A pontifical letter was issued every year telling the correct date of Easter, but it did not always reach the provinces. There is testimony from Gregory of Tours, that as late as AD 577 Spain celebrated an Easter that was neither Latin nor Greek.⁵⁵ In AD 590 Gregory testifies that he celebrated the Latin Easter while many around him were celebrating the Greek Easter.⁵⁶

It appears that Victorius was unfit for his task and did not have a sound grasp of the principles of *computus*. Bartholomew MacCarthy was the first to show that although Victorius used a cycle of 532 years he did not really understand the principles behind this Great Paschal Cycle.⁵⁷ Columbanus' letters show that the Victorian cycle had been received, and found wanting, in Bangor before his departure from there (ca AD 590). Columbanus refers to the Victorian table as being 'laughable,' and as scorned by Irish computists.⁵⁸ Cummian, some forty years later, records that when the southern Irish decided to adopt the Victorian cycle, or some adaptation of it, the computists of Iona vigorously attacked them.⁵⁹

Victorius' errors arose from three causes.

⁵⁴ Charles W. Jones, "The Victorian and Dionysiac Paschal Tables," *Speculum*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Oct. 1934), 408-421. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín has an interesting interpretation of the use of the Victorian table in Ireland connecting it to the letter of Pope John accusing the Irish of heresy. His interpretation of the data provides a fresh approach to this letter.

⁵⁵ Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin Books, 1974), 274.

⁵⁶ Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, 581.

⁵⁷ Bartholomew MacCarthy, *Annals of Ulster*, IV, lxxxv.

⁵⁸ Walker, "Letter, I, LL 10-15," *SCO*, 5.

⁵⁹ Cummian, *DCP*, LL 8-12, 58.

2.2.7.1 Victorius lunar limits

The Council of Nicea (AD 325) decreed that the first lunar month of Easter (Hebrew Nisan) must begin so that its fourteenth day fell on or after the spring equinox, 21 March. This was the date of the vernal equinox by Alexandrian reckoning. Victorius disregarded this rule and began his lunar month on 5 March, which was too early. The Alexandrians began their lunar month of Nisan on 8 March or later. Victorius took this rule from the old Roman method of computation. From that method he also took another old criterion, the Easter moon should have limits 16-22 (*luna xvi-xxii*). While he professed to be following the Alexandrians, he was not, since their lunar limits were (*luna xv-xxi*).

2.2.7.2 Victorius *saltus lunae*

The Alexandrians inserted their *saltus* in the last year of the 19-year cycle. Victorius inserted his ‘moon’s leap’ in the sixth year of the cycle, thereby causing more confusion. The first six years of his cycle agreed with the Alexandrian dates, but after that his dates were always one day ahead. Errors arising out of this occurred in the years AD 482, 522, 526, 546, 550, 577, 594, 597, 617, 621, 641, and 645.⁶⁰ So at least three errors would have occurred during the lifetime of Columbanus, who refers to the table as being only lately written, a reference to its composition in AD 457. The one advantage of Victorius table was that it could run for five-hundred-and-thirty-two years.

⁶⁰ Ó Cróinín, “‘New heresy for old:’ Pelagianism in Ireland and the papal letter of 640,” *Chronology*, 91.

2.2.7.3 Differences in years one to six of his table

The third difference between Alexandrian and Victorian table would occur in years one to six of the cycle where his lunar limits *xvi-xxii* conflicted with the ‘orthodox’ limits *xv-xxi*. Errors of this type occurred in AD 475, 476, 495, 516, and 590.⁶¹

2.2.7.4 Rationale behind table

In the prologue to his table Victorius says there are three moons of importance: the full moon of Creation, the full moon of Passover, and the full moon of the Crucifixion. The full moon of Creation should have been year zero but Victorius put it at year one. He then set the Passover, *Anno Mundi* 3690, and the Passion A.M. 5229, but actually it was A.M. 5230.⁶² Then he set definite days for these full moons. He set Creation in spring following pseudo Cyprian, Hilarius, and other African computists. To make his figures agree, he set the full moon on the fourth day after Creation, so that *luna xiv* would occur on Wednesday, March 29, thereby showing that he did not understand the tradition that the Creation of the sun and moon occurred on the fourth day at the equinox. This theory was based on an equinox of 25 March, but Victorius was using the Nicene equinox of 21 March. The

⁶¹ Ibid., 91.

⁶² For a discussion on the *Anno Mundi* dating in the Victorian Cycle see, Cummian, *DCP*, eds. Maura Walsh and Dáibhí, Ó Cróinín, footnote 206 in the Latin text. Also Bartholomew MacCarthy, *Annals of Ulster*, Vol. IV, lxxxv.

Victorian table was adopted in Gaul at the Council of Orleans (AD 541).⁶³

2.2.8 Dionysius

According to Jones, Dionysius' contributions to Easter-calculation were slight but accurate. He copied the last 19-year cycle in the table of Cyril of Alexandria (d. AD 444). Then he extended the table for a period of five lunar cycles, or ninety-five years, AD 532 to AD 627. In the Cyrillian table the calendar years were reckoned by an era that started with the reign of Diocletian, equal to AD 284. As Dionysius did not favour a calculation based on one of the leading persecutors of the Church he adopted a specifically Christian era. "I did not wish to preserve the memory of the impious persecutor in my cycles," he said, "but rather chose to denote the times from the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ."⁶⁴ the *Annus Domini*, 'the Year of the Lord' or 'the Year of Grace,' and *anno ab incarnatione nostri*, 'from the Incarnation.' From this simple act developed our Christian era. Dionysius attached a translation of the computistical canons of the Alexandrians, and sent the work, together with a dedicatory epistle, to Bishop Petronius, advocating its adoption for use in the Western Church. We know from the letter of Cumman that the cycle of Dionysius was used in Ireland.⁶⁵

⁶³ Kenneth Harrison, *The Framework of Anglo Saxon history to AD 900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 58. He was the first to suggest that the Victorian cycle was adopted 84 years after its introduction in AD 457, in all likelihood they were officially adopted after a period of eighty-four years had been allowed for comparison, that is they were adopted in AD 541 at the Council of Orleans.

⁶⁴ Kenneth Harrison, "The cycle of Dionysius," *The Framework of Anglo Saxon history*, 34.

⁶⁵ Cumman, *DCP*, LL 202-230, 85-89. He lists this cycle among the ten cycles that were known or used in Ireland by the seventh century.

Cummian quotes the false statement of Dionysius that a cycle was composed at the Nicene Council.⁶⁶

2.3 Insular Context

2.3.1 The Insular Church

The first mention of Christianity in Ireland is in *Chronica minora* of Prosper of Auxerre. An entry for the year AD 429 says that it was at the instigation of Palladius, that Pope Celestine I sent Germanus to combat the Pelagian heresy in Britain.⁶⁷ Another entry for AD 431 informs us that Palladius “*Ad Scottos in Christum, credentes ordinates a papa Caelestino Palladius Primus episcopus mittui*”⁶⁸

Commenting on the work of Pope Celestine, Prosper later adds:

He (Celestine) has been, however, no less energetic in freeing the British provinces from this same disease (the Pelagian heresy): he removed from that hiding-place certain enemies of grace who had occupied the land of their origin; also, having

⁶⁶ Cummian, *DGP*, LL, 233-243, 89.

⁶⁷ The Pelagian controversy shows a body of educated Christians in Britain in the first half of the fifth century. Pelagius was a Briton and it seems obtained some of his education in Britain; his writings show that his education was extensive. He had a sound and exhaustive knowledge of the Bible, *PL*, Vol. 51, Col. 744, 594-595. “Agricola Pelagianus, Severiani Pelagiani episcopi filius, Ecclesias Britanniae dogmatis sui insinuatione corruptit. Sed ad actionem Palladii Diaconi, Britannos ad catholicam fidem dirigit.” “Agricola Pelagius son of a bishop corrupts the British church with his insidious doctrine. But by the action of the deacon Palladius, the catholic faith of the Britons was saved.” There is evidence that the Irish used some of the commentaries of Pelagius on the scriptures; though they were never true Pelagians. See Ó Cróinín, “New light on Palladius” *Chronology*, 87

⁶⁸ “Pope Celestine ordained Palladius to be their first bishop, and sent him to those Irish who were believers in Christ.” “Ad Scotos in Christum credentes ordinatur a papa Coelestino Palladius, et primus episcopus mittitur.” *PL*, Vol. 51, 595. Translation mine. Discussed in James Kenney, *Sources for the Early History*, 165, n. 40, John J. Contreni, “The Irish Contribution to the European Classroom,” in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress on Celtic Studies: Held at Oxford from 10–15 July, 1983*. eds., D. Elis Evans, John G. Griffith and E .M. Jope (Oxford: Ellis Evans, 1986), 81-82. Próinséas Ní Catháin and Michael Richter, eds., *Ireland and Christendom: the Bible and the Mission* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), 311-331, and D. A. Binchy, “Patrick and his biographers,” *Studia Hibernica*, ii (1962), 166

ordained a bishop for the Irish, while he labours to keep the Roman island (Britain) catholic, he has also made the barbarian island (Ireland) Christian.⁶⁹

This suggests, and is now generally accepted by scholars, that there were Christians living in Ireland before the coming of Patrick.⁷⁰ But whatever may be the origins of Irish Christianity, Patrick holds pride of place as the Apostle of Ireland. Patrick's *Confessio* is the earliest known work of Latin literature to be written outside the frontiers of the empire.⁷¹ Kathleen Hughes describes Christianity reaching Ireland in the fifth century from different sources, from Britain and from the continent.⁷² She sees Gaul, especially Tours and Auxerre as exerting considerable influence on the Irish Church. Ó Cróinín claims that there is no evidence that he can discover that the Gallic church did not agree with the Roman church in the fourth and fifth century. Ó

⁶⁹ “Nec uero segniore cura ab hoc eodem morbo Britannias liberauit, quando, quosdam inimicos gratiae solum suae originis occupantes etiam ab illo secreto exclusit Oceani, et ordinato Scotis episcopo, [*scilicet* Palladio] dum Roman insulam studet seruare catholicam, fecit etiam barbaram christianam.” *PL*, Vol. 51, *Contra Collatorem*, 21, Col. 363, 271. English translation, from T. M. Charles-Edwards, “Palladius, Prosper, and Leo the Great: Mission and Primatial Authority,” David N. Dumville, ed. *St. Patrick, AD 493-1993* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 1993), 1.

⁷⁰ Around the time of Palladius' mission it was a general practice to compare 84-year and 19-year cycles, and it is this practice that is found in the prologue to Patrick's table. McCarthy adds that in his view the reason for the use of the 84-year cycle is not so much that they are truly cyclic, but the length of the paschal term, 29 days as distinct from 35 days of the 19-year cycle. McCarthy, “Origin of the *Latercus* Paschal Cycle of the Insular Celtic Church,” *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 28 (Winter 1944), 29, n. 18.

⁷¹ Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 131.

⁷² Kathleen Hughes, “The church in Irish society, 400–800,” *A New History of Ireland: Prehistoric and Early Ireland*, ed. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín. Oxford, University Press, 2005, 301, Hughes says Cassian of Marseilles and Honorius of Lerins made a considerable impact on the Irish church in the sixth century. Martin of Tours (d. 397) was also extremely popular in Ireland. Clare Stancliffe sees Britain as the first home of monasticism in these isles, probably reaching Britain from Gaul at the end of the fourth or during the fifth century. Gaul was the home of two major monastic movements, Martin of Tours and John Cassian. Clare Stancliffe, “Christianity amongst the Britons, Dalriadan Irish and Picts,” *New Cambridge Medieval History, c500-c700*, ed. Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 439. Even into the seventh century there were strong links between the Church of Britain and Gaul. There was a Gallican bishop in Sussex at the time of the Synod of Whitby (AD 664). See Bede, *EH*, 3.19. This article was written in 1974, and many developments have taken place in the research of the early history of Ireland since then, and so should be read with caution.

Cróinín suggests that the paschal system prevailing in Britain in the fourth century and surviving to the seventh century was introduced from Britain into Ireland and had taken root among the Christian communities there before the arrival of Patrick.⁷³ On the other hand he does not accept the thesis that Patrick spent some time in Auxerre, Gaul or Lerins.

By AD 500 it is likely that Christianity had been preached throughout Ireland, but it was far from certain that it had been embraced by a majority of the population.⁷⁴

Columbanus clearly sees the Irish tradition as stemming from the apostle Peter and Paul:

For all we Irish, inhabitants of the world's edge, are disciples of Saints Peter and Paul and of all the disciples who wrote the sacred canon by the Holy Ghost, and we accept nothing outside the evangelical and apostolic teaching [...] but the Catholic Faith, as it was delivered to you first, who are the successors of the holy apostles, is maintained unbroken.⁷⁵

During the fourth and fifth centuries, as the Empire went into decline, communications throughout the Roman Empire became difficult. The Visigoths and the Huns plundered and laid waste much of Italy, Gaul and Spain. This factor together with the transfer of the capital of the Empire to Constantinople contributed to the deterioration of the Roman Empire. According to Kenney, this decentralisation was chiefly responsible for the disagreement between the Insular church on one-side and

⁷³ Ó Cróinín's work is also earlier than that of McCarthy, and so has been superseded by his research.

⁷⁴ Clare Stancliffe, "Religion and society in Ireland," 399. See also Joseph Duffy, *Patrick in His Own Words, Confessio*, 34.

⁷⁵ Walker, "Letter 5.3," LL 24-30, *SCO*, 38-39. "Nos enim sanctorum Petri et Pauli et omnium discipulorum divinum canonem spiritu sancto scribentium discipuli sumus, toti Iberi, ultimi habitatores mundi, nihil extra evangelicam et apostolicam doctrinam recipientes: [...] sed fides catholica, sicut a vobis primum, sanctorum videlicet apostolorum successoribus, tradita est inconcussa tenetur."

the continental church on the other. In the sixth and seventh centuries when communication with the continental churches became easier, it became evident that the Insular Christians were still employing and venerating almost as sacred dogma a system of Easter-reckoning that was now long forgotten on the Continent.⁷⁶ This claim does not now stand. The research and evidence provided by Daniel McCarthy backed by citations from Aldhelm and also the indirect witness of Columbanus now attributes the Insular *computus* to Sulpicius Severus, the author of the *Life of St Martin of Tours, Dialogues* and a *World Chronicle*. His interest in chronology makes him ideally suited to tackle the intricacies of the *computus*.

2.3.2 Monastic schools and the computus

The Irish monastic schools of the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries were renowned for their learning. The era of the great founder-saints of the famous monasteries in Ireland generally have obits falling between AD 537 and AD 637 in the Irish annals. Ciarán of Clonmacnois on the Shannon, and Finnian, founder of Clonard, are recorded as dying of the plague in AD 549. Comgal, founder of the austere monastery of Bangor where Columbanus was trained, Columba, the founder of Derry, Durrow and Iona, Kevin the founder of Glendalough, and Carthach, founder of Lismore are all legendary names.⁷⁷ The annalistic evidence from this period reveals a contemporary enthusiasm for the monastic life, corroborated by Patrick “the sons and daughters of Scoto-Irish chieftains are seen to be monks and virgins dedicated to

⁷⁶ James Kenney, *Sources for the Early History of Ireland: Ecclesiastical. An introduction and guide*, Vol. 1 (Dublin: Pádraic Ó Táilliúir, 1979), 158.

⁷⁷ Stancliffe, “Religion and society in Ireland,” 403-404.

Christ,⁷⁸ and Columbanus, writing in 600, refers “to the problem of monks, who desiring a stricter life, leave the places of their original profession.”⁷⁹

These monastic schools welcomed scholars from England and the continent. Their curriculum consisted of the *trivium* of biblical exegesis, grammar, and the study of the *computus*. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín describes the *computus* as one of the three principal foundation stones of the monastic schools, he notes that “(the *computus*) would have enjoyed a permanent place in the curriculum even if the winds of controversy had never fanned those flames.”⁸⁰ The evidence that the Insular church used an 84-year cycle is well documented. Columbanus, Cummian and Bede all bear witness to an 84-year cycle. Bede writing in *EH* says that the “Irish did not keep Easter at the ‘correct time’, but kept it according to an 84-year cycle with lunar limits *xiv-xx*.”⁸¹ For Bede and all who followed Roman principles, the “correct time” was the time laid down by certain canons of the Church. Bede refers to the Irish as “barbarous and simple being so that they had not learnt when the first day after the Sabbath, which is now called the Lord’s Day, should occur.”⁸² That is they did not keep the Sunday following *luna* fourteen but in some case celebrated on that day contrary to the ruling of the councils of the Church.

⁷⁸ “Fillii Scottorum et filiae reulorum monachi et uirgines Xpisti esse uidentur.” St Patrick, *Confessio*, 41, translated by Duffy, *Patrick in his Own Words*, 118-119.

⁷⁹ Walker, “Letter 1. LL, 35-38,” *SCO*, 9.

⁸⁰ Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, ed., *De ratione computandi*, 139.

⁸¹ Bede, *EH*, 2.2, 104.

⁸² Bede, *EH*, 3.4, 149.

In the first stage of the controversy between Celtic and continental Christianity, a stage that began with the mission of Columbanus in Gaul and continued into the eighth century, there were many points of friction: tonsure, liturgy, method of administering baptism, method of Episcopal ordination, the whole system of church organisation and discipline. But the subject, which was made the gauge of the battle was the method of determining the date of Easter.⁸³

2.3.3 Bede as witness to the Paschal controversy

Bede describes the arrival of Columba in Britain AD 565, in the ninth year of the Pictish King, Bride son of Meilchon, with some criticism. “In observing Easter they followed doubtful rules, since they were isolated and had no one to acquaint them with the synodical decrees about keeping Easter.”⁸⁴ Aidan, the Abbot of Lindisfarne, also earns Bede’s censure regarding his liturgical practice and “the keeping of Easter at the proper time.” Because of Bede’s great regard for Aidan’s holiness of life and his obvious zeal for the mission of Christ, he is ready to excuse this fault, “since he believed, worshipped and taught exactly as we do, namely the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension into heaven of the man Jesus Christ.”⁸⁵ However, decrees and synods must be obeyed. This raises the question, how much of the Easter controversy is a question of ecclesiastical authority and jurisdiction, rather than the authority of the scriptures, and the laws of nature? Clare Stancliffe distinguishes the Irish approach to ecclesiastical authority as unlike that of their

⁸³ James Kenney, *Sources for the Early History of Ireland*, 210.

⁸⁴ Bede, *EH*, 3.4, 149.

⁸⁵ Bede, *EH*, 3.5, 150.

continental counterparts.⁸⁶ Indeed Columbanus also seems to propose such a distinction:

Although conformity on Easter was eventually achieved, in certain respects the Irish church continued to develop its own synthesis with Irish law, and to evolve rather differently in organisational terms. The controversy also posed the linked questions of how decisions should be reached and where authority should lie. One can perhaps see amongst the Irish a readiness to seek the answer in scriptural exegesis and in discussion in synods, rather than in decisions reached by those in positions of authority as office-holder, i.e. as bishops or popes.⁸⁷

Contrary to the idea given by some writers, notably Bede, the Papacy did not prescribe the use of any table until the eighth century.⁸⁸

Augustine of Canterbury was sent by Pope Gregory to ‘the British believing in Christ.’ The dealings of Augustine of Canterbury with the authorities of the Insular church reveals a willingness to sanction some of their customs provided they agreed with him on three points: to keep Easter at the correct time, to complete the sacrament of Baptism, and to join with him in preaching the word of God to the English.⁸⁹ The Insular representatives saw Augustine’s manner as haughty and arrogant and refused

⁸⁶ *The Collectio, Canonum Hibernensis*, ed., Friedrich Wilhelm Wasserschleben, *Die irische Kanonensammlung* (Leipzig, 1885). These canons were promulgated by various Irish synods of the sixth and seventh centuries. The *Collectio* was drawn up in the early eighth century; there are no authors in the *Collectio* later than Theodore of Canterbury and Adomnán (d. 704), certain passages of this *Collectio* do not appear to be ecclesiastical at all. See Clare Stancliffe, “Religions and society in Ireland,” 405.

⁸⁷ Clare Stancliffe, “Religion and society in Ireland,” 416. Columbanus in his second letter, refers to a synod called possibly at Chalon sur Saône, to discuss the Easter question, which he did not attend. Also Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 391.

⁸⁸ It is good to keep in mind when discussing Popes and the Papacy at this period that Rome was only one among five Patriarchies; Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Constantinople, Rome being the only patriarchy in the West, and in the fourth century Rome was also the imperial capital. With the decline of the temporal power in the West and the removal of the seat of the Empire to Constantinople, the political and religious authority of Rome grew. See Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*,

⁸⁹ F. E. Warren, *Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church*, Studies in Celtic History IX, revised Jane Stevenson, 2d (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1987) for a description of the other liturgical practices on which the Insular and the continental church did not agree.

to have dealings with him. Augustine's successor Laurence sought to extend his jurisdiction to the inhabitants of Britain.

Having learned that in their own country the life and practice of the Irish and of the Britons were in many respects unorthodox – particularly in the observance of Easter [...] he wrote them a letter jointly with his fellow-bishops, urging them to join in maintaining the unity, peace, and Catholic customs of the Christian Church established throughout the world.⁹⁰

The rationale for the keeping the Easter feast according to Roman principles in the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries is summed up in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. Nechtan, King of the Picts followed the calendar of the Insular Church, now converted to the Roman method of calculation and wrote to Abbot Coelfrid (ca. AD 710). He seeks an explanation of the Roman method of calculating the date of Easter, to enable him to refute those who object to the new (Roman) method of calculation:

We are commended to keep the full moon of the Paschal month after the equinox, so that first the sun may make day longer than night and then the moon may show the whole light of her face to the world because first 'the sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings' that is the Lord Jesus, overcame all the darkness of death by the triumph of His resurrection and then, having ascended into heaven sent down the Spirit from on high and so filled His Church which is often symbolically described as the moon, with the light of inward grace.⁹¹

Abbot Coelfrid in reply warns that whoever celebrates Easter before the equinox allies himself with those who believe they can be saved without the assistance of Christ's grace, a clear reference to the Pelagian heresy.⁹² By the second quarter of the fifth century Pelagianism had made powerful inroads into Britain. Irish

⁹⁰ Bede, *EH*, 2.4, 109.

⁹¹ Bede, *EH*, 5.21, 315.

⁹² A succinct description of the characteristics of Pelagian doctrine is given in *Christ in Celtic Christianity, Britain and Ireland from the Fifth to the Tenth Century* Michael W. Herren and Shirley Ann Brown (Woodbridge, Suffolk, The Boydell Press, 2002), 5. The principal defining feature of this heresy was the assertion of the natural goodness of human nature and the possibility of a sinless life, and the denial of transmitted original sin.

medieval writers frequently quoted from his scripture commentaries. One of the earliest influences of Pelagian thought can be found in Columbanus' *Sermon XI*, where he says, "For if he prostitutes for the opposite employment what he has received from the breath of God, and corrupts the blessings of his nature." Herren and Brown maintain that the words 'blessing of nature' can be construed as innately Pelagian.⁹³ Dáibhí Ó Cróinín denies that the Irish were true Pelagians, as they did not adopt Pelagius' theology.⁹⁴ There is, however, one letter to the northern Irish clergy from the pope-elect John and three others of the Roman curia, in 640, on the subject of the date of Easter and the revival of Pelagianism:⁹⁵

And this also we have learnt that the poison of the Pelagian heresy has of late revived amongst you; we therefore exhort you utterly to put away this kind of poisonous and criminal superstition from your minds. You cannot be unaware that this execrable heresy has been condemned; and not only has it been abolished for some two hundred years but it is daily condemned by us and buried beneath our perpetual ban. We exhort you then not to rake up the ashes amongst you of those whose weapons have been burnt. For who can fail to execrate the proud and impious attempt of those who say that man can live without sin and that, not by the grace of God, but by his own will [...] For all other men [except Christ] were born with original sin and are known to bear the mark of Adam's transgression [...]⁹⁶

⁹³ Michael W. Herren, Shirley Ann Brown, *Christ in Celtic Christianity*, 89. See also Walker, *SCO*, 107.

⁹⁴ Ó Cróinín "New heresy for old': Pelagianism in Ireland and the papal letter of 640," 87. For a different interpretation of this letter refer to Kenneth Harrison, "Letter from Rome to the Irish clergy, AD 640," *Pertia*, vol. 3 (1984), 222-29.

⁹⁵ Ó Cróinín "New heresy for old': Pelagianism in Ireland and the papal letter of 640," *Chronology*, 87. Bede says that a letter had arrived in Rome from Ireland some time before AD 640. The letter was addressed to Pope Severinus, but before he could open the letter the pope died. In the interim between his death and the election of his successor Rome was administered by Johannes *primicerius*, Johannes *arcipresbyter* and Johannes *consiliarius*. The contents of the letter so disturbed the Roman administrators that they felt they had to reply immediately. "Scripta, quae perlatores ad sanctae memoriae Seuerinum papam adduxerant, eo de hac luce migrante, reciproca responsa ad ea, quae postulatae fuerant, siluerunt. Quibus reseratis, ne diu tardae quaestionis caligo indiscussa rameret." Charles Plummer, ed., *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum; Historiam Abbatum; Epistolam ad Ecgbertum / ad fidem codicum manuscriptorum denuo recognovit commentario tam critico quam historico instruxit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 123.

⁹⁶ Bede, *EH*, 2.19, 138, 139.

This letter quoted in Bede's *EH* accuses the Irish of being both Quartodecimans and Pelagian.⁹⁷ The Irish were never Quartodecimans, since their observance was always dominical. There is, however, a considerable body of evidence suggesting such a perception among the *Romani*. Such an accusation had serious theological implications for the Insular Church. This charge of Quatrodecimanism will be dealt with in chapter four.

2.4 Insular Easter dating

To look at the Easter controversy in a single dimension only and to try to pigeonhole it into a single category ignores the fact that this was a multi-faceted and complex debate, which affected people rich and poor, secular and ecclesiastic, for around 700 years.⁹⁸

Time and Theology are the twin pillars on which this thesis rests. It seeks to explore how scriptural interpretations led to theological and computistical differences between the Insular and continental churches. In the fifth, sixth and seventh century the Insular church differed from Rome in its method of calculating the date of Easter. Questions regarding the Irish 84-year cycle have occupied scholars over many years. A review of the literature reveals advances, during the recent past, in our understanding of the techniques of *computus* used in the Insular church. The pioneers in this technical field of research were writers of the calibre of Bruno Krusch,⁹⁹ J. E.

⁹⁷ Bede, *EH*, 3.19. There is a citation of this text in the *Munich Computus* constituting the sole native documentary evidence that the Irish received the letter. This citation also quotes a sentence from the letter omitted by Bede that "*luna xiiii* 'belonged to the shadows.' Obviously this letter is a criticism of Irish practices and suggests they were Quartodeciman. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, "A seventh-century Irish computus from the circle of Cummiánus," *Chronology*, 103-104.

⁹⁸ Julie Purcell, *The Easter Controversy: a new perspective on an old debate*, unpublished MA Thesis (Cork: Department of History, University College of Cork, 2001), 5

⁹⁹ Bruno Krusch, *Studien I*.

Schwartz,¹⁰⁰ D. J. O’Connell,¹⁰¹ Charles Jones¹⁰² and Bartholomew MacCarthy.¹⁰³ Each of these writers attempted to reconstruct the Irish cycle from the scant references in the primary sources to which they had access. More recently, last two decades of the twentieth century, the work of Dáibhí Ó Cróinín has considerably enriched our knowledge of this subject.

The letter of Cumman (AD 632) to Ségeine, fifth abbot of Iona (AD 623-652), lists ten cycles in use in Ireland in the seventh century, namely the cycle of St Patrick, Anatolius, Theophilus, Dionysius, Cyril, Victorius, Pachomius, and the 84-year cycle. Other cycles, which were known to be used in the Insular church, were the Munich *laterculus*, Padua *latercus*, St Columbanus, Bede, *De Temporum Ratione*, *Epacts of the Irish Annals*, *Acts of Council of Caesarea*, *Tractate of St Athanasius*.¹⁰⁴ All these cycles attest to the fact that whatever the origins, the lunar limits began on *luna* fourteen, the cycle of Patrick having limits *xiv-xxi*, while most of the others have lunar limits *xiv-xx*, Dionysius *xv-xxi* and Victorius, *xvi-xxii* being the exception in this table. Their paschal terms varied from 21 March – 23 April, to 26 March – 23 April.

¹⁰⁰ Eduard Szwartz, “Christliche und jüdische Ostertafeln (Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, phil-history)” *Klasse. Neue Folge*, 8 no. 6 (Berlin, 1905).

¹⁰¹ D. J. O’Connell, “Easter Cycles in the Early Irish Church,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 66 (Dublin, 1936).

¹⁰² *Bedae, BOT*, Introduction.

¹⁰³ Bartholomew MacCarthy, ed., *Annals of Ulster*, Vol IV (Dublin: A.Thom, 1887-1901).

¹⁰⁴ Cumman, *DCP*, 87. See also McCarthy, “The Origin of the *Latercus* Paschal Cycle of the Insular Celtic Churches,” 26.

2.4.1 Early research on Insular tables

The 84-year cycle was a *laterculus*¹⁰⁵ with a 14-year *saltus*. Bruno Krusch, Bartholomew MacCarthy and Charles Jones all accepted that such a table existed. Early evidence for the presence of Christianity in Britain can be found in James Kenney, *Sources for the Early History of Ireland*¹⁰⁶ who describes three British bishops as being present at the Council of Arles, Eborius of York, Restitutus of London and Adefius perhaps of Colchester. He credits these with bringing back to the Insular church, the method of Easter calculation then in vogue in Rome, that is the Paschal tables according to Augustalis. It is an historical fact, that these three bishops did attend the Council of Arles, but other aspects of this theory are no longer acceptable.¹⁰⁷ Krusch and MacCarthy both reconstructed the table. Krusch used data from the *Carthage Computus*, but he had insufficient data at hand to construct a correct table. In order to construct this table he altered the *epacts* found in the *Carthage computus*. The table for Krusch's 84-cycle is given in *Studien zur der Christlich altermitterlichen der 84-jährige Ostercyclus und sein Quellen* (1880). Both Krusch and MacCarthy attempted to reconstruct the *latercus* of the Munich *computus*. Both Schwartz and O'Connell rejected Krusch's reconstruction. MacCarthy's reconstruction, based on an improbable set of coincidences, was likewise rejected.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ *Laterculus*, literally means a small brick or tile. However, when used in connection with Easter tables, it means a list

¹⁰⁶ Kenney, *Sources for the Early History of Ireland*, 158.

¹⁰⁷ This theory originated with Bruno Krusch.

¹⁰⁸ Ó Cróinín, "The 'lost' Irish 84-year Easter table rediscovered," *Chronology*, 67. Writing in the introduction to Bede's *De Opera Temporibus*, 17, n. 4, in 1945 Charles Jones says, "I do not believe that an accurate reconstruction of the Irish Easter is possible with our present knowledge." He

Krusch was also the first of many writers in the past one hundred and fifty years to claim that *Liber Anatolii* was an Irish forgery. Many renowned computists followed Krusch's conclusion and were led astray by it, including MacCarthy, Schwartz, and Jones. The net result of this accusation was that many documents cited by the sixth and seven-century Insular computists were dismissed as forgeries. Daniel McCarthy and Aideen Breen, *Ante Nicene Christian Pasch* (2002) have proved conclusively that *Liber Anatolii* is authentic.

An Irish computist, Bartholomew MacCarthy, in his introduction to the *Annals of Ulster* (1893), developed Krusch's theory, but criticised Krusch on a number of points. MacCarthy drew up an 84-year *latercus* based on the *Munich Computus*, which he dated to AD 718. MacCarthy claimed that he had no Irish precursor in the field of the *computus*, and until the last decade of the twentieth century he had no successor either.¹⁰⁹ Dáibhí Ó Cróinín was the first Irish writer to venture into this field of the *computus* in the early 1980s later collaborating with Daniel McCarthy. Thus collaborating disciplines computer science, and a study of manuscript material of a specific *computus* the Padua *latercus*, provided the information and tools necessary to analyse this manuscript. Both of these scholars have challenged MacCarthy's conclusions on a number of points.¹¹⁰

was, of course, right and it was only with the discovery of the Padua *latercus* that such a reconstruction was possible. For a discussion of and MacCarthy's reconstruction see *Annals of Ulster*, Vol IV, cxix. See O'Connell, "Easter Cycles," 88.

¹⁰⁹ Ó Cróinín, *Chronology*, 1.

¹¹⁰ One point such point - the initial year of the *latercus*, MacCarthy had placed it at AD 381, but from the epactal evidence provided by the *Munich Computus* taken together with epacts of the Padua *latercus* Ó Cróinín and McCarthy dated the initial year to AD 438.

J. Schmid in *Die Osterfestberechnung auf den britischen Inseln vom Anfang des vierten bis zum Ende des achten Jahrhunderts* (1907)¹¹¹ gives a summary of the whole controversy in Britain and Ireland. O'Connell¹¹² warns that this account must be read with caution.

Edward Schwartz upset Krusch's theory and corrected Krusch and Schmid on several important points. He shows that a 14-year *saltus* for Augustalis cannot be deduced from the Carthaginian computer, as the evidence points to a 12-year *saltus*. He also shows that far from being an official third-century paschal canon, the *Laterculus* of Augustalis is probably a fifth-century production. Krusch's theory of an older Roman *Supputatio* was rejected. It could only be asserted at this time (early twentieth century) that there was no proof whatever, that an 84-year cycle with 14-year saltus, and Easter limits March 25-April 21, lunar limits *xiv-xx*, was ever in use in Rome.¹¹³ Schwartz conclusion was, therefore, against Krusch's theory of an old Roman *Supputatio* for the fourth century and fifth century.

It is absolutely unbelievable how anyone with this principle could have broken with Rome in order to receive it again after a few years, and to defend it more than a century later against Alexandria.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ J. Schmid, "Die Osterfestberechnung in der Abendländischen Kirche vom I, Allgemeinen Konzil zu Nicäa bis zum Ende des VIII Jahrhunderts," *Strassburger Theologische Studien*, Band IX, Heft I (Freiburg in Breisgau, 1907). "The Easter celebration in the Alexandrian Church, from the first Council of Nicea till the end of the eighth century." *Strassburg Theological Studies*, Vol. IX, part 1 (1907).

¹¹² D. J. O'Connell, "Easter cycles in the early Irish Church," *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 66 (1936), 67-106.

¹¹³ O'Connell "Easter Cycles in the Early Irish Church," 73.

¹¹⁴ Eduard Schwartz, "Christliche und jüdische Ostertafeln," 66. Es ist absolut unbegreiflich, wie man in Rom mit diesem Princip plötzlich gebrochen haben sollte, um es nach wenigen Jahren wieder aufzunehmen und mehr als ein Jahrhundert hindurch gegen die Alexandriner zu verteidigen.

Other contributions of importance in this field are those of D. J. O’Connell and Charles W. Jones, both of whom give concise accounts of the entire Easter controversy in Ireland. Much of this material is now out of date and their conclusions have been overtaken by the research of more recent computists.¹¹⁵

2.4.2 State of research from 1982-2007

The Munich *Computus* was for many years the main witness to the Insular Easter. O Cróinín describes the manuscript, of which there is only one surviving copy, as badly corrupted. The corrupt nature of this manuscript, together with the lack of any surviving Irish 84-year Easter table, made the reconstructing of a table of Easter dates impossible. Ó Cróinín’s discovery of the ‘lost’ 84-year Easter table in Padua, Biblioteca Antoniana, MS I.27 in 1985 put an end to speculation about such tables. Subsequent analysis by Daniel McCarthy clarified many of the technical characteristics and yielded for the first time the true dates of Easter observed in the Insular churches of the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries. Many discrepancies in the *epacts* in the manuscripts were revealed, some but not all of which could be attributed to scribal errors. The Padua *latercus* was an 84-year cycle providing ‘conclusive’ evidence for an Irish 84-year Easter cycle with a 14-year saltus and with lunar limits *xiv-xx*, and paschal term 26 March–23 April. This provided for the first time a list of Insular Easter dates, commencing in AD 438 and running to AD 521.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Other names could be added to this list of Kathleen Hughes, Kenneth Harrison, and Clare Stancliffe. Since this section is laying the basis for understanding the theological underpinning of chapters three and four, they will not be dealt with here. Their works are used throughout this thesis.

¹¹⁶ Daniel McCarthy, Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, “The ‘Lost’ Irish 84 year Easter table rediscovered,” *Chronology*, 58-75.

Another major breakthrough for the understanding of the Insular Easter was the discovery that *De ratione paschali (Liber Anatolii)* played a pivotal role in the understanding of the Insular *Latercus*. Ó Cróinín and McCarthy showed that the Padua *latercus* is uniquely dependent on the lunar table in *DRP*. Further research by Ó Cróinín in the Bodleian Library, MS 309 brought to light a dating clause that showed Bede's own *computus* as a copy of a *computus* compiled in Ireland in 658.¹¹⁷ The nature of the links between Rufinus and Sulpicius, Aldhelm's reference to Sulpicius Severus and Columbanus to Martin of Tours and the date AD 354 all point to an early-fifth-century origin in southern Gaul for the Insular Paschal principles. Evidence from *Historia Brittonum* and the Book of Armagh demonstrate the high status subsequently accorded to Sulpicius by the Insular churches.

Ó Cróinín's book, *Early Irish History and Chronology*, brings together the fruits of some of his research over many years working in the field of the concepts of time and time-reckoning. His work on the editing and translation of Cumian's Letter, and the text of *De ratione computandi*, provide a basis for the exploration not only of the technical side of the *computus* but also its theological underpinning.

More recently Immo Warntjes announced the discovery of a new Irish *computus* *Computus Einsidlensis*, with a possible date of AD 663. The text of this *computus* has close affinities with the Munich *Computus*, adding considerably to the corpus of Irish *computistical* material.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Ó Cróinín, "Mo Sinn macu Min and the *computus* at Bangor," *Chronology*, 36.

¹¹⁸ Immo Warntjes, "A newly discovered Irish *Computus*: *Computus Einsidlensis*," *Peritia* 19 (2005), 61-64.

2.4.3 *De ratione paschali* in an Irish context

In 1736 Van de Hagen published the hypothesis that *De ratione paschali*, hereafter *DRP*, was a forgery written in the first part of the seventh century by an author who was most likely Scottish or Irish and who based his forgery upon a passage copied from Rufinus' translation of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*. Because he considered it certain that this author deliberately pretended to be Anatolius, Van de Hagen designated him 'pseudo-Anatolius.' Subsequently, in 1826, Idler in his work on technical chronology, paraphrased and endorsed Van de Hagen's conclusions. *DRP* has been widely regarded as a forgery ever since. In 1880, Bruno Krusch incorporated Van de Hagen's forgery hypothesis in his monumental study of the history of the 84-year Paschal cycle, briefly summarising and endorsing Van de Hagen's argument with the exception that he dated the 'forgery' to the sixth century. Much of the scepticism expressed towards *DRP* had been anticipated by Petavius. In 1627 he attributed it to Rufinus and dismissed it in the following way:

It may be recalled upon observation that we have shown that the Irish and Picts are displayed as Schismatic and Quartodecimans with no other support than trusting the perverse testimony of Anatolius they persist in celebrating the Paschal rite. And indeed as the true words of Anatolius are not read in Greek this disgraceful interpretation of Rufinus is itself fraudulent.¹¹⁹

Here Petavius clearly regarded the edition of Anatolius used by the Insular Church as a forgery, and Rufinus as the author of this forgery.

¹¹⁹ D. Petavius, *Opus de Doctrina Temporum* (Paris: 1627), 2 vols, 564. This text is cited in McCarthy and Breen, *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, Introduction, 19. Petavius dismissed *Liber Anatolii* by attributing it to Rufinus. He preferred to use his own Latin translation of the Greek text in Eusebius. Petavius referred to Rufinus' text as to *Ruffinii hallucination*, dismissing Ruffinus in the following way. "Non ea repetam, quae fusissimè super hac re in Animaduersionibus [...] explicata sunt vbi Scotos & Pictos Schismaticos ac Tessaescædecatis ostendimus non alio firmamento, quàm illo Anatolij testimonio fretos in peruerso celebrandi Paschatis ritu perseuerasse. Neque verò tam Anatolij verba, quae Græcè non legerant; quàm flagitiosam Rufini interpretatione, iisdem fraudi fuisse."

The most significant rejection of the Insular ‘forgery’ hypothesis was the examination by Zahn of *DRP*, pseudo-Cyril and pseudo-Hieronymus, which he published in 1884. With the works of Van der Hagen, Idler and Krusch before him, Zahn concluded.

The book of Anatolius cannot be after the times of the perpetual calendar of Tours. Probably written around 270 it follows the technically chronological of Alexandria, which the experts have explained in a satisfactory manner to have been written by an unknown author around the third century.¹²⁰

Zahn’s works was never acknowledged by any of the mainstream writers. Strobel discussed this text in 1977 and 1984. Strobel accepted the view that the *lunar* and paschal tables were later and possibly Insular corruptions, but rejects the forgery hypothesis for the remainder of the text. Strobel referred to the text as ‘*der Lateiner Anatolius*’. The most recent reference to *DRP* has been that of Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (2000). He refers to *Liber Anatolii* or the Book of Anatolius, without the prefix ‘pseudo’ in this way indicating that he rejects the term pseudo. Charles-Edwards, however, gives no explanation for his departure from the accepted contemporary usage.¹²¹

¹²⁰ T. Zahn, *Forschungen zur Geshichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons* (Erlangen: 1884), 177-96. “Der liber Anatoli kann nicht nach den Zeiten eines Perpetuus von ‘Tours’ geschrichen sein, wohl aber um 270, wenn es nämlich gelingt, die technisch-chronologischen Abunditäten, welche die Kenner darin gefunden haben, in befriedigender Weise zu erklären oder sie einem unwissenden Uebersetzer des r. Jahrhunderts aufzuburden.”

¹²¹ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 398. While quite obviously dropping the title pseudo, for *Liber Anatolii* Charles-Edwards makes no reference to the work of McCarthy and Breen, even though the reprinted edition of his book postdates McCarthy and Breen’s publication of *Ante nicene Christian Pasch*, by two years.

2.4.4 Evidence for the authenticity of *De ratione paschali*

The text of *DRP* was an extremely important one for medieval Christian scholars. Citations from it appear in the works of Rufinus, Sulpicius Severus, Columbanus, Cummian and Bede.¹²² The most recent examination of text of *Liber Anatolii*, has been that of Daniel McCarthy and Aidan Breen (2002) They conclude that the text is authentic, written by Anatolius of Laodicea. For almost one hundred years many eminent scholars accepted *DRP* as a forgery. What new proof could be brought forward to support this claim? McCarthy showed that the Insular *latercus* or 84-year Paschal table was completely dependent upon the unique lunar table found in *DRP*. In the view of these authors, the Insular Easter table is the work of Sulpicius Servus (d. AD 425), written in southern Gaul in the early fifth century, using the text of *De ratione paschali* as the basis for his composition of that *latercus*.¹²³ Aldhelm implies that Sulpicius Severus adapted Anatolius 19-year cycle to make an 84-year cycle, is exactly what is found demonstrated in the Padua *latercus*. The publication in 1996 by McCarthy of the *lunar* and Paschal tables based on the seven complete MSS showed that:

¹²² McCarthy and Breen, *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, 24.

¹²³ McCarthy, "The Origin of the *Latercus*, Paschal Cycle," 38. McCarthy in contradiction to the claim by Charles W Jones, Bedae, *BOT*, 101, that no table with limits *xiv–xx* could be written after the Council of Nicea, shows that Sulpicius Severus is the author of the 84-year cycle used by the Insular church. Sulpicius Severus the author of a *World Chronicle* and the *Life of St. Martin* is acquainted with chronology and the technique of the computus. Jane Stevenson, *The 'Laterculus Malalianus' and the School of Archbishop Theodore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 27, accepts Jones' analysis and cites Bede, *EH*, 3.4 as evidence for the non-acceptance of Aldhelm's letter to Geraint. McCarthy's article was published in 1994.

The Paschal table found in the text of *DRP* in the Padua MS, immediately preceding the *latercus*, contained two additional columns of data that had been deliberately removed in the recensions found in the other surviving MSS.

- The Paschal table of *DRP* depended completely on the unique *lunar* table that preceded it, in the same manner as the *latercus*.
- The Paschal table in all the manuscripts has been subject to substantial and deliberate corruption.
- The Paschal principles exhibited by the Paschal table of *DRP* were identical with those found in the *latercus* viz. Sunday, lunar term *luna xiv-xx* and Paschal term 26 March to 23 April.

Anatolius asserts that his principles can be accommodated within a nineteen-year cycle, and undertakes to demonstrate this. McCarthy demonstrates that a lunar term of *luna xiv-xx* with a 29-day Paschal term and a nineteen-year cycle, is not possible.¹²⁴ Anatolius came from Asia Minor the stronghold of Quartodecimanism and the tradition of the apostle John. But Anatolius does not adhere to strict Quartodecimanism, but re-affirms his own principles:

John's followers insinuate against us, that we cannot celebrate the bright beginning of Pasch after *luna* 14 does not disturb or alarm us. For, although they determine that it is unlawful that the beginning of Pasch should be extended as far as *luna* 20, yet they cannot deny that it should be deferred as far as *luna* 16 and 17, which occurs on the very day on which our Lord rose from the dead. But we discern that it is better for Pasch to be extended to *luna* 20 on account of the Lord's day than to anticipate the Lord's day on account of *luna* 14.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ McCarthy, "Origin of the *Latercus* Paschal Cycle," 29. Refer to this article for further details of the incompatibility of a nineteen-year cycle and a Paschal term of 29 days, n. 18. McCarthy's conclusion that the prime purpose of using 84-year cycles was not, as traditionally asserted to provide eternal Easter tables, but to arrange Easter within a smaller range of dates than the 34/35-day Paschal term of the nineteen-year cycle.

¹²⁵ McCarthy, *DRP*, 8.1-5, 67.

The Christian Pasch is a feast of light and as such cannot be celebrated unless the ‘heavens’ too reflect the light and glory of the Resurrection. This is the basis of Anatolius theology, the dominion of light over darkness, of Christ’s victory over the darkness of sin.

And, therefore it is enjoined that the Pasch be offered after the vernal equinox, because luna 14 does not fill up the night before the equinox and during it. But after the equinox, luna 14 of course, plus one day gone beyond the equinox, although it [the sun] has now reached the beginning of true light, that is the rising of the sun and the day nevertheless it has not wholly forsaken the shadows behind it.¹²⁶

2.4.5 Columbanus and the principles of Anatolius

The evidence taken from Irish texts is strongly weighted in favour of the time to celebrate Easter as that ordained by God in the scriptures. Columbanus queries: “What then do you say about an Easter on the twenty-first or twenty-second moon, which already is proved to be no Easter, considering its darkness by many laborious scholars?”¹²⁷ This quote from his first letter is a direct reference to the principles mentioned in *DRP* that as Easter is a feast of light no shadow of darkness can be allowed to contaminate it. Columbanus refers to the writings of Anatolius as being preserved in the *Church History* of Eusebius, and highly regarded by Jerome who praised his work on Easter.¹²⁸ McCarthy has shown, however, that the *EH* of Eusebius was not the work of an objective bystander. He was deliberately ambiguous about

¹²⁶ McCarthy, *DRP*, 3.4-9, 64.

¹²⁷ Columbanus has no doubts about the validity of the writings of Anatolius. It was other later writers, Van de Hagen, Idler, Krusch and MacCarthy who raise questions about their authenticity referring to them as pseudo Anatolius, and considering them Insular forgeries.

¹²⁸ Jerome, “Lives of illustrious men,” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. III, 377, says of Anatolius: “Anatolius of Alexandria, bishop of Laodicea in Syria, who flourished under the emperors Probus and Carus, was a man of wonderful learning in arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. We can get an idea of the greatness of his genius from the volume, which he wrote *On the Passover* and his

some of the dates in Anatolius' work, which means that Eusebius cannot be relied upon to give accurate details. Columbanus attacks the practices of Gaul who in accordance with the Council of Orleans (AD 541) followed the calendar of Victorius. In this first letter, Columbanus gives his reasons for non-acceptance of Victorius doctrine. His arguments appear to be coincidental with those of Anatolius.¹²⁹

Anatolius considers that anyone who anticipates or exceeds the number, implanted by sacred Scripture, twenty according to his reckoning, has committed no trivial offence.¹³⁰ True to the parameters of a medieval understanding of time, and the practices, which he found in Gaul, Columbanus also argues against celebrating out of time. This type of celebration he says brings about "a terrible judgment against the Gallican authorities in their error,"¹³¹ "For those who determine that Easter can be celebrated at this period of the moon, not only cannot maintain this on the authority of holy scripture, but also incur the charge of sacrilege and contumacy, together with the peril of their souls."¹³² Here the seriousness of computing the correct time to celebrate Easter is highlighted. Not only did the mathematics have to be correct, but also scripture and tradition and theology must corroborate whatever was determined.

ten books on the *Institutes of Arithmetic*." Here the translation a "man of wondrous learning," "*mirae doctrinae vir*." is given as against a man of "curious learning," which is the translation given by Charles Jones.

¹²⁹ Anatolius records the use of dubious cycles in Gaul even in the third century. No evidence has been found for these cycles to date, Daniel McCarthy states "that there are clear indications that Gaulish Christians were involved in Paschal controversy from an early stage." Also Jones, in Bedae, *BOT*, asserts that Christians in Gaul celebrated on 25 March.

¹³⁰ McCarthy, *DRP*, 2.10-11, 64.

¹³¹ Walker, "Letter, I," *SCO*, 4-5.

¹³² Walker, "Letter I, LL 5-8," *SCO*, 4-5. "Nam qui hac lunae aetate Pascha definiunt possibile celebrari, non solum illud auctoritate divinae scripturae affirmare non possunt, sed et sacrilegii et contumaciae crimen et animarum periculum incurrunt [...]"

Columbanus differs from the Roman and Alexandrian Church concerning the celebration of Easter on a Sunday, if that coincides with fourteenth Nisan. He questions the validity of the decisions of the Council of Nicea. Columbanus' approach to ecclesiastical authority differs from his continental counterparts. He sees the church as egalitarian rather than hierarchical, indeed he says himself in his fifth letter addressed to Pope Boniface IV:

For amongst us it is not a man's station but his principles that matter; yet love for the peace of the gospel compels me to say all, to shame you both, who ought to have been one choir, and this motive is joined by the greatness of my concerns for your harmony and peace; for if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it.¹³³

It seems unlikely that Columbanus was unaware of the Synodal decrees of the Church as his breadth of knowledge is extensive.¹³⁴ In his third letter to Pope Gregory, Columbanus points out a decree of the Council of Constantinople (AD 481) "who decreed that churches of God planted in pagan nations should live by their own laws as they had been instructed by their fathers."¹³⁵ Here Columbanus twists a decree, intended to accommodate converts to Christianity, to his own ends. He is therefore familiar with at least some papal decrees. He also makes the point that he considers himself outside the jurisdiction of the French hierarchy, and requests the Pope's permission to continue with "*traditionem roborem seniorum*,"¹³⁶ provided that it is not

¹³³ Walker, "Letter V, LL 14-19, *SCO*, 48-49. Non enim apud nos persona, sed ratio valet; amor autem pacis evangelicae totum me dicere cogit, ut vobis sit stupor ambobus, qui unus chorus esse debuistis, et magnitudo sollicitudinis meae pro concordia et pace vestra; *si enim patitur unum membrum, compatiuntur omnia membra.*

¹³⁴ Walker gives a summary of the texts used in the writings of Columbanus and they are extensive. See Classical and Patristic Index, *SCO*, 221-222.

¹³⁵ Walker, "Letter III, LL 37-40," *SCO*, 24-25. "[...] ecclesias Dei in barbaris gentibus constitutas suis vivere legibus, sicut edoctas in patribus, iudicantes."

¹³⁶ Walker, "Letter III, L 17, *SCO*, 24 "the strong tradition of our elders," John Ryan, *Irish monasticism: Origins and Early Development* (Dublin: The Talbot Press, 1931), 271. Around the abbot

“contrary to the faith,” so that by your approval “we may in our pilgrimage maintain the rite of Easter as we have received it from generations gone before.”¹³⁷

[...] that you would grant to us pilgrims in our travail the godly consolation of your judgment. Thus confirming, if it is not contrary to the faith, the tradition of our predecessors, so that by your approval we may in our pilgrimage maintain the rite of Easter as we have received it from generations gone before.¹³⁸

2.4.6 The *latercus* and its author

It is clear from Colman’s submission at Whitby that the followers of the *latercus* actually insisted that Anatolius and ultimately John were the real authors of their Easter principles. Columbanus attributes the *latercus* to Martin of Tours.

I have more confidence to celebrate Easter, in the tradition of my native land, in accordance with the teaching and reckoning of eighty-four years and with Anatolius...rather than to do so in accordance with Victorius who writes recently and in a doubtful manner without defining anything where it was needed, as he himself bears witness in his prologue, and who wrote under Hilary 103 years after the time of the great Martin and great Jerome and Pope Damascus.¹³⁹

in monastery stood the ‘seniores,’ or elder brethren, men who had grown old in the practice of virtue. Offices of authority were filled regularly from their ranks. The word senior in Irish usage suggests superiority and connotes the duty of obedience. It was also their duty to correct and direct junior monks.

¹³⁷ Walker, “Letter, III, LL 20-21” *SCO*, 24-5,” [...] quo ritum Paschae sicut accepimus a maioribus observare per tuum possumus iudicium in nostra peregrinatione.”

¹³⁸ Walker, “Letter, III, LL 16-23,” *SCO*, 24. [...] } ut nobis peregrinis laborantibus tuae piaesententiae praestes solatium, quo, si non contra fidem est, nostrorum traditionem robores seniorum, quo ritum Paschae, sicut accepimus a maioribus, observare per tuum possumus iudicium in nostra peregrinatione. Constat enim nos in nostra esse patria dum nullas istorum suscipimus regulas Gallorum, sed in desertis sedentes, nulli molesti, cum nostrorum regulis manemus seniorum, pro quibus defendendis, sive ad vos, ut dixi, apostolicos Patres; sive ad istos nostros vicinos fratres, nostros in Christo patres scripsimus istas [...]

¹³⁹ Walker, “Letter, II, LL 10-19”, *SCO*, 18-19 “ Sed confiteor conscientiae meae secreta, quod plus credo traditioni patriae meae juxta doctrinam, et calculum LXXXIV annorum et Anatolium, ab Eusebio Ecclesiasticae Historiae auctore episcopo, et sancto Catalogi scriptore Hieronymo laudatum, Pascha celebrare, quam juxta Victorium nuper dubie scribentem, et ubi necesse erat, nihil definientem, ut ipse in suo testatus est prologo: qui post tempora domini Martini, et domini Hieronymi, et papae Damasi, per centum et tres annos sub Hilario scripsit.” Columbanus refers to the 532 years of the Victorian cycle. Walker adds a footnote here of an emendation which he owes to B. McCarthy who uses the word ‘per’ rather than ‘post’ in the Latin text; changing the meaning of the text dramatically from meaning 430 past years and 102 future years this gives, the 532 years of the Victorian cycle, by adding one for the year of publication leaves a total of 103 years. Walker adds that if the reading ‘post’

Cummian refers to its place and author being of unknown (uncertain) origin.¹⁴⁰ McCarthy attributes the Insular *latercus* to Sulpicius Severus, who used the paschal limits of Anatolius rectifying the errors in the 19-year cycle in order to reconcile it with the Paschal term of 26 March to 23 April.

There is evidence to show that Severus wrote to Paulinus of Nola (d. AD 431) requesting a copy of the table of Anatolius translated by Rufinus from the Greek text of Eusebius' *Church History*. The text of Eusebius differs in some essentials from the text in Rufinus. Jones presumed that the Christians used the same lunar calendar as the Jews, which they did not. Any 84-year cycle running beside the Jewish 19-year cycle will eventually yield *luna* fifteen dates coinciding with Nisan fourteen, and so duplication of the feasts is possible. Avoiding duplication of the feasts is more complex than Jones understood and there is no computistical basis for his statement that 'we may conclude that the Council generally agreed that *luna xiv-xx* would not do.'¹⁴¹

The chronological details of the Padua *latercus*, the date and nature of the links between Rufinus and Sulpicius, Aldhelm's reference to Sulpicius Severus¹⁴² and Columbanus to St. Martin and the date AD 354 all point to an early fifth-century

be retained it can only mean 103 years after the Chronograph of 354. $354 + 103 = 457$ the year of the publication of Victorius' cycle. Daniel McCarthy offers a different explanation. Martin of Tours was baptised in the year 335. $335 + 103 = 438$, the year in which the 84-year cycle began and possibly the year to which Sulpicius Severus backdated the *latercus*.

¹⁴⁰ Cummian, *DGP*, LL 223-224, 87. This section in Cummian is also contained in a passage, in *De ratione computandi*, see, Ó Cróinín, "A seventh century Irish Computus, *Chronology*, 99-130.

¹⁴¹ Jones, *BOT*, 32.

¹⁴² Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren, "Letter to Geraint," *Aldhelm, The Prose Works* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1978), 157.

origin in southern Gaul for the Insular Paschal principles. Evidence from *Historia Brittonum* and the Book of Armagh demonstrate the high status subsequently accorded to Sulpicius by the Insular churches.

But the suspicion of heresy, namely the Pelagian one, was attached to Sulpicius, and Columbanus may have wanted to give his table an air of respectability by quoting such authorities as Jerome, Eusebius, Damasus and Martin. Did the Insular church also inherit from Sulpicius his ideas on asceticism, literary monasticism, historical approach to the Bible, alienation from bishops, and network of literary contacts which through Paulinus of Nola reached to Augustine in North Africa and through Rufinus and Jerome to Rome, Alexandria and Palestine?

2.4.7 How authors view the Insular controversy

The Easter controversy of the Insular church can be viewed in many ways and from different perspectives. Thomas Charles-Edwards regards it as an issue of scriptural interpretation and biblical exegesis: “what really mattered was biblical exegesis.”¹⁴³ Daniel McCarthy agrees with this assessment, expanding it to specific reference to the theological significance of *luna* fourteen, fifteen and sixteen.

Kathleen Hughes sees it as a difference in perception between the *Hibernenses* and the *Romani*. The *Hibernenses* saw the Easter controversy as a matter of ritual, and on ritual different branches of the church might legitimately differ. ‘Let Gaul I beg you contain us side by side whom the kingdom of Heaven shall contain.’¹⁴⁴ The

¹⁴³ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 396.

¹⁴⁴ Kathleen Hughes, “The Church in Irish society, AD 400-800,” 325.

Romani regarded the date of Easter not as a matter of ritual but as a matter of belief. I would question Hughes' understanding of the word ritual. Anthropologists Victor Turner and Mary Douglas have shown that ritual and rites form part of a cumulative memory of a society and play vital roles in giving a group identity.¹⁴⁵ Also in liturgy the rites and rituals in which people engage flow from deeply held beliefs.

Aidan Kavanagh describes rite as follows:

Rite means more than liturgical customs. It could be called a whole style of Christian life, which is to be found in the myriad peculiarities of worship, in canon law, in ascetical and monastic structures, in evangelical and catechetical endeavours, and in particular ways of theological reflection.¹⁴⁶

Susan Roll puts it this way:

By means of festival and sacred rites which constitute the core of the feast, humanity effects a passage from day-to-day profane time to sacred time. This sacred time derives its essence from the primordial mythical time in which the founding legends or myths of the community took place, myths which offer some explanation of the mysteries of life, the universe and everything, and thus the possibility of some degree of control over the cosmic forces which impact the life of the community.¹⁴⁷

Charles Jones suggests that it was basically a question of legislation and authority.¹⁴⁸ Dáibhí O Cróinín sees the actual mathematics of the *computus* and following the traditions of our 'fathers' as the kernel of the controversy while also

¹⁴⁵ For a summary of the work of these two anthropologists see Nathan Mitchell, *Liturgy and the Social Sciences: American Essays in Liturgy*, ed. Edward Foley (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999). For Mircea Eliade, ritual arises from and celebrates the encounter with the "numinous," or "sacred," the mysterious reality that is always manifested as of a wholly different order from ordinary or "natural realities." Mircea Eliade, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 12 (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1987), 405.

¹⁴⁶ Aidan Kavanagh, *The Elements of Rite*, 44.

¹⁴⁷ Roll, *Toward the Origins of Christmas*, 19.

¹⁴⁸ Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, 30.

acknowledging its doctrinal nature.¹⁴⁹ Faith Wallis in the introduction to Bede's *The Reckoning of Time*, describes the Easter question as follows:

This Easter question is in fact two questions; first, what *criteria* determine a suitable date for Easter? And secondly, how can such a date be *calculated* in advance? The first question is essentially theological. The second is mathematical and astronomical.¹⁵⁰

Bede himself is inclined to view the question of Easter as a matter of canonical and ecclesiastical authority, constantly speaking of 'the correct time,' but 'correct' according to canons and synods of the Roman Catholic Church. Thomas O'Loughlin sees the debate as mathematical and astronomical, and since no writer of this era possessed the tools necessary to understand these cycles correctly, none of them were nor could be correct.¹⁵¹

My thesis is that while these different understandings play a part in the overall struggle, the foundation of this controversy lies deeper. It involves an understanding of how people in the middle ages viewed time and how a literal understanding as well as an allegorical interpretation of the bible shaped their views. The question rests on the twin pillars of time and theology. Different protagonists approached the issue from differing theological viewpoints. What were they celebrating, the Passion or the Resurrection? How did they count their day? Was it according to Roman reckoning of sunrise-to-sunrise, the Jewish reckoning of sunset-to-sunset, or some other means of reckoning? Until we can decipher such questions then we are like the parties involved

¹⁴⁹ Ó Cróinín, "New heresy for old?: Pelagianism in Ireland and the papal letter of 640," *Chronology*, 88.

¹⁵⁰ Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, xxxiv.

¹⁵¹ Personal interview with Dr. Thomas O'Loughlin, University of Wales, Lampeter, July, 2005.

in this discussion doomed to wander around in a morass of words and biblical quotes that leave one confused.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter lays the groundwork for the rest of the thesis. It endeavours to situate the Easter controversy of the Insular church within a framework of Easter controversies in the universal church. The Easter question can be seen as an attempt to bring human time and heavenly time into harmony.

By the fourth century another factor had entered the equation, namely, ecclesiastical authority. Thus the Council of Nicea laid down guidelines for the celebration of the Easter feast, although later writers, such as Dionysius Exiguus, have erroneously attributed to this Council the recommendation of a particular Paschal table. The chapter traces the history of early Paschal tables, from a theological and chronological perspective. The Paschal term and the lunar terms of the various tables attempted to connect Old Testament texts and the narrative of the Passion in the gospel accounts. The lack of uniformity between the synoptic gospels and the gospel of John created the basis for considerable controversy which was to continue in the Insular churches from the sixth to the eighth-century. This chapter stresses the importance of theological reflection and biblical exegesis in the understanding of the rationale behind the Paschal tables composed by early writers.

To understand the Insular cycle, and the controversy surrounding it, an understanding of other Easter cycles and their paschal term and lunar limits is necessary. Finally, the chapter looks at the Easter tables of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries in continental Europe. These provide insight into the essentially doctrinal nature of the controversy. Cummián in a letter to Ségeine in 632 mentions at least ten Paschal cycles, which were known in Ireland by the beginning of the seventh century.

The next chapter addresses the theological significance of *luna* fourteen, fifteen and sixteen.

3 CHAPTER

THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LUNA 14, 15, 16

3.1 Introduction

The feast of the Passover/Easter has cosmic dimensions. Nature and time, in particular, carry the salvation embodied in them, the 'feast' is not celebrated in time, it is ushered in by time.¹ In primitive religions where cosmogony played an important role, New Year ordinarily coincided with the mythical first day of creation. At each New Year the cosmogony is reiterated, the world re-created, and to do this is also to create time – that is, to regenerate it by beginning it anew.²

And there shall be continuous day (it is known to the Lord), not day and not night, for at evening there shall be light (Zach. 14.7).

This theme of continuous day is picked up in some patristic writings on Easter.

Already the sacred rays of the light of Christ are shining, the pure lights of the pure spirit are beaming, and the heavenly treasure of glory and divinity are opening. This great dim night is swallowed up, and the impenetrable darkness is dissolved in him, and the sad shadow of death is overshadowed.³

¹ Anscar Chupungo, *Cosmic Elements of the Christian Passover*, Studia Anselmiana 72, Analecta Liturgica 3 (Rome: Editrice Anselmiana, 1977), 20

² Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane*, 105.

³ Pseudo Hippolytus, "Homily on the Holy Pascha," 1-3, Cantalamessa, *Easter in the Early Church*, 47. 142. No date is given for this homily, but Cantalamessa speculates that it belongs to the latter half of the second century and is contemporary with Melito of Sardis, *Homily on the Pascha*, and also a product of the theology of Asia Minor.

Or again Asterius the Sophist (d. ca. AD 341) can say in a paschal homily: “O night brighter than day! More radiant than the sun! Whiter than snow! Flashing brighter than lightning! More visible than torches! Replete with light!”⁴ “Replete with light!” the symbolism of light, light in its fullness as represented by the full moon at the equinox touches the author’s imagination. An unnamed quartodeciman Pseudo Hippolytus refers to *Pascha* as follows:

O Pascha, illumination of the new torchlight procession, splendour of the virginal feast of lights, because of you the lamps of the souls are extinguished no more, but in a divine way the spiritual fire of grace is transmitted to everyone, fed by the body, spirit, and oil of the Anointed One.⁵

A paschal homily written in AD 387 by Gaudentius of Brescia explains that Christ’s Passover coincided with the time of creation, the author’s point of reference being the equinox. Gaudentius shows that the Creator of man is also our Saviour, and Christ’s work of creating bears an intimate relation to his work of salvation.

The Son of God, “through” whom “all things were made” by his own resurrection raised up the fallen world on the same day and at the same time when he himself had earlier created it out of nothing’. “All things” were to be restored” in Christ, all things in heaven and on earth (Eph. 1.10).⁶

⁴Asterius the Sophist, “Homily 11: Sixth Homily on Psalm 5, on Monday in the Octave of Easter 6, 4.” in Cantalamessa, *Easter in the Early Church*, 70. Cantalamessa comments that this text may be a precursor of the *Exultet*, 167.

⁵ Pierre Nautin, ed., “Homélie pascales I: An Unnamed Quartodeciman (Pseudo Hippolytus), Homily on the Holy *Pascha*, 62.4,” *Sources Chrétienne* 27, 181-191, also in Cantalamessa, *Easter in the Early Church*, 104.

⁶Gaudentius of Brescia, “*Tractatus Paschales, Tractatus Primus in Exodum*, 3,” CSEL 68, 19. Filius ergo Dei, per quem facta sunt omnia, eodem die eodemque tempore prostratum mundum propria Resurrectione resuscitat, quo eum prius ipse creaverat ex nihilo, ut omnia reformarentur in Christo, quae in coelis sunt et quae in terra sunt, *quoniam ex ipso et per ipsum et in ipso omnia*, ut ait apostolus, *ipsi gloria in saecula*. English trans. James Quigley and Joseph Leinhard, *Easter in the Early Church*, 105. The tradition of *Pascha* as the recapitulation of the seven days of creation was introduced among the Latins by Ambrosiaster, Alexander Souter, ed., *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, CXXVII, CSEL, 50.

The lunar month is twenty-eight days, the new moon being on day one, and the full moon on day fourteen, in this sense at the equinox the light of the day meets the light of the moon and there is continuous day. For Columbanus the feast of Easter can only be celebrated when there is continuous light, light should always overcome darkness, because Christ by his death overcame the darkness of sin, and by his Resurrection proved that light has overcome darkness forever.

The Jewish liturgical calendar began with the first of Nisan, the New Year introducing a series of feasts starting from the Passover itself. A distinction was made between the Jewish civil calendar, which began at Tishri in autumn, and the liturgical calendar that began in spring.⁷ The Christian tradition of cosmogony in spring was a direct legacy of Philo of Alexandria, (d. AD 50). Philo's thesis was that God created the world in spring, in the month of Nisan, which comes seventh in order but first in importance. This month is deemed important because in it is celebrated the feast of Passover.⁸ Spring was important because it was regarded as the season of creation. God created the world at the equinox in spring, the elements were separated and placed in harmonious order with reference to themselves and each other. The sign of

⁷ Anscar Chupungo, *The Cosmic Elements*, 20. Chupungo says: "In Israel before the exile, New Year was celebrated in autumn, in the month of Tishri. "Around the year 100 the observance of the New Year on the first of Tishri was current in the Mishna and other rabbinic writings. However, the first of Nisan is also regarded as a New Year day, explaining that it is the beginning of the liturgical year which introduces the series of feasts starting from Passover itself. Philo in his writing recognises the distinction between the civil New Year and the liturgical New Year, "seventh in order, but first in importance."

⁸ Philo of Alexandria, "On Special Laws II," 391 This doctrine of Philo had a lasting influence on later theology. This doctrine spelt out in chapters 27, 28, and 29 of *The Special Laws II* is probably the first of its kind in the Latin world. Pseudo-Cyprian made use of Philo's commentary on the creation narrative in Genesis thereby adding scriptural authority to the prologue of his Easter tables. His method influenced succeeding generations up to the time of Bede. According to Philo, if we wish to know when Nisan or the Easter *mensis novorum* (new month) begins and ends, "we must first examine Genesis, which narrates that God himself separated the first day from the first night." Charles W. Jones, *BOT*, Introduction, 12-13, Anscar Chupungo, *Shaping the Easter Feast*, 51.

the equinox was the division of light and darkness, land and water, into two equal parts - the return of the world to its original order. Spring is regarded not as a repetition but as an imitation of the first day of creation. The feast of Passover is kept in spring because this season evokes images of creation and rebirth, it is on account of Passover that Nisan is the head and sovereign of all times and all ages.⁹

Now the Holy Spirit, drawing a comparison from things visible to things invisible, from things corporeal to spiritual mysteries, has been pleased to appoint that the feast symbolical of the passing from the old life to the new, which is signified by the name Pascha, should be observed between the fourteenth and twenty-first days of the month - after the fourteenth, in order that a twofold illustration of spiritual realities might be gained, both with respect to the third epoch of the world, which is the reason of its occurrence in the third week, as I have already said, and with respect to the turning of the soul from external to internal things, - a change corresponding to the change in the moon when on the wane; not later than the twenty-first, because of the number itself, which is often used to represent the notion of the universe, and is also applied to the Church on the ground of her likeness to the universe.¹⁰

This passage from Augustine's letter to Januarius incorporates both the practical directions of the time of the Pascha *xiv-xxi* and a symbolic understanding of the feast in Christian terms, a passing from death to life, from old life to new life. Augustine develops the symbolism of the feast as belonging to the third week of the first month Nisan. Coelfrid too in his letter to King Neachtan (ca. AD 710) also emphasises that the Easter feast must fall in the third week of the first month.¹¹

⁹ Philo of Alexandria, "On Special Laws," 399.

¹⁰ Augustine, "Letter 55 to Januarius," *NPNFa*, I, Vol. I, 306. *Ad inquisitiones Januarii* ed., Al Goldbacher, *CSEL*, 34 (Prague: 1895), 175-176. "Primum enim tempus est ante legem, secundum sub lege, tertium sub gratia." "The first time is before the law, the second under the law, the third under grace." The first age is that of the natural law through the Patriarchs, the Middle Age that of the Prophets by written law, the Third Age is by the gift of the Spirit through Christ himself. Bede also discusses the three ages of the world, referring to them as "before the law, under the law and under grace," see Faith Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, 152.

¹¹ Bede, *EH*, 5.21, 301.

In relation to Christ's death and resurrection the Gospels specify no month or date. Yet in the context of the final days of Jesus' life all make reference to Passover and the synoptics refer to the feast of the Unleavened Bread. In Judaism, the date of Passover depended on the sighting of the new moon that began at Nisan. At the twilight, that ended the fourteenth Nisan and began the fifteenth, the lamb was slaughtered and its blood sprinkled. During the night time belonging to the fifteenth, the night of the full moon, the lamb was roasted and eaten. The fifteenth Nisan also began the weeklong feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12.1-20, Lev. 23.5-8, and Num. 28.16-25).¹²

Raymond Brown discussing the issues surrounding fourteenth and fifteenth Nisan comments, "These dates make sense only if we assume that the evangelists are reliable for the minimal chronological references that they supply."¹³ Using the Gospel accounts Brown summarises the main events of the final days of Jesus' life. Jesus died in Jerusalem on a day before the Sabbath at Passover time, the day on which he died is identified in Mark 15.42 as "the day before the Sabbath," προσάββατου. Matthew refers to it as the day after Jesus' death, and as that day ends, the first day of the week begins (Matt. 27.62, and 28.1). Luke says that Sabbath is about to dawn just after Jesus is buried (Lk. 23.54). John records precautions being taken lest the bodies remain on the cross for the oncoming Sabbath (Jn. 19.31). These accounts make resurrection by Sunday reconcilable with death and burial on Friday.¹⁴

¹² Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 1351.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1351.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1350.

Professor Charles-Edward expresses the view that the Insular Easter assumes that the seven days of Unleavened Bread began with the fourteenth day, while the Dionysian, Alexandrian Easter, follows Leviticus in beginning the seven days with the fifteenth day. According to Charles-Edwards in the Gospel it is clear that Matthew, Mark and Luke began the Feast of the Unleavened Bread on the fourteenth day (Matt. 26:17, Mark 14:12, Luke 22:7), the Insular church following the scheme of the synoptics. Very little evidence is given for this deduction, certainly the gospels begin the feast of Unleavened Bread on the fourteenth but as Raymond Brown reminds us:

None of the four canonical Gospels is pure history. All preserve older traditions transformed by theological reflection and gathered for missionary or pastoral purposes.¹⁵

Brown offers the opinion that “Mark seems to confuse the day of Preparation fourteen Nisan with the first day of Unleavened Bread, fifteen Nisan,” a view which is shared by Thomas Talley:

There is an ambiguity in the account of Mark (Mk 14.21) that seems to confuse “first day of Unleavened Bread” (actually 15 Nisan) with the day “when they sacrificed the Passover lamb” (14 Nisan and the supper eaten in the night is the Passover feast) Jesus, in this chronology is crucified on 15 Nisan.¹⁶

In his writings Columbanus relies on Old Testament texts rather than on the Gospels for his theology of Easter. Condemning the lunar limits of Victorius, *xvi-xxii*, Columbanus says:

And if the moon has begun to shine in the third watch, there is no doubt that the twenty-first or twenty-second moon has arisen, on which it is impossible for the true Easter to be offered. For those who determine that Easter can be celebrated at this

¹⁵ Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 1360.

¹⁶ Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 3.

period of the moon, not only cannot maintain this on the authority of holy scripture, but also incur the charge of sacrilege and contumacy, together with the peril of their souls, when they maintain that the true light, which rules over darkness, can be offered under conditions where darkness rules to some extent.¹⁷

Columbanus' letters, particularly when dealing with the Easter controversy, never quote the scriptural texts concerning Passover. His reference point is *De Ratione Paschali* of Anatolius and by inference he accepts Anatolius' exegesis on the text of Exodus, "[...] or that the seven days ordained by the Lord's bidding in the law, on which alone the Lord's Passover is commanded to be eaten legally, which are reckoned from the fourteenth moon up to the twentieth, should be exceeded contrary to law and right?"¹⁸ The only scripture reference used in this context is a condemnation of those who says, "we ought not to hold Easter with the Jews?" he continues:

[...] or are we really to believe that the Easter of the fourteenth moon is rightly theirs and not rather to confess that it is the Passover of God Himself who instituted it and Who alone clearly knows the mystery by which the fourteenth moon was chosen for the Exodus?¹⁹

This is as near as Columbanus gets to a scriptural text in discussing the Easter controversy. He makes no mention of the feast of Unleavened Bread at all. This

¹⁷ Walker, "Letter I," *SCO*, 4-5. "Et si in tertia vigilia luna exanderit, non est dubium, lunam vigesiman primam vel vigesimam secundam exortant esse, in qua verum Pascha non est possibile immolari. Nam qui hac lunae aetate Pascha definiaunt possibile celebrari, non solum illud auctoritate divinae scripturae affirmare non possunt, sed et sacrilegi et contumaciae crimen et animarum periculum incurrunt, dum afirmant veram lucem posse immolari cum aliqua dominatione tenebrarum, quae omnibus tenebris dominatur."

¹⁸ Walker, "Letter, I," *SCO*, 4-5. "Aut septem dies Domine iussione in lege sancti, in quibus tantum legitime Phase Domini comedi mandatum est, qui a decima Quarta luna usque ad vigesimam numerandi sunt, contra ius fasque transcendatur?" Cf with Anatolius, McCarthy and Breen, *DRP*, 3.1-4.15, 64.

¹⁹ Walker, "Letter, I," *SCO*, 6-7 "Cum Iudaeis Pascha facere non debemus?[...] aut numquid ipsorum esse recte credendum est decimae quartae lunae Pascha, et non potius Dei ipsius instituentis Phas esse fatendum est, scientisque solius ad purum quo mysterio decima Quarta luna ad transcensum electa est?"

makes Professor Charles-Edwards assertion that the Insular Church followed the chronology of the synoptic gospels difficult to accept. Is it not more likely that Insular tradition derived from an amalgamation of the tradition of the apostle John and *De Ratione Paschali* of Anatolius whose practice while being derived from a Quartodeciman one, was Dominical?

That, however, which they (John's followers) insinuate against us, that we cannot celebrate the bright beginning of Pasch after luna 14 does not disturb or alarm us....yet they cannot deny that it should be deferred as far as luna 16 and 17, which occur on the very day on which our Lord rose from the dead.²⁰

John is described in the scriptures as being present at the important moments in the life of Jesus. John is the beloved disciple, the one close to the heart of Jesus, who leaned on his breast at the Last Supper. He is present at the Transfiguration and the Agony in the Garden. He follows Jesus into the house of the high priest, stands besides Mary at the foot of the Cross, and she is entrusted to his care after the death of Jesus. John is the first to reach the empty tomb, but in deference to Peter allows him to enter first. John is portrayed as the faithful disciple, Peter as the one who will betray Jesus. Finally, Jesus censures Peter for his lack of understanding, but Peter also experiences Christ's forgiveness and love. Despite Peter's weaknesses and faults he is the one chosen to lead the apostles and the church.

The association between John and *luna* fourteen is clear from the Fourth Gospel. The major events of the Last Supper, Agony in the Garden, trial before the High Priest and the Crucifixion are all associated with fourteen Nisan, or *luna*

²⁰ McCarthy and Breen, *DRP*, 8.1-3, 4-6.

fourteen. Under these circumstances it is understandable that John's followers were favourably disposed towards *luna* fourteen as the date for the celebration of Easter.

Traditionally in Ireland, 25 March, the spring equinox, was regarded as the historical day of the Passion, with the historical day of the Resurrection falling on March 27, several Irish Martyrologies confirm these dates.²¹ The lunar limits of the Insular church is well documented, these limits are based on two principal supports, *De ratione paschali* of Anatolius,²² which though a nineteen-year cycle used lunar limits of *xiv-xx*, and the tradition of the apostle John who celebrated on the fourteenth moon no matter on what day of the week it occurred.

3.2 The role of Scripture

Scriptural scholarship played a central position in the early Irish Church. In Ireland the study of the Bible took the place of rhetoric; exegesis was the pinnacle of culture. Jonas says of Columbanus in *Vita Columbani*:

²¹ See Jane Stevenson, *Laterculus Malalianus*, chapter two, n. 98, 168. The Hieronymian group of martyrologies lists the Annunciation, the Crucifixion and the death of the apostle James on 25 March. The *Martyrology of Tallaght* adds the Creation to this list, but the *Laterculus of Malalianus* goes considerably further by adding the crossing of the Red Sea, and the creation and fall of the angels. There is some similiarity between the lists of events occurring on 25 March in the *Laterculus*, and the list occurring in two Irish texts the *Cáin Dómnaig*, "Epistle of Jesus," where the events of creation and redemption are associated with Sunday and the *Ever-New Tongue*, where these events take place at midnight. O'Loughlin, "The Significance of Sunday: Three ninth century catechesis", *Worship* 64.6 (Nov. 1990), 536. Oliver Davies and O'Loughlin, "Ever-New Tongue," *Celtic Spirituality*, 321-326.

²² Eusebius, *Church History*, 7.32.14, *NPNFa*, II, Vol. 1, 319. The Alexandrian scholar, Anatolius championed the more accurate nineteen-year cycle. *The Paschal Canons of Anatolius*, given according to Eusebius, differs from Rufinus' Latin translation of the Greek text of Eusebius. For a discussion of these differences and the text of Anatolius used by Bede see McCarthy, and Breen, *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, 80-82, and Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, chapter 6, 24, chapter 30, 88, and chapter 42, 114.

Thus Columban collected such treasures of holy wisdom in his breast that he could, even as a youth, expound the Psalter in fitting language and could make many other extracts worthy to be sung, and instructive to read.²³

The Latin Bible provides the main source for many of Columbanus' scriptural quotations, which appear frequently in his writings. It is evident that the "bible is the only source in which he recognises ultimate authority."²⁴ Columbanus' own writings show that his education included training in the art of persuasive writing in Latin, and instruction in the technicalities of the *computus*.²⁵ For Cumman too, the scripture is the absolute authority as is evident in *De controversia paschali*.²⁶ These were men who knew and loved the scriptures.

The source of the text of the Bible used in early Christin Ireland is difficult to assess. Some texts were from the *Latin Vulgate*, others from *Vetus Latina*, but certain texts appear in a form that to date are unknown on the continent. "There is some evidence that the version used bears a resemblance to a variation found in Africa, but nowhere does it agree with the special variants of the oldest specimen of that type."²⁷ *Augustinus Hibernicus, De mirabilibus sacrae scripturas*, an Irish text composed probably in the mid-seventh century,²⁸ has surprisingly few direct scripture references for a text dealing with the wonders of sacred scripture. *De ratione computandi* is a

²³ Jonas, *Vita Sancti Columbani*, 9. 9-12.

²⁴ Walker, *SCO*, Introduction, lxviii.

²⁵ Jonas, *Vita Sancti Columbani*, 7.

²⁶ Cumman, *DGP*, LL 15-17, 59.

²⁷ Walker, *SCO*, Introduction, xliii,

²⁸ Francis P. McGinty, The Treatise *De Mirabilibus Sacrae Scripturae*, unpublished PhD Thesis, 2 vols. critical ed. with introduction, English translation of the Long Recension and some Notes (Dublin: The National University of Ireland, 1971). See also William Reeves, "On Augustin, an Irish writer of the seventh century," *PRIA* 7 (1861) 514-22, Mario Esposito, "On the pseudo-Augustinian treatise "*De Mirabilibus Sacrae Scripturae*," *PRIA* (C) 35 (1919) 189-207.

seventh-century computistical tract preserved in two manuscripts, Brussels Bibliothèque Royale MS 5413-22, and Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica, MS Reg. Lat. 1260. There are only eight scriptural quotations in the entire text but *De ratione computandi* is a teaching text whose focus is the technicalities of the *computus*. Another text of Irish provenance, *De sollemnitatibus et sabbatis et neomensis*, is contained in a manuscript in the collection *Cotton Caligula A* in the British Library,²⁹ no author's name is given.³⁰ This text contains numerous scriptural references, both Old and New Testament. The New Testament references far outweigh the Old Testament ones, as the avowed aim of this author is to establish Christ as the fulfilment of the Old Law, "first from the scriptures, how these feasts of the Lord, which the law bids us observe, are commanded to be held not with a typical but with a spiritual observance."³¹ However, when compared to the great libraries of Alexandria, the number of books in Irish libraries was meagre.³² Because of the scarcity of books the calendar became a primary source for historians of the day.

An exegesis of Old Testament texts which prescribe the rules laid down for the celebration of the Passover underpin any theological discussion of the lunar dates

²⁹ *Cotton Caligula A*, xv (s. XII/XIII), f 86^v – 90^v, British Library, London.

³⁰ Ó Cróinín, "The computistical works of Columbanus," *Chronology*, 51. Ó Cróinín indicates an Irish milieu and perhaps an Irish author in the seventh century for this text, though other writers suggest a fifth-century date and possibly a continental origin for it. Johannes W. Smit, *Studies in the language and style of Columba the Younger (Columbanus)* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1971), 33.

³¹ Walker, "Appendix, Letter, *De sollemnitatibus et sabbatis et neomensis*," *SCO*, 199, 200. "[...] de scriptures prius ostender cupientes, quoniam hae feriae Domini, quae praecipuntur lege observari, non umbrali sed spirituali observantia celebrari iubentur."

³² Charles W. Jones, *Bede, the Schools and the Computus*, ed. Wesley M. Stevens (Aldershot, Brookfield: Variorum, 1994), Jones writes: "From the library of Alexandria, with possibly 60,00 volumes, we descend to the library of Cassiodorus, with possibly two or three thousand books. Bede, who lived in an English renaissance and was the most widely-read man of his time, is known to have used some one hundred and seventy-five titles."

of fourteen, fifteen and sixteen Nisan. For the Jews, the feast was a symbolic commemoration of the victory of darkness over light, the victory of the one true God over the sun god of the Pharaohs, a celebration of a movement from slavery to freedom, from bondage to the Pharaohs to being set free to worship the living God. “Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the wilderness” (Ex. 7.16).

For Egypt stood for this world, Pharaoh stood for the devil, and the people of Israel was the type of ourselves, just as that people was liberated from Egypt by the sacrifice of a lamb and the mystery of the Pascha so we who believe in him are liberated from the captivity of this world and of Pharaoh – that is the devil.³³

This journey from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom is described graphically in three texts of the Old Testament, and the exegesis of these texts has proved to be the foundation of the theology behind the choosing of lunar limits, and consequently setting the date of Easter.

The deliverance out of Egypt and the expected coming of the Messiah reflect the meeting of memory and hope in this festival. Two other themes further enriched the Passover early in the Common Era, but precise dating is impossible. The Palestinian Targum on Exodus contains a “Poem of Four Nights,” which assigns four events to Passover: the creating of the world, the binding of Isaac, the deliverance from Egypt, and the coming of the Messiah.³⁴

These four themes had a significant impact on the Christian themeology of Pascha. The Christian Passover associates Christ’s disciples with his death and

³³ Gregory of Elvira, “Treatises [of Origen] on the Books of Holy Scripture, 9.9” critical edition *Gregorii Iliberritani episcopi quae supersunt*, CCSL, 69, ed. Vincentius Bulhard (Turnholdt: Brepolis, 1967), 74. “Aegyptus enim in similitudine istius saeculi fuit, Farao diaboli, populus Israhel typum nostrum gerebat. Proinde sicut ille populus de Aegypto per agni immolationem per sacramentum paschae est liberatus, ita et nos credentes in ipso de captiuitate saeculi istius et Pharaonis, id est diaboli tyrannide liberamur.” Francis J. Buckley, *Christ and the Church according to Gregory of Elvira* (Rome: Gregoriana, 1964), also in Cantalamessa, *Easter in the Early Church*, 104.

³⁴ Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 3. The word ‘themeology’ is not found in the *Oxford Dictionary*, but is used by Talley in this context. His use of the word refers to the four themes of the Targum taking their place among the themes used by Christian writers. The Jewish exegetical tradition, represented by the first-century Palestinian Targum, treated the month of Nisan as a month of redemption. See G. Gemes, *Scriptures and Tradition on Judaism: Haggadic Studies*, 2d (Leiden: 1973), 216, Jane Stevenson, *Laterculus of Malalianus*, 168.

resurrection, frees them from sin and death, and looks forward in hope to the glorious resurrection after death. There is an obvious continuity in moving from the Jewish festival to the festival of Easter, but the perspective has changed in passing from the old to the new covenant through the intermediary of Jesus' Passion.

3.2.1 Old Testament

Thomas Talley says of the Passover, "Passover can refer to the whole complex of the spring festival, both the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread, and references to the latter feast can include Passover."³⁵ This makes it difficult to unravel the feasts when it comes to using these texts as the biblical authority for setting lunar limits:

Observe the month of Abib by keeping the passover for the Lord your God, for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night. You shall offer the passover sacrifice for the Lord your God, from the flock and the herd, at the place that the Lord will choose as a dwelling for his name. You must not eat with it anything leavened. For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it - the bread of affliction because you came out of the land of Egypt in great haste, so that all the days of your life you may remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt. No leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory for seven days; and none of the meat of what you slaughter on the evening of the first day shall remain until morning. For six days you shall continue to eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a solemn assembly for the Lord your God, when you shall do no work (Deut. 16.1-4, 8).

This text of Deuteronomy appears to include the Passover as belonging to the seven days of unleavened bread, and makes no mention of the twenty-first day. Cummian examined carefully the scriptural and patristic foundations of the Easter feast in his letter *DCP*, a text that also contains references to a number of

³⁵ Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 1.

pseudonymous tracts.³⁶ The Dionysian, Alexandrian Easter follows Leviticus in commencing the seven days of Unleavened Bread with *luna* fifteen, and it specifically mentions concluding on the twenty-first day:

In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, there shall be a passover offering to the Lord, and on the fifteenth day of the same month is the festival of unleavened bread to the Lord; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. For seven days you shall present the Lord's offerings by fire; on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation: you shall not work at your occupations. (Lev. 23. 5-8)

The Exodus text begins with the command to set aside the offering for the Passover on the tenth day of the first month, directing that it should be slaughtered between the two evenings. Thus the Exodus text is closely aligned with that from Leviticus. These two texts imply that the Passover meal took place on the evening of *luna* fourteen, which was the beginning of *luna* fifteen.

In the first month, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day, you shall eat unleavened bread. For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether an alien or a native of the land. (Ex. 12. 18-19)

The parallelism between the Jewish exodus and Christ's sacrificial death was a favourite topic among early Christian homilists.³⁷ Gregory of Nazianzen (d. AD 390) uses an Easter Sermon as an opportunity for scriptural exegesis on Exodus 12 interpreting the text in terms of the Passover of Christ:

Yesterday the Lamb was slain and the door-posts were anointed, and Egypt bewailed her Firstborn, and the Destroyer passed us over, and the Seal was dreadful and reverend, and we were walled in with the Precious Blood, today we have clear escaped from Egypt and from Pharaoh; and there is none to hinder us from keeping a

³⁶ There were texts usually attributed to some well-known author like Augustine or Jerome whose authorship is uncertain. More recently the authorship of some of these texts has been identified more accurately.

³⁷ Anscar Chupungo, *Shaping the Easter Feast*, 1.

Feast to the Lord our God – The Feast of our Departure; or from celebrating that Feast, not of the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, carrying with us nothing of wicked and Egyptian leaven.³⁸

In his *Second Oration on the Pasch* he continues this theme comparing the release from Egypt to the release of the Christian from sin, delivered by the Precious Blood of the Redeemer:

Then comes the Sacred Night, the Anniversary of the confused darkness of the present life, into which the primeval darkness is dissolved, and all things come into life and rank and form, and that which was chaos is reduced to order. Then we flee from Egypt, that is from sullen persecuting sin; and from Pharaoh the unseen tyrant, and the bitter taskmasters, changing our quarters to the world above; and are delivered from the clay and the brickmaking, and from the husks and dangers of this fleshly condition, which for most men is only not overpowered by mere husklike calculations. Then the Lamb is slain, and act and word are sealed with the Precious Blood.³⁹

He refers to Easter as the day of salvation, “Christ is raised from the dead, rise you with him.” Easter is the day of the new creation, the old is put aside and the New is fulfilled. He continues:

The Lord’s Passover, the Passover, and again I say the Passover to the honour of the Trinity. This is to us a Feast of feasts and a Solemnity of solemnities as far exalted above all others (not only those which are merely human and creep on the ground, but even those which are of Christ himself and are celebrated in his honour) as the Sun is above the stars.⁴⁰

Earlier in this homily he discusses the etymology of the word Pascha:

This great and venerable Pascha is called Phaska by the Hebrews in their own language; and the word means Passing Over. Historically, from their flight and migration from Egypt into the Land of Canaan; spiritually, from the progress and

³⁸ Gregory of Nazianzen, “First Oration on the *Pascha*, 3-4,” *NPNFa*, II, Vol VII, 203. This homily was delivered on the first Easter after his ordination to the priesthood in AD 362. By the time this homily was written, the Church had begun to distribute the content of the *Pascha* over several days. Martin Connell, *Eternity Today: On the Liturgical Year*, Vol. 2, discusses the theology of the Three Days and the change of emphasis that took place as a result of an anti-Arian stance from the fourth to the sixth century.

³⁹ Gregory of Nazianzen, “Oration XLV, The Second Oration on the *Pascha*, XV.1-5” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. VII, 428.

⁴⁰ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 422-3.

ascent from things below to things above and to the Land of Promise. And we observe that a thing, which we often find to have happened in Scripture, the change of certain nouns from an uncertain to a clearer sense, or from a coarser to a more refined, has taken place in this instance. For some people, supposing this to be a name of the Sacred Passion, and in consequence Graecising the word by changing Phi and Kappa into Pi and Chi, called the Day Pascha.⁴¹

Bede in *De temporibus ratione* differentiates between the celebration of the Pasch and the celebration of Unleavened Bread. “The single day of the Pasch, that is, the “passing over,” is the fourteenth day of the first month, when it is commanded to sacrifice the lamb at sundown.”⁴² The celebration of the days of Unleavened Bread occupies the seven days from the fifteenth to the twenty-first day of the first month. He reiterates the text of Exodus, “You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight” (Ex. 12.6). In Bede’s scheme the fifteen Nisan is the day of the full moon, consequently he cannot countenance *luna* fourteen as the day to begin the Paschal celebration, since in his reckoning *luna* fourteen is not appropriate.⁴³

3.2.2 New Testament

The Passover provided the cultic context for the last supper of Jesus with his disciples, his arrest, trial, passion and crucifixion.⁴⁴ It is within the eight days of this

⁴¹ Gregory Nazianzen, “Oration XLV Second Oration on *Pascha*, X.13-17,” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. III, 426.

⁴² Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, 149-151.

⁴³ Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, 142.

⁴⁴ Scholars have questioned whether in fact the Last Supper was a Passover meal. Paul Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins*, 63. also Paul Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins* (London: SPCK, 2004), 2. “The trend in more recent scholarship has been to locate the source of the Eucharist more broadly within the context of the other meals of Jesus’ life and not merely the Last Supper, and largely following the trajectory established by redaction-criticism, to take seriously the various layers of meaning that can be discerned within the New Testament and the different ways that the individual New Testament writers describe those meals.”

paschal festival that he was raised from the dead on the first day of the week. The texts of the synoptic gospels given below, all refer to the days of Unleavened Bread. Mark also describes it as the day of preparation for the Passover.

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" (Mark 14.12)

On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" (Matt. 26.17)

Now the festival of Unleavened Bread which is called Passover was near (Lk. 22.7)

Technically Passover may have been the fourteenth, the day of the sacrificing of the lamb rather than the day of eating it. Less contentiously the fifteenth was the first day of Unleavened Bread. Almost six hundred years before Jesus the Passover feast and the feast of Unleavened Bread had become a combined festival that brought people to the Temple in Jerusalem. Paul reports a received tradition of the eating and drinking of the bread and cup and challenges his readers/hearers to "clear out the old yeast inasmuch as they are unleavened."

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb has been sacrificed. Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Cor. 5.6-8).

It seems clear that the death and resurrection of Jesus were associated in Paul's mind with the symbolism of the opening days of the feast of Passover/Unleavened Bread and for him and later commentators it became a metaphor for a new beginning and a turning away from old sinful ways to the way of Christ. Eusebius of Caesarea in writing on the Paschal Feast says:

In this season too was performed the figurative rite of the ancient Pascha, also called the Crossing; it brought the symbol of the slaughter of the sheep and hinted at the image of feeding on unleavened bread. All these things were brought to completion at the saving festival [...]⁴⁵

In Cummian's scheme the historical date of Easter was related to the lunar limits set down in the Pentateuch and were the justification for the peculiarities of the Christian observance. Other writers namely Augustine of Hippo and the Irish author of *De sollemnitatibus et sabbatis and neomensis* viewed the Old Testament texts as having being fulfilled in Christ.

Therefore, brethren, I have said, and I repeat it, Christ's seal drives from us the destroyer, if only we have Christ as an inmate of our hearts. I have stated these things, in case anyone's thoughts should be turning on the meaning of these festivals of the Jews. The Lord therefore came in some way to the victim's place, that the true Passover might be ours, when we celebrated his passion as the real offering of the lamb.⁴⁶

The author of *De sollemnitatibus* says clearly that Christ abolished the Jewish festival days:

And we should observe this also, that it was not on the fourteenth day towards evening, as the law commands, that the Lamb of God, Who bears the sin of the world, and our Passover Christ was sacrificed, but it was on the fifteenth day, in which it is clear that the Jews' festal day, with its sacrifice, was abolished by the Lord.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Eusebius, "On the Paschal Solemnity, 56.3" English translation, James Quigley, Joseph Lienhard, *Easter in the Early Church*, 66-69. Jacques P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, 24 (1857), 698. "Hoc tempore figura perficiebatur, vetus nimirum Pascha seu transitus: insuper etiam symbolum caesae ovis fiebat; denique azymi panis esus emaginis cujusdam instar erat. Quae omnia in Servatoris solemnitate completa sunt." Eusebius follows Philo and Origen in seeing the Pasch as a "crossing-over" from Egypt in the light of Exodus 12, regarding it as the Christian *Pascha*, "the feast of the saving Passion."

⁴⁶ Augustine, "Tractate 50 on the Gospel of St John, Chapter XI, 55-57," *NPNFa*, I, Vol. XII, 279

⁴⁷ Walker, "Letter, *De sollemnitatibus et sabbatis et neomeniis*," *SCO*, 201.

3.3 Patristic theology

Passover as the festivity of light owes much to the post-equinoctial canon. At the equinox there is an uneasy tension between light and darkness: they are of equal length and force; neither has conquered and neither has won. Until this tension has been resolved in favour of light, the Passover of the children of light cannot be meaningfully celebrated. This, in bare outline is the patristic theoria on the feast of light.⁴⁸

Patristic literature abounds in homilies, festal letters, and treatises, which take delight in the theme of Passover, and Easter. There is evidence to support the view that the Insular writers were indebted to patristic writings for many of their ideas and commentaries. Columbanus is familiar with the work of Pope Gregory the Great, and Jerome's Commentary on Ezekiel. "His favourites are Cassian and Jerome, from whom he drew a wealth of expressions and ideas."⁴⁹ Writing to Bishop Venance in AD 593 Gregory mentions that he has sent a copy of his *Pastoral Rule* to the Priest Columbanus,⁵⁰ and in his letter to Pope Gregory in AD 600, Columbanus says he has read it:

I have read your book containing the pastoral rule, brief in style, pregnant in doctrine, replete with sacred lore; I confess that the work is sweeter than honey to the needy; wherefore in my thirst I beg you for Christ's sake to bestow on me your tracts, which, as I have heard, you have compiled with wonderful skill upon Ezekiel. I have read six books of Jerome on him; but he did not expound even half.⁵¹

The writings of John Cassian (d. AD 435) influenced Columbanus, whose monastic rule reflects the use of Cassian's *Conferences* written in AD 426.

⁴⁸ Chupungo, *Cosmic Elements*, 54.

⁴⁹ Walker, *SCO*, Introduction, lxviii.

⁵⁰ Gregory the Great, "Letter, 5.17,"

⁵¹ Walker, *SCO*, "Letter 1," 12.

Columbanus' discussion of discretion, in his *Regula Monachorum*, displays a striking similarity to Cassian's discussion of this same virtue in his *Conferences*.⁵²

For when the works of the above-mentioned virtues were abounding in them, discretion alone was wanting, and allowed them not to continue even to the end. Nor can any other reason for their falling off be discovered except that as they were not sufficiently instructed by their elders they could not obtain judgment and discretion, which passing by excess on either side, teaches a monk always to walk along the royal road, and does not allow him to be puffed up on the right hand of virtue, i.e., from excess of zeal to transgress the bounds of due moderation in foolish presumption, nor allows him to be enamoured of slackness and turn aside to the vices on the left hand, i.e., under pretext of controlling the body, to grow slack with the opposite spirit of lukewarmness.⁵³

Columbanus in the *Regula Monachorum* says of discretion:

How necessary discretion is for monks is shown by the mistakes of many, and indicated by the downfall of some, who beginning without discretion and passing their time without a sobering knowledge, have been unable to complete a praiseworthy life; since, just as error overtakes those who proceed without a path, so those who live without discretion intemperance is at hand, and this is always the opposite of virtues which are placed in the mean between each extreme.⁵⁴

In his letter to Pope Boniface IV (d. AD 614) Columbanus uses Cassian's *Preface to Conference I-X* saying: "But since my mind's frail bark is not so much drawn into the deep, according to the Lord's word but would rather stick fast in one spot."⁵⁵ Columbanus' letters and sermons show a breadth of learning, not only of the

⁵² These *Conferences* disseminated spiritual guidance in the form of interviews granted to Cassian, while in Egypt, by the great old men of the desert. These *Conferences* helped to bring the tradition of the eastern Christian world close to the west. See Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 111.

⁵³ John Cassian, "Conference 2.2," *NPNFa*, Vol. XI, 308-309.

⁵⁴ Walker, "Rule VIII, On Discretion," *SCO*, 134-135. *Discretio monachis quam sit necessaria multorum error ostendit et aliquorum ruinae demonstrant, qui sine discretione incipientes et absque moderatrice scientia degentes vitam finire laudabilem non potuerunt; quia sicut sine via tendentibus error evenit, ita sine discretione viventibus excessus in promptu est, qui semper virtutibus in medio inter utramque nimietatem positus contrarius est.*"

⁵⁵ Walker, "Letter, 5," *SCO*, 45. "Sed quia fragilis ingenii cymba non tam in altum iuxta verbum Domini ducta est, quam adhuc in uno haerat loco [...]" These sentiments bear a strong resemblance to Cassian's *Preface*, to *Conference I*, *NPNFa*, II, Vol. XI, L 21, 293. "For the bark of my slender abilities will be exposed to the dangers of a longer voyage on the deep [...]"

scriptures, but includes classical writers such as Virgil, and Horace.⁵⁶ Cummián also displays knowledge of the works of Jerome, Augustine, Gregory, Origen, and Cyprian. Besides the biblical texts on which he drew heavily, Cummián also had to hand an extensive collection of patristic and technical works, some of which have not yet been satisfactorily identified.⁵⁷ Ó Cróinín lists the writings, which have been positively identified. These include the writings of Jerome, Ps-Columbanus, Augustine, Augustinus Hibernicus, Ambrosiaster, Origen, Pope Innocent I, Patrick, Victorius of Aquitaine, Gregory the Great, Pelagius, The Cologne Prologue, Acts of Synod of Caesarea, Dionysius Exiguus, Acts of the Council of Nicea, Acts of the Council of Arles, Cyprian's *On the Unity of the Church*, and the *Collections Hibernensis*.

The writings of Adomnán, abbot of Iona, (d. AD 713) in particular *De locis sanctis* provide further evidence regarding texts used in an Insular setting.⁵⁸ Thomas O'Loughlin from an analysis of *De locis sanctis* establishes that among the works found in the library of Iona in the late seventh century were some by Jerome, by far the most numerous, Augustine, Cassiodorus, Josephus, Eucharius of Lyons, Isidore,

⁵⁶ Walker, *SCO*, 221, provides an index of classical and patristic writers, which he believes were used in the writings of Columbanus. The list of text is considerable.

⁵⁷ Ó Cróinín, "Appendix 2, Biblical Texts and Related Sources: A, Cummián's Letter," *DCP*, 225.

⁵⁸ Evidence suggests, that Adomnán for example had at his disposal the library of Iona, which was as well stocked as most in the Latin west at the time. The works include: books of the Latin fathers, books of poetry, a manual of instruction and encyclopaedic works. *De locis sanctis* contains evidence for some seventeen books; there are indications of five more and further research will reveal others. O'Loughlin, *Celtic Theology*, 81, also O'Loughlin "The Library of Iona in the Late Seventh Century: The evidence from Adomnán *De locis sanctis*," *Ériu* 45 (1994), 33-52.

Pliny, Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicle*, Juvencus, with probably a few other authors.⁵⁹ The text of *De ratione computandi* contains a series of excerpts from a wide variety of authors on the subject of Easter: Victorius, Dionysius, Paschasinus of Lilybaeum, Proterius of Alexandria, *De ratione paschali*, Epistola Cyrilli and *De sollemnitatibus*. Also included are passages from Jerome.⁶⁰

3.3.1 Latin west

The Fathers of the Church saw an intrinsic link between the first creation at the dawn of time in Genesis and the ‘recreation of humankind’ achieved by Christ’s redemptive act of salvation. The Jews celebrated the Pasch as a memorial of their salvation out of Egypt, when the firstborn of the Egyptians died without the firstborn of the Jews also perishing, the blood of the paschal victim symbolically protecting them. In the same way the Christian Pasch became a figure of the salvation of the Jews, but the Pasch celebrated by us “is a cause of salvation for all people beginning with the first created, who saves and gives life to all.” Cummián quotes:

The Pasch is killed and is brought to life. It is a part of the feast day, the fourteenth moon, not the whole feast, in which we are led astray, but in the part, and in the restful Sabbath and in the heralded new which are but a shadow, not the substance of Christ. The shadow is killed; the truth is brought to life.⁶¹

⁵⁹ O’Loughlin, “The Library of Iona in the Late Seventh Century,” 52. O’Loughlin provides a table of the works, grading them, A: being a certainty on Iona; B: doubtful; C: No evidence.

⁶⁰ Ó Cróinín, ed., *Scotti anonymi tractatus de ratione computandi secundum solem et lunam*, 116-210.

⁶¹ Cummián, *DCP*, LL 124-129, 75.

According to Ó Cróinín the source of this text is unknown, but this type of imagery of shadow and reality is one frequently found in the writings and homilies of the fathers. Ambrose of Milan (d. AD 397) says:

The carnal Jews had the shadow, the likeness is ours, the reality theirs who shall rise again. For we know that according to the Law there are these three, the shadow, the image or likeness, and the reality; the shadow in the Law, the image in the Gospel, the truth in the judgment. But all is Christ's, and all is in Christ, whom now we cannot see according to the reality, but we see him, virtually, in a kind of likeness of future things, of which we have seen the shadow in the Law. So, then, Christ is not the shadow but the likeness of God, not an empty likeness but the reality. And so the Law was by Moses, for the shadow was through man, the likeness was through the Law, the reality through Jesus. For reality cannot proceed from any other source than from reality.⁶²

Basil the Great (d. AD 397) also introduces this theme:

But the faith in Moses and in the cloud is, somehow, in a shadow and type. The nature of the divine is very frequently represented by the rough and shadowy outlines of the types; but because small and human things prefigure divine things, it is obvious that we must not therefore conclude the divine nature to be small. The type is an exhibition of things expected, and gives an imitative anticipation of the future. So Adam was a type of "Him that was to come." Typically, "That rock was Christ;" and the water a type of the living power of the word; as he says, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink." The manna is a type of the living bread that came down from heaven; and the serpent on the standard, of the passion of salvation accomplished by means of the cross, therefore they who even looked thereon were preserved. So in the same way, the history of the exodus of Israel is recorded to show forth those who are being saved through baptism. For the firstborn of the Israelites were preserved, like the bodies of the baptised, by the giving of grace to those who were marked with blood. For the blood of the sheep is a type of the blood of Christ; and the firstborn, a type of the first-formed.⁶³

A text of Pseudo Chrysostom also resembles the ideas in Cummián's letter, *DCP*:

The partial and transitory, as images and figures of the perfect and eternal, prepared for and foreshadowed the reality, which has now emerged. When the reality arrives, the figure is obsolete, just as when a king comes, no one who sees the living king would think of prostrating himself before his image. The inferiority of the figure when compared to the reality is self-evident, where the figure celebrates the short life of the first-born of the Jews, while the reality celebrates the enduring life of all humanity. For it is no great thing to escape death for a short time, if one dies shortly

⁶² Ambrose of Milan, "On Belief in the Resurrection, 2.109," *NPNFa*, II, Vol. X., 192-193.

⁶³ Basil the Great, "The Book of Saint Basil on the Spirit, 14.31," *NPNFa*, II, Vol. VIII, 19.

thereafter; but it is a great thing to escape death altogether – which is what happens to us, for whom “Christ has been sacrificed as the paschal lamb” (1 Cor. 5.7).⁶⁴

In the *Hexameron*, Ambrose of Milan commenting on the opening verse of Genesis explains that the world *principium* ‘beginning’ has reference either to time or to number or to foundation. If time is alluded to, it has the meaning according to Exodus. “This month shall be for you the beginning of the months” (Ex. 12.2). Ambrose explains that this is the feast of the months because Passover is held in it. In other words the beginning of Genesis coincides with the beginning of Exodus, therefore God created heaven and earth at the time when the months began, from which time it is fitting that the world took its rise.⁶⁵ The implication is that both creation and Passover are spring occurrences. The sun in spring, regular and orderly in its course, is the symbol of Christ the Sun of Justice.

Jerome (d. AD 420) forwards to Theophilus, patriarch of Alexandria, a translation of the latter's paschal letter for AD 404:

With what secret stores of wisdom you have spoken of the interchange of day and night, the course of the moon, the laws of the sun, the nature of our world; always

⁶⁴ Pierre Nautin, ed., “Homélie pascale 2, Trois homélie dans la tradition d’Origène,” *Sources Chrétiennes*, 36 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1953), 55-57. “Les choses partielles et provisoires, images et figures des choses parfaites et éternelles, préludaient, ainsi que des esquisses, à la Vérité qui s’est maintenant levée; mais quand la Vérité est là, la figure n’est plus de saison, de même qu’après la venue d’un roi, personne ne juge convenable de délaissier le roi présent pour se prosterner devant son image. Il est bien évident de soi que la figure est inérieure à la Vérité, quand la figure fête la vie éphémère de premiers-nés juifs, tandis que la Vérité fête la vie permanente de tous les hommes; car ce n’est pas grand’ chose d’échapper à la mort pour un temps bref, quand on mourra peu après, mais c’est une grand chose que d’échapper à la mort complètement, comme cela se produit pour nous, pour qui «*La Paque a été immolée, le Christ*». Nautin attributes this homily to an imitator of Origen at the end of the fourth century; the text *Sur La Paque I*, has the heading *pseudo-chrysostomienne*; he lists seven homilies on the Pasch attributed to Pseudo Chrysostom, but within that group Nautin distinguishes five different authors. English translation, James Quigley, Joseph Lienhard in *Easter in the Early Church*, 64, 65; Cantalamessa is of the opinion that the homily is earlier than the fourth century, and its dependence on Origen remains to be determined.

⁶⁵ Ambrose of Milan, *Hexameron, Paradise, and Cain and Abel*, trans. John J. Savage (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1961), 19.

appealing to the authority of scripture in case in a paschal treatise you should appear to have borrowed anything from secular sources!⁶⁶

Augustine regards the celebration of the Passion of the Lord, as being sacramental. Because “in the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord the transition from death to life has been consecrated, the passing from death to life is wrought in us by faith.”⁶⁷

[...] it is, I say, because of the newness of life in us, that the first of the months of the year has been appointed as the season of this solemnity. [...] This is accordingly signified also in the part of the month appointed for the celebration; for, since the number seven is usually employed in Scripture as a mystical number, indicating perfection of some kind, the day of the celebration of Easter is within the third week of the month, namely between the fourteenth and the twenty-first day.⁶⁸

Augustine uses the symbolism of Easter falling within the third week of the first month to elucidate the importance of the number seven. The third week stretches from day fourteen to day twenty-one, fourteen is twice seven, and twenty-one, three times seven, so these numbers represent complete perfection. The third week then becomes the most appropriate time to celebrate ‘Easter, that most solemn of all feasts.’⁶⁹

Western writers also addressed the theme of light. Augustine is interested in the symbolism of the moon. Reflecting on Psalm 89, verse 37 “It shall be established forever like the moon, an enduring witness in the skies,” Augustine unfolds a spiritual

⁶⁶ Jerome, “Letter 99.2 to Theophilus” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. VI, 188-189. Jerome forwards to Theophilus a translation of the latter’s Paschal letter for AD 404 and apologizes for his delay in sending it. Ill-health and grief for the death of Paula had prevented him doing any literary work.

⁶⁷ Augustine, “Letter 55,” *NPNFa*, I, Vol. I, 304.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 305.

⁶⁹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, art. 102,

meaning to the waxing and waning of the moon; the moon in its fullness represents the perfection of Christ.

For although that moon which we know becomes perfect, the next day she begins to wane, after her orb is full. "He shall be as the moon perfect for evermore," he says. His seat shall be made perfect as the moon, but that moon is one, which will be perfect for evermore. If as the sun, why also as the moon? The Scriptures usually signify by the moon the mortality of this flesh, because of its increasings and decreasings, because of its transitory nature. The moon is also interpreted as Jericho: one who was descending from Jerusalem to Jericho fell among robbers: for he was descending from immortality to mortality. Similar then is the flesh to that moon, which every month suffers increase and decrease: but that flesh of ours will be perfect in the resurrection: "and a faithful witness in heaven." So then, if it was our mind only that would be perfected, he would compare us only to the sun: if our body only, to the moon; but as God will perfect us in both, in respect of the mind it is said, "like as the sun before me," because God only sees the mind: and "as the moon," so is the flesh: which "shall be made perfect for evermore," in the resurrection of the dead.⁷⁰

Ambrose of Milan also regards the full moon as a symbol of perfection, "the Passover of the Lord is celebrated on the fourteen day of the moon, because those who celebrate Easter ought to be perfect."⁷¹ He calls the number fourteen, *grande numeri mysterium*, the symbol of the Father's love for us, "For it was on the fourteenth, when the moon was brightly shining, that the Father handed his only Son to death for our sake."⁷² Jerome echoes a similar doctrine:

We read in the Book of Exodus that the lamb is immolated on the fourteenth day of the month. It is immolated on the fourteenth when the moon is full, when nothing is lacking in its brightness. Thus you see that Christ is not immolated except in perfect and full light.⁷³

⁷⁰ Augustine, "Homilies on the Psalms, 89.32," *NPNFa*, I, Vol. VIII, 436-437.

⁷¹ Ambrose, "De orbitu Theodorsi," *Sancti Ambrosii Opera*, Pars 7, Otto Faller ed., *CSEL*, 73 (Vindobonae: Hoelder-Pilchler-Tempsky, 1955), 391. "Ita est enim ecclesia, quae pie pascha celebrat domini nostri Iesu Christi: sicut luna perfecta in aeternum manet."

⁷² Ambrrose, "De Orbitu Theodosii," 391. "Grande numeri mysterium, quando pater unicum filium pro nobis omnibus tradidit, cum pleno luminis sui orbe luna fulgeret."

⁷³ Jerome, "Tractatus de in Quadragesima, v. 1," *CCSL*, 78 (Turnholti: Brepols, 1958), 30. "Deinde legimus in Exodo, quia Quarta decima die agnus immolatur, quanto luna plena est, quando nihil ei est de lumine, videte ergo quod Xpistus non imolatur, nisi in perfecto et pleno lumine." See also

3.3.2 Greek east

The *Acts of the Synod of Caesarea*⁷⁴ reports that the bishops gathered told Bishop Theophilus at the outset: “We must first inquire when the world was created, and when this has been diligently studied, the paschal regulation can be correctly established from it.”⁷⁵

Gregory of Nyssa wrote an important homily dealing with the symbolism of the Easter full moon. This homily was a reply to Jewish criticism regarding Christian calculation of the Easter feast. Gregory pointed out that the Mosaic regulations are valuable only when they can cleanse a person from sin, fourteen Nisan has meaning for Christians only in so far as it symbolizes renewal of life.

Before the rays of the sun totally disappear, the moon rises on the other horizon to shed its light on the world. Before the moon completes its night journey, the brightness of the sun already mingles with the moon’s remaining light. Darkness is

Jerome, *De Exodo, in Vigilia Paschae, CCSL, 78, 536, 537.*” *Hodie* populus Israhel et uere homo uidens Deum (hoc quippe interpretatur Israhel) egedi iubetur ex Aegypto. *Hodie* agnus Dei, qui tollit peccata mundi, pro omnium salute iugulatur. *Hodie* sanguine illius postes dorum, id est, frontes nostra depinguntur. *Hodie* occiduntur Aegyptii, et seruitute Pharaonis dei populus liberatur....” In the tract on Exodus, Jerome makes a play on the word ‘*hodie*’ a word that still retains its importance in the celebration of the *Easter Triduum*. Jerome explains “Today the people were led out of Israel, today, the Lamb of God saved us, today his blood is painted on the doorposts that is on our foreheads, today the people of God are led out of Egypt and the servitude of Pharaoh.” Translation and italics mine.

⁷⁴ Bartholomew MacCarthy, *The Annals of Ulster*, Vol. IV, regards these *Acts* as an Irish fabrication and dates them to the sixth century.

⁷⁵ *Acts of the Council of Caesarea, PL, XC, 607-61, Krusch, Studien, I, 302-310*, see James Kenney, *The Sources for the Early History* and Bartholomew MacCarthy, *Annals of Ulster*, Vol. IV, for a discussion of the *Acts of the Council of Caesarea*, both these writers claim that the texts are deliberate Irish falsifications. It seems likely today that these texts were never intended to be deliberate falsifications. For the purpose of this work, it is the theological ideas that they contain that are of interest. Bede obviously thought of these documents as genuine. Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, 204, 328-336, MacCarthy, *Annals of Ulster*, Vol. IV, cxvii-cxviii, Krusch, *Studien, I* “*Tractate of Athanadius*,” 344-349, MacCarthy, *Annals of Ulster*, Vol. IV, xxxiv.

thus completely absent on the night of the full moon because of the uninterrupted succession of the sun and the moon.⁷⁶

The Easter full moon symbolises the quality of Christian life, lived fully in the light, without the mixture of darkness. Gregory presents the Easter week as a compendium of the entire life of Christians. It is a reminder to Christians that they should live in the brightness of Christ's resurrection. Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria from AD 385 to 412, also developed the theme of light provided by the Easter full moon, in his *Prologue to Easter Letters*.⁷⁷ "The law," he writes, "prescribes that Easter should be held on the fourteenth of the first month, so that by imitating the light of the full moon, we who possess the full light of the mind, may dwell far away from the darkness of sin."⁷⁸ He says, "we keep the fourteenth, in order that we may perceive from the light received by the senses the other light which is understood by the mind alone."⁷⁹ These brief samples of early texts show the religious symbolism of light over darkness was a powerful one that caught the imagination and fire of early Christian writers. The other recurring theme in these writings is the full moon as the symbol of perfection, which a Christian should strive to attain.

⁷⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, "Letter I to Eusebius", *NPNFa*, II, Vol. V, 527. cf. Philo of Alexandria, "Special Laws, II," 391-411. Philo discusses the reason for choosing the vernal equinox rather than the autumnal equinox for the first of the month. The vernal equinox represents a time of birth and regeneration, unlike the autumnal equinox that symbolizes a time of death and destruction. "The feast begins at the middle of the month, on the fifteenth day, when the moon is full, a day purposely chosen because then there is no darkness, but everything is continuously lighted up [...]"

⁷⁷ Athanasius died in AD 373, leaving the church without his yearly Festal Letter, which set the date for the following Easter Sunday. About a year after the death of Athanasius, Theophilus of Alexandria published his own *Paschal Canon* known as the *Laterculum Paschali*. Only the Prologue of this work remains.

⁷⁸ Krusch, ed. "III, *Prologus Theophili*," *Studien*, I, 226.

⁷⁹ *Theophyllus*, *PG*, 65, 49AB, cited in Anscar Chupungo, *Shaping the Easter Feast*,

3.4 14, 15 or 16 Nisan in the Easter controversy

Daniel McCarthy has written that when it comes to discussing Easter cycles especially in the older sources, it is the lunar term that is of importance:

A striking aspect of the older sources is that their principal emphasis is upon the lunar term, that is, the age of the moon on Easter Sunday, and specifically whether it should be *luna* 14-20, 15-21, or 16-22; *Liber Anatolii*, St Columbanus, Cummian and St Colman and Wilfrid, the Synod of Whitby all devote the major portion of their discussion to this detail.⁸⁰

From the emphasis placed upon these lunar dates by St Columbanus, Cummian, Bede, and others, it is clear that the numbers *luna* fourteen, fifteen and sixteen often function as ciphers for issues of theological and historical dispute.⁸¹ The second aspect of Easter calculations was the Paschal term but this in turn depended on the type of cycle used and the lunar limits.

3.4.1 *Luna* fourteen

The biblical authority for the date of Easter is restricted to specifying that the Crucifixion fell on a Friday, fourteen Nisan according to John's gospel, fifteen Nisan according to the synoptic gospels. The gospels provide no indication as to whether the focus of the celebration should be the Passion or the Resurrection. In Jewish paschal theology fourteen Nisan played a significant symbolic role. The full moon suggests that the Passover is the feast of light and is the symbol of life. Around AD 172 Apollinaris, bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia engaged in battle with those who "feign that it was on the fourteenth when the Lord ate the lamb with his disciples and it was

⁸⁰ McCarthy, "The Origin of the *Laterculus* Paschal Cycle," 27.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

on the feast of Unleavened Bread when he suffered.” In fighting against the error, Appollinaris left to posterity the formulation of Quartodeciman paschal theology. “The fourteenth day was the true Passover of the Lord: the Son of God was the true sacrifice in the place of the lamb.”⁸² The fourteen Nisan entered into Christian paschal liturgy and theology through the Quartodeciman observance.⁸³ The earliest sources,

⁸² Othmar Perler, ed., “Meliton de Sardes: Sur la Pâque et Fragments,” *Sources chrétiennes*, 123 (Paris: Du Cerf, 1966), 244.

⁸³ Bernard Botte, “La question pascale: pâque du Vendredi ou pâque du Dimanche?” *La Maison Dieu* 41 (1955), 84-85. Ce titre est peut-être fallacieux, car il y a eu plusieurs questions pascales distinctes. Vers 160, il y eut des discussions à Laodicée sur la question de savoir si Jésus a été crucifié à 14 Nisan ou bien s’il a mangé la Pâque ce jour-là et a été crucifié le lendemain. C’est un problème exégétique qui n’a pas cessé de tourmenter les commentateurs jusqu’à nos jours. Il y a eu des discussions plus tard, jusqu’au concile Nicée, sur la manière de calculer la date de Pâques. La Syrie s’en tenait au calcul des juifs, tandis qu’Alexandrie et Rome jugeaient le comput juif erroné et se servaient d’un comput différent [...] il ne s’agit pas simplement d’une question de date, mais de la conception même de la fête de Pâques, les Asiatiques célébrant la Passion du Sauveur et les autres sa résurrection [...] ” This title is perhaps fallacious, because there have been there several distinct paschal questions. About 160, there were discussions at Laodicée as to whether Jesus was crucified on 14 Nisan or whether he ate the Pasch on that day and was crucified the next day. This is an exegetical problem that has never ceased to create difficulties for commentators up to our day. There were some later discussions around the council of Nicea, on how to calculate the date of Easter. Syria itself was anxious to follow Jewish calculations, while Alexandria and Rome judged the computation of the Jews erroneous and used a different computation [...]. It was not simply a question of date but of the same understanding of Easter, those from Asia celebrating the Passion of the Saviour and the others his Resurrection. [.] Anton Baumstark, *Liturgie Comparée: Principes et Méthodes pour l’étude historique de liturgies chrétiennes*, 3d (Chevetogne: Editions de Chevetogne, 1953), 192-193. Sees the problem: “Il y avait la beaucoup plus qu’une question de calendrier. La *quarta decima* des Asiatiques était le jour de la Crucifixion, le dimanche prôné par les Romains était celui de la Résurrection. C’est une profonde différence de mentalité et de sentiment qui s’exprime dans les deux manières de fête la première et la plus fondamentale des solennités chrétiennes. Quelle peut être donc son origine? Ne serait-elle pas dans les deux apôtres qui ont présidé à la première croissance de jeunes Églises d’Asie et de Rome? Pour le grand apôtre de l’Asie Mineure, Jean le disciple bien-aimé qui s’était tenu debout sous la Croix du Maître mourant jusqu’au dernier. *Consummation est*, la Résurrection elle-même ne pouvait rien ajouter au souvenir de ce cri triomphal. Pour le premier titulaire de Siège romain, pour celui qui repose sous la majestueuse coupole de Michel-Ange et de Bramante, la mémoire du jour de la Passion n’évoquait qu’un bien triste souvenir qui demeurait toujours un cuisant remords. Le souvenir qu’il aimait à se rappeler était au contraire, celui dont l’avait personnellement favorisé le divin Ressuscité au matin du Dimanche.” Anton Baumstark, *Comparative Liturgy*, trans. F. L. Cross (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1958), 174. “It was much more than a calendrical question. The *Quarta decima* of the Asiatics was the day of the Crucifixion, the Sunday celebrated by the Romans that of the Resurrection. A profound difference of mentality and sentiment finds expression in the two methods of celebrating the first and most fundamental of the Christian solemnities. What, then, can have been the origin of this difference? May not the divergence lie in the different spiritual outlooks of the two Apostles who presided over the early growth of the young Churches of Asia and Rome? In the mind of the great Apostle of Asia Minor, John, the Beloved Disciple, who stood under the dying Master’s Cross until the final *Consummation est*, even the Resurrection could add nothing to the remembrance of that

Quartodeciman practice, Anatolius, *Acts of the Synod of Caesaraea*, Pseudo Theophilus, Athanasius, Augustine, Ambrose⁸⁴ all include *luna* fourteen in their lunar limits. The author of the *Chronicon Paschale* gave the name *Pascha*, not only to the passion and death of the Lord, but also to his resurrection. The Quartodeciman *Pascha* also contained, implicitly, the resurrection of Christ, for the Quartodecimans, *luna* fourteen was their celebration of Easter.⁸⁵

The Insular controversy concerns truth claims of faith, and hence its emphasis is on theology rather than rubrics. Ritual and symbolism is as much a way of making

triumphant cry. For the first holder of the See of Rome, the Apostle who rests under the majestic cupola of Michaelangelo and Bramante, the day of the Passion evoked only very sad recollections which would never cease to arouse deep remorse. The event which Peter loved to remember was rather the experience with which the Divine Risen Christ had personally favoured him on the Sunday morning.”

⁸⁴ Celebration of the Pasch on *luna* fourteen, irrespective of the day of the week on which it occurred; others in Asia Minor and parts of Gaul, celebrated on a fixed date 25 March, (see *Munich Computus*) and yet others celebrated on 6 April. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*; Matthew Connell, *An Introduction to the Liturgical Year* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1999), McCarthy and Breen, *DRP, The ante Nicene Christian pasch, The Acts of the Council of Caesarea*. These *Acta* (otherwise known as the *Epistola Philippi* and *Acta concilii Caesareae*, are all cited in the Brussel computus; and also in Cummian’s letter, *DCP*. Ó Cróinín, “A seventh-century Irish computus from the circle of Cummianus,” *Chronology*, 115. Krusch, “*Prologus Theophilus*,” *Studien*, I, Krush, “*Tractate of Athanasius*,” Augustine, “Letter 55 to Januarius, 5.9,” *NPNFa*, I, Vol. I, 306, *CSEL*, 34 (1895); all these texts show lunar limits of *xiv-xx* or *xxi*. Charles W. Jones in the introduction to Bede’s *Opera de Temporibus*, gives the African lunar limits as *xiiii-xxi*. According to Jones the African table advocated Easter limits 22 March - 21 April, and lunar-limits *xiiii-xxi*.

⁸⁵ The problem in the West was how to include the passion and death of Christ in the Paschal celebration. Nicetas of Remesiana and the author of the *Acta Synodi Caesariensis* found the solution in the Pascal Triduum. “Theophylus episcopus dixit: Et impium non est, ut illi tres dies passionis dominici, tantum sacramenti mysterium, foras limitem excludantur? Pasmus namque dominus ab xi kl Ap v. feria, quod caena domini vocamus, quia nocte Judaeis traditus, quando et cum discipulis suis discubuit, quando et Judae praedixit, quod ab ipse esset traditurus, quod et ita constat fuisse suppletum, et viii. kl Ap. resurrexit. Quomodo ergo hii tres dies foras terminum excludentur?” “Theophilus the bishop said: Is it not irreverent to exclude the three days of the Lord’s passion, which is so great a mystery? For the Lord began to suffer on the xi kl Ap, fifth feria (Thursday) that we call the Lord’s Supper, and in that night when Judas betrayed him he held discourse with his disciples. Judas has decided beforehand that he would betray him, and so he allowed himself to be taken, and on the viii kl Ap he rose from the dead.” English translation mine.

The bishops decided at this synod that they should keep Passover after the xi kl April and before the xi kl May

truth claims as are doctrinal formulae, since ritual and symbol are in fact ways of giving a group identity. As shown earlier Easter was and is still seen as a great feast of light, consequently, the celebration of the feast on a date in which darkness still relatively speaking, prevailed over light, amounted to a symbolic denial rather than a confession of Christ's victory over darkness by his death and resurrection.⁸⁶ Each of the Easter calendars or tables employed a particular astronomical apparatus, at times inaccurate, though usually corroborated with biblical authority. As theologians reflected on the significance of Easter and the symbolism of its occurrence during the first month, at springtime, cosmological happenings became a starting point for theological reflection. The symbolism of light and dark, creation and recreation, rebirth and new life provided themes for homilies and became important elements in the sacrament of Baptism.

The movement away from the celebration of fourteen Nisan to a dominical celebration had two phases. The first was not to celebrate Passover except on Sunday, the second not to celebrate the feast even on Sunday, if that Sunday fell on fourteen Nisan. Easter was transferred to the following Sunday. The Council of Nicea fixed Easter Sunday after the vernal equinox, but as already shown there is no proof that it censured the celebration of Easter Sunday on fourteen Nisan. What began and developed in Alexandria, and later spread to the West, was the exclusion of *luna*

⁸⁶ James Mackey, "The Theology of Columbanus," *Ireland and Europe in the early Middle Ages: Learning and Literature*, eds. Próinseas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1996), 233.

fourteen from lunar terms.⁸⁷ If Easter is never to be celebrated on the day of the Passover *luna* fourteen, the fifteenth day of the lunar month will be the earliest date for Easter. In a year when Easter is the fifteenth day of the lunar month the fourteenth, the Passover will be the Sabbath and Easter Sunday is the next day: if we assume that the fourteenth day is on a Sunday, Easter must be postponed until the next Sunday, the twenty-first day of the lunar month.⁸⁸

However, the reason for these difference and the consequent passionate controversy was not astronomical but rather the lunar dates *luna* 14, 15 and 16 all had powerful religious and theological significance for Christians because of their association with the events of the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus; where different Christian groups disagreed as to the emphasis that should be given to each they arranged their Easter slightly differently and disputes naturally arose as to who was 'correct.'⁸⁹

The reason given for the elimination of fourteen Nisan revolved around the time for the paschal fast. If fourteenth Nisan fell on Sunday, fasting would have to be broken the day before, since no fasting was allowed on Sunday. This meant that the ancient tradition of fasting three complete days until fourteen Nisan could not be accommodated. The alternative was to move the Passover to the next Sunday. Theophilus of Alexandria explained, "lest we break the fast on Saturday which is still the thirteenth day of the moon."⁹⁰ The author of *Chronicon Paschale* also maintained "that fasting could not be broken on Saturday which is till the thirteenth day of the

⁸⁷ For Alexandria the lunar limits became *xv-xxi* with *xv* becoming the terminus for the early lunar limit, however for the Romans, their lunar limits were *xvi-xxii*, but *luna xvi* was the earliest moon for Easter Sunday, not for 14 Nisan. This resulted in a discrepancy between Alexandrian Easter dates and Roman dates. The latest date for the celebration of Easter in Rome was the 21 April, but the Alexandrians held to 23 April. The Alexandrian term was thirty-five days, 22 March – 23 April.

⁸⁸ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 400.

⁸⁹ McCarthy, "Easter Principles and a Fifth-Century Lunar Cycle used in the British Isles," 204.

⁹⁰ Krusch, "*Prologus Theophili* 3," *Studien*, I, 224. "Igitur quoniam nec Quarta decima luna si in diem dominican incidat ieiunare nos oportet, nec consequens est tercia decima luna die sabbato ieiunium solvere [...]"

moon,” Ambrose of Milan saw the danger of playing with this argument and added, “fasting is to be observed most especially on the day of the Passion.”⁹¹

What had happened to the importance and symbolism of fourteen Nisan? Suddenly, all the theology about the importance and symbolism of the full moon was disregarded, and was replaced by the use of lights at the Easter vigil.⁹² This feast of light lost its connection with the earlier theological interpretation of the cosmological happenings and so was robbed of its rich symbolism of continuous light at the equinox and the full moon. From then on the theology of feast centred on developing scriptural links with fifteen Nisan. The Johanne chronology was replaced by the chronology of the synoptic gospels. The Insular church fed as it was by the writings of Anatolius and the importance of postequinoctial triumph of light over darkness continued to adhere to an ancient tradition.

The calculation of the dates for Easter depended on which moon was regarded as the Easter moon, *luna* fourteen, fifteen or sixteen, and the theological and etymological interpretation of *Pascha*. Scriptural exegesis played a vital role in the development of the theological understanding of Easter. Different systems of reckoning Insular, Victorian or Dionysian, all developed their own exegesis of these texts, each group believing that their interpretation was the one ordained by God, and God was the ultimate authority. Both Anatolius and Ceolfrid use the text of Exodus

⁹¹ Ambrose, “*Epistula XXIII*,” *PL XVI*, Col. 883.17, 1028, “quia neque Dominica jejunare debemus, neque tertiadecima luna die sabbati incidente jejunium solvere, quod maxime die passionis est exhibendum.” “Because we must neither break the fast on Sunday nor on the Sabbath on the thirteenth moon, because breaking the fast belongs to the great day of the Passion.”

⁹² Chupungo, *Cosmic Elements*, 52.

12 to derive their lunar terms, but reach very different conclusions, Anatolius arriving at a lunar term of *xiv-xx*, Ceolfrid maintaining that the lunar term must be *xv-xxi*. Astronomy played its part in the synchronisation of the ecclesiastical moons with the observed moon but the theological arguments attached to these different moons were of immeasurably greater significance than actual astronomy.⁹³

At the time of Jesus the beginning of each month was determined empirically by the sighting of the new light. The new moon is, of course not visible; what is visible is the new light, about one or two days after the new moon, a faintly glowing curved line appearing over the western horizon shortly after sunset. In the evening of the twenty-ninth day of each month the priestly calendar commission assembled and waited for witnesses who would testify under oath that the new light had appeared.⁹⁴

Almost every Paschal table that has been written includes a discussion of the theology behind the table. The priorities of those who actually participated in the paschal controversy were the lunar and Paschal terms, the details of the lunar cycle were of relatively little importance to them.⁹⁵ Cummian, having devoted nearly one hundred lines to discussing issues relating to *luna* fifteen and twenty-one disposes of the ten lunar cycles in just twenty lines. Moreover he does not even clearly identify which cycle he uses himself much less make any recommendation to Ségéne about which cycle he should adopt.⁹⁶

⁹³ Astronomy has played an important role in narrowing down the possible years for Jesus' crucifixion, see Raymond Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 1375, Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans., Norman Perrin (London: S.C.M. Press, 1966), 36-41. Colin J. Humphreys and W. G. Waddington, *Dating the Crucifixion* (London: Macmillan Journals, 1983).

⁹⁴ Ó Cróinín, discusses this matter in relation to the Irish interpretation of Easter, Cummian, *DCP*, 25-29.

⁹⁵ Mackey, "The Theology of Columbanus," 29.

⁹⁶ Mc Carthy, "The *Latercus* Paschal Cycle," 28.

Technical Details of Insular Paschal Limits and Lunar Cycles known or used in the Insular Church⁹⁷

Source	Lunar Term	Paschal Term	Cycle	Saltus
Padua <i>Latercus</i> ⁹⁸	14-20	26 th March-23 rd April	84	14
Munich <i>latercus</i>	14-20		84	14
<i>Liber Anatolii</i>	14-20	26 th March-23 rd April	19	14
St Columbanus	14-20	26 th March –23 rd April	84	-
Bede, <i>De Temporum Ratione</i>	14-20	26 th March	84	
Epistle of Cyril		---- 23 rd April		
Cummian's letter ⁹⁹	16-22	22 nd March-23 rd April	19	19
Victorius				
Cummian's Letter	15-21	22 nd March-25 th April	19	19
Dionysius Exiguus ¹⁰⁰				
Epact of the Irish Annals			19	19
St Patrick ¹⁰¹	14-21	22 nd March	19	11
Cummian's letter				
Acts of Council of Caesarea	14-21	22 nd March-21 st April	---	---

⁹⁷ Cummian, *DCP*, 29-47, McCarthy, "Origin of the *Latercus* Cycles of the Insular Celtic Churches," All data concerning Easter limits comes from Bartholomew MacCarthy, *Annals of Ulster, cxv-clix* except that on the Padua *latercus* which comes from McCarthy and Ó Cróinín.

⁹⁸ Note that practically every technical detail of the Padua *latercus* matches the *latercus* described in the Munich Computus. Apart from the Padua *latercus* the only other Irish 84-year *latercus* known is described in the Munich Computus. Ó Cróinín, *Chronology*, 66-67. A new edition of the Munich Computus is at present being prepared by Immo Warntjes. Immo Warntjes, München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14456. "Alii Latinorum ciclum .lxxxiiii. annorum conposuerunt, in quo ciclo .xviii. quarter inueniuntur anni et .viii. dies [recte anni] superflui sunt .xx[viii]. vero anni ter in eo contentur et nihil supefluum habet. In quo circulo saltus in xiio anno fit, in quo saltus sol luna.vii. diebus [recte anni] superat. Et hic saltus incongruus est, quia non xiimam partem diei cum nocte currit. Deinde hic circulus secundum solem congruus est, incongruus secundum lunam." O'Connell, "Easter Cycles in the Early Irish Church," 95 dated the Munich *latercus*, to AD 718. Ó Cróinín and McCarthy, in their work on the Padua *latercus* conclude that AD 438 is the only year compatible with the ferial and epactal data and O'Connell's dating of the Munich *latercus*.

⁹⁹ Cummian, *DCP*, shows that southern Ireland had adopted the Victorian cycle by AD 632.

¹⁰⁰ The cycle of Dionysius began to replace the cycle of Victorius about 640; Wilfrid of Ripon may have introduced the cycle to Northumbria at the Synod of Whitby. Wilfrid had learnt this cycle from Boniface whilst he was a deacon in Rome. Bede was an enthusiastic supporter of the Dionysian table against that of Victorius. Bede attacks Victorius unmercifully, quite unlike the author of *De ratione computandi* who discusses the merits of each of the cycles dispassionately. The crucial problem with the Victorian cycle is that based its calculation of the relationship of Easter to the equinox, rather than the relationship of the full moon to the equinox, resulting in the full moon falling before the equinox.

¹⁰¹ Cummian, *DRP*, LL 206-211. See also Ó Cróinín, "New Light on Palladius," *Chronology*, 29-30. Ó Cróinín says that this text could not be Patrick's Easter table, but rather ascribes the table to Palladius. Patrick, he says, was formed by an experience of the British church, and in the fourth and fifth centuries the British church reckoned the date of Easter according to the rules of an 84-year cycle not a 19-year one.

Source	Lunar Term	Paschal Term	Cycle	Saltus
Tractate of St Athanasius	14-21	22 nd March-21 st April	---	---

Cummian's letter describes ten of the cycles given above, and there are in addition the cycles given in the Padua *latercus* and the Munich *latercus*. It can be seen that with the exception of Victorius' cycle and that of Dionysius all the other cycles began with *luna* fourteen, and a number of the cycles have lunar limits *xiv-xxi*.

There seems to be a number of reasons for the switch from lunar limits *xiv-xx* to limits *xv-xxi*. As the theological emphasis of Easter changed from an emphasis on the Passion, *πάσχεῖν*, to *transitus*, 'passage' or 'crossing' there was also a change visible in patristic writings from using the chronology of John's gospel and with it the taint of Quartodecimanism, to the synoptic chronology. This resulted in a change in biblical emphasis, on *luna* fourteen as a celebration of the Passion, to *luna* fifteen as the celebration of the Passion, and a theological shift from Easter as a feast of the Passion, to Easter as a feast of the Resurrection. In AD 387 Ambrose wrote that Christ did not suffer and die on the fourteenth Nisan, but on the fifteenth. "We must observe the law of Passover, namely, that we do not keep the fourteenth as the day of the resurrection, but rather as the day of the passion."¹⁰² There are contradictions in this

¹⁰² Ambrose, "Epistula, XXIII," *PL*, 16, Col. 882.8, 1028, Col. 883.11, 1028. "unde necesse fuit, quia etiam post Aegyptiorum supputationes, et Alexandrinae Ecclesiae definitiones, episcopi quoque Romanae Ecclesiae, per litteras plerique meam adhuc exspectant sententiam, quid existimem scribere de die Paschae. Nam licet futuri diei Paschae inciderit quaestio, tamen etiam in reliquumquid tendum videatur, aperimus; si quaestio talis incurrerit." "Accordingly, since, even after the calculation of the Egyptians, and the definitions of the church of Alexandria, and also of the Bishop of the church of Rome, several persons are still waiting my judgment by letter, it is needful that I should write what my opinion is about the day of the Passover. For though the question which has arisen is about the approaching Paschal day, yet we state what we think should be maintained for all subsequent time, in case any question of the kind should come up [...]" "Unde lex paschae nobis servanda est, ut non quartadecimam observemus in die resurrectionis, sed in die magis passionis, aut certe aliis proximis superioribus diebus; quia resurrectionis celebritas die Dominica celebratur; Dominica autem jejuna non possumus; quia Manichaeos etiam ob istius diei jejuna jure damnamus. Hoc est enim in

letter, Ambrose at times favouring fifteen Nisan, but mentioning fourteen Nisan many times. Anatolius spoke out quite vehemently against the limits of *xv-xxi*, but Anatolius was from Asia Minor, which was the stronghold of the *luna* fourteen tradition.

3.4.1.1 *Luna* fourteen and Anatolius

Anatolius discounts the practice of lunar limits extending to *luna* twenty-one: basing his exegesis on Exodus 12.18-19 he says: “Not understanding that if *luna xxi* be added, there will be eight days of unleavened bread,”¹⁰³ citing the Lord’s command to Moses “for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread,” or in contradiction of the Gospel text, “now on the first day of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus,” (Matt. 26.17) and asked him where they would prepare the Passover? In this context Anatolius refers to specific practices derived from Gaul in the third century, of keeping lunar limits of *xiv-xxi*, Augustine in fourth century North Africa also records this practice, as did Ambrose at Milan.¹⁰⁴ Anatolius is in no doubt that this practice is incorrect, for him the fourteenth was the day of the Passover, and the first day of Unleavened Bread.

resurrectionem Christi non credere, si legem quis jejunii die resurrectionis indicat.” “We must then keep this law of Easter; not to keep the fourteenth day as the day of the Resurrection, but rather as the day of the Passion, or at least one of the next preceding days, because the feast of the Resurrection is kept on the Lord’s day and on the Lord’s day we cannot fast; for we rightly condemn the Manichaeans for their fast upon this day. For it is unbelief in Christ’s Resurrection to appoint a rule of fasting for the day of the Resurrection.”

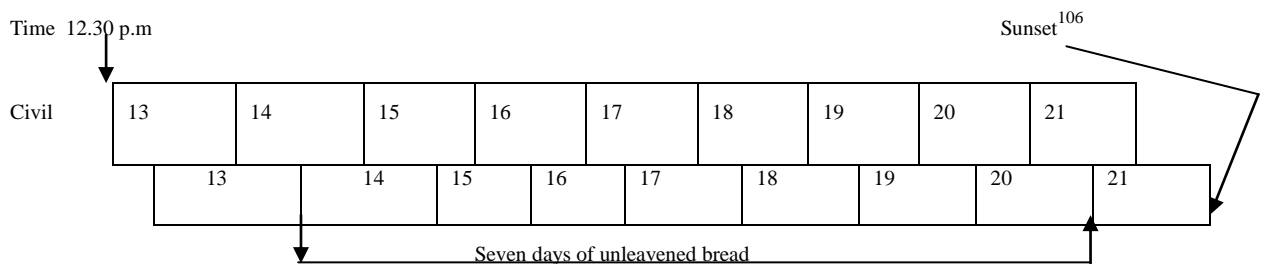
This letter is addressed to the Bishops of the Province of Aemilia, which as it formed part of the political diocese of Italy, was under the ecclesiastical superintendence of the Bishop of Milan. The Bishops had applied to Ambrose for his decision as to the proper day for observing Easter in the following year, AD 387, when the first day of the week fell on the fourteenth day of the moon.

¹⁰³ McCarthy and Breen, *DRP*, 5.5-6, 65.

¹⁰⁴ Augustine, “Letter 55,” *NPNFa*, I, Vol. I, 304, 305.

[...] those who make this assertion are deceived by error because they do not know that day (he is referring to the lunar day) 13 and 14, 14 and 15, 15 and 16[...] are all to be found on the one and the same day. For every day in the lunar computation does not end at evening in the same number in which it began in the morning because the (civil) day, that in the morning, that is until the six and one half hour (12.30 p.m.), is counted as luna 13, that same is at evening found to be (luna 14).¹⁰⁵

In other words, the Roman civil day begins at 12.30 p.m. and the lunar day begins at sunset. The seven days of unleavened bread corresponds to lunar days *xiv-xx* and these lag behind the civil day by approximately five-and-one-half hours.



The confusion between the civil day and the lunar day is partly responsible for the misunderstanding regarding which moon is in fact the Paschal moon. Wilfrid accuses Colman of celebrating on the thirteenth moon, not realising in fact, that according to the argument of Anatolius the moon that rises at sundown on the thirteenth is in fact the fourteenth moon.¹⁰⁷ In John's gospel the fourteenth Nisan is the day of the slaughtering of the lambs for the Passover meal, Jesus is portrayed as the true lamb who has come to deliver his people from exile and bring them back to the Father. The theme of Jesus as the lamb of God was an important one in early Christian theology, even though there are few scriptural references on this theme,

¹⁰⁵ McCarthy and Breen, *DRP*, 5:14, 65.

¹⁰⁶ Diagram taken from McCarthy and Breen, *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, 90. See Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, where she describes Bede as interpreting the lunar day as beginning at 12.30 p.m. from the text of Anatolius.

¹⁰⁷ This in fact will only happen when *luna* fourteen is also a Sunday and the day upon which the Insular church celebrates Easter in certain years.

John 1.29 and Rev. 5.6-6.17. The importance of the sacrifice of the lamb for the Insular Easter is shown by the following passage from *Liber Anatolii*:

Following their example up to today all the bishops of Asia, who sustain the rule by the irreproachable authority of John the Evangelist, who leant on Our Lord's bosom, who was without doubt the imbiber of spiritual teaching, celebrated the Pasch indubitably in every year when it was luna *xiv* and (at the same time) when the lamb was sacrificed amongst the Jews, once the equinox was over. They did not assent to the authority of certain (men), that is the successors of Peter and Paul, who taught all the church in which they preserved the spiritual seed of the Gospels that the festival of Our Lord's Resurrection could only be celebrated on Sunday.¹⁰⁸

While Anatolius praises the Greeks and Hebrews for their correct Paschal calculation, he criticises methods used by Roman Christians like Hippolytus, who began the seven days of unleavened bread with the fifteenth Abib (Nisan.)¹⁰⁹ Hippolytus' lunar limits were *xvi–xxi*. "Some in part permitted the Pasch to be celebrated prior to the spring equinox and others erred in the matter of the twenty-first day of the moon,"¹¹⁰ *luna* twenty-one was excluded in the calculation of Anatolius. Commentators disagree as to Anatolius' dating of the equinox, some like Bartholomew MacCarthy suggests that 22 March is the day he chooses. However, from information in the text and its analysis by Daniel McCarthy it seems that Anatolius regarded 25 March as the equinox.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ McCarthy and Breen, *DRP*, 5.2, 66.

¹⁰⁹ McCarthy and Breen, *DRP*, 1.1-20, 63. Anatolius is aware of different cycles, 16-year cycle, 25-year cycle, 30-year cycle and an 84-year cycle, all of which he criticises, because he says "they conflict each other, and some of them only calculated according to the lunar course and neglected the ascent and descent of the sun."

¹¹⁰ McCarthy and Breen, *DRP*, 5.5, 65, 90.

¹¹¹ It seems that Bede misinterpreted the text of Anatolius, taking the word *quadrans* to mean one quarter of a day, rather than the fourth day. This is made clear in the text of the *Munich Computus*.

Anatolius quoting from Aristobulus¹¹² says that for the solemn celebration of the Pasch:

[...] is ordained after evening on day fourteen of the first month, when the moon is found opposite the region of the sun, as indeed we prove with our eyes, the sun is indeed found occupying the signs of the vernal equinox, the moon on the other hand, the (sign of the) autumnal equinox.¹¹³

Christians have always seen the redemptive act of Christ, like the spring equinox, as a triumph of light over darkness.¹¹⁴ In Genesis, on the first day God “divided light from darkness and called the light day and the darkness night” (Gen 1.4-5) on the fourth day “He created two great luminaries [...] to rule the day [...] and the night” (Gen. 1.16).¹¹⁵ By tradition the division was equal, with day and night of equal length and the moon was created illuminating the whole night, in other words

¹¹² Aristobulus was an Alexandrian Jew and philosopher, who lived in the time of Ptolemy Philometor second century BC. He was the author of *Commentaries on the Mosaic Law*, which endeavors to prove that Greek Philosophy was borrowed from the books of Moses. The work is mentioned in Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, 7.14, 7.9-10, and Clement of Alexandria, “*Stomata*, 5,” *NPNFa* II, Vol II, 351-352. Clement proves by several examples that the Greeks drew from the Jewish sacred writers.

¹¹³ McCarthy and Breen, *DRP*, 64. Ps-Cyprian, *De pascha computus*, *PL* IV, (1844), 3.7-10, 4.1, Col. 939-974. Ambrosiaster, *Questiones veteris et novi testamenti*, 106.4, “*De Ordine Diei et Noctis*,” *CSEL*, 50. “Et appellavit deus lucem diem et tenebras appellavit noctem; et factum est vespere et factum est mane dies unus. Nam nisi dies fuisset, nec nox. Tenebrae enim erant, quae cum inluminatae sunt et praeteriit dies cursu suo peracto, factus est vesper. Et cum post vesperum inluisset factus est dies primus nocte transacta, ut diem sequeretur nox. Hoc et dignum est et ratione commendatum, ut interior natura per omnia subiecta sit potiori.” In a less common interpretation the Sun was created on the fourth day at the equinox. This is also Bede’s stance, the sun and the moon are created on the fourth day; because without the two great luminaries, there was no means of measuring day and night. The moon was created full and the heavens reflected equal day and night. Martin of Braga, *De pascha*, 5: “*dicunt enim ideo plenam factam, quia non docebat, ut deus imperfectum aliquid illo dei faceret in sideribus.*” (For it is said that (the moon) was made full showing that there is no imperfection in God, in him who made the stars.) Augustine, *De Genesi ad literam*, 2.15. *CCSL*, 28.

¹¹⁴ Anscar J. Chupungco, *The Cosmic Elements*, 26-54.

¹¹⁵ Basil the Great, *Exegetic Homilies*, “Creation of the Lights of the Heavens, Homily 6” trans. Sr Agnes Clare Way (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963), 86. Basil gives the reason for the creation of the two luminaries on the fourth day as distinct from on the day in which God said, “let there be light.” According to Basil, this was done to prevent man worshipping the sun and the moon as the source of all things, rather than adoring God the creator. Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, 24.

‘full.’ The Easter ritual must return the worshipper to that central time. The long debate over the date of Easter pivots around those times of salvation and Creation.

And therefore in this concordance of the sun and the moon, the Pasch is not to be offered up, because as long as they are discovered in this combination the power of darkness is not overcome, and as long as equality between light and dark prevails and is not diminished by the light, it is shown that Pasch is not to be offered. And therefore it is enjoined that the Pasch be offered after the vernal equinox because luna 14 does not fill up the night before the equinox and during it. But after the equinox, luna 14 of course, plus one day gone beyond the equinox, although it [the sun] has now reached the beginning of true light, that is the rising of the sun and the day nevertheless it has not wholly forsaken the shadows behind it. Therefore the seven days of Unleavened Bread are commanded by the Lord through Moses to be kept up to the offering of Pasch, so that during them no power of darkness may be found to exceed the light. And although the beginning of the quarters of the night are in darkness that is [on luna] 17 and 18 and 19 and 20, yet even luna 20 does not allow the darkness to stretch up to the middle of the night before it rises.¹¹⁶

This passage reflects the theme of light and darkness, a strongly Johannine theme: “a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower” (Jn. 1.5), “he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (Jn. 8.12). There is an attempt here to mirror the cosmic reality of the feast being celebrated, or more correctly the feast as a feast of light was seen reflected in the heavenly bodies. At the equinox night and day are equal, twelve hours day and twelve hours night, the full moon rises at sundown and shines for the whole of the night giving theoretically a period of continuous light. According to Anatolius this does not happen at the equinox itself but at the equinox plus one day, because *luna* fourteen does not fill up the night before the equinox or during it but after it. “As long as equality between light and dark prevails and is not diminished by the light, it is shown that the Pasch is not to be offered.”¹¹⁷ Gregory of Nyssa in a letter to Eusebius,

¹¹⁶ McCarthy and Breen, *DRP*, 3.1-14, 64.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 64,

connects the equinox with our Redemption and the victory of ‘good things’ over ‘evil.’

But the feast of the Resurrection, occurring when the days are of equal length, of itself gives us this interpretation of the coincidence [...] For this reason also, after the moon has run her course for fourteen days, Easter exhibits her exactly opposite to the rays of the sun, full with all the wealth of his brightness, and not permitting any interval of darkness to take place in its turn; for, after taking the place of the sun at its setting she does not herself set, but she mingles her own beams with the genuine rays of the sun, so that one light remains continuously [...]¹¹⁸

The only way to accommodate a Sunday celebration is to extend the lunar term to seven days. Anatolius comments, when the Easter day was always celebrated on the same day as in the Quartodeciman practice, there was no difficulty concerning when the feast was to be arranged. “But it was not at all difficult for those to whom all days of the week were lawful to celebrate Pasch when *luna xiv* came after the equinox.”¹¹⁹

Daniel McCarthy has shown that *DRP* of Anatolius AD 230 provided not only the basis for the Insular calendar, but also the nineteen-year cycle of the Alexandrians.

3.4.1.2 Insular principles

As we have seen, the basis for the Insular limits according to Columbanus, and others who followed the Insular practices, rested on two main supports, firstly scriptural authority, secondly *Liber Anatolii*, the text of *DRP* providing authentic evidence for the lunar and Paschal terms of the Insular Easter. McCarthy emphasises the dependence of the Padua *laterculus* on the lunar table of Anatolius, he says. “The

¹¹⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, “Letter I, To Eusebius,” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. V, 527.

¹¹⁹ McCarthy and Breen, *DRP*, 7, 1-2, 66.

whole calendrical structure of the *latercus* relies on *Liber Anatolii*.¹²⁰ In this reckoning the day of the Passover was regarded as being the first of the seven days of Unleavened Bread and the days of the lunar months and the Jewish feasts began and ended at sunset. No attempt was made to associate the timing of Easter with the Resurrection, in particular beyond placing it on a Sunday.

Cummian's letter uses an exegesis of New Testament rather than Old Testament texts. The reasoning behind the lunar limits adopted from Victorius of Aquitaine is based on an interpretation of the synoptic gospels in which their chronology becomes crucial in a novel way.¹²¹ Columbanus seized on the weakness that was apparent in the lunar limits of Victorius, sixteenth to twenty-second, allowing Easter to be celebrated after the beginning of the third quarter of the lunar month. The moon now rose after midnight and would thus have waned to the point when less than half of its surface was illuminated. Columbanus says:

Certainly if the moon's rising has been delayed until the end of two watches of the night, which marks midnight, light does not prevail over darkness but darkness over light; but it is without doubt impossible that, at Easter, any element of darkness should dominate the light, since the festival of the Lord's resurrection is light and 'light and darkness have nothing in common' (2 Cor. 6:14).¹²²

Anatolius says:

Certainly, if moonrise is not until the two watches, that is midnight, light does not overcome the darkness, but darkness overcomes the light. And it is certainly not possible at Pascha that any part of the darkness should have dominion over light,

¹²⁰ McCarthy, "Origin of the *Latercus* Paschal Cycle," 26.

¹²¹ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 404.

¹²² Walker, "Letter I," *SCO*, 2-3. "'Certe', inquiring, si usque ad duarum vigiliarum terminum, quod noctis medium indicat, ortus lunae tardaverit non lux tenebras, sed lucem, tenebrae superant; quod certum est in Pascha non esse possibile, ut aliqua pars tenebrarum luci dominetur quia solemnitas dominicae resurrectionis lux est, et non est *communicatio luci cum tenebris*."

because the celebration of our Lord's resurrection is the light and light has no fellowship with darkness (2 Col. 6.1).¹²³

These two texts especially in Latin are almost identical, showing that Columbanus was familiar with the text of Anatolius.¹²⁴ Columbanus continues: "And if the moon has begun to shine in the third watch, there is no doubt that the twenty-first or twenty-second moon has arisen on which it is impossible for the true Easter to be offered."¹²⁵ Columbanus discounts the twenty-first or twenty-second moon because he believes that at this point darkness overcomes light. The amount of darkness involved here must have been infinitesimal but the symbolic importance of light overcoming darkness is such that any suggestion of the darkness overpowering the light is a denial of the grace of Christ, and a denial that his death had won the victory over sin and overcame darkness forever. This for Columbanus is a central faith issue on which he will not compromise.

In sixth century Gaul the church was rife with all kinds of abuses - clerical, as well as doctrinal. Columbanus accuses Victorius of adding to these abuses by causing confusion about the date of Easter.¹²⁶ Victorius, he says, had broken the rule that Easter should occur after the spring equinox, and consequently in his scheme the "*Quippe qua ratione utraque stare possunt, ut scilicet resurrectionem Domini ante*

¹²³ McCarthy and Breen, *DRP*, 4.7-11, 65. "Certe si usque ad duarum uigiliarum terminum, quod est noctis medium, ortus lunae tardauerit, non lux tenebras sed tenebrae lucem superant. Qod certum est in pascha non esse possibile ut aliqua pars tenebrarum luci dominetur, quia sollemnitas dominicae resurrectionis lux est et non est communicatio luci cum tenebris."

¹²⁴ Walker adds a footnote here that this text of Columbanus is not from the genuine writings of Anatolius, an observation that no longer stands. McCarthy and Breen, *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*.

¹²⁵ Walker, "Letter 1," *SCO*, 5. Third watch means after midnight, in which case the moon will only illumine part of the night and not the whole night.

¹²⁶ The church in Gaul had adopted the Victorian tables at the Council of Orleans in AD 541.

*suam celebretur passionem.*¹²⁷ He sees the Victorian Easter limits of sixteen to twenty-two as being ‘*absurdum*’¹²⁸ and contrary to the ‘Law’ enjoined by God in the Old Testament. Exodus 12.5, the text used by Anatolius as he interprets it, and Deuteronomy 16.8 suggest that the feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover are the same. The day of the Passover being among the days of Unleavened Bread results in a festal period of *luna* fourteen to twenty.

All the churches of the entire West do not consider that the resurrection should take place before the passion, that is Easter before the equinox, and they do not wait beyond the twentieth moon, lest they should hold a sacrament of the New Testament without the authority of the Old.¹²⁹

Columbanus argues that since the Jews do not celebrate Easter, how could Christians be celebrating Easter with the Jews. Columbanus is therefore implying that the coming of Christ is the fulfilment of the Old law and the beginning of the New. Consequently, it does not make any difference whether we celebrate with the Jews or not, since the two celebrations are totally different. Technically Columbanus is correct, theologically Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross fulfilled all the sacrifices of the Old Testament, as the author of the letter to the Hebrews says:

All the priests stand at their duties every day, offering over and over again the same sacrifices, which are quite incapable of taking sins away. He, on the other hand, has offered one single sacrifice for sins, and then taken his place forever, at the right hand of God, where he is now waiting until all his enemies are made into a footstool

¹²⁷ “For on what principle can either practice stand, namely, that the Lord’s resurrection should be celebrated prior to his passion?” In Insular practice the equinox occurred on 25 March, and Easter could not be before this date. For Victorius the equinox was 18 March, which was far too early.

¹²⁸ Walker translates this word as ‘ridiculous,’ I would prefer the translation ‘absurd,’ or nonsensical: it gives a greater sense of Columbanus’ scorn for the principles of Victorius.

¹²⁹ Walker, “Letter 2,” LL 14-18, *SCO*, 16-17. “Omnes enim ecclesiae totius Occidentis, sicut in tomo responsionis meae, quem vobis nunc misi, licet ante triennium scriptum, indicavi, non respiciunt fieri debere resurrectionem ante passionem, id est ante aequinoctium Pascha, et vigesimam lunam non excedunt, ne sine auctoritate Veteris Testamenti sacramentum Novi Testamenti agant.”

for him. By virtue of that one single offering he has achieved eternal perfection of all whom he is sanctifying, (Heb. 10.11,14).

3.4.1.3 Colman's understanding

It was during the episcopacy of Colman that the Easter controversy came to a head. Historians have discussed, extensively, the manoeuvre and counter manoeuvres on the part of King Oswiu and his son, Alchfrid. The alliance of Alchfrid with the young deacon Wilfrid and the Gallican bishop of the West Saxons, Agilbert, played an important role in the final outcome of the Synod called by Oswiu. Oswiu was attended by his bishop Colman, who was invited to speak first and as reported by Bede it is clear that Colman regards the Insular Paschal tradition as coming directly from John, the table of Anatolius and his ancestors in faith. Wilfrid confirms that he also has the same understanding. These principles are well documented as the Christian tradition of some of the peoples of the British Isles. Colman belonged to the *parouchia* of Columba (Iona), and so was bound by obedience to the Columban tradition.

Wilfrid speaks on behalf of the Gallican bishop Alchfrid. Wilfrid stresses that he and all who follow him adhere to the orthodox customs, that is those taught by the Apostles Peter and Paul and continued by the 'true' Catholic and Roman Church. He claims a universality for Easter practices, which for this era is probably not valid, but Wilfrid uses this claim to condemn the Insular practice, "the only people who stupidly contend against the whole world are those Irish-men and their partners in obstinacy,

the Picts and Britons.”¹³⁰ Wilfrid claims that the apostle John, to avoid giving scandal to Christian Jews, continued to observe some practices of Mosaic Law. He claims a dominical tradition for the apostles Peter and Paul “they waited until the day after the Sabbath, since it was on this day that the Lord rose from the day.”

Wilfrid’s bases his criteria for the correct time to celebrate Easter on a number of factors, the authority of Peter, the fulfilment of the scripture, and the authority of the Council of Nicea. The Insular tradition did not comply with these criteria. They claimed John as the author of their tradition, their exegesis of scripture differed from Wilfrid’s and they do not, in Wilfrid’s view anyway, comply with the prescriptions of the synods and councils of the church. He condemns Colman for beginning Easter on the evening of the thirteenth, a practice he claims has no scriptural foundation, and for the exclusion of *luna xxi*, specifically mentioned in the Mosaic Law, from their lunar term. He accuses Colman of keeping “neither the Law nor the Gospel.”¹³¹ When Wilfrid refers to Anatolius he uses his cycle against Colman, since Anatolian cycle was a 19-year one. Colman and Wilfrid appear to talk at cross-purposes making no attempt to clarify the parameters of time are they using. Are their points of reference the civil day or the lunar day? On which scriptural texts do they base their exegesis? Such clarifications might have helped to alleviate some of the discrepancies and dispelled some of the misunderstandings. The arguments do suggest that Colman at least was not fully conversant with the technicalities of the *computus* but rather had

¹³⁰ Bede, *EH*, 3.25, 189.

¹³¹ Bede, *EH*, 3.25, 189.

learnt the mechanics of the Insular tradition, and held on to it with the same rigour as one would a tenet of faith.

3.4.1.4 *Munich Computus* witnesses to *luna* fourteen

Up to the discovery of the Padua *latercus* in 1983, the *Munich Computus*, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14456, was the sole native evidence for the 84-year cycle in Ireland.¹³² This text is dated to AD 718 by O’Connell and independently dated by Schwartz and MacCarthy to this same year. Like many other Irish computistical texts written in the late seventh and early eighth century, after the acceptance of the Dionysian reckoning, the *Munich Computus* is highly critical of the lunar limits of the 84-year cycle with a fourteen-year *saltus*.

The author’s criticism is indirect, as the lunar limits of this 84-year cycle is attacked by citing a list of authoritative quotations that condemn celebrating on *luna* fourteen. The heading of this section *De prohibitione celebrandum pascha in luna xiiii*, speaks for itself.¹³³

After the resurrection and ascension of the Lord, the apostles did not inquire how they should observe the Pasch, since the disciples had been dispersed through the whole world on account of their preaching. But they celebrated the Pasch on whatever day the fourteen moon happened to be.¹³⁴

¹³² This text consists mainly in a reworking of a text similar to *DRT*, but to this material was added a discussion of the 84-year cycle and a comparison of the 19-year cycle and 84-year cycle. The manuscript was written in Regensburg in Bavaria in the early ninth century, but following an Irish exemplar.

¹³³ “On the prohibition of celebrating Easter on the fourteenth moon.” Ó Croinin ed., *DRC*, 98.13.26 and Bede *DTR* 59.36-67, See Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*,

¹³⁴ *Munich Computus*, 313. English translation, Immo Wartjnes. “Post resurrexionem domini et ascensionem quomodo pascha apostoli obseruarent, non quaerebant, quia discipuli per uniuersum mundum ad praedicandum fuerunt dispersi. Sed quacum que die esset xiiii luna, pascha celebrant.” See

The author describes how after the death of the apostles diverse practices concerning the celebration of Easter and the paschal fast grew up. He cites those in Gaul as celebrating on 25 March, “since they believed that Christ resurrected on that day,” he adds, “which is wrong.”¹³⁵ He relates how Pope Victor (ca. AD 180) instructed Theophilus bishop of Caesarea and Palestine to summon an assembly of bishops from all provinces.¹³⁶ The bishops considered the time of creation, referred to the authority of scripture namely the Mosaic Law and drew up a doctrine that the Pasch was to be observed from 22 March, in springtime and seven days of the moon. Anyone who violates these terms violates the commandments.¹³⁷ The next authority he cites is Cyril who says:

We shall not celebrate Easter on the fourteenth moon with the Jews and those heretics who are called Thesserecedecaditae.¹³⁸

The author’s reference to John *consillarius* is an important one. This is a reference to the letter from John pope elect in AD 640. He wrote to the northern Irish church

DRC 87, 194, for an almost identical quotation, prefaced by Theophilus ostendit dicens: Post resurrectionem [...]

¹³⁵ *Munich Computus*, 314. “Nam Galli quacumque die viii kl Aprilis fuisset pascha celebrabant, quia in eo Christum resurrexisse credebant, quod falsum est.”

¹³⁶ The work as it now exists is not that of Theophilus, a second-century bishop of Caesarea, nor is it the work of Theophilus of Alexandria (d. AD 412) who composed a Paschal cycle but not the one to which these *Acta Synodi Caesareae* is supposedly the preface. It is as well to note that the lunar limits of these *Acta* was *xiii-xxi*.

¹³⁷ *Munich Computus*, 314. “Inde omnes ad principium mundi reuersi sunt, et rectam rationem in obseruatione paschae ab .xi kl Aprilis cum auctoritate librorum legis satuerunt, hoc est diem et uernum tempus et lunae .vii dies, ut nulli liceat hos terminos praeterire. Quicumque enim transgreditur hos terminos transgreditur mandatum.” Eusebius, “*Church History*, 5.25,” *NPNF*, II, Vol. 1,

¹³⁸ *Munich Computus*, 315. “Quirillius ait: *Non faciamus pascha in xiiii. Luna cum Judaeis et hereticis qui dicuntur Thesserescedecaditae.*” *The Epistula Cyrilli*, comprises the genuine letter of Cyril patriarch of Alexandria (d. AD, 441) addressed to the Council of Carthage concerning the date of Easter AD 420, together with a long tract which is clearly not his. See PL 67, 226-227 for the genuine text of his letter. Charles W. Jones, discusses the status of this text in Bede, *BDT*, 95-97.

concerning their Easter practice in AD 640. The quote given in this text, omitted in Bede, is of vital importance since it provides evidence that the Irish did in fact receive this letter. “The *consiliarius* John says: “The fourteenth day of the moon belongs to the shadows.”¹³⁹

Isidore (d. AD 636) is the next in this long list of condemnation of celebrating on *luna* fourteen, “whoever approves of Easter being celebrated before the fifteenth moon violates the commandment.”¹⁴⁰ Returning to Cyril, he cites a section, which refers to “the lamb being consumed in one house.”¹⁴¹ Developing an emphasis on ‘one’ he concludes that all the churches having ‘one’ faith should also have ‘one’ paschal celebration. This section concludes with a discussion of the paschal fast: if Easter is celebrated on *luna* fourteen the fast is broken on the thirteen moon which is unacceptable.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ *Munich Computus*, 314-315. “Inde Johannes consiliarius ait: .xiii. dies lunae ad umbras pertinebant.” See Ó Cróinín, *Chronology*, 89, 103-104, and Bede, *EH*, 2.19.

¹⁴⁰ *Munich Computus*, 314-315. Ysidorus ait: Quicumque ante .xv. luna pascha celebrari iubet, transgreditur mandatum.”

¹⁴¹ *Munich Computus*, 316-317. This citation bears a strong resemblance to one taken from Cyprian on the *Unity of the Church*, and also one by Jerome when he says “least we eat the figurative lamb outside of the one house against the precept of the Law,” “Ieroninus ait: ne extra unam domum contra preceptum legis, ‘id est extra’ ecclesiam uniuersalem, ‘agnum typicum comedamus.” *Hieronymus, De Exodo in vigilia Paschae*, *CCSL* 78, 536-537. This emphasis on one will be discussed in more detail in chapter four in relationship to the charge of Quartodecimanism in the Insular church. The phrase in “one house” is also used in the canons of the *First Synod of St Patrick*. Ludwig Bieler, “The First Synod of St Patrick” *The Irish Penitentials. Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*, Vol. V (Dublin: 1963).

¹⁴² This section is similar to *Prologus Theophilii* quoted by Bede regarding the paschal fast and the reasons for not celebrating on *luna* fourteen. See Krusch, *Studien*, I, 224.

3.4.2 *Luna fifteen*

3.4.2.1 *De sollemnitatibus et sabbatis et neomeniis*¹⁴³

But for our part at the beginning of this tract, taught by the example of Jeremiah we intend first to pluck up and destroy and then to plan and build, seeking to show first from the scriptures, how these feasts of the Lord, which the law bids us observe, are commanded to be held not with a typical but with a spiritual observance.¹⁴⁴

According to this author Easter is “*De Pascha autem tamquam maximo sacramento salutis nostrae.*”¹⁴⁵ His argument begins in the usual way by setting out the scriptural prescriptions regarding the keeping of Passover according to Ex. 12.3,5,6. The writer argues that the Lord fulfilled some of the commands of the Law: *ipse Dominus, verus agnus, cum ad verum Pascha progreditur.*¹⁴⁶ Others he did not wish to retain. The author’s intent is twofold, to establish Christ as the fulfilment of the Law, and to condemn those who “keep Easter with the Jews.”

Attempting to show Christ as the fulfilment of the Law, he quotes Paul to the Colossians:

From now onwards never let anyone else decide what you should eat or drink, or whether you are to observe annual festivals, New Moons or Sabbaths. These were only a pale reflection of what was coming; the reality is Christ (Col. 2.10-17).

Most importantly, Christ fulfilled the command that the Passover should be eaten in the first month, and after the fourteenth moon: *Qui cum in primo mense secundum*

¹⁴³ “On festivals and Sabbaths and new moons;” this short letter British Library, *Cotton Caligula, A, XI* (s. XII/XIII), f 86^v – 90^v is found with a collection of other computistical material. It has at various times been ascribed to Columbanus, and to Jerome. See Walker, *SCO*, 199-200.

¹⁴⁴ Walker, “*De sollemnitatibus*,” *SCO*, 199-200.

¹⁴⁵ “Easter is the greatest sacrament of our salvation.” This reference to Easter as a sacrament of our salvation reflects Augustine’s letter to Januarius. Augustine, “Letter 55,” *NPNFa*, I, Vol. I, 303.

¹⁴⁶ “The Lord Himself, the true Lamb, when he came to the true Easter,”

*praeceptum legis immolari dignus est et deciman quartam nullo modo praevenire
suae passionis tempora commisit.*¹⁴⁷

It was not on the fourteenth day towards evening, as the law commands, that that Lamb of God, Who bears the sin of the world, and our Passover Christ was sacrificed, but it was on the fifteenth day, in which it is clear that the Jews' festal day with its sacrifices, was abolished by the Lord.¹⁴⁸

This author follows the chronology of the synoptic gospels. Commenting on Is. 1.13-14, he says that the "Lord declares that he did not command these things, while it is clear that He enshrined them in the law." The coming of Christ he argues abolished the old Law, illustrating with several examples from the Gospel, how Christ accomplished this. His healing on the Sabbath is seen as Christ moving beyond the Jewish Sabbath law, or more specifically the bearing of burdens on the Sabbath, when he commands the cripple, "take up thy bed." Christ's decision not to go up the Feast of Tabernacles, "I will not go up to this festival day," is seen as an indication of his wish to abolish this feast. The author uses these incidents as evidence to show the Christ is the fulfilment of the old Law, like Paul in the letter to the Romans: "But now the Law has come to an end with Christ, and everyone who has faith may be justified" (Rm. 10.4). Christ finally abolished the Jewish festal day, because according to this writer the sacrifice of Christ took place on fifteenth Nisan:

And we should observe this also, that it was not on the fourteenth day towards evening, as the law commands, that the Lamb of God, Who bears the sin of the world, and our Passover Christ was sacrificed, but it was on the fifteenth day, in which it is clear that the Jews' festal day, with its sacrifice was abolished by the Lord.

¹⁴⁷ He who offered a worthy sacrifice, in the first month according to the commandment of the law, did not allow the time of His Passion to begin before the fourteenth. Translation mine.

¹⁴⁸ Walker, "*De sollemnitatibus*," 201.

The argument showing Christ as the fulfilment of the old law is similar to those of Augustine against Faustus the Manichean (in defence of the Old Testament). Augustine shows Christ as the fulfilment of Jewish practices. This he does by allegorising these practices so that Christian practices are linked to an earlier Jewish practice. Circumcision becomes rebirth in baptism and looks forward to resurrection: the keeping of the Sabbath is fulfilled in Christ. “So, when you ask why a Christian does not keep the Sabbath, if Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it, my reply is, that a Christian does not keep the Sabbath precisely because what was prefigured in the Sabbath is fulfilled in Christ.”¹⁴⁹ Christians do not keep the feast of unleavened bread because what was prefigured in this feast is fulfilled in Christ:

When you ask why a Christian does not keep the feast of unleavened bread as the Jews did, if Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it, I reply, that a Christian does not keep this feast precisely because what was so prefigured is fulfilled in Christ, who leads us to a new life by purging out the leaven of the old life. When you ask why a Christian does not keep the feast of the paschal lamb, if Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it, my reply is, that he does not keep it precisely because what was so prefigured has been fulfilled in the sufferings of Christ, the Lamb without spot.¹⁵⁰

A second strand in this tract is the condemnation of those who keep “Easter with the Jews”:

Hence the elect and well-loved bride of Christ, the Universal Church, anathematizes those persons, since they follow the Jews at the Paschal festival in maintaining the observance of the fourteenth day and the Sabbaths and the other items of this typical rite.¹⁵¹

The Paschal principles in this tract are: Easter should be observed in the first month, after the fourteenth day, with a Sabbath intervening (in other words, on a

¹⁴⁹ Augustine, “Reply to Faustus the Manichean,” *NPNFa*, I, Vol. VI, 243.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 243.

¹⁵¹ Walker, “Letter, *De sollemnitatibus*,” 203.

Sunday). This is a clear attack on the Insular practice of keeping Easter on *luna* fourteen if that fourteenth moon fell on a Sunday.

Turning his attention to a spiritual interpretation of the Christian Passover, the author of *De sollemnitatibus* says the number fourteen symbolises *cum decalogi a nobis verba completa fuerint, in evangelii perfectione quaternario numero consistente*¹⁵² Fourteen represents for this writer the Ten Commandments and the four Gospels. Having lived the Ten Commandments and the full gospel message, Christians will attain to the glory of heaven, where *non tenebratis cordibus, spiritu sancto noctem nostram illuminante*.¹⁵³

The question is asked, did Columbanus write this text? The author's reference to the fifteenth Nissan would make it seem unlikely unless Columbanus had conformed to the Roman method of calculation before the end of his life, and this is too uncertain a text on which to base any conclusion.¹⁵⁴

3.4.2.2 Ceolfrid's explanation

In his letter of response to Neachtan, King of the Picts (ca. AD 710), Ceolfrid sets out the scriptural authority governing lunar limits as he understands them, namely, at what 'age' could the moon be on Easter Sunday? He explains that there are three rules that determine the time for keeping Easter, "whom no human authority

¹⁵² "When we have fulfilled the words of the Ten Commandments, in the gospel's completeness, which resides in the number four."

¹⁵³ "With our hearts not darkened as the Holy Spirit illumines our night."

¹⁵⁴ Ó Cróinín, "The Computistical Works of St. Columbanus," *Chronology*, Ó Cróinín suggests that a possible author for this work is an Irishman named Ronán, who learnt to calculate the "Roman Easter." This is likely the same Ronan with whom Finian, bishop of Lindisfarne, disagreed seriously.

may change.”¹⁵⁵ Two of these rules are decreed in the Law of Moses and the third is added in the Gospel. Ceolfrid therefore is very clear, God is the ultimate authority for the rules governing Easter. He makes no allowance for other interpretations of the scriptural text, the rules are laid down by God and interpreted by the teachings of the Catholic Church as expounded by the Apostolic See.

Exodus and Leviticus are the key scriptural texts for Ceolfrid’s lunar limits of fifteen to twenty-one. From the gospel texts he concludes that Easter must fall on a Sunday, because that was the day of the Lord’s Resurrection. His interpretation of the Exodus text differs markedly from Anatolius. Both agree that when the day at the respective lower limits of their particular lunar term is included, the result is eight days of unleavened bread not seven. The scriptural texts are quite clear on this point, “*seven day, ye shall eat unleavened bread.*” The fourteenth day of the lunar month is for Ceolfrid the eve of the Passover, the Passover begins at evening on the fourteenth that is with the rising of the fifteenth moon. Ceolfrid begins the day of Unleavened Bread on the fifteenth, counting the seven days of unleavened Bread from the fifteenth to the twenty-first, his lunar limits are therefore, fifteen to twenty-one. However, his authority is not just scriptural but is explained in “accordance with the rulings of the apostolic see, for we know that whenever Holy Church sets itself to learn, teach, or maintain the truth concerning our Lord, this truth is revealed to it from heaven.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Bede, *EH*, 5.21, 310.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 309.

When Coelfrid argues that the fifteenth moon begins the third week, he is calculating according to the Jewish day beginning at sunset. A passage from the book of Numbers he uses as a proof that the Exodus took place on *luna* fifteen, concluding that the people of Israel left Egypt on that day. The third week assumes great significance in his letter, the phrase is mentioned no less than ten times in the course of the letter. This emphasis is high symbolic, “we are directed to keep Easter in the first month of the year, which is also known as the month of New Fruit.” Paul says, “Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (1 Cor. 15).

We are bidden to keep it in the third week of the month, because Christ, who has been promised before the Law and under the Law, came with Grace in the third age of the world to be sacrificed as our Passover.¹⁵⁷

This passage reflects Augustine’s letter to Januarius, where he explains that the twenty-first day begins the third week. However, Augustine gives lunar limits of fourteen to twenty-one, using the symbolism of the numbers fourteen and twenty-one, as already explained in chapter two.

In all his arguments about the fifteenth day of the lunar month Coelfrid makes no specific reference to the canons of the Council of Nicea. He attempts to prove his case solely from scriptural texts and at times his arguments do not stand up to close scrutiny. He asserts that if the fifteenth day of the first month always fell on a Sunday, Easter could be celebrated at the same time as the ancient people of God. He adds:

If it could be made to happen that the fifteenth day of the first month always fell on a Sunday, we would always be able to celebrate Easter at the very same time as the

¹⁵⁷ Bede, *EH*, 5.21, 315.

ancient people of God though the mystery/sacrament be different, as we do it with one and the same faith.¹⁵⁸

This conclusion takes no cognisance of any barrier to celebrating Easter by the Christian community, other than the constraints of the solar and lunar calendars. However, the purpose of emphasising *luna* fifteen was to avoid the celebration of the Christian Pasch at the time of the Jewish Passover. Coelfrid seems to imply that Jews and Christians alike have faith in the same God; it is the visible expression of the faith that makes the difference. Was Coelfrid thinking of the passage in Paul's letter to the Romans?

That is why what fulfils the promise depends on faith, so that it may be a free gift and be available to all of Abraham's descendants, not only those who belong to the Law but also those who belong to the faith of Abraham who is the father of us all (Rms. 4.16-17).

Charles-Edwards comments on this section of Coelfrid's letter:

According to the letter a difference of sacrament (presumably even belief) would not make Judaism and Christianity different in faith, but a difference in the date of the supreme feast could, and did.¹⁵⁹

The early Christians did not consider themselves any less Jewish because they were Christians, but the decision in the *Acts of the Apostles* not to circumcise Gentile converts implied a separation between Judaism and Christianity, which led to the separation of the feasts of Easter and Passover.

In Coelfrid's case, as in other cases, it appears that it is the 'lunar limits' that constitute the theological principles. Coelfrid seems to suggest that if the fifteenth of

¹⁵⁸ Charles Plummer ed., *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam*, 5.21, 337. "Si ergo fieri posset, ut semper in diem XV^{um} primi mensis, id est in lunam XV^{um} dominica dies incurreret, uno semper eodemque tempore cum antiquo Dei populo, quanquam sacramentorum genere discreto, sicut una eademque fide, pascha celebrare possemus." Translation mine.

¹⁵⁹ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 412.

the moon could always be on a Sunday then the Jews and Christians would celebrate at the same time.¹⁶⁰ But this is precisely the accusation against the Insular church that they celebrated ‘with the Jews’. It is difficult to know exactly what Ceolfrid is suggesting in this passage. Ceolfrid argues against Insular lunar limits:

‘seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread,’ in these words, all the third week of the first month is directed to be solemnly observed. But lest we should think that those seven days were to be reckoned from the fourteenth to the twentieth day, it is added: ‘On the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your house; for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day he shall be cut off from Israel.’¹⁶¹

When Ceolfrid argues that the Insular Easter begins on the thirteenth day, he appears to contradict himself, since the evening of the thirteenth day is the beginning of the fourteenth moon, and he has just argued that the beginning of the fifteenth moon occurs on the evening of the fourteenth day. Wilfrid also uses this type of argument against Colman at the Synod of Whitby. Part of the problem was the distinction between the civil day and the lunar day.¹⁶² So how can the Insular church begin the celebration on the thirteenth day, if they begin the celebration on *Luna* fourteen? This suggests that there is considerable confusion in deciding which is the civil day and which is the lunar day. Bede is quite specific when he says that.

Those who consider that the day of Our Lord’s Resurrection should be kept between the fourteenth days of the moon and the twentieth day of the moon anticipate without any reasonable necessity the time prescribed in the Law.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ It appears that like the author of *De sollemnitatibus*, Ceolfrid accepts *luna* fourteen as the day of the Passover and *luna* fifteen as the day of the crucifixion.

¹⁶¹ Bede, *EH*, 5.21, 3.10.

¹⁶² Refer to diagram in section 3.3.1 for the relationship between the civil and lunar day.

¹⁶³ Bede, *EH*, 5.21, 313.

Everyone is agreed that Easter Sunday could fall on any day from the sixteenth to the twentieth of the first lunar month of the year. For Bede and Ceolfrid, the equinox was 21 March and the lunar limits were fifteenth to twenty-one inclusively. For the adherents of the Insular 84-year cycle the vernal equinox was 25 March, lunar limits were fourteenth to twentieth.

3.4.2.3 *De ratione computandi*

*De ratione computandi*¹⁶⁴ offers an understanding of the structure and content of an Irish *computus*. Cummián's letter demonstrates that the study of the *computus* had always formed part of the learning transmitted in the early monastic schools. If we are to believe Cummián's assertion of a paschal table by Patrick, the study of *computus* goes right back to the inception of the Insular church.¹⁶⁵ *De ratione computandi* gives a more rational and balanced commentary on the Victorian tables than does Bede. In *De temporum ratione*, Bede launches a severe attack upon the table of Victorius. The author of *DRC* engages in a detailed discussion of the day, its various divisions and explains computistical terminology. This information is given generally in the *tres linguae sacrae*.¹⁶⁶ The first part of the text discusses the technical

¹⁶⁴ Ó Cróinín, ed., *De ratione computandi*, 1.

¹⁶⁵ Ó Cróinín, "New Light on Palladius," also Wesley M. Stevens, "Scientific Instruction in Early Insular Schools," *Insular Latin Studies*, ed. Michael W. Herren (Toronto: 1981), 83-111.

¹⁶⁶ The three sacred languages were Hebrew, Greek and Latin. This is a common feature of Irish manuscripts, and can be found in the *Munich Computus*, *De ratione computandi*, and the *Brussels Computus*. It ultimately derives from the statement in John's gospel that the inscription over the cross of Christ was written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek (Jn. 19.10-20). The author includes in his description the number of atoms in a moment, the number of moments in a day, the number of hours in a day and in a year; these numbers were of importance in the technicalities of the *computus*. Ó Cróinín, *De ratione computandi*, 20, 128. "Sciendum nobis quid sit hora nomen Grecum hora enim Grece umbra interpretatur. Sciendum nobis super quod fundamentum primitus dictum sit. Id est super umbram quae obumbrabat sol lineas horologii." "We should know the Greek name for the hour. For in Greek the

details which were a necessary requisite for students of the *computus*, the second part deals with the moon and the state in which it was created, which was always an important question for computists. The author in his discussion of the Pasch explicitly contrasts differing authorities in the matter, Victorius, Dionysius, specifically contrasting the Insular 84-year cycle with Alexandrian 19-year cycle. In his discussion on the term Pascha and its meaning, he shows that others beside the Insular church differed in the way they interpreted its meaning, leading to difficulties in calculation.¹⁶⁷

Sections forty-four to forty-six discusses the solstices and equinoxes as points of division for the year which brings him to a discussion of the doctrine of Anatolius. The text has the typical method of a teaching text with each section beginning with *Sciendum nobis*. As this text contains only the minimum theological details only eight scripture references in all, it will not be examined in any detail.

hour is interpreted by the shadow. It should be known upon what fundamental principle it might be expressed. That is (the time) when the sun overshadows the lines of the shadow on top of the sundial.” Translation mine.

¹⁶⁷ A well-established pattern in these Insular computistic texts comprises contrasting different cycles, a discussion of the etymology of the term *Pascha*; a description of the lunar and paschal terms of the cycles; and a discussion of the theological principles that guided their choice of limits.

3.4.2.4 Bede (d. AD 735)

At the end of his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Bede gives a short biography of his life. He was born on the land of the monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow, at age seven he became an oblate there. He was educated by Benedict Biscop and later by Biscop's successor Coelfrith, he was ordained deacon and then priest. He says:

From the time of my receiving the priesthood until my fifty-ninth year, I have worked, both for my own benefit and that of my brethren, to compile short extracts from the works of the venerable Fathers on Holy Scripture and to comment on their meaning and interpretation.¹⁶⁸

Of those who have written about the calendar, Bede is probably the best known, his work was responsible for the general acceptance of the 19-year cycle of Dionysius. The writings of Bede are many and varied; exegetical texts,¹⁶⁹ two major works on time and the *computus*, *De temporibus ratione (The Reckoning of Time)*, *De Temporibus (On Time)*, a *History of the English People*, and a *World Chronicle*. Bede's approach is both logical and thorough. His work on the *computus* attends not only to astronomical details and definitions, but he combines this with an exhaustive scriptural exegesis and an examination of the patristic writings. This section will touch only those areas that give an insight into Bede's theological understanding. Wallis in her commentary on Bede's text makes the following comment:

How does one 'prove' the correctness of a system of Paschal computation? Nature does not furnish a complete answer; on the other hand, authority is malleable and

¹⁶⁸ Bede, *EH*, 5.24, 329.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 330. Bede's exegetical works are considerable listing twenty-seven such works in the autobiographical note in *The History of the English Peoples*, several *Lives of the Saints* are also included in his writings, a *Martyrology*, a *Book of Hymns*, and a *Book of Poetry*.

Scripture open to interpretation. In the case of Scripture, it is not enough to cite the Old Testament regulations for Passover, or the New Testament records of the Resurrection. It is also necessary to determine how these two relate to one another, historically and theologically. This is Bede's task in chapters 63 and 64 of *The Reckoning of Time*. Bede adopts a very different approach and tone here, one strongly redolent of his biblical commentaries and homilies.¹⁷⁰

Bede's criteria for the celebration of Easter is that it originates in the Sunday on which our Lord rose from the dead, so therefore Sunday must be the day of celebration. He includes the three criteria from the Old Testament, namely, that it is to be celebrated after the equinox, in the first month, and in the third week of the month, from sundown of the fourteenth moon, which is the beginning of the fifteen moon, up to the evening of the ending of the twenty-first moon.

Hence when we have seen the fourteenth moon of the first month rise in the evening (the equinox having been passed), we should not immediately jump up to celebrate Easter. Rather, waiting for that Lord's Day on which He himself deigned to make the Pasch – that is, the “passing over” from death to life, from corruption to incorruption, from punishment to glory, by his rising – let us celebrate upon that day the solemnities befitting Easter.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, 349.

¹⁷¹ Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, 145. Bede here uses the later etymology of *Pascha* referring to it as a “passing over.” A recent publication by Martin Connell, *Eternity Today*, 108-119, discusses how an anti-Arian stance on the part of certain prominent bishops, notably Ambrose of Milan, changed the theological interpretation of Easter. A change of emphasis from ‘*paschein*’ meaning to suffer, and an accentuation on the lamb slain was replaced by a new Easter theology. This new theology encapsulated the *pascha* as *transitus* meaning a ‘passing over,’ or ‘crossing over,’ based on the typology taken from the crossing of the Red Sea. Connell claims that it was the divorce of the human and divine nature in Christ at the heart of Ambrose's theological rhetoric that gradually influenced the theology of Easter. See Ambrose, “On the Incarnation” and “On the Faith” in which two works Ambrose relegates “the humanity of the Son to the sidelines of the paschal mystery.” These writings, however, must be taken in the context in which they were written, namely, the Arian controversy. See also Bradshaw, *Search for the Origins*, 181.

“Do not mingle the darkness of our nature with the splendour of his glory; do not spread the cloud of human flesh over his light. If you do not distinguish what is able to suffer when preaching about his passion you have disproved the holiness of God and you have denied your own salvation.” Ambrose of Milan, *De incarnatione*, 44, *CSEL* 79, 246, English translation, Connell, *Eternity Today*, Vol 2,

Bede gives detailed definitions of day, month, and year. For Bede the ordinary day was from sunrise to sunrise. When does day begin?¹⁷² When does the moon rise? For Bede the ‘lunar day’ was from sunset to sunset. The lunar day preceded the solar day, as is shown by this passage from Coelfrid, where having quoted the text of Exodus 12 concerning the time to slaughter the lamb, he says:

These words make it very clear that, in the paschal observance, the fourteenth day is mentioned not because it was the day on which the Passover is commanded to be kept, but because the lamb is commanded to be killed on the evening of the fourteenth day, (*quarta decima dies*) that is, at the fifteenth rising of the moon (*quinta decima luna*) which marks the beginning of the third week; and because it was on the night of the fifteenth moon that the Egyptians were smitten.¹⁷³

The evening of the fourteen *dies* is then the beginning of the fifteenth *luna*. These were central questions in the calculation of Easter. As was customary among computists Bede discusses the beginning of the day according to various traditions: Hebrews, Chaldeans, Persians, Egyptians, Romans, Umbrians and Athenians. This discussion relates directly to *computus*, and is often found in Irish texts including *De ratione computandi*. In Bede’s view the Hebrew day in Genesis was calculated from dawn to dawn,¹⁷⁴ but in the New Testament accounts the day began and ended at sunset.

For He who at the beginning of the world first called light “day” and darkness “night,” at the end of the ages first illumined the night with the glory of His resurrection, and thus consecrated the day by showing Himself to His disciples; He confirmed them more fully in the faith of His Resurrection by eating with them the

¹⁷² See Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 413-414, for a discussion of the use of the words *dies* and *luna* and the importance of using them in a correct biblical context.

¹⁷³ Bede, *EH*, 5.21, 310.

¹⁷⁴ Wallis comments that it is unclear where Bede obtained his information about the Jewish day.

following evening and offering Himself to their touch, and also by bestowing the gift of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷⁵

Scripture sanctions both definitions of the ‘day’ – a ‘period of daylight’ - and the scientific definition - ‘period of twenty-four hours’. This is an important issue not only for Bede, but some church Fathers define scripture as a basis for all Christian learning. Augustine, especially, sees all human knowledge as a unity, and apparent discrepancies find their resolution in revealed authority.¹⁷⁶ As Bede discusses the meaning of ‘day’ in those passages of Genesis referring to the time before the creation of the Sun, scriptural exegesis and scientific learning can be seen working together.

Bede follows the traditional theory that Creation took place at the equinox and the moon was created full, “for the Creator who is justice itself, would never make something in an imperfect state.”¹⁷⁷ In Bede’s theology the week of the Passion replicates the week of Creation. As man was created on the sixth day of the first week, so humankind is recreated in the work of Redemption.

In the Sixth Age, as the Prophets foretold, the Son of God appeared, who would recreate man in the image of God. As he slept upon the Cross, water and blood flowed from his side from which he would consecrate the Church to himself.¹⁷⁸

Bede uses the doctrine of Anatolius in this section quite liberally, using Rufinus’ translation of Eusebius. The symbolism of light and darkness plays an important role in Bede’s theology:

[...] so now to connote the joy of our redemption, day should first equal night in length, and then the full Moon should suffuse [the night] with light. This is for the

¹⁷⁵ Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, 23.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 271.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁷⁸ Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, 41.

sake of a certain symbolism because the created Sun, which lights up all the stars, signifies the true and eternal *light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*. While the Moon and stars, which shine, not with their own light (as they say), but with an adventitious light borrowed from the Sun, suggests the body of the Church as a whole, and each individual saint.¹⁷⁹

He develops this image of reflected light and says that in celebrating the ‘supreme solemnity’ “it is necessary that Christ precede his Church, which cannot shine except through Him.”¹⁸⁰ Celebrating Easter before the full Moon is for Bede equivalent to saying that the Church “existed in its perfection before the Saviour came in the flesh, or that one of the faithful without grace can have ‘supernal’ light.”¹⁸¹ So celebration before the equinox suggests salvation without the grace of Christ. This is a dangerous doctrine, which borders on Pelagianism.

Bede describes each column of the Dionysian table in detail:

The sixth section of the cycle contains the fourteenth Moons of the first month, which indicates without any ambiguity the day of Easter Sunday in every year; for the Sunday which comes after the fourteenth Moon is the Paschal day of the Lord’s Resurrection. This fourteenth Moon manifests its progress over the Earth at sundown on the equinox, that is, 12th calends of April [21 March] at the earliest, and at the latest 29 day later, that is, on the 14th calends of May, [18 April].¹⁸²

For Bede, even if it were possible for the fourteenth moon to fall every year on the Saturday, nothing could displace the time of the Paschal observance from its lawful [time]. Christians follow the precept of the Law, they sacrifice the lamb at sunset, they eat the lamb, they sprinkle the blood on the doorposts. These images all become

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 25.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 26.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 26. Wallis used the word ‘supernal’ rather than ‘supernatural’ in this context.

¹⁸² Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, 142.

metaphors for baptism. The feast is completed by “the solemnities of the Paschal Mass, so that they would triumph over the spiritual Egypt.”¹⁸³

Bede explains the reason behind the range of seven days for the lunar limits; it is because “we were taught to restrict the beginning of Easter to a Sunday because of the Resurrection of our Redeemer.”¹⁸⁴ He continues, “However, it never happens that our Paschal solemnity does not fall on a day of the Pasch [appointed by the] Law, but it often falls on all of them within this [period]. To those who say that Moses did not lay down any stipulation about the equinox he says “that the moon of the first month is the first one to show its full orb after the equinox has passed.”¹⁸⁵

So on any occasion when we have Sunday after the fifteenth Moon, our Easter season in no way disagrees with what is prescribed in the Law, although we honour the solemnities of this same Easter with other kinds of sacraments.¹⁸⁶

This statement appears to echo Ceolfrid’s letter, but Bede’s statement is less ambiguous. The Christian celebration takes its starting point from the Law but goes beyond it to the New Covenant in the blood of Christ, visible in the sacraments of the Church, namely Baptism and Eucharist.¹⁸⁷

Bede points out the error of those who keep Easter between limits sixteenth to twenty-second moon, “they labour under a ‘double burden.’” Firstly, they reject from their celebration the evening of the fourteen day, which scripture commands to be observed as the beginning of the Pasch, and the morning of the fifteenth day, when

¹⁸³ Ibid., 143.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 146.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 142.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 143.

¹⁸⁷ Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, 147.

the feast of Unleavened Bread is to commence, and, secondly, they command that the twenty-second day be sanctified, which was never commanded by the Law of Moses.¹⁸⁸

Next, he turns to another perceived error - that of the insular church:

[...] who swerve from the truth in the other direction, but with no less error, even though Scripture commands them to travel by the royal road, and not to turn aside from it either to the left or to the right.¹⁸⁹

Again Bede adheres to an interpretation of the scriptural text that envisages the Pasch beginning at evening on the fourteenth day of the first month, “these people often preempt the beginning of the Pasch [decreed by the] Law when they divert what is ordained for the fourteenth day of the Moon to the thirteenth day.¹⁹⁰ To make matters worse in Bede’s view, they excluded *luna* twenty-one from their limits, “the twenty-first day they utterly disdain, as if this [day], did not belong to Eastertide at all.” Bede quotes a letter from Theophilus patriarch of Alexandria, (d. AD 412) to the Emperor Theodosius the Elder:

But it sometimes happens that some folk fall into error concerning the fourteenth Moon of the first month, if this Moon should fall on a Sunday. When this happens the fast would have to end on Saturday, when the thirteenth Moon is shown to arrive and [thus] we start to do what is contrary to the Law. Hence it is appropriate to issue a vigorous warning that whenever the fourteenth Moon falls on a Sunday, we should rather postpone Easter until the following week, and this for two reasons; first, lest when the thirteenth Moon is found on a Saturday we end our fast [then], which does

¹⁸⁸ Bede attacks the cycle of Victorius of Aquitaine whose lunar limits were outside those of the Alexandrian limits of fifteen to twenty-one. In fact Victorius in his table gives two sets of figures, one that he calls the Greek Easter, and the other the Latin Easter, leaving the choice up to the Pope of the day, so that in fact he created more problems by his table than he solved. Ó Cróinín, “‘New heresy for old:’ Pelagianism in Ireland and the papal letter of 640,” has a comprehensive discussion of the issues and errors involved in the Victorian Cycle, 97-98, also Charles W. Jones, “The Victorian and Dionysiac Paschal Tables,” *Speculum*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 408-421

¹⁸⁹ Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, 143.

¹⁹⁰ The Insular Church practice was to keep Easter on a Sunday, even if that Sunday was *luna* fourteen. Bede sees this practice as against prescriptions of the Mosaic Law.

not make sense, nor does the Law prescribe it, particularly since the light of the Moon is still seen to be imperfect in its own sphere; and then, lest we be obliged to fast on Sunday, as this constitutes the fourteenth Moon [...]¹⁹¹

Again quoting Theophilus, Bede discusses the historical dates of the events of the Passion and Resurrection. In summary, Theophilus says: Our Saviour was betrayed on the fourteenth day of the Moon, was crucified on the fifteenth day of the Moon, He rose again on the seventeenth day, which Theophilus says fell on a Sunday.¹⁹² Bede defends the celebration of Easter within a range of seven days and concludes by saying that if the fourteenth falls on a Sunday, Easter must be postponed until the following Sunday, because in Theophilus' scheme of things and consequently in Bede's because Christ was crucified on the fifteenth of the first month, and his resurrection was on the seventeenth day, it is not permitted to celebrate Easter on the fourteenth Moon.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ Krusch ed., "Prologus Theophili I," *Studien*, I, 224, "cum quartus decimus dies in ipso nunquam die dominico incidat, sabbatum solent ieiunium solvere, cum sabbato certe tercius decimus dies esse videatur, hoc autem contra legem est divinum; ergo diligenter oportet observari, ut, si aliquando contigat in dominica quartum decimum lune incidere, melius est differri in dein septimanam, propter scilicet rationes: primo, ut non sabbato die, quo tercia decima luna est, ieiunare desinamus, quod legis auctoritate prohibetur. Sed et illud accedit, ut luna circulus adhuc imperfectus esse videatur, dehinc et dominica die et Quarta decima luna ieiunare cogamur... Igitur quoniam nec quarta decima luna si in diem dominicam incidat ieiunare nos oportet, nec [...]" Cited in *The Reckoning of Time*, English translation, Wallis, 144. Gennadius "Lives of illustrious men," *NPNFa*, II, Vol. III, 392. "Theophilus, bishop of the Church of Alexandria, wrote one great volume *Against Origen* in which he condemns pretty nearly all his sayings and himself likewise, at the same time saying that he was not original in his views but derived them from the ancient fathers especially from Heraclas, that he was deposed from the office of presbyter driven from the Church and compelled to fly from the city." In addition to the sources already mentioned, consult: Theodoret of Cyrus, "Ecclesiastical History, 5.22," *NPNFa*, II, Vol. III, 147. "The illustrious Athanasius was succeeded by the admirable Petrus, Petrus by Timotheus, and Timotheus by Theophilus, a man of sound wisdom and of a lofty courage. By him Alexandria was set free from the error of idolatry; for, not content with razing the idols' temples to the ground, he exposed the tricks of the priests to the victims of their wiles." For a discussion of the time to end the Paschal fast in the early Church, see Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 18.

¹⁹² The Synoptic accounts of the Passion and Resurrection refer to προσαββατον before the Sabbath in connection with Christ's burial.

¹⁹³ The historic date of the Resurrection as mentioned by Theophilus causes considerable problems for the Dionysian system: the traditional dates of 25, 27, 28 March will not match the period

Bede sums up his theology of Easter and the effect that it introduced on an understanding of time in the Christian context:

Christ's Resurrection changed time in every respect. It ushered in a new age of history; but it also changed the time when the day began. At Creation, the day began at dawn; but the last Age of the Earth was inaugurated by a *mutatio temporis* that significantly shifted the beginning of the day to the evening, so that time flows from darkness into light, and not from light into darkness.¹⁹⁴

3.4.3 *Luna sixteen*

We know from the letters of Pope Leo¹⁹⁵ (d. AD 461) that the practice of comparing Greek and Latin tables was standard practice during the fourth and fifth centuries. This situation arose because Roman and Alexandrian tables often differed. This was because they differed in their lunar terms, the length of the paschal term and the date of the equinox. The limits of Roman Easter tables from the time of Hippolytus through to Victorius were *xvi-xii*. These limits were criticised by many, as there was no scriptural basis for them. Columbanus had nothing but scorn for the Victorian Easter tables with which he had some familiarity, if only for the sake of comparison, before leaving Bangor for the continent. Victorius did not receive any better treatment from Coelfrid, or Bede, both attacked the Victorian tables on a number of grounds, but principally on the basis of his lunar limits.

of Christ's ministry. For further discussion of these dates see Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, 348, Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 36-110.

¹⁹⁴ Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, 273.

¹⁹⁵ Krusch, ed., "*Die Osterbriefe Leo's des Großen, IV*," *Studien*, I, 255-265.

3.4.3.1 Cummian and the problem with *luna sixteen*

Cummian in *DCP* having spent time in research and reflection attempts to defend Victorius' cycle. He develops arguments from scripture and patristic writings to support the Vicorian lunar limits of *xvi-xxii*. Cummian's theology and etymology of Easter derives from an earlier meaning of *Pascha*, from the Greek word *πασχεῖν* meaning to suffer and all his arguments are based on this theology. He does not seem to have recognised that according to Victorius *luna xvi* was the lower limit for Easter Sunday. Ó Cróinín puts it this way:

Both Cummian and the author of the *Liber Quaestionum* are adamant that *luna xiiii* denotes the Passion. Why? Because Cummian, at any rate, viewed the Passion as the New Testament reenactment of the Pasch – *Pascha nostrum immolatus est Christus,*" as he pointedly remarks.¹⁹⁶

Cummian opens his discussion by attempting to define Nisan, the first Hebrew month. He begins with the text of Exodus 12.1-3,6 and also uses a text from Leviticus, which points out the command to keep Passover at the correct time, this text encourages him to research the practice of the Hebrews, Greeks, Latins, and Egyptians. This section of twenty lines had seven scriptural references, five from Exodus, one from Paul's letter to the Corinthians, and a citation from Leviticus.

Cummian makes a sharp distinction between the Passion and the Resurrection, concentrating on the Exodus image of the blood smeared on the doors of the houses of the Jews as the cause of their salvation. This is an image frequently used by patristic

¹⁹⁶ Ó Cróinín, *Commentary, Cummian, DCP*, 23.

writers, “that the blood of Christ is the cause of our salvation.”¹⁹⁷ Cumian says: “I found the Apostle spoke thus concerning the sacrifice of Christ, not concerning the Resurrection saying: *For Christ our Passover has been sacrificed.*”¹⁹⁸

For it is clear that the passing over was after the Pasch. Therefore the blood gave safety, not the passing over, because the blood prevents the passing over from doing harm.¹⁹⁹

Compare Cumian’s statement with one by Ambrosiaster:

For it is plain that the passage came after the Pascha. They put the blood of the lamb that had been sacrificed on the doorposts and lintel, so that the angel who passed in the night should not strike the house on which there was the sign of blood. Salvation came, therefore, from the blood, not from the passage, because it was the blood that kept the passage from being harmful.²⁰⁰

Later on in this letter Cumian stresses, once again, the distinction between Passion and Resurrection, he refers to the Passion being on the fourteenth day and the Resurrection on the sixteenth day, and from there he counts the fifty days to the coming of the Holy Spirit.²⁰¹ He refers to an eastern practice of allotting a week to the

¹⁹⁷ See Gregory of Nazianzen, “First Oration on the *Pascha*,” n. 33, and “Oration XLV on the *Pascha*,” n. 34, also Jerome, n. 66. Ambrosiaster, *Liber quaestionum*, CSEL, 50, 106.1, “*Pascha delectissimi fratres, a passione appellatum est, sicut docet nos traditio* . “The Pasch, dear brothers, is called after the Passion, as our tradition teaches us.”

¹⁹⁸ Cumian, *DCP*, LL 27-29. “Et inveni hoc apostolum de immolatione Christi non de resurrectione commemorasse dicentem: *Et enim pascha nostrum immolatus est Christus.*”

¹⁹⁹ Cumian, *DCP*, LL 49-51, 61.

²⁰⁰ Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, 96, CSEL 50, 170-171. “Manifestum est enim transitum post pascham fuisse. De sanguine enim immolati agni supra postes ostii et supra limen posuerunt, ut transiens nocte angelus non percuteret domum, in qua signum sanguinis esset. Sanguis igitur salutem praestitit, non transitus, quia, ut transitus non noceret, obstitit sanguis.” English translation, James Quigley and Joseph Lienhard, *Easter in the Early Church*, 98, 200. There is some uncertainty about the authorship of this text with some scholars citing Ps-Jerome as the author and others Amrosiaster; the text itself gives Ps. Augustine as the author. Ambrosiaster is a name coined by Erasmus to designate the author of a commentary on the Epistles of Paul that had traditionally been ascribed to Ambrose. In 1905 Alexander Souter proved that a collection of 127 *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, commonly attributed to Augustine was in fact by the same author as the Pauline commentaries.

²⁰¹ See Chapter four, for a discussion of Cumian’s theology in this context.

Passion *xiv-xx*, a week to the Sepulchre *xv-xxi*, and a week to the Resurrection, *xii-xii*.²⁰² Cummian follows the Victorian doctrine of Resurrection on *luna xvi* and the Passion on *luna xiiii*, Sepulchre on *luna xv*, he then extrapolates back, saying that if *luna xiiii* is the Resurrection, then *xiii* is the Sepulchre, and *luna xii* is the Passion which cannot be.

Cummian's lunar moons

Thursday evening Beginning of New Covenant	Fourteenth moon rose in evening Paschal meal	Last Supper
Friday morning	Fourteenth moon	
Death Friday midday	Fourteenth moon	Crucifixion
Friday evening	Fifteenth moon	
Sabbath, guard on sepulchre	Fifteenth moon	
First day of the week	Sixteenth moon	The bonds of hell having been loosed Resurrection
After eight days Sunday after Easter	Twenty-third moon	He stood among his disciples
Fortieth day after Resurrection counting from Easter Sunday	Calculated from the sixteenth moon not the fourteenth.	He led his disciples out to Bethany and was raised up to heaven

²⁰² Here Cummian is quoting almost verbatim a section from the *Cologne Prologue*, to which Krush attaches a heading “*Das Paschale der Supputatio Romana*.” “ut hii tres dies sacratismi, qui trinitatis gracia sanctificati sunt, passio, requies et resurrectio habeant singulas sibi adscriptas lunae ebdomadas: passio a *xiiii*, luna usque ad *xxm*, requies a *xv*, luna, in qua azemia, usque ad *xxi*, resurrectio, novi firmenti ingressio a *xvi*, luna usque ad *xxii*.” “These three most holy days that are sanctified by the grace of the trinity are the passion, the rest (in the sepulchre) and the resurrection may each have attached to them a week of moons: passion *xiiii*, moon up to the twentieth, the sepulchre from the fifteenth moon, the feast of Unleavened Bread, up to the twenty-first, resurrection, sixteenth up to twenty-second moon.” Krusch, *Studien* II, 232, 233. Charles Jones, ed., *BDT, Introduction*, 91, comments that in the *Cologne Prologue* the argument supported *lunae xvi-xxii*, and adds that he believes that Cummian was confused by the fact that Rome was advocating both the Alexandrian Easter of *luna xv-xxi* and the Victorian tables with which they seem to conflict.

Fiftieth day after Resurrection again counting from Easter Sunday	Again calculated from the sixteenth moon of the resurrection, not fourteenth moon of the Passion	The Holy Spirit rested on the apostles
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For Cumman then, the traditional limits of *luna xiiii* applies to the Passion and not the Resurrection, this seems to imply dependence on early sources and on the chronology in John's gospel. Another seventh-century Irish *computus* now preserved in a unique copy in Munich – *The Munich Computus* incorporates a similar statement, “*Inde Greci faciunt pascha in .xv. luna, quia non est minus pasch passio quam resurrection.*”²⁰³ The Roman Easter limits *xvi-xxii*, make it possible for Good Friday to fall on *luna xiiii* the day that was associated with the death of Christ in John's gospel.

“Some of the southern Irish at least regarded the Passion as equal in importance to the Resurrection, and they associated with *luna xiiii.*”²⁰⁴ Cumman refers to *luna* fourteenth as being ‘twice blest,’ the day of the Passion, but also the day of the proclamation of the New Covenant by Christ at the Last Supper, the day of the fourteen moon extends from the time of the Last Supper (Passover meal in the Old Testament) to the beginning of the fifteenth moon, and within that time the Crucifixion takes place. The *Munich Computus* refers to this day as “*continent duo mysteria in uno dies.*”²⁰⁵ Confusion between the historical date of the Passion and lunar limits *xiiii-xxi* according to the text of the Mosaic Law in Exodus and the

²⁰³ Immo Watnjes, *Munich Computus*, Clm. 14456, saec. ix, fols. 24^v – 25^f (Bayerisch Staatsbibliothek), 70-73, 57. “Hence the Greeks keep the *Pascha* on the fifteenth moon which is not as much *Pascha* – passion as resurrection.”

²⁰⁴ Ó Cróinín, *DGP*, Introduction, 24.

²⁰⁵ Immo Watnjes, *Munich Computus*, fol. 24^v L 68, 56. “Binding together two mysteries in one day.”

historical lunar dates that he found in Victorius forced Cumian to set *luna xiiii* as the date before which the Passion could not fall.

Some of the Irish looked on the Last Supper and the Passion as equally important in the Easter celebration as the Resurrection, and for men of Cumian's disposition the lunar-limits applied to the Last Supper and the Passion just as much as to the Resurrection. This is where the peculiarity of the southern Irish practice lay. For them Last Supper and Passion marked the beginning of the Easter celebration and though they occurred on separate Julian days (Thursday and Friday) they were both deemed to have taken place on the same lunar day, *luna xiiii*.²⁰⁶

A section of *DRC* also picks up this theme of when the historical Passion took place. It refers to the quotation of Theophilus already cited above. According to this text the Passion took place on the xi kl April (22 March) the night he was betrayed by Judas and the resurrection took place on the viii kl April (25 March).²⁰⁷

A passage from *DRC* provides several different interpretations of the word *Pascha*, some like Isidore denying that it had any connection with the Passion, whereas for others it definitely has a meaning relating to the Passion:

We should know what language is *Pascha*. Isidore shows saying: Pasch is not a Greek word but Hebrew, not from passion, since to suffer in Greek is *paschein*, but

²⁰⁶ Ó Cróinín, *DRC*, 25. The importance of the fourteenth in the Irish tradition points towards the chronology of John's gospel as the background for their tradition and the celebration of the anniversary of the Passion on *luna xiv*. Central to this discussion was the question: How was the day defined? Was it defined according to Hebrew, Egyptian, Babylonian or Latin principles? Was it the lunar day or was it the civil day? The author of *De ratione computandi* attempts to define the day, as does Bede, but at times various protagonists in the controversy talked at cross-purposes because no clear distinction was made regarding the parameters of time. The Insular church followed the Jewish practice of a lunar day, from sunset to sunset, but Wilfrid at the Synod of Whitby seems to follow the civil day.

²⁰⁷ Ó Cróinín, *DRC*, 88, 195. "Sciendum nobis in quia die mensis passus est Christus secundum eos qui resurrectionem factam in viii. kl Aprelis putant. Theophilus dicit: "Passus namque dominus ab .xi. kl Aprelis, quia nocte ab Judeis est traditus. Et .viii. kl resurrexit." We should know on what day of the month is the passion of Christ so that the resurrection can happen on the viii kl April. For the passion of the Lord [takes place] from xi kl April the night on which he was betrayed by Judas, and he rose on the viii kl.

Pascha is named after the word for “passing over” because the people of God passed over from Egypt. Augustine agrees saying: Pasch is not Greek, but Hebrew.²⁰⁸

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the theological significance of *luna* fourteen, fifteen and sixteen and the biblical and patristic theology which shaped and informed these lower lunar limits. Of vital importance to an understanding of these lunar limits is exegesis of the scriptural texts relating to Passover for this the foremost feast of the Christian Year. An examination of the Patristic texts reveal an early emphasis on the symbolic importance of the full moon, celebrated on *luna* fourteen, and the symbolic interpretation of the importance of the full moon mingling with the full light of the equinox. The themes of the earliest homilies on the Easter incorporated the theme of light. The Resurrection is celebrated as a victory over sin and death, and a movement from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom. Even later writers, Bede for example saw this feast as one of light, but for Bede *luna* fifteen was the day of the full moon, which of course was a shift from the earlier emphasis on *luna* fourteen.

The early Quartodeciman Easter practice emphasised the theology of Easter as the feast of the Christian Passover, “Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us.”

²⁰⁸ Ó Cróinín, *DRC*, 84, 191. Sciendum nobis cuius est linguae pascha. Isidorus, ostendit dicens: “Pasche uocabulum non Grecum est, sed Ebreicum; nec a passione, quoniam paschin Grece dicitur pati, sed a transitu Ebreo uerbo pascha appellatum est, eo quod tunc populus Dei de Egypto transierit.” Augustinus quoque huic consentit ita dicens: “Pasch non est Grecum, sed Ebreum. Utrumque enim Ebreo” fuisse et “pascha transitus interpretatur.” Paschasinus ita dicens: “Dies passionis .xi. die kl Maiarum occurrit, a qua sicut uidetur Grecis, pascha nomen accepit. “We should know what is the language of Pasch. Isidore shows saying; Pasch is not Greek but Hebrew, not from Passion as paschein is called in Greek, but from the Hebrew word for “passing over” because then the people of God crossed over from Egypt. Augustine also agrees with this saying: “The pasch is not Greek, but Hebrew for in Hebrew, phas [...] is understood as “passing over.” Paschasinus also says: the days of the passion occurs from the ix kl April.

The earliest theology for *luna* fourteen is to be found in the Quartodeciman understanding of the feast as explained by Apollinarius. This theology of Easter shaped the early understanding of the feast. As the emphasis shifted from the celebration of Easter as Passion to Easter as the feast of the Resurrection a corresponding shift took place in the theological understanding of the Fathers.

The fracturing of the Easter feast into a celebration of Three Days brought with it a corresponding change in emphasis. An anti-Arian stance in the fourth century contributed as much to change as anything else. The growth of a period of fasting before the celebration of the great feast was the underlying cause of some dissention regarding the move away from *luna* fourteen. The earliest lunar tables found in an Insular context those found in Cummian's letter, *De controversia paschali* bears witness to a vibrant interest in computistics in an Insular setting, eight of these cycles record *luna* fourteen as the start of their lunar terms, and whatever their origins, some at least have been shown to be authentic, this reflects an earlier emphasis on *luna* fourteen. This is the tradition the Insular church inherited and to which it adhered almost as a tenet of faith right through from Columbanus, its use in Iona in AD 716, the year in which the Columban foundation eventually accepted the Roman Easter.

Luna fifteen on the other hand seems to have been a product of ecclesiastical authority with its explanation then using the scriptural texts to explain it. The Council of Nicea, whatever its intention, seems to be responsible for this movement away from *luna* fourteen. First adopted by Alexandria, this movement to *luna* fifteen reached the west and lunar limits beginning with *luna* fourteen were replaced by limits beginning with *luna* fifteen. *Luna* sixteen, a product of the Roman tradition and the tables of Victorius is one, for which there is no clear cut scriptural basis.

Having examined the various lunar terms, it is time to examine the consequence for the Insular church of observing *luna* fourteen in a 'world' where *luna* fifteen was fast becoming the norm, and the only one tolerated. So that the Quartodeciman label became a handy stick with which to 'beat the Celtic dog.'

4 CHAPTER

ACCUSATION OF QUARTODECIMANISM A CONSEQUENCE OF OBSERVING LUNA FOURTEEN¹

4.1 Introduction

In the fourth century we find an apparently organized British Church, with bishops who represent it at the Council of Arles in AD 314, and certainly at Rimini in AD 359. The British Church was evidently in close communication with the Church in Gaul, as may be inferred from the dedication to Martin of Tours of a church at Withern and one at Canterbury, and from the mission of Victridius of Rouen in AD 396. Constantius (d. AD 448) tells the story of two missions of Germanus to Britain to combat the Pelagian heresy, probably in AD 429, and again in AD 448.² Bede gives these dates and adds, “henceforward, the Faith was maintained uncorrupted in Britain for a long time.” The “*Vita Gildae*” tells how

¹ The Quartodecimans held nothing in common with the Jews besides the date of the Pascha, but from the Council of Nicea on, they and all who kept “the Pascha with the Jews” were accused of Judaizing.

² Bede, *EH*, 1.21, 70. Bede records that on the first occasion he was accompanied by Lupus, Bishop of Troyes on the second by Severus, Bishop of Trèves. The dates given in Bede differ slightly from those given by Kenney, *Sources for the Early History*, 163. Kenney gives the date of his return as AD 447, the year before Germanus’ death.

King Ainmerech sent for Gildas to restore ecclesiastical order to his kingdom

“*quia paene catholicam fidem in ipsa insula omnes reliquerant.*”³

When Augustine of Canterbury (d. 640) and the Saxon Church came into contact in the seventh century, it appears that the Britons were using the 84-year cycle of Sulpicius Severus. By the time of Aidan bishop of Lindisfarne (d. AD 651) the northern Irish kept Easter according to the Insular cycle but the southern Irish had adopted the Roman practice ca. AD 632.⁴ Aidan’s practices were tolerated because of his holiness of life, and his orthodoxy in other areas. His successor Finán was a man of uncertain temperament who antagonised others. Matters, however, really came to a head in the time of bishop Colman.

As already mentioned in the second chapter Dáibhí Ó Cróinín posits an explanation for the charge against the Irish of Quartodecimanism, based on an interpretation of the Victorian tables. Yet his thesis still leaves unanswered questions. Why was the letter of AD 640 written to the Irish in the first place? Did the leaders of the Irish church write to Rome during the papacy of Severinus (28 May, 640–2 August, 640)? What were the contents of this letter that disturbed the Roman authorities so greatly? Was the papal letter a reply to such a letter?

³ “Because practically all the island had relinquished the catholic faith.”

⁴ Cummian after a year of study consulted his elders. The southern Irish assembled at Mag Léogna to discuss the issue. Following this synod it was decided to send representatives to Rome to inquire into the correct method of calculation. Kenny, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland*, 220. The Irishmen were in Rome at Easter, when their practice differed from that of other Christians by a whole month. The only two occasions when this could have occurred during the abbacy of Ségéne was AD 631 and 642. See Ó Cróinín, *Chronology*, 89, n. 14. Ó Cróinín says that the charge of Quartodecimanism comes first in the letter of AD 640, the Pelagian one follows from that charge. Charles Plummer ed., *Venerabilis Bedae Opera Historica*, 2.14 says that the name ‘quartodeciman’ was always a handy stick with which to beat the ‘Celtic dog.’

Without any actual evidence of the contents of such a letter from the northern Irish clergy, we are left in the realm of speculation. Is it possible that these clerics had written to Rome, as Columbanus once had, requesting to be allowed to continue their own Easter practice?

In AD 628 Honorius wrote to the bishops of Ireland, requesting them to change their practices. Southern Ireland agreed and in AD 632 it changed its practice; the northern provinces, however, continued to observe the Insular tradition. In AD 639 the Insular Easter occurred on 21 April, *luna xiv*, and the Roman Easter occurred on 31 March, a difference of one month, a difference which would occur again two years later in AD 642 on *luna xx*. These moons are at both termini of the Insular lunar term *xiv* to *xx*. In both cases the widest possible divergence in Easter dates occurred and so was highly visible.

It was in AD 632 that Cummián penned his letter to Ségeine setting out his doubts and questions about the 84-year cycle. Ségeine abbot of Iona, an important leader in his own right, is among those named in the letter of AD 640. On receipt of Cummián's letter did Ségeine write to his colleagues in northern Ireland and the monasteries of the Iona *paruchia*, regarding the continuance of their practices? Did the bishops, abbots and priests of northern provinces then write to Rome? For those following the 84-year cycle, Easter Sunday would occur three times on fourteenth Nisan, between the years AD 636 to 646.⁵ From a Roman point of view anyone who advocated (or appeared to uphold) celebration of Easter on the

⁵ See Table in Appendix 2.

fourteenth of the moon was pre-empting the Pascha, and by the same token, denying the efficacy of the Resurrection as the true instrument of man's redemption.⁶

We beg you not to rake up the ashes of controversies long since burned out. For who can do other than condemn the insolent and impious assertion that man can live without sin of his own free will not of God's grace?⁷

Contemporary scholars are liable to cast about for the underlying causes of this controversy in mathematical difference, computus, astronomy, or in issues of an independent Insular church over and against one led by Rome. This chapter will now examine the charge of Quatrodecimanism in an Insular context. The Insular church certainly does not fit the description of Quartodeciman that obtained in the early church, 'celebration on fourteenth Nisan with the Jews.' From the evidence of those who made this charge, it seems that their understanding of the meaning of Quartodeciman had shifted to those who always celebrated on a Sunday and only occasionally on fourteen Nisan. It appears to have been immaterial whether the Insular church were true Quartodecimans, what mattered was the perception of heresy by their contemporaries. These accusations had destructive effects for the Irish mission and their acceptance by those in authority in the British church. Two of their most vigorous opponents were

⁶ Ó Croínín, "New heresy from old; Pelagianism in Ireland and the papal letter of 640," *Chronology*, 98.

⁷ Bede, *EH*, 2.19. This reference while it could be applied to Pelagius, could also refer to Pseudo Tertullian's accusation against the Quartodecimans that, by continuing to follow the Mosaic Law, the grace of Christ was being reduced to the old law.

Theodore of Canterbury and Wilfrid of Ripon, the latter making a concerted attempt to destroy the work of the Irish missionaries in Northumbria.⁸

4.2 Heresy in the early church

4.2.1 Definition of heresy

Heresy was considered as a *delictum* or offence against the law of the church. The Greek word *hairesis* implies a choosing, or that which is chosen, especially an opinion which one chooses or holds *haireseis apoleias* 2 Pet. 2.1,⁹ a Greek phrase used by ecclesiastic writers for opinions deviating from the true Christian faith, it can also be seen as a body of men holding particular opinions in philosophy. The canonical offence of heresy consists in a departure, not from the implied belief in Christ, but from what the church through her creeds and canons has declared to be a matter of faith. Augustine of Hippo stipulates, that for an error to constitute heresy it must be persistent and wilful:

Just so there are those in the Church of Christ who have a taste for some unhealthy and perverse notion, and who if reproved – in the hope that they might acquire a taste for what is wholesome and right – obstinately resist and refuse to correct their deadly dogma and persist in defending them.¹⁰

The heresy must not only be suspected but also detected and adjudicated upon, the cognisance of heresy belongs to the spiritual office of the bishop. The

⁸ Clare Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid and the Irish: Jarrow Lecture 2003* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, J. & P. Bealls, 2003), 5.

⁹ Jerusalem Bible translates 2 Pet. 1.2 as disruptive views; the New American Bible translates the phrase as pernicious heresies. Alexander Souter, in *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) translates *haireseis* as a self-chosen opinion; a religious or philosophical sect, and *hapoleia* as destruction, ruin, loss.

¹⁰ Augustine, *The City of God*, 18.51, 833.

term heretics at the Council of Carthage in AD 411 also include schismatics, this re-echoes what was already stated by canon six of the Council of Constantinople in AD 381:

We term heretics those who were formerly excommunicated and those subsequently anathematised by ourselves and in addition those who claim to confess the sound faith but have broken off and hold services in opposition to their canonical bishops.¹¹

The concluding part of this canon “have broken off and hold services in opposition to their canonical bishops” could well be applied to the Insular church in its unwillingness to conform to the practice of the universal Church. Cyprian in describing the Novatianists uses the terms *schismatici* and *haeretici* interchangeably.¹² His treatise on *The Unity of the Church* develops the idea of belonging, of being ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ the one community of the church.

The sacrament of the Passover contains nothing else in the law of the Exodus than that the lamb which is slain in the figure of Christ should be eaten in *one house*. “In *one house* shall ye eat it (Ex 12:46).¹³

Cyprian comments, “the flesh of Christ and the holy of the Lord cannot be carried outside, and there is no other house for believers except the one Church.”¹⁴

This statement is very close to the words of the second synod of St. Patrick.

¹¹ Henry Percival ed., “Council of Constantinople, Canon VII,” *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the undivided Church: Their canons and dogmatic decrees: NPNFa*, II, Vol. XIV, 185. This canon gives a list of those who were considered heretics, and includes a formula for reception back to orthodoxy. The list includes Quartodecimans or Tetradites. See also Hefele, *History of the Councils*, Vol. II, 368. In a letter to Bishop Martyrius of Antioch in the fifth century, the subject is referred to in a similar way. Authors have conjectured that canon seven is an extract from this letter, and may be at least eighty years later than this Council, AD 381.

¹² Cyprian, “Letter 55” *NPNF*, I, Vol. V, 340.

¹³ Cyprian, “Treatise on the Unity of the Church,” *NPNFa*, I, Vol. V, 424.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 421.

On the eve of Easter, whether it is permissible to carry it outside. It is not to be carried outside, but to be brought down to the faithful. What else signifies it that the Lamb is taken in one house, but that Christ is believed and communicated under one roof of faith?¹⁵

The concepts of unity, belonging, being one body, ‘inclusion’ or ‘exclusion’ from the family of the Church, are woven into Cyprian’s writings. Anyone or anything that divides the unity of the Church is anathema. They have by their actions put themselves ‘outside’ the family of the Church.

For neither have heresies arisen, nor have schisms originated from any other source than from this, that God’s priest is not obeyed; nor do they consider that there is one person for the time priest in the Church and for the time judge in the stead of Christ.¹⁶

Athanasius, in his fourth *Festal Letter*, differentiates slightly between schismatics and heretics “heretics slay the word and schismatics rend the coat.”¹⁷ John Chrysostom sees no great difference between heretics and schismatics, “it is no good to say their faith is the same, they are orthodox, I assert that to make schism in the church is no less evil than to fall into heresy.”

¹⁵ Ludwig Bieler, “Second Synod of St Patrick, Canon XIII,” *Irish Penitentials: Scriptores Latine Hiberniae*, Vol. 5 (Dublin: Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, 1963), 189. According to Bieler this is the earliest surviving document concerning ecclesiastical discipline in Ireland. He puts the date for this synod as AD 457. “In nocte Paschae, si fas est ferre foras. *Non foras fertur, sed fidelibus deferatur. Quid aliud significat quod in una domo sumitur agnus quam: sub uno fidei culmine creditur et communicatur Christus?*” In another of the canons of the ‘First Synod of Patrick, 28,’ *Irish Penitentials*, 58-59, it says: “If a cleric has been excommunicated, he shall say prayer alone, and *not in the same house* with his brethren; nor is he allowed to offer the holy sacrifice or to consecrate until he has corrected himself; if he does otherwise he shall be doubly punished.” “Si quis clericorum excommonis (fuerit), *solus non in eadem domo cum fratribus orationem facit nec offerre nec consecrare (ei) licet donec se faciat emendatum; qui si sic non fecerit, dupliciter unidicetur.* Italics mine. See also D. A. Binchy, “St Patrick’s First Synod,” *Studia Hibernica*, 8 (1968): 49:59.

¹⁶ Cyprian, “Treatise on the Unity of the Church,” *NPNFa*, I, Vol. V, 421.

¹⁷ Athanasius, “*Festal letter*, VI, Easter AD 334,” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. IV, 521.

The early fathers seem to have taken Christ's words very much to heart, "he who is not with me is against me, he who gathers not with me scatters" (Matt. 12.20). There could be no half measures heresy was a serious charge, resulting in excommunication from the church. For those whose whole life was given over to God to be cut off from the church was to be excluded from the community of faith and the fabric of society. It was a punishment to be feared; accusations of heresy and schism were never to be taken lightly.

When Bede speaks of the Irish he is also careful to speak of their orthodox faith, but the real question has to be asked, were they 'inside' or 'outside' the Church? Did their stubborn adherence to their own customs and laws in defiance of the laws of the universal church put them 'outside'?¹⁸ The discussion of heresy becomes of particular relevance in Cummián's letter. Having examined the scriptures, the canons of the church, and the writings of the early Fathers, he reluctantly comes to the conclusion that if he fails to follow these canons and decrees he leaves himself open to a charge of heresy, and worse the 'eternal damnation' of his soul.¹⁹ It also plays a role in the posthumous censuring of Aidan as a heretic by Archbishop Theodore because of his Insular practices regarding Easter.

¹⁸ Stanley L. Greenslade, *Schism in the Early Church: What light can the past throw?* (London: SCM Press, rept. 1964), 22.

¹⁹ Cummián, *DCP*, LL 164-187, 81.

4.2.2 Why were the early Quartodecimans considered heretics?

Their faith was orthodox, they claimed apostolic origin they celebrated the Lord's Passion as Easter on 14 Nisan. The inclusion of these churches among the list of heretics is therefore not simply a question of loose terminology but is a deep theological issue. The writing of Hippolytus provides an insight into the issues involved when he says "certain others lovers of strife, maintain that the Passover ought to be kept on the fourteenth day of the first month according to the ordinance the Law":

(But in this) they only regard what has been written in the law, that he will be accursed who does not so keep (the commandment) as it is enjoined. They do not, however, attend to this (fact), that the legal enactment was made for Jews, who in times to come should kill the real Passover. And (this paschal sacrifice, in its efficacy,) has spread unto the Gentiles, and is discerned by faith, and not now observed in letter (merely). They attend to this one commandment, and do not look unto what has been spoken by the apostle: "For I testify to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to keep the whole law." In other respects, however, these consent to all the traditions delivered to the Church by the Apostles.²⁰

Eusebius writing on the Quartodeciman controversy of the second and third centuries stresses how both sides wished to excommunicate the other. But there were also moderates like Irenaeus and Polycarp, who while holding to their own traditions, were willing to accept and tolerate differences:

For neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe what he had always observed with John the disciple of our Lord, and the other apostles with whom he had associated; neither could Polycarp persuade Anicetus to observe it as he said that he ought to follow the customs of the presbyters that had preceded him. But though matters were in this shape, they communed together, and Anicetus conceded to the administration of the Eucharist in the Church to Polycarp, manifestly as a mark of respect. And they parted from each other in peace, both

²⁰ Hippolytus, "The Refutation of all Heresies, XI" *ANF*, Vol. V, 123.

those who observed, and those who did not, maintaining the peace of the whole church.²¹

Pseudo-Tertullian writes of Blastos a Roman Quartodeciman (ca. AD 195):

And besides all of these, we have Blastos too, who secretly wants to introduce Judaism. For he says that the Pascha should not be kept in any other way than according to the Law of Moses, the fourteenth of the month. But who does not know that the grace of the gospel is rendered nil if you reduce Christ to Law?²²

Abbot Ceolfrid writing to King Nechtan (ca. AD 710) uses a similar expression:

Whoever argues, therefore, that the Paschal full moon can occur before the equinox, disagrees in the observance of our highest mysteries with the teaching of the scriptures and allies himself with those who believe that they can be saved without the assistance of Christ's grace.²³

Normally taken as a reference to Pelagianism, this quote is perhaps closer to the meaning of Pseudo-Tertullian than to a specific Pelagian context.²⁴ If that is the case it infers that Coelfrid considered the Insular church to be Quartodeciman.

The inclusion by the Council of Constantinople (AD 381) of Quartodecimans among its list of heretics may stem from this understanding of their practice, "the grace of the gospel is rendered nil if you reduce Christ to the

²¹ Eusebius, "Church History, 5.24" *NPNFa*, II, Vol. I, 244.

²² Pseudo-Tertullian, *Against All Heresies*, 8.1, cited in Cantalamessa, *Easter in the Early Church*, 93. Blastos, together with Florinus, came to Rome under Eleutherius or Victor from Asia Minor which explains his Quartodeciman practice. Eusebius, "Church History, 5.15," *NPNFa*, II, Vol. I, 241. "Others, of whom Florinus was chief, flourished at Rome. He fell from the presbyterate of the Church, and Blastus was involved in a similar fall. They also drew away many of the Church to their opinion, each striving to introduce his own innovations in respect to the truth." Blastos may have been the one who provoked the controversy with Pope Victor. Eusebius, "Church History, 5.20," *NPNFa*, II, Vol. I, 237. "Irenaeus wrote several letters against those who were disturbing the sound ordinance of the Church at Rome. One of them was to Blastos "On Schism"; another to Florinus "On Monarchy, or That God is not the Author of Evil." For Florinus seemed to be defending this opinion."

²³ Bede, *EH*, 5.21, 316.

²⁴ Pelagius' special formulation of the doctrine of free will had a serious impact on his Christology. He emphasised Christ's humanity at the expense of his divinity, and even placed restrictions on the human aspect of Christ. Herren and Brown, *The Theology of Christ in Insular Christianity*, 52.

Law.”²⁵ Old Testament tradition, as the basis for their computations, was strong among Irish computists. Did this emphasis on the old Law portray them as denying the grace of Christ? The writer of *De sollemnitatibus et neomensis* goes to great lengths to stress Christ as the fulfilment of the Law, a theme which is Pauline in its emphasis of Christ as the fulfilment of the old Law and the beginning of the new. The question, should Christians continue to follow Jewish practices, caused considerable controversy in the early church. Eusebius writes:

But before this time another most virulent disorder had existed, and long afflicted the Church; I mean the difference respecting the salutary feast of Easter. For while one party asserted that the Jewish custom should be adhered to, the other affirmed that the exact recurrence of the period should be observed, without following the authority of those who were in error and strangers to the gospel of grace.²⁶

The significance given to the Passion and the Resurrection and their role in the celebration of Easter is closely related to the heresies of Pelagianism and Quartodecimanism. Thomas Charles-Edwards describes it in this way:

At the equinox the day becomes longer than the night and thus the light prevails over darkness. As the sun at the equinox set and rose again to defeat the darkness so did Christ die, lie in the tomb, and rise again to defeat the Devil. To celebrate Easter before the equinox was to deny the grace of Christ, to suppose that one might defeat the Devil before the True Light had risen. Similarly to celebrate Easter before the full moon (now accepted to be the fifteenth *luna*) was to betray oneself as a Pelagian.²⁷

From an Insular point of view therefore, those who celebrated Easter before the 25 March which they regarded as the equinox, were heretics. From the viewpoint of those who followed the Roman tradition, the Insular church was heretical, since

²⁵ Pseudo-Tertullian, *Against All Heresies*, 8.1, cited in Cantalamessa, *Easter in the Early Church*, 93.

²⁶ Eusebius, “Life of Constantine, 3.5,” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. I, 520.

²⁷ Charles-Edward, *Early Christian Ireland*, 415.

they celebrated on *luna* fourteen. This would appear to be the situation between Segene and Cummian, each accused the other of heresy.

4.2.3 Why were the Irish regarded as Quartodecimans?

4.2.3.1 Calendrical evidence²⁸

A trawl through the dates of the Insular Easters from AD 438 to 646 reveals an interesting fact, namely the number of times that Easter Sunday fell on 14 Nisan in the Insular calendar. This happened fifteenth times in 84-years on average every 5.6 years. In certain decades it occurred three times in the decade: four times between AD 448 and 458 and 84-years later between AD 532 and 542, also between AD 586 and 595, 616 and 626.

4.2.3.2 Analysis of the Table²⁹

An analysis of this table reveals that within an 84-year cycle that Easter Sunday was celebrated fifteen times on fourteen Nisan. The table also reveals that while in some cases the dates agreed with the Roman/Alexandrian dates the most common discrepancy was one week. This usually happens when the Insular Easter fell on fourteen Nisan, but according to the Council of Nicea, “Easter should not be celebrated with the Jews.” The Alexandrian/Roman tables had different epacts, a different cycle, and a different equinox, the latest moon according to their limits

²⁸ Michael Jones, *Handbook of Dates: for students of British history*, A Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks, 4, ed. C. R. Cheney (Cambridge: University Press, 2004), 147-154.

²⁹ See Table of Easter dates in Appendix II.

of *luna xv* to *xxi*. The Alexandrian/Roman limits of *xv–xxi* ensured that Easter was never celebrated on fourteen Nisan. The Insular churches observed their equinox on 25 March, as distinct from 21 March of Alexandrian/Roman churches, this meant that if *luna xiv - xx* occurred before the 26 March, Easter in the Insular church was postponed to the next lunation, giving a divergence of almost one month in the dates of Easter.

Taking the 84-year cycle commencing in AD 606, Easter occurs on fourteen Nisan in the following years: 609, 616, 622, 626, 636, 639, 646, 666, 670, 672, 676, 679, and 683. It should be noted however, that southern Irish churches had adopted the Victorian Easter after the synod of Mág Lena and the visit of the delegation from Ireland to Rome in 632.³⁰ The churches of the north, Iona and parts of Britain and Wales continued to keep to their traditional method of calculating Easter long afterwards. Iona did not accept the Roman Easter until AD 716 with parts of Britain continuing to use their own method until the middle of the eighth-century.

For the Insular church, however, perceptions were as damaging as reality. This controversy damaged the perception of the Insular church especially following the Synod of Whitby damaged their creditability, and how their orthodoxy of practice and belief was viewed. The accusation of Quartodecimanism also raised questions concerning the validity of their orders, and the validity of their baptism; the theological implications were far-reaching. It

³⁰ Cumman, *DCP*, LL 263-264, 91.

introduced a new issue, that of authority. Whose authority is valid and should be followed? Is it the authority of the Bible, the writings of the fathers and early synods, where little or no evidence of central authority is found? Or is it the authority of Rome as portrayed by the Roman party within the British church, for whom the rules and canons of church synods and councils were the ultimate authority?

4.2.4 Columbanus affirms his orthodoxy

Jonas', *Life of Columbanus* written (AD 643) is divided into a series of themes: birth, entry into asceticism, peregrinatio to Gaul, entry into the desert, establishment of Luxeuil, re-entry into the secular community after exile from Luxeuil, and efforts to convert the heathen at Bregenz, he creates a narrative closure with the foundation of Bobbio and the saint's death. The second book of the *Life* is devoted mainly to the Luxeuil and Bobbio and their respective abbots after Columbanus' death. Jonas' account in this second book is more than simple hagiography it is an ordered thematic deployment of material. It triumphantly bypasses the problems of Columbanus' theological failings, which included support for the Insular Easter and probably for the Tricapitoline schismatics.³¹ The account of Agrestius' (AD 640) opposition to Eustasius,³² for example, makes

³¹ Ian Wood, "Jonas, the Merovingians, and Pope Honorius: *Diplomata* and the *Vita Columbani*," *Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751* (London: Longman, 1994), 100.

³² Agrestius former monk of Luxeuil became a bitter enemy of Columbanus. Eustasius the abbot of Luxeuil is mentioned in Jonas', *Life of St Columbanus*, 61.1. "During his time king Chlotar, when he saw that the words of Columban had been fulfilled, summoned Eustasius, who was then abbot of Luxeuil, and urged him to go with an escort of noblemen, whom Eustasius himself should select, to the holy Columban and beg the latter, wherever he might be, to come to

possible an exploration of some of the contradictions within early Columbanian spirituality and theology.³³ Agrestius' support for the Aquileian schismatics may well have been closer to the position of Columbanus, who criticised Vigilius' collapse before Byzantine pressure, than was that of Eustasius and Athala, who supported the papal position.³⁴

Bede's, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, gives a full account of Columbanus' life and trials in Gaul. There is no record that Pope Gregory ever replied to Columbanus' letters, but at this stage of the controversy there was no suggestion of heresy. His letter shows clearly that the Bangor community were well practised in computistical matters and confident of their own abilities. They were unlikely to have changed their 84-year cycle at this early date. Gregory died

Chlotar." See Clare Stancliffe, "Jonas's Life of Columbanus and his Disciples," *Studies in Irish Hagiography: Saints and Scholars*, eds., John Carey, Máire Herbert and Pádraig Ó Riain.. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001: 189-220, see also *Jonae vitae sanctorum Columbani. Scriptores rerum germanicarum in usum scholarum ex Monumentis Germaniae historicis separatim editit. Vedastos. Johannis, Recognovit, Bruno Krusch.* (Hannoverae: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1905)

³³ Columbanus is not very clear on these issues. There are internal discrepancies in his fifth letter. Walker, *SCO*, xxx, comments on Columbanus' doctrinal stance. "The Irish saint was disposed to a deeply conservative reverence for antiquity, and both character and training prompted him to suspect any doctrinal innovation; with a mind little attuned to the subtleties of theological refinement he saw in this controversy only a hindrance to his urgent missionary work." Walker, "Letter 5.10," *SCO*, 47. It is clear that he thought the papacy had defended itself against charges of heresy – "Letter, 5.10-11," 47. Wood, *Merovingians Kingdoms*, 196-7. It was common enough to talk of Nestorius and Euthyches, as if these heresies were one and the same. Prosper of Aquitaine records in his Chronicle for the year AD 431 that Nestorius was condemned, along with the heresy that bears his name, and also Pelagius who supported a dogma related to his; by more than two hundred bishops assembled at Ephesus. Liam de Paor, ed., trans., "The Chronicle of Proper of Aquitaine," *St Patrick's World* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 79.

³⁴ Agrestius received permission from his abbot Eustasius to evangelise Bavaria. Achieving little there he went to Aquileia in north-east Italy and joined their schismatic church. The Aquileian schism was dominant in the Po valley and round the top of the Adriatic into Dalmatia. They stood against papal endorsement of Justinian's support for the "Three Chapters" schism. This controversy originated in an edict of Justinian published in AD 543-4 intended to reconcile his Monophysite subjects; in this edict he condemned the writings of Theodore of Mopuestia, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, and Ibas.

in AD 603 and was succeeded by Sabinian (AD 604-606), Boniface III (February 607–November 607) and Boniface IV (AD 608-May 615). Columbanus continued to write letters to the pontiffs seeking their approval of the Insular method of calculating Easter, referring to himself as humble and meek; he addresses them as equals unafraid to take them to task. This he does with Boniface IV:

To the most fair Head of all the Churches of the whole of Europe, estimable Pope, exalted Prelate, Shepherd of Shepherds, most reverend Bishop; the humblest to the highest, the least to the greatest, peasant to citizen, prattler to one most eloquent, the last to the first, foreigner to native, a poor creature to a powerful lord, (strange to tell, a monstrosity, a rare bird) the Dove dare to write to Pope Boniface.³⁵

Columbanus gives his pedigree in the faith: claiming a strong bond with Rome, “we are all disciples of Saints Peter and Paul.” This provides significant evidence that the account in the *Chronicle* of Prosper of Aquitaine is in fact of importance for the Irish Church.³⁶

For all we Irish, inhabitants of the world’s edge, are disciples of Saints Peter and Paul and of all the disciples who wrote the sacred canon by the Holy Ghost, and we accept nothing outside the evangelical and apostolic teaching; none has been a heretic, none a Judaizer, none a schismatic; but the Catholic Faith, as it was delivered by you first,³⁷ who are the successors of the holy apostles is maintained unbroken.³⁸

Columbanus was also concerned with the unity and love of the church, despite suggestions by earlier writers that the Irish Church was independent of

³⁵ Walker, “Letter 5.1,” *SCO*, 32.

³⁶ Liam de Paor, “Chronicle of Prosper of Aquitaine,” *St Patrick’s World* (Dublin: Four Courts Press), 1996, 79. “Palladius was ordained by Pope Celestine and sent to the Irish believers in Christ as their first bishop.”

³⁷ This confirms the view that the mission from Ireland was sent first from Rome. See footnote in Walker, *SCO*, 39.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

Rome.³⁹ Columbanus denies any taint of heresy; ‘none a Judaizer,’ clearly refers to being a Quatrodeciman. Having claimed an immaculate pedigree in the faith Columbanus describes his grief that the Pope Boniface IV has been accused of defending heretics and schismatics. He pleads with him for unity and the summoning of an episcopal synod to settle the matter:⁴⁰

Then, lest the old Enemy bind men with this very lengthy cord of error let the cause of division, I beg, be cut off by you with St. Peter’s knife, that is, with the true and synodical confession of faith and with an abhorrence and utter condemnation of all heretics, that you may cleanse the chair of Peter from every error, if any, as they say, has been introduced, and if not, so that its purity may be recognized by all⁴¹

In his first sermon Columbanus elucidates his own belief in the Trinity, maintaining that he has never been a schismatic or a heretic. This sermon, preached to his monks on the continent, may be viewed as an avowal of his own faith, in a situation of unbelief and the virulent Arian controversy raging in Gaul and Lombardy, or could it be, whatever his protestations to the contrary, that he was accused of being a schismatic by the bishops of Gaul for his readiness to celebrate Easter on *luna xiv* if it fell on a Sunday, and was therefore regarded by them as a ‘Judaizer?’

4.3 Accusation of heresy from Gildas to AD 716

What evidence is to be found to support this accusation of heresy in the Insular church? A considerable body of evidence witnesses to the charge, namely,

³⁹ F. E. Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church: Studies in Celtic History* 9, ed. Jane Stevenson, 2d (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1987),

⁴⁰ Columbanus is here referring to the “Three Chapters” controversy.

⁴¹ Walker, *SCO*, 45.

Gildas, *Eddius Stephanus*, Aldhelm, two popes, and Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury,⁴² all these writers refer to the Irish as heretics and schismatics. The dealings of Augustine and Laurence with the Insular church reveal deep divisions, and possibly schism. There is also some continental evidence from the Columban foundations at Luxeuil and Bobbio that may help to clarify the issues regarding the papal position. On the positive side Bede is careful to refrain from any suggestion that the Irish are Quartodeciman. Indeed even Wilfrid himself acknowledges at the Synod of Whitby that the Irish practice was to celebrate on Sunday. How true then are these assertions?

The account of *Eddius Stephanus*, in his *Life of Wilfrid*, differs markedly from Bede's account. Wilfrid's biographer insists repeatedly, that the Irish are Quatrodeciman, and portrays the Synod of Whitby not as the end of the controversy, but as the beginning of a new phase, one which became at times even more serious and bitter than the previous stage. After the Synod of Whitby he says, the 'Quatrodeciman party' were able to persuade Oswiu to promote Chad to the episcopate. Clare Stancliffe is of the opinion that it was not the Quartodeciman party directly, but rather those who adhered to the Easter principles of the Roman church but were on friendly terms with the 'Quartodecimans' who persuaded

⁴² John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer, trans. *Medieval Hand-books of Penance: A translation of the principal libri poenitentiales and selection from related documents*. Records of Civilization Sources and Studies, XXIX (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 215. Paul William Finsterwalder, *Die Canones Theodori Cantuariensis und ihre Uberlieferungsformen* (Weimar: Hermann Bojlaus Nachfolger, Hof. Buchdruckerei, 1929), 247-249

Canones 133: "Si quis aepiscopus vel presbyter sanctam paschae diem ante equinoctium celebraverit deponatur." "Whatever bishop or presbyter celebrates Easter before the equinox will be deposed."

Oswiu to appoint Chad as bishop. Charles-Edwards helps to clarify the situation regarding the various parties present in the British church after the Synod of Whitby:

[...] there were those like Colmán who refused to abandon the traditional Columban Easter and left Northumbria; there were those of a Roman persuasion, like Wilfrid, who regarded such people as heretics and schismatics, and, between these two extremes, there was a middle party consisting of people like Eata, Chad, and Hild, who accepted the Roman Easter for themselves, but refused to regard those holding to the traditional Celtic Easter as heretics, and so refused to reject the Lindisfarne tradition.⁴³

It was the arrival in Canterbury of the new archbishop Theodore that ended the Irish influence.

To give an overall view of these accusations it is necessary to look at the historical facts and view the evidence for and against the accusation.

4.3.1 Gildas

Historically perhaps the first to refer to heresy in Britain is Gildas. In *The Ruin of Britain* (ca. AD 540) he describes the invasion of Britain by the Irish and Picts:

[...] like dark throngs of worms who wriggle out of narrow fissures in the rock when the sun is high and the weather grows warm. They were to some extent different in their customs, but they were perfect in their greed for bloodshed.⁴⁴

Gildas in describing the British church of the sixth century also describes the first onslaught of heresy in these isles.

⁴³ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 320-1, 336-7.

⁴⁴ Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and other works*, trans. Michael Winterbottom, ed. John Morris (Chichester: Phillimore, 1978), 19.1, 23.

The pleasant agreement between the head and limbs of Christ endured until the Arian treasons, like a savage snake, vomited its foreign poison upon us, and caused the fatal separation of brothers who had lived as one. And as though there were a set route across the ocean there came every kind of wild beast, brandishing in their horrid mouths the death-dealing venom of every heresy, and planting lethal bits in a country that always longed to hear of novelty – they never took firm hold of anything.⁴⁵

However in a commentary written by William of Malmesbury (AD 1172) on a translation into old English of the *Ruin of Britain* he says:

To the inhabitants of the Iland of Great Britainne. The author himselfe declareth some notorious causes of the ruine of well Civill as Ecclesiasticall discipline and the first was here for upon this fruitfull seede of the Gospell, came the Arians, and scattered the darnell of their detestable doctrine, yea (as he faith) all other damnable sectaries breathed out upon the Land, their venomous poison, and onely this, but also from the very bowels of Britaine was borne that accursed wretch Pellagius, and shortly after the death of Gildas were the Britaines overwhelmed with the darksome cloud of the Quartodecimani (who varied from the Church of God in celebrating the feast of Easter) these truely were the mothes that did eate the garment of the government of the realme.⁴⁶

William of Malmesbury, gives an account of the erroneous keeping of Easter:

[...] you shall read of how the Pictes and inhabitants of Scotland who sometimes broke downe the Northerne fortifications, and invaded the Land, did afterwards beate down the Bulwarke of hell, delivered the soules which sinne did withhold in bondage and made them the blessed captives of Christ, undoubtedly of rare holinesse and unspotted conversation, had they not beene a little blemished with an erroneous opinion about the celebration of Easter, which as venerable Bede signifieth continued the longer among them because inhabiting in a farre removed region of the world they had not heard of the Cannons of the Church which commanded the contrary. Moreover as our Saviour did feede them bodily, whom before he refreshed spiritually so did they of Scotland, not onely with the bread of life, releve their neighbours, but also received the Britaines when they were expelled out of their Country by the Saxons.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain*, 12.3, 20. Gilda's phrase 'agreement between the head and limbs of Christ' refers to the correct relation between Christ's humanity and divinity, attacked by the Arian heresy. See Herren and Brown, *Christ in Celtic Christianity*, 52.

⁴⁶ Gildas, *A Description of the State of Great Brittain: Written Eleven Hundred Yeares since. By that ancient and famous author Gildas, sir-named the wise, and for the excellency of the Work translating into English*, trans. Thomas Abingdon (London: John Hancock, 1652), C3. This text is written in old English spellings of words were left as in original, with the exception of the letter 's' which was changed to a modern font. See Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain*, 26-27.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, C3.

While this account was written in the twelfth century it refers to the writings of Gildas written about AD 540 and makes direct reference to the Irish as Quartodecimans.

4.3.2 The evidence from Papal letters

4.3.2.1 Pope Honorius and the Insular controversy

While Columbanus was expelled from Gaul, his monasteries continued to flourish there. The turning point in the controversy on the continent came at a synod held at Mâcon AD 626 or 627. This synod was held under the presidency of Treticus, bishop of Lyons in AD 626/7. Agrestius, a former monk of Luxeuil, who had become a bitter enemy of Columbanus, accused him and his successors of ‘heresy.’⁴⁸ The former monk attacked the severity of the *Rule of Columbanus*, the tonsure, and, almost certainly, his Easter practice.⁴⁹ He gained the support of a number of powerful powerful people including bishops and Warnacher, mayor of the Burgundian palace the most powerful man in Burgandy. Warnacher died just before the synod met, in this way Agrestius lost his principal supporter. Jonas

⁴⁸ Jonas, *Vita Columbani*, II, 1.12, 172-173.

⁴⁹ Ó Cróinín, *Chronology*, 36. Luxeuil almost immediately adopted the Victorian Easter, as we know from a calendar (itself a copy) that was carried there from Corbie sometime before AD 657. After Columbanus’ departure from Gaul, the monks at Luxeuil must have been almost exclusively Frankish and had no affiliation to the 84-year cycle. See Walker, *SCO*, “Letter 4,” 26-28. Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid and the Irish*, 7, sees Luxeuil’s change from the Insular calendar as a result of the controversy with Agrestius. See Clare Stancliffe, “Jonas’s Life of Columbanus and his Disciples,” *Studies in Irish Hagiography: Saints and Scholars*, eds., John Carey, Máire Herbert and Pádraig Ó Riain.. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001: 189-220, see also *Jonae vitae sanctorum Columbani. Scriptores rerum germanicarum in usum scholarum ex Monumentis Germaniae historicis separatim editit*. Vedastos. Johannis, Recognovit, Bruno Krusch. (Hannoverae: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1905)

portrays Agrestius in this incident as a Judas figure Eusastius submits Agrestius accusations to the tribunal of God's judgment in these words:

In the presence of these bishops, I, the disciple and successor of him whose teaching and Rule you condemn - I challenge you to the divine tribunal to dispute with him within the course of the present year, so that you may feel the sentence of the just judge, whose servant you seek to stain with your evil speaking.⁵⁰

Nevertheless the result was an episcopally brokered reconciliation not a victory for Eustasius, abbot of Luxeuil. Shortly afterwards Luxeuil changed its Easter practice, and then modified its Rule. These changes reveal the seriousness of Agrestius' charges. The repercussion of controversy probably reached Italy.

In AD 628 the local bishop, Bishop Probus of Tortona, exerted pressure on the abbot of the Columbanian foundation at Bobbio to conform to Roman practice. Bertulf, Abbot of Bobbio, appealed to the Lombard King Ariowald for help in his disagreement with the bishop. The king insisted that the issue had to be decided by the church, but he was prepared to make all the provision for an appeal to the pope.

Honorius I became Pope in AD 625 only thirteen days after Pope Boniface died.⁵¹ The year AD 626 was a year in which the Insular Easter occurred on

⁵⁰ Jonas *Vita Columbani* II, 2.10, 251.

⁵¹ Pope Honorius gained considerable influence over the government of Italy by his wise administration of the patrimony of Peter, and despite heavy expenditure on churches and other buildings amassed a considerable papal treasure. One of his principal achievements was the ending of the schism of the patriarchs of Aquileia-Grado which had been renewed by Fortunatus whom he deposed, probably with the help of the archbishop of Ravenna. Gratitude for this assistance may have influenced his attitude towards the emperor Heraclitus in the matter of the Monothelite heresy that has been among the chief historical arguments against Papal Infallibility. About AD 634 Sergius the Patriarch of Constantinople addressed a letter to the Pope interrogating him on the question of the 'one energy' *mia henergeia* of Christ. This formula, which while confessing the two natures, attributed only one mode of activity that of the Divine Word to the Incarnate Christ

Sunday *luna xiv*, 13 April in the Insular calendar. Bertulf abbot of Bobbio, accompanied by Jonas, travelled to Rome to seek papal support.⁵² He appealed to the pope, and consequently Bobbio gained papal privileges coming directly under papal jurisdiction, excluding all other ecclesiastical power.⁵³

Honorius questioned the abbot about Bobbio's practices and it was probably in this way that the pope gained direct knowledge of traditional Irish Easter practice.⁵⁴ Subsequently Honorius wrote to the northern Irish bishop accusing them of being Quartodecimanism, urging them to keep Easter with the rest of the world, and threatening excommunication if they did not agree.⁵⁵ Is there then a direct correlation between Bertulf's visit to Rome and the Papal letter to the Irish?

had been found useful in reconciling the Monophysites. The Pope had used the unfortunate term 'one will' in Christ, which was adopted by the Monophysites and was condemned by the Council of Constantinople AD 681. *PL* 80, 463-483. Beside the note in the *Liber Pontificalis* and Honorius' epitaph, there is information from his chroniclers, some of his letters, and even the earliest documents preserved in the *Liber Censuum* of the Church of Rome. English monarchs saw in Honorius a counter balance to the Irish penetration into England. His letter to King Edwin recorded in *PL*, Vol. 80 is also recorded in Bede, *EH*, 2.17, 135. Pope Honorius sent Birinius to occupy the see of Dorchester in Wessex and gave his support to the foundation of the bishopric of York, where the prelate had the rank of metropolitan. After the conversion of Edwin king of Northumbria the Roman monk Paulinus occupied the see. As later history shows it is not certain that York had in fact achieved the honour of metropolitan see, since the giving of the *pallium* did not in itself confer the status of metropolitan upon a bishop. Honorius had actually succeeded to the see of Canterbury, three years before he received the *pallium*. Bede, *EH*, 2.18, 137. The Pope did not diminish the responsibility of his namesake the elderly bishop of Canterbury, one of Gregory the Great's last disciples. See *Liber Censuum de L'eglise romaine* ed. P Faber and L. Duchesne, 1910, 350-1.

⁵² Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid and the Irish*, 7.

⁵³ Ian Wood, "Jonas, the Merovingians, and Pope Honorius," 118

⁵⁴ Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid, and the Irish*, 7. See also Wood, "Jonas, the Merovingians, and Pope Honorius," 119.

⁵⁵ Charles Plummer, ed., *Beda Venerabilis Opera Historica*, 2.19, 122. Bede, *EH*, 2.19, 138. English translation, Leo Sherley-Price, "Misit [...] Honorius litteras etiam genti Scottorum [...] solleter exhortans, ne paucitatem suam in extremis terrae finibus constitutam, sapientiore[m] antiques sive modernis, quae per orbem errant, Christi ecclesiis aestimarent; neque contra paschales computos et decreta synodalia[m] totius orbis pontificum aliud pascha celebrarent."

Honorius, letter was one of exhortation and advice.

Honorius sent letters to the Irish, exhorting them not to imagine that their little community situated at the extreme ends of the earth had a wisdom greater than that of all the churches ancient and modern and he urged them not to keep a different Easter contrary to paschal calculation, and the synodal decrees of all the bishops of the world.⁵⁶

Bobbio received its papal privilege in AD 628. In the charter granted to Bobbio it appears that the monks at Bobbio exchanged their fealty to the local bishop to fealty in a special way to the Pope. It is possibly at this point that they were asked to acknowledge the Pope's supremacy in the matter of the dating of Easter.⁵⁷ This is the first recorded evidence of papal disapproval of the Insular Easter reckoning, including the charge of heresy, carrying with it the penalty of excommunication for lay people, and the deposition of clerics. Whether the charge originated in Gaul or in Rome we cannot be sure, although Clare Stancliffe believes Gaul to be the more likely.⁵⁸ Bobbio was to pay a price for its papal privilege; it was to champion the cause of orthodoxy against the Lombard Arians.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Bede, *EH*, 2.19, 138-19. Ó Croínín, *Chronology*, 99. C. W. Jones, ed., *Beda, De Temporum Ratione*, *CCSL*, 123B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977), 525: "Eo tempore exortum apud Scottos in observatione paschae errorem quartadecimanorum Honorius papa per epistolam redarguit," (i.e. *Chronica Maiora*) 4591. "Pope Honorius refuted by letter, the Quartodeciman error of the Irish observation of Easter, springing up at that time."

⁵⁷ J. P. Migne, ed., "*Privilegium Bobiensi Coenobio Datum*," *PL*, 80, 463-483.

⁵⁸ Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid and the Irish*, 8.

⁵⁹ Thomas Charles-Edwards, *After Rome: Short Oxford History of the British Isles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 134. Bobbio had been charged, by the same Pope Honorius less than a decade beforehand, with the task of preaching orthodox Catholic Christianity within a Lombard kingdom that was partly Arian, partly schismatic.

Honorius was a pope who was embattled on all sides. He must have regarded the matter of the ‘correct’ date of Easter as extremely serious, given the other issues with which the Pope found himself embroiled.

4.3.2.2 Papal letter of AD 640

There were many Columban foundations all obeying Iona, belonging to the *paruchia*⁶⁰ of Iona, these foundations played a significant part in the Easter controversy refusing to conform to the Roman Easter until the time of Bishop Egbert (AD 716). Ségéne, abbot of Iona from AD 632 to 652 and the recipient of Cumman’s letter,⁶¹ was also among the named recipients of a letter from the pope elect John denouncing the Irish as being both Pelagianism and Quartodecimanism:

Most dear and holy Tomméne, Colmán, Cronán, Dimma Dubh and Baetán, bishops, Cormaic, Ernan of Tory, Laissen Mac Nesca, Sillán, Ségéne, priests and to Sárán Ua Crítáin and certain other doctors or Irish abbots.⁶²

⁶⁰ *Paruchia* is not to be understood in the modern sense of parish. In discussions of the Irish Church, however the word *paruchia* has acquired the special sense of a group of daughter-monasteries controlled by the abbot of the mother-house. See Kathleen Hughes’ definition in *The Church in Early Irish Society*, 63.

⁶¹ Ségéne the fifth abbot of Iona. The effective conversion of the English kingdom from the borders of Loathian to the Thames was accomplished by a mission sent by Ségéne abbot of Iona and his senior monks. Charles-Edwards, *After Rome*, 132, describes it as follows: Ségéne advised by his senior monks sent Aidan, who established his see on the island of Lindisfarne. Aidan was bishop for sixteen years (AD 635-651), his episcopate was followed by Fínán (AD 651-660) and Colmán (AD 661-664). Together they constituted what Bede called ‘Irish episcopate’ in Northumbria. Bede, *EH*, 3.26, 193.

⁶² Maurice Sheehy, ed., *Medieval Papal Chancery Documents*, 640-1261, Vol. 1. Dilectissimis et sanctissimis Tomiano, Columbano, Cromano, Dimao et Baithano episcopis Cromano Ernianoque, Laistrano, Scellano et Segeno presbyteris, Sarano ceterisque doctoribus seu abbatibus, Scottis. For a full discussion of the possibilities of the recipients of this letter refer to the footnote reference in Sheehy. It should be noted that with the possible exception of Cormaic, abbot of Clonmacnoise, most of those mentioned are from the northern counties. See Kenney, *Sources of Irish Ecclesiastical History*, No. 58, 221-223. Charles W. Jones, ed., *Bedaes BDT*, 110, Ó Cróinín, *Chronology*, 103.

Kenneth Harrison says of this letter, that it was addressed to a group of Irish abbots, bishops and priests mostly northern, and headed by Armagh. It dates from between August (when Severinus died) and December 640 at which time the pope elect became Pope John IV. Bede, in his introductory remarks, to the letter says:

With great authority and learning the pope clearly showed that Easter Sunday should be found between *luna xv* and *luna xxi*. In the letter itself the Irish were accused of celebrating on *luna xiv* ‘with the Hebrews’.⁶³

Yet they were not Quartodecimans, but the odour of heresy still clung to *luna xiv*.⁶⁴ Harrison while acknowledging the authority behind this accusation takes issue with Bede’s assessment of John IV as being a ‘man of great learning.’ Rather he sees his pronouncement “as shallow and ignorant.”⁶⁵

As already discussed, Dáibhí Ó Cróinín discovered a part of this letter, which Bede had omitted, included in the *Munich Computus*. Ó Cróinín attaches great importance to the mention of *Johannes consiliarius*. He says “this is none other than the man who in the year AD 640 addressed a joint letter to the leading ecclesiastics of the northern Irish churches, urging them to adopt the Roman method of calculating the date of Easter.”⁶⁶ The statement that “*dies xiiii lunae ad umbras pertinebat*,”⁶⁷ “*luna xiiii* belonged to the ‘shadows’” is undoubtedly a

⁶³ Bede, 2.19, 139.

⁶⁴ Kenneth Harrison, “A letter from Rome to the Irish Clergy, AD 640,” *Peritia*, Vol. 3 (1984), 227. See Ó Cróinín, *Chronology*, 89, n. 14. The charge of Quartodecimanism comes first.

⁶⁵ Bede, *EH*, 5.19,

⁶⁶ Ó Cróinín, “A seventh-century Irish computus from the circle of Cummiánus,” *Chronology*, 103.

⁶⁷ Immo Wartnjes, *Munich Computus*, “the fourteenth moon belongs to the shadows.”

reference to Quartodecimanism. This letter also accuses the Irish of *nouam ex ueteri heresim renouare conantes*.⁶⁸ Taken together these two references point to the Insular practice of keeping Easter on the fourteenth moon, and a charge of Quartodecimanism. Bede is relatively reticent on the papal letters received by the Irish, omitting any mention of the Insular church being heretical. Bede tactfully omitted that accusation, representing them simply as mistaken.⁶⁹

Turning again to the table the Insular Easter date, for those who continued to follow the 84-year cycle, in AD 639 was 18 April, *luna xiv*, could there be a connection between the celebration of the Insular Easter on this date and the letter of John IV? This does imply that the Roman authorities were aware of the Insular calendar and the actual moon according to that calendar, as for that year AD 639 in the Vicorian calendar was thirteen year of the tenth cycle. Easter was 28 March, *luna xviii* and the date of Easter and the epact were the same according to the Dionysian calendar. Obviously in AD 628, Luxeuil was still following the Insular calendar or Agrestius would not have attacked them. However, this theory only holds if it is presumed that the Insular 84-year calendar was available in Rome.

4.3.3 Events which changed the perception of Insular church in 660s

In the 660s three events occurred which was to lead to a further polarisation between the Roman church and the *Hibernenses*

⁶⁸ “reviving a new heresy from an old”. The phrase *noua ex ueteri heresies* was a favourite barb of Jerome against Pelagius,

⁶⁹ A. T. Thacker, “Bede and the Irish,” *Beda Venerabilis: Historian, Monk and Northumbrian*, eds., L. A. J. R. Houwen, A. A. MacDonald (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1996), 31-59.

- The Synod of Whitby at which the Northumbrian King decided to accept the Roman Easter.
- The appointment of the Romanising Wilfrid as Northumbrian bishop,
- The arrival of the papally appointed Theodore as archbishop of the island of Britain in AD 669.

The result was to try to enforce the view that the British and Irish who adhered to their traditional Easter and tonsure were heretics. A seventh-century Irish canon condemns the Britons for this separation from the rest of the Western Church.

4.3.4 Wilfrid and the *Hibernensis*

Aidan's Easter practices were tolerated in his lifetime, but after his death a more serious controversy broke out under bishop Finán (d. AD 661). The arrival in Northumbria of Ronan, an Irishman who learned the 'correct' method of calculating Easter on the continent, fuelled the controversy because of his argumentative stance. His refusal to accept the Insular reckoning brought an awareness of the discrepancies between the Roman cycle and the Insular cycle to the forefront. Finally in the time of bishop Colmán a more serious controversy arose, which was so serious that many feared that "they had received the name of Christian in vain."⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Bede, *EH*, 3.25, 187.

Bede's statement about the first visit to Rome of Wilfrid is revealing. This visit occurred about AD 654. In Rome, Wilfrid meets and is befriended by archdeacon Boniface from whom he learnt the 'correct' computation of the Easter date – not just the tables of Dionysius but also the method behind them, and possibly the statement in his preface about “the excommunication of those who keep Easter with the Jews.” Dionysius also included in this preface the warning that clergy who did not co-operate with the excommunication of Quartodecimans would themselves be deposed. *Eddius Stephanus* says:

This was Boniface the archdeacon, one of the wisest of the counsellors, from whom he learned the four Gospels of Christ perfectly and the Easter rule of which the British and Irish schismatics were ignorant, and many other rules of ecclesiastical discipline.⁷¹

When Wilfrid returned to England after receiving the tonsure in Gaul, he formed two friendships, which greatly affected future events. He became a protégé of Agilbert, the Frankish bishop of the West Saxons, and Alhfrith son of King Oswiu.⁷² On his return to England, Wilfrid was ordained priest, by Agilbert, and his champion Alhfrith gave him the monastery of Ripon. It was at this point that Wilfrid became involved in the controversy about Easter. Ripon was a

⁷¹ Eddius Stephanus, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, 13. Bede's own abbot Coelfrid had been a member of Wilfrid's monastery at Ripon, consequently he was well placed to obtain information concerning Wilfrid and his actions. Kenneth Harrison comments on this period of Wilfrid's life, that the table he learned in Rome was the Dionysius one. It cannot have been Victorian or Bede, who had already dismissed the Victorian Tables in *De Temporum Ratione*, would not have passed it by without comment. See Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*. In AD 640 the Pope was backing the Dionysian table. These tables may have been adopted at the Synod of Whitby in Northumbria AD 664.

⁷² Bede, *EH*, 3.25, 186. At that time there was controversy in the royal household, concerning Easter. Oswiu's wife Eanfled, observed the Roman Easter, while Oswiu and his father Oswald, who had been educated in Ireland during the days of their exile, followed the Insular Easter.

daughter house of Lindisfarne, its abbot was Eata one of Aidan's chosen pupils, and included among its members Cuthbert, later to be bishop of Lindisfarne. Eata and his monks were given the choice of changing their Easter practice and tonsure or leaving the monastery. Wilfrid was given Ripon, Eata and his monks were expelled.

This action challenged the validity of the Christianity in which King Oswiu had been educated, and which all Northumbria had accepted. Wilfrid's ecclesiastical challenge received the political backing of Alhfrith. Oswiu tried to resolve the controversy by calling, what was in effect a royal council, the Synod at Whitby.⁷³ *Eddius Stephanus* recounts the calling of the synod:

On a certain occasion in the days of Colmán, Bishop of York and Metropolitan, while Oswiu and Alhfrith his son were reigning, the abbots and priests and men of all ranks in the orders of the Church gathered together in a monastery called Whitby, in the presence of holy mother and most pious Hild, as well as of the kings and two bishops, namely Colmán and Agilbert, to consider the question of the proper date for the keeping of Easter.⁷⁴

Bede records how each side in the controversy argued its case. Colmán claims the traditions of his 'fathers in faith' especially Columba, the authority of the apostle John and the *Paschal Canons of Anatolius*. Wilfrid seizes on these references and turns each of them against Colmán, stressing that his, Wilfrid's, tradition came from no other than the prince of the apostles Peter. When the king is asked to decide he reluctantly agrees with Wilfrid to follow the customs of Peter and Paul, rather than the customs of his Irish teachers.

⁷³ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 318-19.

⁷⁴ Eddius Stephanus, *The Life of St Wilfrid*, X.22, trans. and ed., Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), 21, see Bede, *EH*, 3.25, 186-192.

After the Synod of Whitby the authority of Iona over Northumbria came to an end. Bede describes Colman leaving Britain accompanied by all the Irish he had collected at Lindisfarne and attended by about thirty English whom he had trained in the monastic life.⁷⁵ Wilfrid's biographer makes it clear that even after the Irish had left Northumbria, Wilfrid continued to oppose any Irish influence there:

Wilfrid's perception of how he could attack the tradition of Aidan and Columba in both script and building accords with everything we know about his policies once Theodore established him as bishop of York in 669. From his actions and the defence of them by his biographer Stephen we can see through contemporary, though admittedly hostile, eyes what the tradition of Columba and Aidan signified.⁷⁶

There were complex cross currents involved in the Easter controversy before AD 664. It was not simply a question of Roman or Irish, there were those who followed the Roman Easter in Britain and Ireland after AD 632, but there were also those in Britain and Ireland who followed the 84-year cycle before the Synod of Whitby, and some who still adhered to it after this synod. It was not simply a polarisation between 'Roman' and 'Insular' church. Professor Thomas Charles-Edwards points out the interlinking and undercurrents there were in this situation possibly even after the Synod of Whitby.⁷⁷

While he was on the continent before his ordination in the 650s Wilfrid seems to have imbibed the harsh continental intolerance for Quartodecimanism. Without the intervention of Wilfrid the Easter controversy might have quietly died

⁷⁵ Bede, *EH*, 4.4, 211.

⁷⁶ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 325.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*,

away, but Wilfrid's opposition to the remnants of Irish influence resulted in a hardening of attitudes on both sides. His approach to the Irish is remarkable. For Bede the Irish were "exemplary monks, evangelist and pastors, for Wilfridians the Irish achievements were something to be deliberately destroyed."⁷⁸ Clare Stancliffe takes the view that if Wilfrid and his supporters thought that all the Britons and Irish who continued to ignore the Roman way of calculating Easter were Quartodecimans this would indeed explain his hostility to them and the use of language such as 'poisonous weeds' planted by the Irish in Northumbria.⁷⁹

The taint of Quartodecimanism spread out not only to those who kept the Insular Easter and wore the Insular tonsure, but to all those who had fellowship with them. The *Life of St Wilfrid* presents a striking contrast to Bede's regarding Irish practice, his speech at the synod of Austerfield (ca. AD 703) in defence of his own work says:

Was I not the first, after the death of the first elders who were sent by St Gregory, to root out the poisonous weeds planted by the Irish? Did I not change and convert the whole Northumbrian race to the true Easter and to the tonsure in the form of a crown in accordance with the practice of the Apostolic See, though their tonsure had been previously at the back of the head, from the top of the head downwards?⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Clare Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid, and the Irish*, 2.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸⁰ Eddius Stephanus, *The Life of St Wilfrid*, 99. Also Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History* (Princeton: 1988), 307-28. This phrase is similar to one used by Wilfrid in his attack on the Irish, but there are other instances of its use. Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain*, uses it in his reference to the Arians. The Council of Ephesus AD 431 condemned the teaching of Nestorius who denied that Christ was truly divine. The discussion at his condemnation includes the phrase "in addition, those who have been condemned are not to be permitted to govern monasteries, lest tares be sown and increase." Italics mine.

The attitude of Wilfrid and his supporters towards the Irish is complex. Wilfrid was not opposed to Irish per se, he seems to have had quite friendly relations with the Irish who observed the Roman Easter, it was the Irish who held to their Insular observance that came in for his scorn and abuse. According to his biographer Wilfrid when it came to his consecration as bishop he refused to be consecrated by those who were out of communion with the See of Rome and went to Gaul for his consecration. In Clare Stancliffe's view his understanding of the Insular church as being out of communion with Rome explain his rejection of the Columban Irish mission, and all it had brought to Northumbria, while at the same time explaining his friendly relations with other Irish groups.⁸¹

Describing the election of Wilfrid as bishop (AD 664) Eddius Stephanus is fulsome in the praise of his champion, portraying him as a deeply religious man, dedicated to the reading of scripture, and is careful to point out that he had studied the canons of the Church, on the other hand he portrays the Britons, the Scots (Irish) as Quartodecimans:

Now there are here in Britain many bishops whom it is not for me to criticize, but I know for a fact that they are Quartodecimans like the Britons and Scots; by them were ordained men whom the Apostolic See does not receive into communion, nor does she even receive those who have fellowship with the schismatics.⁸²

⁸¹ Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid and the Irish*, 3.

⁸² Eddius Stephanus, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, 24-25, English translation Betram Colgrave. "Sunt enim hic in Britannia multi Episcopi quorum nullum meum est accusare, quamvis veraciter sciam, quod aut quartadecimani sunt ut Brittones, ut Scoti, ab illis sunt ordinati quos nec Apostolica sedes in communionem recipit, neque eos qui scismatics consentiunt. Et ideo in multa humilitate a vobis posco ut me mittatis cum vestro praesidio trans mare ad Galliarum regionem, ubi Catholici Episcopi muti habentur, ut sine controversia Apostolicae sedis licet indignus, gradum Episcopalem merear accipere."

According to his biographer no less than twelve bishops, adhering strictly to the command of the Council of Nicea, that all the bishops of the province should consecrate a bishop, consecrated Wilfrid. Since twelve is the apostolic number, this claim gives him a perfect pedigree, one in complete harmony with the Apostolic See, portraying him as a devote follower of everything Roman. Wilfrid remained in Gaul for some time and the king, Oswiu, was persuaded to have another bishop consecrated to his see; this was Bishop Chad.

Wilfrid defended his forty-year episcopate before the council of Austerfield (ca. AD 703). The terms he used may belong to his biographer rather than to him, but in one form or another he called history to the support of his cause. To oppose him was, he suggested, an act of infidelity toward all the wholesome and Catholic improvement he had brought to the Northumbrian Church. If this was his way of thinking, maybe in the earlier opposition to his position on Easter, he felt personally slighted, and he retaliated by branding the Irish as heretics and schismatics.⁸³

Was I not the first, after the death of the first elders who were sent by St Gregory, to root out the poisonous weeds planted by the Scots? Did I not change and convert the whole Northumbrian race to the true Easter and to the tonsure in the form of a crown, in accordance with the practice of the Apostolic See, though their tonsure had been previously at the back of the head, from the top of the head downwards? And did I not instruct them in accordance with the rite of the primitive Church to make use of a double choir singing in harmony, with reciprocal responsions and antiphons?

Iona through its *paruchia* was influential in many areas, especially the north of Ireland and Northumbria. From the time of Aidan (d. 651) Iona was responsible

⁸³ Walter Goffart, "Bede and the Ghost of Bishop Wilfrid," 264.

for providing bishops for Northumbria and in this role wielded considerable power and influence. Professor Charles-Edwards makes an interesting suggestion he claims that Wilfrid after the Synod of Whitby and his consecration as bishop wished to establish York as the new orthodox Iona with authority over the Northumbria Church, the Picts, and its dependant churches in the northern half of Ireland.

Once Wilfrid had linked his metropolitan claims to his well-attested championship of orthodoxy against those he believed to be Quartodeciman heretics, his extension of his authority far beyond the limits of one people might be justified – not just over Picts and Britons but also over the northern Irish.⁸⁴

After Wilfrid's death among the verses of an epitaph placed there are the following lines:

[...] Easter's mistimed observance he set right
In due conformity with canon law
Fixed by the Fathers and to all folk
Banishing doubt made manifest the truth⁸⁵

4.3.5 Theodore of Canterbury

In AD 665 Oswiu, King of the Northumbrians educated by the Irish, but fully aware that the Roman Church was the Catholic and Apostolic, chose a priest to be sent to Rome to be consecrated bishop, by name Wighard, he died before he could be consecrated. The pope, Vitalian, sent a letter to the King praising him for his religious practices and exhorting him to “to observe the holy precepts of the

⁸⁴ Ibid., 433.

⁸⁵ Kenneth Harrison, “Christian Era in Britain,” *The Framework of Anglo-Saxon History to AD 900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 57. The full text of this poem is given Bede, *EH*, 5.19, 306.

*Paschalis qui etiam sollemnia tempora cursus
Catholici ad iustum correxit dogma canonis,
Quem statuere patres, dubioque errore remoto
Certa qua genti ostendit moderanima ritus :*

Prince of the Apostles, both in keeping Easter, and in everything transmitted to us by the holy Apostles Peter and Paul.”⁸⁶ The pope gives reasons for the delay in appointing another bishop:

In view of the lengthy journey involved, we have not yet been able to discover a man wholly suitable to be your bishop, as you request in your letters. But as soon as such a man can be found, we will give him instructions and send him to your country, so that under God’s guidance, through his own witness and the teachings of God, *he may uproot the tares sown by the Enemy throughout your island.*⁸⁷

The reluctance of the Pope to appoint a bishop from among the native clergy would appear to verify that some taint is attached to them. The delay in the appointment of the new bishop took place at the same time as Wilfrid’s consecration as bishop in Gaul, AD 665. Did Wilfrid who was so fiercely Roman in his outlook, and so opposed to the *Hibernensis*, have any part to play in informing the Pope that the Irish were schismatics and heretics?⁸⁸

For Wilfrid and his followers, what mattered above all else was adherence to the Roman dating of Easter and Roman tonsure. In other words, they did not have an attitude towards ‘the Irish’ as such, but rather an open or friendly attitude towards those of the Irish (and English) who had already embraced Roman practices, and a dismissive or hostile attitude towards the Irish (and English) churches which refused to do so.⁸⁹

Theodore, a native of Tarsus in Cilicia, was consecrated bishop by the Pope in AD 668 on condition that Bishop Honorius accompanied him to England. Honorius was to ensure that Theodore did not introduce into England any Greek

⁸⁶ Bede, *EH*, 3.29, 199.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 199, Italics mine.

⁸⁸ Warren, *The Ritual and Liturgy of the Celtic Church*, 42. Warren certainly sees this reference to “tares sown by the Enemy throughout your island,” as a reference to the clergy of the ‘Celtic Church.’

⁸⁹ Stancliffe, *Bede Wilfrid and the Irish*, 3. See also Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 320-1.

customs that “conflicted with the teachings of the true Faith.”⁹⁰ There is some evidence to suggest that Theodore was the monk present at the Council of Constantinople who strongly supported the two natures in Christ and opposed the Monothelite position.⁹¹

Theodore arrived in England on Sunday 27 May in the second year after his consecration and remained bishop for twenty-one years. Bede documents that “he taught the Christian way of life and the canonical method of keeping Easter, and was the first bishop that the entire Church of England obeyed.”⁹² However, bearing in mind Clare Stancliffe’s analysis of Bede’s work as trying at all times to portray unity, this statement can hardly be based on the real facts. In AD 668 four years after the Synod of Whitby many in the British church still followed the Insular Easter and consequently, at least on the Easter question and the tonsure, did not obey Archbishop Theodore. Theodore became a formidable opponent of the position to which Iona still clung regarding its Easter practice.

⁹⁰ Bede, *EH*, 4.1, 203.

⁹¹ The emperor wished to proclaim that Christ was truly human and truly divine, but that the core of his being, his will, was unique and utterly undivided. He had a ‘single will’ hence the term Monothelite. Pope Vitalian, through fear of the Emperor, changed his support for the two natures the stance of the Council of Constantinople. This stance had cost his predecessor, Pope Martin I (d. AD 655), his life and in AD 662 Maximus, a leading Greek theologian, was arrested and put to death. Vitalian was the pope who sent Theodore to England. He wished to remain on good terms with the emperor; Theodore was better off out of Rome. See Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 369.

⁹² Bede, *EH*, 4.2, 205.

4.3.5.1 Theodore and the Insular church

If one flouts the Council of Nicea and “keeps Easter with the Jews on the fourteenth of the moon, he shall be driven out of every church unless he does penance before his death.”⁹³

This canon is the premise on which Theodore based his dealings with the Insular church. The first indication of Theodore’s dissatisfaction with them came when King Oswiu was persuaded, by the ‘Quartodeciman party,’ to consecrate Chad to the bishopric of York. This took place while Wilfrid was still in Gaul.

After a lapse of time, when Saint Wilfrid the bishop did not arrive from across the sea, King Oswiu, moved by envy and at the instigation of the ancient foe, consented to allow another to forestall him in his see in an irregular manner; for he was instructed by those who adhered to the Quartodeciman party in opposition to the rule of the Apostolic See.⁹⁴

The consecrating bishops were Wini, the Saxon Bishop of Wessex, and two British bishops probably Cornish. Bede adds that “Wini was the only bishop in Britain who had been canonically consecrated,”⁹⁵ pointing out that the assisting British bishops kept the Insular Easter and by implication were not canonically consecrated. Whether this was because of their Easter practices or because the requisite number of at least three bishops had not consecrated them, is not entirely clear in Bede.

⁹³ Finsterwalder, *Die Canones Theodori*, 48, 257. English translation McNeill and Gamber, 3, 188. The numbering in McNeill and Gamber does not always agree with Finsterwalder. “Si quis contempserit Nicenae concilium et fecerit pascha cum Judeis XIII luna exterminabitur ab omni ecclesia nisi penitentiam egerit ante mortem.”

⁹⁴ Eddius Stephanus, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, 31.

⁹⁵ Bede, *EH*, 3.28, 197.

They went to Bishop Wine to consecrate Chad as bishop, which he did in the company of two British Bishops, who celebrated the Sunday of the Pasch contrary to canonical customs from the fourteenth up to the twentieth moon.⁹⁶

If Bede's account is placed side by side with that of Eddius Stephanus, Stephanus gives the impression that the former is the case; these bishops were not canonically consecrated because they were schismatics/heretics. Eddius Stephanus is not as circumspect as Bede and says quite plainly that the Quartodecimans ordained him.⁹⁷ This consecration took place ca. AD 665.

A number of Theodore's actions regarding the followers of the Insular Easter and tonsure point to his regarding them as outright heretics. In Louis Saltet's opinion by the end of the fifth century "It is said that the ordinations of all heretics was regarded as invalid."⁹⁸

Regarding reconciliation, the church of Constantinople divided heretics into two categories. The first comprised Arian, Macedonians, Novatians, Quartodecimans and Apollarians. Of all these they regarded only baptism as valid; their confirmation and their ordination were considered void: they must be repeated.⁹⁹

When Theodore informed Chad that his consecration was unlawful he offered to resign, but the archbishop seeing his humility completed his consecration

⁹⁶ Bede, *EH*, 3.28, 197. See Charles Plummer, ed., *Bedae Opera Historica*, 3.18, "Ab illo Vini est vir praefatus (Ceadda) consecratus antistes, adsumtis in societatem ordinationis duobus de Britonum gente Episcopis, qui Dominicum paschae diem secus morem canonicum in Quarta decima usque ad vicesimam lunam celebrant."

⁹⁷ Eddius Stephanus, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, 33.

⁹⁸ Louis Saltet, *Les Réordinations: Étude sur le Sacrement de l'Ordre* (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1907), 41, "C'est dire que les ordinations de tous les hérétiques étaient regardées comme nulles."

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 41. "Relativement à la réconciliation L'Église de Constantinople divisait les hérétiques en deux catégories. La première comprenait les ariens, les macédoniens, les novatians, les quartodécimans, et les apollinaristes. De tous ceux-là on admettait seulement le baptême comme valide; leur confirmation et leur ordination étaient considérées comme nulles: elles devaient être réitérées."

according to Catholic rite, this is in accordance with the canons of Theodore which state:

Those who are ordained by Irish or British bishops who are not in communion with the catholic church in the celebration of Easter or the tonsure, are for a second time to have a catholic bishop lay hands on them and they shall be confirmed by a collect.¹⁰⁰

Further, we have not the liberty to give them, when they request it, the chrism or the eucharist, unless they have previously confessed their willingness to be with us in the unity of the Church. And likewise a person from among these nations, or anyone, who doubts his own baptism, shall be baptised.¹⁰¹

These canons imply that ordination by British and Irish bishops was invalid. They required a fresh imposition of hands, its members were refused communion without first making a formal submission, and there was doubt about the validity of their baptism.

In the West it was not normal practice to re-ordain one whom heretics had ordained. In the East, however, there is a precise parallel to the practices enjoined in the Reordination Group rulings.¹⁰² A letter addressed to the Patriarch Martyrius of Antioch AD 471 lists Quartodecimans among heretics and indicates how they should be reconciled with the true Catholic church. They are to be signed on the

¹⁰⁰ Finsterwalder, *Die Canones Theodori*, Canones D 116, 249. English translation McNeil and Gamber, *Handbook of Medieval Penance*, IX.1, 206. "Qui ordinati sunt aut Scotorum aut Britonorum episcopis qui in pascha et in tonsura adunati ecclesie catholice non sunt iterum ab episcopo catholico manus impositione confirmentur et aliqua conlectione."

¹⁰¹ Finsterwalder, *Die Canones Theodori*, U, IX, 3, 324. English translation, McNeill and Gamber. IX.3, 207. "Licentiam quoque non habemus eis poscentibus crismam vel Eucharistiam dare, nisi ante confessi fuerint velle nobiscum esse in unitate ecclesiae. Et qui ex horum similiter gente vel quicumque de baptismo suo dubitaverit, baptizetur."

¹⁰² Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid and the Irish*, 14. In a little cluster of three canons, which she designates as the Reordination group, there is a requirement that some one ordained by heretics should be reordained; that some one baptized by a heretic who was heretical on the Trinity should be rebaptized; and that one who passed from the catholic church to heresy and later returned could be ordained only in special circumstances.

head, the noses, the ears and the breast with chrism, “be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.” The practice reflected here is similar to the procedure followed by Theodore in regard to Chad.

Arians, Macedonians, Novatians, Quartodecimans or Tetradites, Apollinarians – these we receive when they hand in statement and anathematise every heresy which is not of the same mind as the holy, catholic and apostolic church of God. They are first sealed or anointed with holy chrism on the forehead, eyes, nostrils, mouth and ears and breast and all senses. As we seal them we say; “Be sealed with the gift of the holy Sprit.¹⁰³

Evidence of how Theodore viewed the Irish legacy to the church of Northumbria is seen in the writings that stem if not directly from himself, from students at his school in Canterbury, the *Laws of Theodore*. Other indications of the invalidity of Insular practices are seen in the *Penitentials of Theodore*.

When Theodore travelled to Lindisfarne with Hadrian on his first visitation, he had occasion to consecrate the church. Theodore’s re-consecration of Aidan’s church points to some irregularity in its original consecration and some doubt about the validity of such consecrations by Insular bishops. Finán had built this church after the Irish fashion that is with timber and it was not so elaborate that it could have taken years to build. This church was finished eight years before

¹⁰³ Percival, ed., *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, *NPNFa*, II, Vol. XIV. Council of Nicaea I (AD 325) Canons, 8, 20, Canon 19, 40. First Council of Constantinople, (AD 381), 161-188. Council of Laodicea, AD 343-381, Canons, 7, 8, *NPNFa*, II, Vol. XIV, 128. Basil of Caesarea, Canon 1, *NPNFa*, II, Vol. VIII, 223. Finsterwalder, *Die Canones Theodori*, 5, 47, English translation mine. “Quod Arianos quidem et Macedonianos et Novatianos qui se puros et puriores dicunt, et Quartodecimanos sive Tetraditas et Apollinaristas recipimus libellos dantes, et omnem haeresim anthematizantes quae non sentit ut sancta nostra et catholica Ecclesia, cuius tu praeses et caput, beatissime sentit, et sinatos sive untos primum sancto chrismate, frontem et nares et aures et pectus et omnes sensus; et eos signantes dicimus; Signaculum doni Spiritus Sancti et postea ut probati laici, ordinantur illi qui inter eos prius sive presbyteri sive diaconi, sive subdiaconi sive cantors, sive lectores fuerant.”

Theodore's visit, who dedicated this church to Peter. Was it really necessary to consecrate Aidan's church again?

Bede describes the Insular mode of consecrating a church. Cedd having received a site for a monastery from King Ethelwald, begins to dedicate it to God by prayer and fasting, purifying the site from the taint of earlier crimes, making it acceptable to God before laying the foundations. He received permission from the king to remain there during the whole of the Lenten season praying and fasting. He explained that it was the custom of those who had trained him in the rule of regular discipline to dedicate the site of any monastery or church to God with prayer and fasting.¹⁰⁴ Thus prayer and fasting was the Insular method of consecration, such a consecration would be considered uncanonical by the Roman church. There are two issues here, firstly the manner of consecration, secondly the validity of the bishop's orders.

Similarly churches that have been consecrated by such bishops shall be confirmed with a collect and with the sprinkling of holy water.¹⁰⁵

In Theodore's view bishops ordained by those who kept the Insular Easter were invalidly ordained, and consequently none of their episcopal actions were valid. Secondly the consecration of the church itself was uncanonical.

¹⁰⁴ Bede, *EH*, 3.23, 181. Another notable point of difference is that churches in the Insular tradition were not named after any saint already dead, as was the custom becoming popular in other places, but were named after a living founder.

¹⁰⁵ Finstertwalder, *Die Canones Theodori*, IX.2, 324. "Similiter et ecclesiae quae ab ipsis episcopis ordinantur, aqua exorcizata aspergantur et aliqua collectione confirmentur."

4.3.5.2 ‘Theodore’s Laws’

During his lifetime Theodore devoted himself to teaching in the school at Canterbury, the various canons and disciplinary rulings are not his own writings but those of his students who collected them in written form. There are four main collection of these disciplinary rulings published in 1929 by Finsterwalder under the title *Canones Theodori Cantuariensis*. The general terms of ‘Laws of Theodore’ will be used when referring to the collection as a whole. Within this broad term there are four collections: headed (D) in Finsterwalder, *Capitula Dacheriana*, first published by D’Achéry, next (G) *Canones Gregorii*, attributed to Gregory the Great, some of these canons found their way into the *Canones Collectione Hibernensis*, which date from ca. AD 720 and are included in Bierler’s *Irish Penitentials* in the Irish canons the last canons to be included are those of Adomnán and Theodore, (Co) A version found in the British library, Cotton Vespasian D, XV, (U) a version edited by someone calling himself the *Discipulus Umbrensius*.

If one prays with such a person (as if he were a Catholic cleric,) he shall do penance for a week, if indeed he neglects this, he shall the first time do penance of forty days.¹⁰⁶

Catholic cleric refers here to those who hold the orthodox Roman Easter and wear the Roman tonsure. If this canon is compared with canon eleven of *The First Synod of St Patrick* from the *Collectione Canones Hibernensis* not only were

¹⁰⁶ Finsterwalder, *Canones Theodori*, G.48, 257. This is an additional part of the text quoting the Council of Nicea. “Si autem oraverit cum illo et nescit septimana peniteat. Si vero neglexerit XL dies peniteat in prima vice.”

the followers of the Insular Easter considered heretics but others who entered into communion with them were also branded as heretics:

If someone has excommunicated any cleric and others receives him, both are to perform the same penance.¹⁰⁷

If one give communion to a heretic or receives it from his hand, and does not know that the Catholic Church disapproves it when he afterward becomes aware, he shall do penance for an entire year. But if he knows and neglects the rule and afterwards does penance he shall do penance for ten years.¹⁰⁸

4.3.5.3 Theodore and Aidan

Bede makes plain “his affection for the Irish in general, and in particular for the Irish monks from Iona who had converted his native Northumbria.”¹⁰⁹

From Bede’s perspective Aidan was doctrinally sound, he makes no direct reference to the Irish being Quartodecimans. Bede records that even the bishops of the Roman party respected him, despite his Easter allegiance, “he was therefore rightly loved by all, even those who differed from his opinion on Easter.”¹¹⁰

However this was not always the case. It seems that attitudes hardened and while the Insular Easter was tolerated in the early seventh century, by the time of Wilfrid and Theodore this was no longer so:

But this in him I do approve, that in keeping his Easter he believed, worshipped, and taught exactly what we do, namely the redemption of the human race through the Passion, Resurrection and ascension into heaven of the Man Jesus Christ, the

¹⁰⁷ Bieler, “The First Synod of St Patrick, 11,” *The Irish Penitentials*, 57. “Quicumque clericus ab aliquo excommunicatus fuerit et aliaus eum suscipit, ambo coequali penitentia utantur.”

¹⁰⁸ Finsterwalder, *Die Canones Theodori*, G.50, 257. “Si quis dederit aut acceperit communionem de manu heretici et nescit quod catholicam ecclesiam contradicit et postea intellegit, annum integrum peniteat. Si autem scit et negligit et postea penitentiam egerit X annos peniteat.”

¹⁰⁹ Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid, and the Irish*, 1.

¹¹⁰ Bede, *EH*, 3:25, 186.

Mediator between God and man. He always kept Easter, not as some mistakenly suppose, on the fourteenth moon whatever the day was, as the Jews do, but on the Lord's Day falling between the fourteenth and twentieth days of the moon.¹¹¹

From this text it appears that there were some of Aidan's contemporaries who regarded his practice with suspicion, accusing him of being Quatrodeciman. Bede's own protestations show that at the time he was writing, AD 730 there were obviously those who believed that Aidan had been a true Quatrodeciman:

The Roman canon says: Beware of those who come from other provinces or churches without cause employing different customs and another religion like the Jews, or Britons who against all the customs, have cut themselves off from unity with the church.¹¹²

4.3.5.4 Importance of the Rulings

A number of issues arise during the life and death of Aidan. As long as most theologians believed that any sect 'outside' the catholic communion had no spiritual life, there was no great need to distinguish carefully between heresy and schism. While Bede exalted Aidan and commended him for his holy life and his orthodox faith Theodore of Canterbury considered him have been 'outside' the

¹¹¹ Bede, *EH*, 3.17, 170.

¹¹² Arthur West Haddan and William Stubbs, eds., *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents: Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 1 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1869), 126, from the St. Gall, MS 243, 54. Ex *Collectione Canonum Hibernensius*: XX: 6. The words of the canon are partly borrowed from words attributed, but with questionable accuracy, to Gildas. As a "*Romana Institutio*" It must date after Augustine of Canterbury, AD 600 and have been adopted by the Irish Church or by any part of it after AD 630. On the other hand, the collection of canons in which it occurs was known and in use among foreign Irish monks in the earlier half of the eighth century before AD 763. In AD 768 the British Church conformed or began to conform to the Roman Easter. On the Anglo-Saxon side we see a like condemnation of the British Church in *Theodore's Penitentials*, AD 668/690. This canon attributed to St Patrick, belongs to a set of canons plainly subsequent to the adoption by the Irish of the Roman tonsure, i.e., not earlier than the middle of the seventh century and probably contemporary with that given above in the text, see Ludwig Bieler, 'First Synod of Patrick,' *Irish Penitentials*, 59. The canon provides that "*Clericus qui de Britannis ad nos venit sine epistola etsi habiter in plebe, no icitum ministare*," "Clerics who come to us from Britain without Episcopal letters are not to be allowed to minister even if he lives in a community." See footnote Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, 126.

communion of the church because of his Easter practices and consequently like Aldhelm he viewed him as having no spiritual life.

If anyone orders a mass for a dead heretic and preserves his relics on account of his piety because he fasted much, and he does not know the difference between the Catholic faith and that of the Quartodecimans, and (if he) afterward understands and performs penance, he ought to burn the relics with fire, and he shall do penance for a year. If one knows, and is indifferent when he is moved to penance he shall do penance for ten years.¹¹³

There are a number of points in these Penitentials that are worth considering. The first concerns what happened to the remains of bishop Aidan. There was quite a controversy over where his body should be buried.

He died on 31 August.. His body was immediately conveyed thence to the island of Lindisfarne and buried in the cemetery of the brothers. Some time afterwards, when a larger church had been built there and dedicated in honour of the most blessed chief of the apostles, his bones were translated thither and buried on the right side of the altar, with the honour due to so great a bishop.¹¹⁴

So says Bede, but is it true? Or to ask the question in another way, what does it mean? Bede's aim seems at all times to preserve unity and charity. It appears that there was a controversy between Colmán directing that part of Aidan's relics should remain on Holy Island (Lindisfarne) and should be translated into the sanctuary of the new church, and the canons of Theodore which specifically state that not only should the remains of heretics not be venerated, they should be ground down, so that no trace of them remains, and Theodore had for a time regarded Aidan as just such a heretic.

¹¹³ Finsterwalder, *Canones Theodorii*, 53, 258. "Si quis autem pro morte heretici missam ordinavit et pro religione sua reliquias sibi tenuerit quia multum ieiunavit et differentiam catholicae fidei et XIV nescit et postea intelligit et penitentiam egerit reliquias igne concremit et annum peniteat. Si autem scit et neglegit penitentia commotus X annos peniteat."

¹¹⁴ Bede, *EH*, 3.17.

4.3.6 Aldhelm's letter to Geraint

It is not known when or where Aldhelm was born. His birth is estimated as AD 639 or 640. William of Malmesbury of whose monastery Aldhelm was abbot states that he was seventy when he died, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records his death in AD 709. Aldhelm studied at Canterbury under Hadrian on two separate occasions, his course of studies included jurisprudence, metrics, computus, and astronomy. His learning was extensive, rivalling if not surpassing, that of Bede. Writing to Geraint, king of Domnonia (Devon and Cornwall) in (ca. AD 705) Aldhelm refers to a synod of bishops at which he was present where “out of almost the entirety of Britain, an innumerable company of bishops of God came together.”¹¹⁵ Bede recounts:

For example Aldhelm when he was still a priest and abbot of the monastery known as Malmesbury, by order of a synod of his own people wrote a remarkable book against the British error of celebrating Easter at the wrong time, and of doing many other things to the detriment of the pure practices and the peace of the Church; by means of this book he led many of the Britons who were subject to the West Saxons to adopt the catholic celebration of the Easter of our Lord.¹¹⁶

Michael Herren points out a number of inaccuracies in Bede's account. Aldhelm wrote a letter not a book, the letter is addressed to Geraint, king of Domnonia (Devon and Cornwall) and he wrote by “order of a synod of his own people.” The council referred to by Aldhelm was clearly national not local. The council to which he alludes dealt with the problems of church unity and Easter reckoning. It appears from available evidence that no such council took place

¹¹⁵ Herren and Lapidge, ed., *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, 155.

¹¹⁶ Bede, *EH*, 5.18, 298-299.

within the limits usually assigned to Aldhelm's abbacy (AD 675-705). On the other hand, the Council of Hertford, convened by Theodore in September AD 672, dealt precisely with the issues put forward by Aldhelm in his letter to Geraint. The first canon of this synod dealt with the question of Easter:

That we all unite in observing the holy day of Easter on the Sunday after the fourteenth day of the moon of the first month.¹¹⁷

The synod closes with a statement, "dictated to Titillus our secretary":

That if any one contravene or disobey these decisions confirmed by our agreement and ratified by our signatures, according to canonical decrees, let him take notice that he incurs suspension from every priestly function and exclusion from our fellowship.¹¹⁸

The prologue of Aldhelm's letter reflects the wording of the text of the synod, "out of concern for the churches and the salvation of souls, the decrees of the canons and the statutes of (Church) Fathers discussed by all and be maintained in common with Christ."¹¹⁹

For what profits the emoluments of good works, if they be performed *outside* the Catholic Church, even if someone should meticulously carry out the rules of practice of a rigid life according to monastic discipline or with fixed purpose decline the companionship of mortals and pass a life of contemplative retirement away in some squalid wilderness?¹²⁰

Aldhelm's attitude is harsh, leading a good and ascetic life is useless, if done 'outside' the communion of the Catholic Church indicating once again the emphasis on belonging, being in 'one house,' which reflects back to Cyrian's *On the Unity of the Church*. He continues his attack on Geraint's bishops regarding

¹¹⁷ Bede, *EH*, 4.5, 214.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹¹⁹ Herren, and Lapidge, eds., *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, 155.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 155.

the celebration of Easter: “ There is however another crueller, bane to our souls, that in the most holy celebration of Easter they do not follow the rule of the three hundred and eighteen Fathers who at the Council of Nicea ordained with prudent perception that a nineteen–year cycle be followed.”¹²¹

Furthermore these people follow the nineteen-year cycle of Anatolius or the rule of Sulpicius Severus – who described a course of 84-years – observe the paschal solemnity on the fourteenth moon along with the Jews, since neither follows the bishops of the Roman Church in their perfect method of computation, but they also declared that the paschal computus of Victorius, which observes a cycle of five-hundred-thirth-two years, should not be followed in future.¹²²

This is a core issue for Aldhelm: he reduces the Insular Easter to celebrating on “*luna* fourteen with the Jews.” No reference is made to such celebrations on *luna* fourteen being only occasional or that their Easter celebration was always Dominical. Aldelm has moved a long way from the lyrical writings of the Fathers on *luna xiv* and the symbolism of the full moon. *Luna* fourteen to him means only one thing and that is Quartodecimnism. His reference to ‘*Tessereskaidecaditae*’ being the Greek for ‘fourteeners’ is clearly associated with those who follow the 84-cycle:

[...] because they celebrate the feast of Easter on the fourteenth moon along with Jews, who blaspheme Christ and trample the pearls of the Gospel in the manner of swine and for that reason they are regarded as alien to the blessed society of the orthodox, (and are)unfortunately reckoned among the assemblies of the schismatics.¹²³

¹²¹ Herren and Lapige, eds., *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, 157. This is not in fact correct. Neither Nicea, nor any other council had advocated the use of any particular cycle, but Dionysius uses this sentence in the prologue of his Easter table.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 158.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 158. This contains a reference to Matt. 7.6, and a reference to Augustine’s writing *De Haeresibus*, XXIX,

Aldhelm's view is, "He who does not follow the teaching rule of St Peter boasts vainly and idly about his Catholic Faith."¹²⁴ This letter provides solid evidence that the Synod of Whitby did not resolve the Easter controversy. This controversy continued to rumble on, not only in Iona, but also in other parts of Britain. Aldhelm then attacks the tonsure of the priests in Geraint's land:

[...] there are in your province certain bishops and clerics who obstinately refuse the tonsure of St Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and persist in recalcitrantly defending themselves with the exculpating apology that they imitate the tonsure of their founders and predecessors, whom they argue with grandiloquent assertions to have been illuminated by divine grace.¹²⁵

While Aldhelm called the Insular priests schismatics, they in turn regarded him as being out of communion with them. Describing how Welsh bishops, refused to pray or eat with them, offered them no common courtesy, and no kiss of peace. They effectively excommunicated the Roman clergy requiring them to spend forty days in penance before they would receive them. The schism between British and especially Welsh and Saxon Churches continued up to AD 731.

¹²⁴ Herren, and Lapidge, *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, 160.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 157. Here Aldhelm enters into a long discussion on the tonsure and respective meaning Insular tonsure and Roman tonsure. Saying about the Roman tonsure: "This method of tonsuring and shaving is a sign that vices are trimmed back and that we are shorn of the hair of our flesh as though of crimes." The Britons were accustomed to shave the whole head in front of a line drawn from ear to ear, instead of using the coronal tonsure of the Romans. This is thought to have been, though there is no real evidence for it, the practice of the Druids; it was nicknamed *tonsura magorum* (tonsure of the magi). *Magus* was accepted as equivalent to *druid*, and to this day the magi of Matthew 2, are *druidhean* in the Scottish Gaelic Bible. The Roman party jeered at it as the *tonsura Simonis Magis*, in contra distinction to their "tonsure of St. Peter." Gregory of Tours provides evidence for the type of hairstyle worn by Saxons. He records that during the reign of King Childebert who reigned from AD 575-592 some Saxon settlers in Bayeux were ordered to cut their hair in the Breton way and dress in clothes like the Bretons. The Council of Toledo IV, AD 633 canon forty-one condemns a tonsure like the British. The Scottish and the British tonsure were no doubt identical, but differed both from the Roman and Greek. Bede records that Theodore before his ordination as priest "waited four months for his hair to grow so that he could receive the circular tonsure; for hitherto he had worn the tonsure of the holy apostolic Paul in conformity to the Eastern custom."

4.3.7 St Cuthbert

In AD 687. St Cuthbert, a convert to the Roman usage, in his the dying words says to his brethren, “with those who err from the unity of Catholic peace either by not celebrating Easter at the proper time, or by living perversely, have no communion.”¹²⁶

4.3.8 Evidence from *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*.

It is documented by Haddan and Stubbs that by AD 704 northern Ireland had accepted the Roman method of calculating the date of Easter.¹²⁷ Documentary evidence from the *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*, for the year AD 704, however records the following:

In this year the men of Ireland accepted a single regulation and rule from Adomnán, regarding the celebration of Easter on Sunday, the fourteenth of the moon of April and regarding the wearing of Peter’s tonsure by all the clergy of Ireland, for there had been great disturbance in Ireland until then, that is, many of the Irish clergy were celebrating Easter on Sunday, the fourteenth of the moon of April, and were wearing the tonsure of Peter the Apostle, following Patrick. Many others, however, were following Colm Cille, celebrating Easter on the fourteenth of the moon of April no matter on which day of the week the fourteenth happened to fall, and wearing the tonsure of Simon Magus.¹²⁸

This passage seems to suggest that the Insular Easter was truly Quartodeciman, but this is in direct contradiction of the evidence of the Padua *latercus* that shows that the Insular celebration of Easter was a Sunday one, and

¹²⁶ Bede, *Life of St Cuthbert*, xxxvii-xxxix

¹²⁷ Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, Vol. 1, 108, this reference is contained in a footnote.

¹²⁸ Joan Newlon Radner, ed. and trans. *Fragmentary Annals*, 116 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1978), 55-7. The annals also describe Adomnán acceptance of the Roman tonsure in that year. Adomnán’s Life of Columba is silent on the Easter question, except where Columba prophesies strife for Ireland. Adomnán of Iona, *Life of St. Columba*, 1.3, trans. Richard Sharpe (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1995), 1.3, 116.

not Quartodeciman. This passage does raise questions. To whom is the author referring as the men of Ireland? Since it is mentioned in the context of Adomnán is he referring to those belonging to the *paruchia* of Iona? This is the year given for the acceptance of the northern Irish bishops of Roman dating.

4.4 Secondary evidence

4.4.1 Augustine's Mission (AD 597)

Augustine, sent to England by Pope Gregory the Great, landed near Kent and began his mission there in AD 597. Augustine writes back to Gregory to seek his advice and guidance on a number of matters. In his reply Gregory displays prudence and wisdom. When questioned about local customs he replies: “take what is best from the various customs you find in the locality where you are ministering and combine them with the finest of your own practices.” Questioned regarding the number of bishops required to consecrate a new bishop, Gregory shows his practicality. Augustine while he remains the sole bishop in England, must be the sole consecrating bishop, but as soon as new bishops are consecrated this situation should be rectified. Gregory reiterates the fourth canon of the Council of Nicea. This canon prescribed ordination of a bishop by all the bishops of a province, or at least three in the case of emergency, accompanied by written approval of the absent bishops.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Percival, ed., “Council of Nicea I, Canon IV,” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. XIV, 11.

It would appear that the pope, while showing wisdom and tolerance on some matters, was insensitive to the native Catholic population in England. Such insensitivity may have resulted in an uncooperative stance by the native clergy towards Augustine. Clare Stancliffe describes it in this way:

As regards their refusal to join Augustine, the prior issue here is why Pope Gregory ignored the existence of the British church when he first sent Augustine and why he provocatively laid down that the British bishops should be treated as Augustine's inferiors not colleagues.¹³⁰

In AD 601 Augustine received the pallium and several new clergy, namely Mellitus, Justus, Paulinus and Rufinianus. In AD 603 Augustine urges the British bishops to cement Catholic unity, they refuse and hold fast to their 84-year cycle and “neither prayers nor discussion can sway them.”¹³¹ Some viewed this dissent as a refusal to accept the customs of the universal church. William of Malmesbury records:

They fell to open error, and then to disobedience of the Church in withstanding the authority of Saint Augustine the first Arch-bishop of Canterbury although within a while afterwards, it pleased God of his singular mercy to recall them backe into his Catholike fold againe.¹³²

This was the beginning of the formal schism between the British and the Saxon (and the Roman churches.)

¹³⁰ Clare Stancliffe, “Christianity amongst the Britons, Dalradian Irish and Picts,” *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (c.500–c.700), Vol. 1, ed. Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 446.

¹³¹ Bede, *EH*, 2.1, 105. Other areas of conflict between the Insular church and the Roman church are as follows: Peculiar ritual of Ordination; consecration of bishops by a single bishop; and a peculiar mode of consecrating churches and monasteries.

¹³² Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain*, 182.

4.4.2 Augustine's successor, Laurence

Laurence (d. AD 616) whom Augustine had consecrated bishop in his own lifetime succeeded him in the archbishopric. He set about his task “working tirelessly to perfect the edifice of the church whose foundations he had seen so tirelessly laid.”¹³³ He tried to extend his pastoral care not only to the original inhabitants of Britain, but also to Ireland. On learning that the Irish and the Britons were unorthodox in their Easter practices, he wrote “urging them to maintain unity and peace, and Catholic customs of the Christian Church established through the world.”¹³⁴ Laurence's letter arguably written in 670s is a forerunner of Aldhelm's (d. AD 709) letter to Geraint, king of Devon and Cornwall, and his bishops.¹³⁵

4.4.3 Cummian and the southern Irish

It was probably against the background of the letter of the Pope Honorius I, in AD 628, that the synod of Mag Lene was held. The accusation of heresy was never to be taken lightly since it immediately conjures up the idea of being ‘outside’ the church. The letter of Cummian to the Abbot Ségéne and a certain Beccán a hermit is at once a report of a synod held by the southern Irish churches to discuss the Paschal question, and a defence of that synod against the criticisms

¹³³ Bede, *EH*, 2.4, 109.

¹³⁴ Bede, *EH*, 2.4, 109.

¹³⁵ Herren and Lapidge, *Aldhelm: The Prose Work*, 140-143. Aldhelm wrote at the behest of a synod of bishops ‘out of almost the entirety of Britain’ to urge the bishops of Devon and Cornwall and their kings to enter into unity with the Catholic Church in the matters of a common Easter and common tonsure.

made by Ségéne and his followers. The letter uses rhetorical language and argues as one exegete to another.¹³⁶ Cummián rejects blind adherence of tradition “Our elders, however, whom you hold as a cloak for your rejection, kept simply and faithfully that which they knew to be best in their day, and prescribed for their posterity thus according to the Apostle (Thes. 5.21-22).”¹³⁷

This letter also provides an insight into the procedures followed by the early Irish church when faced with major doctrinal questions.¹³⁸ Cummián’s *modus operandus* is, firstly to search the scriptures, secondly to examine the decrees of church councils and synods on the subject of Easter. Many of these church councils reiterate the Council of Nicea, which states “anyone who celebrates Easter with the Jews is to be regarded as a heretic.” These statements must have caused him considerable turmoil, especial when taken in conjunction with the letter attached to the canons of the Council of Nicea, which reads as follows:

We further proclaim to you the good news of the agreement concerning the holy Easter, that this particular also has through your prayers been rightly settled; so that all our brethren in the East who formerly followed the custom of the Jews are henceforth to celebrate the said most sacred feast of Easter at the same time with the Romans and yourselves and all those who have observed Easter from the beginning.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Bede (AD 651-664) refers to Englishmen coming to Ireland to study exegesis.

¹³⁷ Cummián, *DCP*, LL

¹³⁸ Cummián *DCP*, 3.

¹³⁹ Percival ed., “A letter to all Bishops after the Council of Nicea,” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. XIV, 54., See also Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.6, *NPNFa*, II, Vol. II. Theodoret, “*Ecclesiastical History*, 1.9,” *NPNFa*, II, Vol. III.

Cummian's method follows that of a canon of Innocent I recorded in book nineteen of *Collectio canonum Hibernenses*:

Innocent said: regarding what to bind or loose, the authority is; the twenty two books of the Old Testament, the four gospels with all the writings of the Apostles, should these not be clear then have recourse to prophetic writings of what the Greek hagiographers said, if not in them [have recourse] to the histories of the catholic church and to the writings of catholic doctors, if not in these consider the canons of the apostolic see, if not in them, examine and inquire into the example of the saints. If after all this the matter is still not clear, seek out the elders of the province or congregation and courteously explore it with them.¹⁴⁰

In the first year of the cycle of 532 years (Victorian cycle), he describes himself as entering into, “the sanctuary of God (that is Sacred Scripture)”¹⁴¹ He explored the testimony of the book of Exodus “and the whole assembly of the sons of Israel shall sacrifice their lambs in the evening” (Ex 12.6-7). A passage from the book of Numbers,

[...] if anyone is clean and is not on a journey yet refrains from keeping the Passover, that person shall be cut off from his people, because he did not offer the Lord's offering at its *appointed time* (Num. 9.13.).

becomes for him an indication of the seriousness of not celebrating at ‘the appointed’ time.¹⁴² Continuing to examine Exodus he finds written “for seven days

¹⁴⁰ Ludwig Bieler, “*Canones Hibernenses*,” *The Irish Penitentials, Scriptores Latine Hiberniae*, Vol. 5 (Dublin: Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, 1963), “Innocentius dicit: De his ergo causis in quibus solvendi ligandique auctoritas est, XXII librorum veteris testamenti, quatuorque evangeliorum cum totis Apostolorum scriptis, si non appareat, ad divina recurrunt scripta, quae graece hagiographa dicuntur; si nec illis, ad catholicae ecclesiae historias catholicasque a doctoribus catholicis scriptas manum mitte; si nec in his, canones apostolicae sedis intueri; si ne in istis, sanctorum exempla perspicaciter explorata inspice. Quod si his omnibus inspectis huius questionis qualitas non lucide investigatur, seniores provinciae congrega et eos interroga:

¹⁴¹ Cummian, *DGP*, LL, 14-16, 59.

¹⁴² This passage from the book of Numbers, chapter nine provides for those, who because of ritual uncleanness or because they are on a journey, are allowed to celebrate Passover one month later. The provision must not be misconstrued, however, as exempting people from observance of the feast on the specified day for just any reason. It is in this sense that Cummian uses the text, there is ‘one’ time appointed by God and only one. Stressing the necessity of

you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day,” (Ex.13.6-7). This was a clear and unambiguous statement but one which disagreed with Irish practice.

Probing the Fathers he finds in the writings of Jerome “the people sacrifice the Pasch, and celebrate other festivities. Their whole solemnity is finished on the eighth day,”¹⁴³ the first day of unleavened bread is the fifteenth moon, and the eighth day is the twenty-first moon. This is a damning condemnation of the Insular lunar limits *xiv-xx* from such an authority as Jerome. Eusebius records that in the time of Pope Victor, synod and assemblies of bishops were held and they drew up an ecclesiastical decree: “that the mystery of the Resurrection of the Lord should be celebrated on no other day but Sunday and that we should observe the close of the paschal fast on that day only.”¹⁴⁴

The Irish, by allowing Easter to coincide with Passover in some years, were attempting to fulfil the command of the Mosaic law: “this month shall be to you the beginning of months, it shall be first in the months,” and at the same time to also fulfil the new command shown in the gospels to honour the resurrection of the Lord, who rose from the dead on Sunday. Cummián sees Paul’s use of “Christ our Passover has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5.7) as being the words of the Mosaic Law. “And it shall come to pass when your children say to you ‘What do you mean by this service?’ and you shall say ‘it is the sacrifice of the Lord’s Pasch” (Ex. 12.16-17).

harmony in the paschal celebration. Cummián actually refers to this passage as being from Leviticus, but this seems to be incorrect.

¹⁴³ Ambrosiaster, “*Questiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*,” *CSEL*, 50, 144.

¹⁴⁴ Eusebius, “*Church History*, 14.11,” *NPNF*, II, Vol. I, 243.

Christ, our Pascha, has been sacrificed. According to the Law, he [Paul] teaches that the newness of the Pascha consists in the reason for it. And Christ was killed for this reason; that a new preaching from him might establish a new mode of life, in which we who accept the reason for the Pascha would not follow the old way. And so Pascha is sacrifice, not passage as some think; for the Pascha comes first, and then the passage, because the foreshadowing of the Saviour's example comes first, and then the sign of salvation.¹⁴⁵

Were Christians to continue to celebrate these two important feasts according to the old law, namely the tenets and commands of the Mosaic Law, or had Christ by his death on the cross, brought that law to fulfilment? Were Christians still bound by the Mosaic Law, or had they moved beyond the old into the celebration of the new, “this is the new Covenant in my blood,” (1 Cor. 11.25)? On the surface this appears to be a fairly straightforward shift, but judging from the controversy it created the decision was a difficult one. The problem began when the Passion and Resurrection were no longer so clearly perceived as a single process, becoming more acute when New Testament accounts, were taken as the overriding criterion for liturgical practice, because these accounts are not consistent on points of chronology.¹⁴⁶ For the early Christians, many of them Jews, it meant a total break with their traditions.

Cummian disturbed by a text he has discovered, “excommunicating and expelling from the church those who come against the canonical statutes of the

¹⁴⁵ Ambrosiaster, “*Commentary on the Thirteen Epistles of Paul, on 1 Cor. 5.7*” CSEL, 81/2 ed. Henry Joseph Vogels (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1968), 56, cited in Raniero Cantalamessa, *Easter in the Early Church*, 98-99. Basically Ambrosiaster's stance and Cummian's following Ambrosiaster - Pasch gets its name from ‘passion.’ “First comes the immolation of the lamb, then the sign made with its blood that ensures salvation.” See Cummian, *DCP*, LL 50-51, 61.

¹⁴⁶ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 401.

four apostolic sees, when they agree on the unity of Easter.”¹⁴⁷ Cummián once again consults Jerome to support his arguments, and with sadness and regret concludes that if the choice is between the ancient traditions of his fathers, the Columban Easter, or the authority of the Church, the way forward is clear. To continue to follow the traditions of ‘his fathers,’ is to be excommunicated by the universal Church. “If I do not cry out I am excommunicated by the universal Catholic Church, to which the authority of binding and loosing was given by God.”¹⁴⁸ Examining the testimony of Cyprian he finds his treatise on *The Unity of the Church*, the strictest concerning the unity of the Church.¹⁴⁹ He develops the idea of ‘oneness’ of being ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ the church. This entire passage reflects the emphasis on ‘oneness’ that was the concern of early church Fathers. The image that catches his attention is that of ‘exclusion,’ and he is troubled lest his nonconformity with Roman practice would result in ‘exclusion’ from the church. “If anyone could have escaped outside of Noah’s Ark, then one who is outside of the Church might escape.”¹⁵⁰

Continuing his quest for the ‘truth’ Cummián refers to the synod of six hundred bishops at Arles who ‘first of all’ confirmed “concerning the observation of Easter, we should keep it on ‘one’ day and at ‘one’ time throughout the entire

¹⁴⁷ *Quid sentirent de excommunicatione nostra, a supradictis sedibus apostolicis facti.* col. 977. *PL*, Vol. 87, col. 972. “Whoever feels the excommunication made by the aforesaid apostolic see.”

¹⁴⁸ Cummián, *DCP*, LL, 150-153, 79.

¹⁴⁹ Cummián, *DCP*, LL 154-174, 79..

¹⁵⁰ Cummián, *DCP*, LL 158-159, 79. Ó Croínín comments in the footnote here that Cummián does not use Cyprian *verbatim*, but also expands his images with images of his own.

world,”¹⁵¹ so that the universal Church according to the Apostle, “might honour the one God with ‘one’ voice,”¹⁵² and citing Jerome he goes on “lest we eat the figurative ‘lamb’ outside of the ‘one’ house against the precept of the Law, ‘that is outside’ of the universal Church” from which it is manifest,” he says:

[...] that Jews and heretics and all conventicles (assemblies) of perverse doctrines who do not eat the Lamb in the ‘one’ Church do not eat the flesh of the Lamb, but that of the dragon that was given according to the Psalter, as food to the Egyptian people.¹⁵³

Earlier Irenaeus has written:

[...] the Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, keeps it carefully, as dwelling in *one* house; and she believe these doctrines as though she had *one* soul and *one* heart, and preaches and teaches them, and hands them down, as if she had *one* mouth.¹⁵⁴

This is reminiscent of Cyprian’s reference to ‘being in *one* house,’ the emphasis is on the ‘*one*.’ Canon thirteen of the *Second Synod of St Patrick* also reflects this emphasis on ‘one house.’ Cumman urges Ségéne, in the strongest possible terms, to change his practice pointing out that the practices which he is advocating are those observed throughout the whole world, except for “an insignificant group of Britons and Irish who are almost at the end of the earth, and, if I may say so, but pimples on the face of the earth.”¹⁵⁵ The responsibility of Abbot Ségéne is onerous, as leader of a community he has many souls under his

¹⁵¹ Cumman, *DGP*, LL 98, 99, 71.

¹⁵² Cumman, *DGP*, LL, 100, 101, 72.

¹⁵³ Cumman, *DGP*, LL, 106-109, 72.

¹⁵⁴ Irenaeus, “*Adversus Haereses*,” *Early Latin Theology: selections from Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose and Jerome*. The Library of Christian Classics, Vol. V, trans. Stanley L. Greenslade (London: SCM Press, 1956), 66.

¹⁵⁵ Cumman, *DGP*, LL 112,113, 75.

care. “For you are the heads and the eyes of the people, and if they are led into error because of our obstinacy you shall answer, according to Exechiel, for the blood of each soul to the strict Judge.”¹⁵⁶ For Ségéne this is a crucial moment. His failure to take the decrees of the universal Church seriously jeopardises not only his own eternal salvation but also the salvation of those under his care. While Cummian can forgive his elders, because they did have the benefit of his extensive research, he is less forgiving towards Ségéne, because he, Cummian, has pointed out to him the invalidity of the Insular Easter. “Lest it should happen that you should judge the unanimous rule of the Catholic Church to be a form of evil, which heaven forbid!”¹⁵⁷

Finally Cummian seeks the counsel of other churchmen, in accordance with Deuteronomy “I *asked my fathers to make* known to me, (Deut. 32.7) my *elders* (that is to say) the successors of our first fathers: the heads of the churches of Emily, Clonmacnois, Mungret, Clonfertmulloe and either Birr or Clonfert to *tell* me what they thought about our excommunication by the aforementioned Apostolic See.”¹⁵⁸ Cummian here obviously takes seriously the charge of Pope Honorius I. His study of scripture and of conciliar decrees leads him to accept the validity of the papal charge. Later on he makes a direct reference to keeping Easter “on the following Sunday and not keeping it on the fourteenth moon with

¹⁵⁶ Cummian, *DGP*, LL 115-116, 75.

¹⁵⁷ Cummian, *DGP*, LL, 122-123, 75.

¹⁵⁸ Cummian, *DGP*, LL 260-266, 91. These were major monasteries of Ireland three of which were in Munster and two others on its borders.

the Jews and heretics who are called Thesserascedecadite,” (in other words Quartodecimans.).¹⁵⁹

4.5 Conclusion of controversy

The date of Easter continued to cause controversy in places for many years. In AD 739 Pope Gregory III warns the Bavarians and the Germanic Bishops against British missionaries. *Gregorius Papa III ad Episcopos Bajoarae et Allamanniae* – (exhorts them to obey S. Boniface, and further that) “*gentilitatis ritum et doctrinam, vel venientium Britonum, vel falsorum sacerdotum et haereticorum, aut undecunque sint, renuentes ac prohibentes adjiciatis etc.*”¹⁶⁰ If Boniface suggested to the pope this prohibition of “Britoners” in his mouth this must have meant Welsh or Cornishmen rather than Bretons, the prohibition is more likely to be only a repetition of the “*Romana institutio* 2 alluded to in the canon quoted in the *Annals of Cambria* AD 755, 777.

On the other hand, evidence can be produced to disprove the charge of heresy and in support of the orthodoxy of the first Church of the British Isles. Hilary of Poitiers AD 358 congratulates the bishops of the provinces on ‘their having continued uncontaminated and uninjured by any contact with the detestable heresy.’ Warren cites a number of testimonies to the orthodoxy of the British church, including Athanasius (AD 363), John Chrysostom (AD 398), and

¹⁵⁹ Cummian, DCP, LL 182-187, 81.

¹⁶⁰ *Gregorii Papae III, Epistola I, Ad Episcopos Bajoariae Et Alamanniae, PL Vol. 89 Col. 0580D. Online database <http://library.nuim.ie>. Accessed, 10th August, 2007.*

Jerome (AD 400). Jerome asserts that Britain in common with Rome, Gaul, Africa, Persia, the East, and India, adores one Christ, observes one rule of faith.¹⁶¹ Venantius Fortunatus (AD 580) testified to British orthodoxy in the sixth century, yet this is only forty years after Gildas has written *The Ruin of Britain*.

While this freedom from charge of heresy may be true in the fourth, fifth and even sixth centuries, Warren's assessment may be somewhat flawed when he represents Wilfrid in AD 704 as asserting before a meeting of bishops in Rome "that the true Catholic faith was held by the Irish, Scottish and British, as well as by the Anglo-Saxon Church."¹⁶² To whom is Wilfrid here referring? Is it the Irish of the *Romani* party, rather than the *Hibernensis*, or it the whole of Ireland?¹⁶³ It also fits in with Wilfrid's own analysis of his life's work. He claimed that it was he and he alone that had brought the 'true' Catholic faith to all of Britain. Even a cursory reading of the *Life of Bishop Wilfrid* shows Wilfrid as deeply opposed to those who followed the Insular Easter accusing them of being heretics and schematics.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the charge of Quartodecimanism against the Insular church by several prominent church figures, not least among them Wilfrid of Ripon and Theodore of Canterbury. The observance of *luna* fourteen was the

¹⁶¹ Jerome, "Letter to Evangelus," *NPNFa*, II, Vol. VI, 289.

¹⁶² Eddius Stephanus, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, 99.

¹⁶³ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 432.

cause of this charge. Whether the charge arose out of ignorance or a deliberately twisting of the Insular Dominical practice is unclear, the charge was, however, taken seriously in some quarters. The action taken against the Insular church, in many cases, presented them as heretics and schismatics. Perceptions were what mattered, and there was a perception among their contemporaries that they were as charged Quartodecimans. The canons of several church councils condemned celebrating with the Jews. Columbanus' denial of being a 'Juadizer' was ignored. For those who wanted to see them as Quartodeciman, the evidence against them was considerable. The Insular church by its insistence on remaining loyal to the 'traditions of their fathers' and celebrating on *luna* fourteen, could be accused of contravening the laws of God and of the church.

The results for the Irish mission to Northumbria were devastating. Wilfrid tried to destroy all the Irish had achieved in this area during the thirty-years of the Irish episcopacy there. Theodore also proved to be a formidable opponent. This new phase of the controversy planted doubts about the validity of the ordination of Insular bishops, the validity of their baptism, and the orthodoxy of their faith. Even those like Aidan who in his lifetime had been regarded as a man of outstanding holiness and virtue, became for a while, suspect in the eyes of Theodore.

This chapter has raised many questions to which there may be few if any answers forthcoming at present. It has stressed that the Insular church was not Quartodeciman. There were also those who while observing the Roman Easter like Chad, Etta and Hild were on friendly relations with the *Hibernensis*. These too, were likely to feel the weight of episcopal excommunication, for consorting

with 'heretics.' Whether in fact these canons were actually put into practice is not recorded.

Had Wilfrid not become involved in the Easter controversy when he did it might have quietly died away, but opposition hardened attitudes resulting in a continuation of the quarrel for a almost one hundred year after the Synod of Whitby.

Conclusion

The thesis has explored the concept of time against the backdrop of the early church and the Insular Easter controversy. In a Christian, religious context, time begins with creation and reaches its fulfilment in Jesus Christ. Time organizes chronology (calendar) but the organization of the calendar speaks of deeply held beliefs and is more than a succession of chronological units. It is a way in which groups express identity and as such is an emotive issue when deeply held beliefs are threatened. Not only was it a faith issue, and an issue symbolic and expressive of a common unity, but calendars also involve issues of power and authority.

Reflection on time grew out of a profound sense of God's action in the world. For Christians time is the privileged moment in which the presence and power of Christ's saving mystery is experienced. Liturgical time is 'the time of Christ, which extends into the time of the church'. The liturgical year was central to the lives of people in the middle ages. Certain times were appointed by God as the 'correct' time to celebrate and the liturgical year was a vital weapon in achieving one's salvation. To keep time with the liturgy is to be in harmony with God and with each other. God in scripture, Exodus, Deuteronomy and Leviticus, had ordained the time to celebrate the Passover, the moon, the celestial reckoner was to be used to calculate the appointed time. Getting the arithmetic right was a matter of the basic law of creation and the divine plan. Cosmological happenings became a starting point for theological reflection.

All Easter tables that have ever been drafted had the objective of selecting a date whose solar lunar and weekday character matches as closely as possible those that prevailed at the time that Jesus died. In setting and developing Easter

tables harmony was to be achieved so that all Christians would together give God glory and praise at the Easter feast. Such harmony was hard won and even today had never been fully achieved. Controversy and confusion were present even in the early church. Controversies about the date of the equinox, should Easter be celebrated before or after the equinox. *Luna* fourteen, fifteen and sixteen were central to the issues especially in the Insular context They developed as ciphers for particular theological approaches to the date of Easter. On these lower lunar limits with their attendant biblical exegesis, could a particular set of Easter tables stand or fall. Issues concerning *luna* fourteen also became synonymous with controversy and heresy, this latter understanding spilled over into the Insular controversy.

Of central importance to the theological considerations of Easter is its celebration in spring at the equinox. Spring with its themes of creation, recreation, new birth and rebirth, provided homilistic material for many church fathers, alongside which they also developed as baptismal themes associated with Easter baptism. The full moon at the equinox with its theme of continuous day becomes a metaphor for the light of the Resurrection, which triumphed over sin and destroyed death forever. A central theme in the writing of Anatolius it becomes a central theme in Columbanus' writings. Easter as a feast of light can only be celebrated when there is harmony between the heavens and the feast, light must be seen to triumph over darkness. From Anatolius' exegesis of the text of Exodus comes the Insular lunar limits and its Paschal term. In his exegesis of this text, the feast of Unleavened Bread is the first day of the Passover, the lunar limits are *luna* fourteen to twenty, and the day begins and ends at sunset and *luna* fourteen is the earliest date for Easter Sunday.

At the heart of the controversy was a difference in the understanding of the scriptural texts and the theological principles upon which the Easter feast was founded. The writings of the early Fathers following the chronology of John's gospel accepted *luna* fourteen as the day of the Crucifixion. *Luna* fourteen as used in a Quartodeciman context provides the earliest sources for a theological understanding of Easter. The Fathers write about *Luna* fourteen with glowing eloquence. Its association with the full moon centred on the fullness of light is regarded as a representation of the perfection of Christian life. In some early calendars at least *luna* fourteen was always given as the lower limit for the lunar term. In the course of the first four centuries the term *Pascha* undergoes a change in meaning with a consequent change in the theology associated with it. Also visible at this period is a shift from the chronology of John's gospel to synoptic chronology, with a consequent shift from *luna* fourteen to *luna* fifteen as the day of the Crucifixion. These form the basis for a shift after the Council of Nicea to lunar limits of *xv* to *xxi*. From then on all the theology associated with *luna* fourteen now becomes transferred to *luna* fifteen. It was this shift that created problems for the Insular church.

The Insular church followed the tradition of the apostle John, and the *Paschal Canons of Anatolius* together with a Dominical practice. Whatever their contemporaries, in the wake of the Synod of Whitby, said of them it is clear that the Insular church was never Quartodeciman in the strict sense of the word, celebrating only on *luna* fourteen if that day fell on a Sunday. The Council of Whitby instead of bringing closure to the controversy only hardened attitudes on both sides. Personalities and personal animosities may have played a considerable part in branding the Insular church as Quartodeciman. Whether from jealousy of

the power of the *paruchia* of Iona and its influence in the church of Northumbria, or a sincere belief that they were as charged Quartodeciman, Wilfrid did all he could to obliterate every trace of Irish influence in Northumbria. Theodore of Canterbury, as seen reflected in his *Laws* and *Penitentials*, was a formidable opponent of the Insular church. These accusations together with those of Pope Honorius I and John IV were not without their consequences, raising doubts about the theological orthodoxy of the followers of the Insular Easter, doubts about the validity of their episcopal ordinations and the validity of their baptism.

Certainly while the time question is of importance and the techniques of the computus essential for accurate tables, yet it was the theological considerations especially the theological consideration of *luna* fourteen, outlawed by so many authorities on which the 84-year cycle of the Insular church was judged and found wanting.

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APPENDIX I

CONVERSION TABLE FOR DATES

Table 1

EGYPTIAN YEAR RELATIVE TO ROMAN CALENDAR DATES¹

Thot ...	29 August	Pharmuthi ...	27 March
Paophi ...	28 September	Pachon	26 April
Athyr ...	28 October	Panoi	26 May
Choiah ...	27 November	Epiphi	25 June
Tybi ...	27 December	Mesori	25 July
Phamenoth	25 February	Epagomena	24 August

¹ Chronicon Athanasianum, The Festal Letter, and their Index, Table C, The Egyptian Year, *NPNFa*, II, Vol. IV, 501. See also Ideler, Vol. 1, 161, 164. In a leap year the Diocletian year began on the previous 30 August, which was accordingly the First of Thot, owing to the additional 'equagemenon' which preceded it. According all the months to Phamenoth inclusive began a day late. For dealing with Alexandrian Easter tables, the dates of Easter is always with the months Pharenoth and Pharmuthi, the lunar limits of xv-xxi occur between the 22 March and 23 April. After the final settlement of Egypt by Augustus as a province of the Roman Empire, the use of the Julian form of computation was established in Alexandria, the firstday of the new Calendar being fixed to the 19th August, the first of Thot of the year in which the innovation took place; from which period, six instead of fix supplementary days were added at the end of every fourth year; so that the form of the Alexandrian year wsas follows. The months from Phamenoth 5 (Mar. 1) onwards are unaffected by a leap year. intercalary day coming in as 29February, Pharmuthi and the succeeding months began as show above

Table 2**ROMAN CALENDAR²**

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
1	kal	kal	kal	kal	kal	kal	kal	kal	kal	kal	kal	kal
2	4 Non	4 Non	6 Non	4 Non	6 Non	4 Non	6 Non	4 Non	4 Non	6 Non	4 Non	4 Non
3	3 Non	3 Non	5 Non	3 Non	5 Non	3 Non	5 Non	3 Non	3 Non	5 Non	3 Non	3 Non
4	2 Non	2 Non	4 Non	2 Non	4 Non	2 Non	4 Non	2 Non	2 Non	4 Non	2 Non	2 Non
5	Nonae	Nonae	3 Non	Nonae	3 Non	Nonae	3 Non	Nonae	Nonae	3 Non	Nonae	Nonae
6	8 Id	8 Id	2 Non	8 Id	2 Non	8 Id	2 Non	8 Id	8 Id	2 Non	8 Id	8 Id
7	7 Id	7 Id	Nonae	7 Id	Nonae	7 Id	Nonae	7 Id	7 Id	Nonae	7 Id	7 Id
8	6 Id	6 Id	8 Id	6 Id	8 Id	6 Id	8 Id	6 Id	6 Id	8 Id	6 Id	6 Id
9	5 Id	5 Id	7 Id	5 Id	7 Id	5 Id	7 Id	5 Id	5 Id	7 Id	5 Id	5 Id
10	4 Id	4 Id	6 id	4 Id	6 Id	4 Id	6 Id	4 Id	4 Id	6 Id	4 Id	4 Id
11	3 Id	3 Id	5 Id	3 Id	5 Id	3 Id	5 Id	3 Id	3 Id	5 Id	3 Id	3 Id
12	2 Id	2 Id	4 Id	2 Id	4 Id	2 Id	4 Id	2 Id	2 Id	4 Id	2 Id	2 Id
13	Idus	Idus	3 Id	Idus	3 Id	Idus	3 Id	Idus	Idus	3 Id	Idus	Idus

² C. R. Cheney, ed., *A Handbook of Dates: For students of British history*, 146-146. The Middle Ages inherited from the Roman world not only its system of reckoning the years, but also its method of describing the months and days..

14	19 KF	16 KM	2 Id	18 KM	2 Id	18 KJ	2 Id	19 KS	18 KO	2 Id	18 KD	19 KJ
15	18 KF	15 KM	Idus	17 KM	Idus	17 KJ	Idus	18 KS	17 KO	Idus	17 KD	18 KJ
16	17 KF	14 KM	17 KA	16 KM	17 KJ	16 KJ	17 KA	17 KS	16 KO	17 KN	16 KD	17 KJ
17	16 KF	13 KM	16 KA	15 KM	16 KJ	15 KJ	16 KA	16 KS	15 KO	16 KN	15 KD	16 KJ
18	15 KF	12 KM	15 KA	14 KM	15 KJ	14 KJ	15 KA	15 KS	14 KO	15 KN	14 KD	15 KJ
19	14 KF	11 KM	14 KA	13 KM	14 KJ	13 KJ	14 KA	14 KS	13 KO	14 KN	13 KD	14 KJ
20	13 KF	10 KM	13 KA	12 KM	13 KJ	12 KJ	13 KA	13 KS	12 KO	13 KN	12 KD	13 KJ
21	12 KF	9 KM	12 KA	11 KM	12 KJ	11 KJ	12 KA	12 KS	11 KO	12 KN	11 KD	12 KJ
22	11 KF	8 KM	11 KA	10 KM	11 KJ	10 KJ	11 KA	11 KS	10 KO	11 KN	10 KD	11 KJ
23	10 KF	7 KM	10 KA	9 KM	10 KJ	9 KJ	10 KA	10 KS	9 KO	10 KN	9 KD	10 KJ
24	9 KF	6 KM ³	9 KA	8 KM	9 KJ	8 KJ	9 KA	9 K8	8 KO	9 KN	8 KD	9 KJ
25	8 KF	5 KM	8 KA	7 KM	8 KJ	7 KJ	8 KA	8 KS	7 KO	8 KM	7 KD	8 KJ
26	7 KF	4 KM	7 KA	6 KM	7 KJ	6 KJ	7 KA	7 KS	6 KO	7 KN	6 KD	7 KJ
27	6 KF	3 KM	6 KA	5 KM	6 KJ	5 KJ	6 KA	6KS	5 KO	6 KN	5 KD	6 KJ
28	5 KF	2 KM	5 KA	4 KM	5 KJ	4 KJ	5 KA	5 KS	4 KO	5 KN	4 KD	5 KJ
29	4 KF		4 KA	3 KM	4 KJ	3 KJ	4 KA	4 KS	3 KO	4 KN	3 KD	4 KJ
30	3 KF		3 KA	2 KM	3 KJ	2 KJ	3 KA	3 KS	2 KO	3 KN	2 KD	3 KJ
31	2 KF		2 KA		2 KJ		2 KA	2 KS		2 KN		2 KJ

³ In leap years the *dies bissextus*, preceded *vi kal Mar.* In these years 24 February became *bis vi kal Mar.* and 25 February became *vi kal. Mar.* The table reproduced below gives the Julian calendar as modified by Augustus Leap Year, 24 February = 6 KM bis; 25 February = 6 KM; 26 February = 5 KM; 27 = 4 KM, 28 = 3 KM; 29 = 2 KM

APPENDIX II

TABLE OF INSULAR EASTER DATES

Based on the Padua *latercus*, which gives dates from AD 438 to AD 521⁴

Cycle no.	AD	Ferial	Epact	Paschal Date	Paschal Moon
1	438	7	20	27-Mar	16
2	439	1	1	16-Apr	17
3	440	2	12	07-Apr	19
4	441	4	23	20-Apr	14
5	442	5	4	12-Apr	16
6	443	6	15	04-Apr	19
7	444	7	26	23-Apr	20
8	445	2	7	08-Apr	15
9	446	3	18	31-Mar	18
10	447	4	29	20-Apr	20
11	448	5	10	04-Apr	14
12	449	7	21	27-Mar	17
13	450	1	2	16-Apr	18
14	451	2	13	01-Apr	14
15	452	3	25	20-Apr	16
16	453	5	6	12-Apr	18
17	454	6	17	28-Mar	14
18	455	7	28	17-Apr	16
19	456	1	9	08-Apr	17
20	457	3	20	31-Mar	20
21	458	4	1	13-Apr	14
22	459	5	12	05-Apr	17
23	460	6	23	27-Mar	19
24	461	1	4	16-Apr	20
25	462	2	15	01-Apr	16
26	463	3	26	21-Apr	18
27	464	4	7	12-Apr	19
28	465	6	15	28-Mar	15
29	466	7	30	17-Apr	18

⁴ McCarthy and Ó Cróinín, “The ‘Lost’ Easter Cycle.’ The Padua *latercus* gives dates from AD 438 to 521. Working on the premise that this cycle was cyclic, the other dates were calculated. for the period from six hundred to seven hundred. The use of this the 84-year cycle remained only in pockets such as Northumbria, northern Ireland and Iona, with possibly a some continental practices, in Columban foundations, in the early part of the seventh century.

Cycle no.	AD	Ferial	Enact	Paschal Date	Paschal Moon
30	467	1	11	09-Apr	20
31	468	2	22	21-Apr	14
32	469	4	3	13-Apr	16
33	470	5	14	05-Apr	19
34	471	6	25	18-Apr	14
35	472	7	6	09-Apr	15
36	473	2	17	01-Apr	18
37	474	3	28	21-Apr	20
38	475	4	9	06-Apr	15
39	476	5	20	28-Mar	17
40	477	7	1	17-Apr	18
41	478	1	12	02-Apr	14
42	479	2	23	22-Apr	16
43	480	3	5	13-Apr	18
44	481	5	16	29-Mar	14
45	482	6	27	18-Apr	16
46	483	7	8	10-Apr	18
47	484	1	19	01-Apr	20
48	485	3	30	14-Apr	15
49	486	4	11	06-Apr	17
50	487	5	22	29-Mar	20
51	488	6	3	17-Apr	20
52	489	1	14	02-Apr	16
53	490	2	25	22-Apr	18
54	491	3	6	14-Apr	20
55	492	4	17	29-Mar	15
56	493	6	28	18-Apr	17
57	494	7	10	10-Apr	20
58	495	1	21	26-Mar	16
59	496	2	2	04-Apr	16
60	497	4	13	06-Apr	19
61	498	5	24	19-Apr	14
62	499	6	5	11-Apr	16
63	500	7	16	02-Apr	18
64	501	2	27	22-Apr	20
65	502	3	8	07-Apr	14
66	503	4	19	30-Mar	18
67	504	5	30	19-Apr	19
68	505	7	11	03-Apr	14
69	506	1	22	26-Mar	17
70	507	2	3	15-Apr	18
71	508	3	15	30-Mar	14
72	509	5	26	19-Apr	16
73	510	6	7	11-Apr	18
74	511	7	18	27-Mar	14

75	512	1	29	15-Apr	15
76	513	3	10	07-Apr	17
77	514	4	21	30-Mar	20
78	515	5	2	12-Apr	14
79	516	6	13	03-Apr	16
80	517	1	24	26-Mar	19
81	518	2	5	15-Apr	20
82	519	3	16	31-Mar	16
83	520	4	27	19-Apr	17
84	521	6	8	11-Apr	19
1	522	7	20	27-Mar	16
2	523	1	1	16-Apr	17
3	524	2	12	07-Apr	19
4	525	4	23	20-Apr	14
5	526	5	4	12-Apr	16
6	527	6	15	04-Apr	19
7	528	7	26	23-Apr	20
8	529	2	7	08-Apr	15
9	530	3	18	31-Mar	18
10	531	4	29	20-Apr	20
11	532	5	10	04-Apr	14
12	533	7	21	27-Mar	17
13	534	1	2	16-Apr	18
14	535	2	13	01-Apr	14
15	536	3	25	20-Apr	16
16	537	5	6	12-Apr	18
17	538	6	17	28-Mar	14
18	539	7	28	17-Apr	16
19	540	1	9	08-Apr	17
20	541	3	20	31-Mar	20
21	542	4	1	13-Apr	14
22	543	5	12	05-Apr	17
23	544	6	23	27-Mar	19
24	545	1	4	16-Apr	20
25	546	2	15	01-Apr	16
26	547	3	26	21-Apr	18
27	548	4	7	12-Apr	19
28	549	6	15	28-Mar	15
29	550	7	30	17-Apr	18
30	551	1	11	09-Apr	20
31	552	2	22	21-Apr	14
32	553	4	3	13-Apr	16
33	554	5	14	05-Apr	19
34	555	6	25	18-Apr	14
35	556	7	6	09-Apr	15

Cycle no.	AD	Ferial	Enact	Paschal Date	Paschal Moon
36	557	2	17	01-Apr	18
37	558	3	28	21-Apr	20
38	559	4	9	06-Apr	15
39	560	5	20	28-Mar	17
40	561	7	1	17-Apr	18
41	562	1	12	02-Apr	14
42	563	2	23	22-Apr	16
43	564	3	5	13-Apr	18
44	565	5	16	29-Mar	14
45	566	6	27	18-Apr	16
46	567	7	8	10-Apr	18
47	568	1	19	01-Apr	20
48	569	3	30	14-Apr	15
49	570	4	11	06-Apr	17
50	571	5	22	29-Mar	20
51	572	6	3	17-Apr	20
52	573	1	14	02-Apr	16
53	574	2	25	22-Apr	18
54	575	3	6	14-Apr	20
55	576	4	17	29-Mar	15
56	577	6	28	18-Apr	17
57	578	7	10	10-Apr	20
58	579	1	21	26-Mar	16
59	580	2	2	04-Apr	16
60	581	4	13	06-Apr	19
61	582	5	24	19-Apr	14
62	583	6	5	11-Apr	16
63	584	7	16	02-Apr	18
64	585	2	27	22-Apr	20
65	586	3	8	07-Apr	14
66	587	4	19	30-Mar	18
67	588	5	30	18-Apr	19
68	589	7	11	03-Apr	14
69	590	1	22	26-Mar	17
70	591	2	3	15-Apr	18
71	592	3	15	30-Mar	14
72	593	5	26	19-Apr	16
73	594	6	7	11-Apr	18
74	595	7	18	27-Mar	14
75	596	1	29	15-Apr	15
76	597	3	10	07-Apr	17
77	598	4	21	30-Mar	20
78	599	5	2	12-Apr	14
79	600	6	13	03-Apr	16

Cycle no.	AD	Ferial	Enact	Paschal Date	Paschal Moon
80	601	1	24	26-Mar	19
81	602	2	5	15-Apr	20
82	603	3	16	31-Mar	16
83	604	4	27	19-Apr	17
84	605	6	8	11-Apr	19
1	606	7	20	27-Mar	16
2	607	1	1	16-Apr	17
3	608	2	12	07-Apr	19
4	609	4	23	20-Apr	14
10	615	4	29	20-Apr	20
11	616	5	10	04-Apr	14
12	617	7	21	27-Mar	17
13	618	1	2	16-Apr	18
14	619	2	13	01-Apr	14
15	620	3	25	20-Apr	16
16	621	5	6	12-Apr	18
17	622	6	17	28-Mar	14
18	623	7	28	17-Apr	16
19	624	1	9	08-Apr	17
20	625	3	20	31-Mar	20
21	626	4	1	13-Apr	14
22	627	5	12	05-Apr	17
23	628	6	23	27-Mar	19
24	629	1	4	16-Apr	20
25	630	2	15	01-Apr	16
26	631	3	26	21-Apr	18
27	632	4	7	12-Apr	19
28	633	6	15	28-Mar	15
29	634	7	30	17-Apr	18
30	635	1	11	09-Apr	20
31	636	2	22	21-Apr	14
32	637	4	3	13-Apr	16
33	638	5	14	05-Apr	19
34	639	6	25	18-Apr	14
35	640	7	6	09-Apr	15
36	641	2	17	01-Apr	18
37	642	3	28	21-Apr	20
38	643	4	9	06-Apr	15
39	644	5	20	28-Mar	17
40	645	7	1	17-Apr	18
41	646	1	12	02-Apr	14
42	647	2	23	22-Apr	16
43	648	3	5	13-Apr	18
44	649	5	16	29-Mar	14

Cycle no.	AD	Ferial	Enact	Paschal Date	Paschal Moon
45	650	6	27	18-Apr	16
46	651	7	8	10-Apr	18
47	652	1	19	01-Apr	20
48	653	3	30	14-Apr	15
49	654	4	11	06-Apr	17
50	655	5	22	29-Mar	20
51	656	6	3	17-Apr	20
52	657	1	14	02-Apr	16
53	658	2	25	22-Apr	18
54	659	3	6	14-Apr	20
55	660	4	17	29-Mar	15
56	661	6	28	18-Apr	17
57	662	7	10	10-Apr	20
58	663	1	21	26-Mar	16
59	664	2	2	14-Apr	16
60	665	4	13	06-Apr	19
61	666	5	24	19-Apr	14
62	667	6	5	11-Apr	16
63	668	7	16	02-Apr	18
64	669	2	27	22-Apr	20
65	670	3	8	07-Apr	14
66	671	4	19	30-Mar	18
67	672	5	30	18-Apr	19
68	673	7	11	03-Apr	14
69	674	1	22	26-Mar	17
70	675	2	3	15-Apr	18
71	676	3	15	30-Mar	14
72	677	5	26	19-Apr	16
73	678	6	7	11-Apr	18
74	679	7	18	27-Mar	14
75	680	1	29	15-Apr	15
76	681	3	10	07-Apr	17
77	682	4	21	30-Mar	20
78	683	5	2	12-Apr	14
79	684	6	13	03-Apr	16
80	685	1	24	26-Mar	19
81	686	2	5	15-Apr	20
82	687	3	16	31-Mar	16
83	688	4	27	19-Apr	17
84	689	6	8	11-Apr	19