

Christians outraged as BBC drops B.C./A.D. dating method

by [Al Webb](#)

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LONDON (RNS) British Christians are incensed after the state-funded BBC decided to jettison the terms B.C. and A.D. in favor of B.C.E. and C.E. in historical date references.

The broadcaster has directed that the traditional B.C. (Before Christ) and A.D. (Anno Domini, or Year of the Lord) be replaced by B.C.E. (Before Common Era) and C.E. (Common Era) in its television and radio broadcasts.

The BBC said in an official statement that since it is "committed to impartiality, it is appropriate that we use terms that do not offend or alienate non-Christians."

It described the terms B.C.E. and C.E. as "a religiously neutral alternative to B.C./A.D.," although critics quickly pointed out that the new terms, like the old, were anchored around the birth of Jesus Christ.

The new edict drew immediate accusations that the network was guilty of political correctness run amok as the BBC's phone lines were jammed with irate listeners and readers.

Retired Anglican Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali of Rochester, a leading British evangelical, told journalists that "this amounts to the dumbing

down of the Christian basis of our culture, language and history."

"These changes are unnecessary," said Nazir-Ali, "and they don't actually achieve what the BBC wants them to achieve. Whether you use Common Era or Anno Domini, the date is still the same and the reference point is still the birth of Jesus Christ."

The network also drew fire from Britain's Plain English Campaign, whose spokeswoman, Marie Clair, said "it sounds like change just for the sake of change. ... It is difficult to see what the point of the changes are if people do not understand the new terms."

On Wednesday (Sept. 28), a BBC spokeswoman addressed the controversy, saying: "Whilst the BBC uses B.C. and A.D. like most people as standard terminology, it is also possible for individuals to use different terminology if they wish to, particularly as it is now commonly used in historical research."