

Redeeming Holy Days from Pagan Lies-Easter 1

Easter is the English/Germanic name for the Festival of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This particular Feast Day is the heart and center of the whole liturgical practice of the Christian Church Year.

Because it is at the center it is under great attack by those seeking to discredit this liturgical festival. If these people can maintain that Easter is really originally pagan, then they undermine Christ, His Passion, death and Resurrection.



In this article we will look at:

- Passover as the historical Biblical origin of the Christian liturgical Church Year;
- The historical development of the date of Easter/Resurrection/Passover;
- Claims of Pagan Origin or Influence, including:
 - The origins of the pagan goddess Eostre;
 - The historical Lenten Fast that lead to the use of Eggs in association with Easter;
 - And the particularly Christian use of the hare/rabbit as a symbol for the Trinity and the Resurrection.

Passover as The Origin of the Christian Church Year

The three High Festivals of the Christian Church Year are Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. All of these days are were established in the early Church on the basis of the biblical dating of Passover. Any festivals that are tied to the dates of these Holy Days are derived from their relationship to Passover.

This means that, contrary to claims from many different sources, the choice of dates for these Festivals and those tied to them have nothing to do with pagan origins.

Let us say that again and more clearly: The dates for Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and all those church holy days that are directly tied to the dates of those holy days are all based originally on Passover. None of these days were chosen due to pagan influences. None! The actual choice for the date was based on what God declared to Moses in about 1,440 B.C. on Mt. Sinai.

There are Christian festivals that are not directly tied to these dates, those are dates such as the the commemoration of Saints. Those days were chosen for their own reasons: usually to commemorate the calender day on which a person was born or died.

But the relationship between the Passover, Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas is an historically demonstrable fact through the writings of the Church Fathers.

And this relationship to Passover is essential to understanding the theology of the Promise and Fulfillment in Christ as well as the establishing of the First Covenant and its fulfillment in the New Covenant.

About 1,470 years before the Son of God instituted His Holy Supper, that same Son of God commanded Moses and the Congregation of Israel saying:

12 Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,
2 “This month *shall be* your beginning of months; it *shall be* the first month of the year to you. 3 Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: ‘On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of *his* father, a lamb for a household. 4 And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take *it* according to the number of the persons; according to each man’s need you shall make your count for the lamb. 5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take *it* from the sheep or from the goats. 6 Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight.

The ordinance for this festival and the Festival of Unleavened Bread is that the month of Abib become the first month of the religious calendar. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are the basis in the Books of Moses for calculating the two other ma-

for festivals of the liturgical year:

- the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) 7 weeks and one day, which marks remembering God's revealing of the Covenant at Mt. Sinai at the end of those weeks (Exodus 19). The remembrance is tied together with the harvest of the Firstfruits and the requirement to offer the best of the firstfruits to God.
- the Feast of Tabernacles is calculated being the full moon seventh month (a sabbath month) from the first month. All the congregation was required to gather before the tabernacle each year on these three festivals.

And just as the Passover Lamb was selected on the 10th of the First Month, the scapegoat and the sacrificial goat for the Lord were selected on the 10th of the Seventh Month–The Day of Atonement.

Everything in the liturgical year is keyed upon Passover in the Old Testament. This key event does not get put aside in the New Testament. Rather, the Passover takes on even greater significance as it is fulfilled in the Passion and Resurrection of Christ.

While Clement of Alexandria attests to the fact that there were a handful of different days of the year that people thought the world was created, the view expressed by [Clement](#) (c.150 – c. 215), [Hippolytus](#) (170 – 235), [Julius Africanus](#) (c.160 – c.240) and others at the close of the 2nd century A.D. were the most widely accepted. That view was that the world was created March 25th, Christ was conceived March 25th, and Christ was crucified March 25th. March 25th also was the equinox. Which made this date easy to calculate.

Thus we can see that the choice of this date was also a public confession of the Hypostatic Union of the Two Natures in Christ. Observing Creation, Incarnation, and Passion on the same day confessed that it is the Son of God, the Creator, who became human and so intimately united Himself with humanity by suffering as a man in humanity's place.

We are not evaluating whether March 25th was the actual date that these events truly happened, we are demonstrating the early rationale for and the early widespread acceptance of this date in the teaching and practice of the Church.

This dating was the basis for later the work of Dionysius Exiguus (c. 470 – c. 544) , and widely enough established in the late 2nd century to be used as proof by Tertullian (c. 160 – c. 225 AD):

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** [March 25th], on the first day of unleavened bread, on which they slew the lamb at even, just as had been enjoined by Moses. (*An Answer to the Jews*, 8.18, emphasis added)

This view formed the basis for the [Alexandrian Era](#) and held in the ancient Church up to the 7th century A.D.

The Christmas Cycle separates from the Easter Cycle

While the early church equated March 25th (the equinox) with the Incarnation of Christ, all those dates related directly to that date became fixed on the calendar. However, the Passover changed each year because it was based on the lunar cycle.

How Did Easter Get Separated from Passover?

So the problem became, when should Christ’s Passion and Resurrection be celebrated? Should it be held relative to Passover regardless of which day of the week it occurred? Or should it be held on the days of the week named in the Gospel narratives regardless of which day of the week the Passover actually occurred?

The debate is called “The Easter Controversy.” It is actually several different controversies through the centuries about the same issue. Records about this debate and from this debate date back to the early and mid 2nd century. And the question of when Easter should be celebrated and how it should be calculated led to many writings of the early chronographers and calendarists.

There were two main parts to these controversies. First, whether Passover and Resurrection should be observed on the 14th of Abib or on the Sunday following. The controversies following this had to deal with the best way to calculate the Passover accurately.

Why Sunday Weekly Worship

Sunday became the focus of Christian worship because it is the Day of the Resurrection of Christ (Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:9; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1, 19).

The weekly Sunday worship focused on the Passover given and instituted as the New Covenant fulfilling the Promise (Gal. 4). Paul testifies that the Lord's Supper was celebrated and tithes were gathered at worship on Sunday (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2). Weekly Sunday worship with the Lord's Supper is weekly observance of the Passover in Christ, but not the passover of the Old Covenant. It is the partial fulfilment of the Passover with the New Covenant. The complete fulfilment of the original Passover waits until the Return of Christ on Judgement day.

¹⁴ When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him.

¹⁵ Then He said to them, "With *fervent* desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

(Luke 22:14-16)

Often moderns will make the same claim made by the Puritans, that Christians cannot worship on Sunday because that is a pagan day devoted to a pagan God. The Puritans tried to argue that the early church did not worship on Sunday but that this gradually came about as Christianity gave into paganism and wordliness.

But worship on Sunday was considered a vital confessional practice even while the Apostles were still alive. Ignatius (30 AD – 107 AD) wrote in *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians*, Chapter 9 (ANF 1:62-63):

If, therefore, those who were brought up in the ancient order of things have come to the possession of a new hope, **no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day, on which also our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death**—whom some deny, by which mystery we have obtained faith, and therefore endure, that we may be found the disciples of Jesus Christ, our only Master—how shall we be able to live apart from Him, whose disciples the prophets themselves in the Spirit did

wait for Him as their Teacher? And therefore He whom they rightly waited for, being come, raised them from the dead. (emphasis added)

And later in the same chapter:

But let every one of you keep the Sabbath after a spiritual manner, rejoicing in meditation on the law, not in relaxation of the body, admiring the workmanship of God, and not eating things prepared the day before, nor using lukewarm drinks, and walking within a prescribed space, nor finding delight in dancing and plaudits which have no sense in them. And after the observance of the Sabbath, **let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's Day as a festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all the days [of the week]. Looking forward to this, the prophet declared, "To the end, for the eighth day," on which our life both sprang up again, and the victory over death was obtained in Christ,**(emphasis added)

It was on a Sunday that the Apostle John received the Revelation of Jesus Christ.([Rev. 1:9-10](#))

Justin Martyr (AD 100–ca.165) bears witness to this unity of dates and practices (also pointing out that the Mithraists copied Christian practice in his time with regard to the ceremonies and sacraments of the Church) [[Apology 1:66](#) --ANF 1:p. 185]. Justin highlighted the significance of the day and the liturgical practice in the following passage:

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the pres-

ident, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, **because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead.** For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration. [[ibid. 67, ANF 1:186](#)]

The First Easter Date Controversy (up to 190AD)

So by the time the first main controversy about Easter became an issue, most congregations outside of Asia-Minor already celebrated Resurrection on the Sunday following the Passover.

But in Asia-Minor there were several congregations that maintained the practice of celebrating the Crucifixion on the 14th of Abib. These people became called “Fourteenthers” [Quartodeciman].

Eusebeus (*Hist.* 5:24) records the words of Irenaeus at the time:

12. “For the controversy is not only concerning the day, but also concerning the very manner of the fast. For some think that they should fast one day, others two, yet others more; some, moreover, count their day as consisting of forty hours day and night.

13. **And this variety in its observance has not originated in our time; but long before in that of our ancestors.** It is likely that they did not hold to strict accuracy, and thus formed a custom for their posterity according to their own simplicity and peculiar mode. Yet all of these lived none the less in peace, and we also live in peace with one another; and the disagreement in regard to the fast confirms the agreement in the faith.” ([NPNF2-01: 243](#) emphasis added)

Irenaeus stated that the difference in calendar observance was not divisive of fellowship.

There are two important things to note about this controversy:

First: The question of whether 14th Abib or the Sunday following pre-dates this controversy. The practice of a Sunday Easter service is shown by Irenaeus' and Justin's letters. The practice of Sunday observance of Easter probably dates back to the Apostolic times.

Second: The issue at hand was when to break the fast for the Resurrection. We have already seen that the 40 day Lenten fast pre-dates Constantine. We see here in Irenaeus that fasting traditions varied from place to place but were considered old traditions.

The choice of the Church to celebrate the Resurrection of Christ on Sundays is very ancient, probably from the Apostolic period. The choice had nothing to do with Roman pagan holidays or any other pagan holiday. It had to do with making a clear Christological confession about the Christ-the suffering Servant, the God-Man incarnate who redeemed us from sin, Satan, and death itself.

The Second Easter Date Controversy (323 A.D)

This debate took place as part of the Council of Nicea where Athanasius worked against Arius. This is the council that the Easter-haters point to claiming that Constantine usurped the church and brought in pagan customs and dates.

Sunday Easter service was already the norm throughout Christianity by this time. The issue at the Council was which is the best way to calculate when Easter would occur.

The desire was to have all the congregations celebrating on the same date. But that could not happen by depending upon the rabbis fixing the month by physical observation. One of the complaints recorded is that dependency on such physical calculations might allow Passover to be celebrated twice in one solar year.

The practice was to wait until the rabbis had "set the month by observation" (קדוש החדש) (על פי ראיה) or by means of reckoning (קדוש החדש על פי חשבון).

[From "*Mishna Torah, Book of Times, Regulations for the Sanctifying of the Month*" - משנה תורה

[ספר זמנים - הלכות קידוש החודש - הכול פרק ב

The Council sought to keep the Passover in Christ from being arbitrarily decided and to have the date uniformly kept throughout the church at large. They set the equinox as the earliest possible date of Passover—already established by early tradition as the day of Creation, Incarnation, and the original Crucifixion.

Nothing in their discussions or in any of the surviving evidence suggests that these dates were chosen or influenced by any pagan practice or teaching. All the actual contemporary evidence points to a great concern that the Passover be marked accurately for the sake of confessing the Hypostatic Union of Christ and His saving work in His Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection.

The Third Easter Date Controversy (c. 600 A.D)

Churches in the British Isles which had been established early were using a different method of calculation than were the churches in the Mediterranean area. The calculations used in the British Isles were using the formula from the time of the Roman occupation, the formula that the church at Rome had made improvements to.

The Easter date in the British Isles had nothing to do with pagan worship, but was based on the older method originating with the churches in the Mediterranean area. When this older method was replaced it had nothing to do with pagan practices. The churches in the British Isles were just conforming to what had been established by the Church at large in the Mediterranean world.

[Thurston, H. (1909). Easter Controversy. In *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Retrieved March 26, 2013 from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05228a.htm>]

Summary

The date of Easter and the rest of the High Holy Days of the Church are rooted in the observance of the Passover and have no roots in any pagan practice. The Passover was established by God nearly 1500 years before the fulfilment of the Promise in Christ's death and resurrection. The Church sought to clarify how this date chosen in the calen-

dar and help make the practice consistent throughout the Church.

None of the controversies surrounding the dating of Easter had anything to do with pagan practices. Essentially these controversies were either disagreements on whether to observe the 14th of Abib rather than the Sunday following, or disagreements on the best way to calculate when the Biblical 14th of Abib (the Passover) would take place.

Anyone who contends that the dates were chosen on the basis of pagan sources is making a claim contrary to all actual evidence from the actual periods.

What About Other Pagan Influences?

Part 2 coming soon.....

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Redeeming Holy Days from Pagan Lies-Easter 2

Second Part: Attacks On The Name and Traditions

There are three main things people attack about this Holy Day:

1. They claim that it is pagan because the name Easter is from a pagan goddess.
2. They claim that Easter eggs are a symbol of pagan worship, particularly of that false goddess in number 1.
3. They claim that the Easter bunny is a pagan symbol, the consort of the pagan goddess in number 1.

All of these claims are false.

That's not to say that the materialism of modern culture hasn't obscured the meaning of Easter through focusing on treats and bunnies. But even though factual information about the tradition of eggs at Easter is plentiful, and even though the use of the hare/rabbit has long history in Christian iconography the propaganda efforts of the anti-Easter crowd and the pagans through all kinds of media has overcome the truth. And the lies have found a firm footing in the social awareness of contemporary society. Through venues like the History Channel, college courses, and popular news media the lies have become accepted as historical fact.

The Name of the Holy Day: Easter

As we have demonstrated in the previous article, the choosing of the date for Easter had nothing to do with pagan practices. The original dates chosen and the reasons for adjusting the methods of determining those dates always had to do with determining when the Biblical Passover should be observed so that the festival of the Resurrection could be observed without discord.

While most languages adapt the word פסח Pesach "Passover" as the term for Easter/Passover, German and English adopted the local month name. The local month name was adopted very early, by the records it was adopted while Rome was still active.

Alexander Hislop claimed:

What means the term Easter itself? It is not a Christian name. It bears its Chaldean origin on its very forehead. Easter is nothing else than Astarte, one of the titles of Beltis, the queen of heaven, whose name, as pronounced by the people Nineveh, was evidently identical with that now in common use in this country. That name, as found by Layard on the Assyrian monuments, is Ishtar. The worship of Bel and Astarte was very early introduced into Britain, along with the Druids, “the priests of the groves.” (*The Two Babylons, Ch. 3, sec. 2*)

Notice how clever the argument is? Sir Austen Henry Layard just published his first works on Nineveh in 1848, 1849, and 1853. And in 1853, Hislop, who knew nothing about cuneiform or ancient Babylonian languages concludes that since the Babylonian name “Ishtar” sounds like the English word “Easter” they must be the same!

Just so that the argument can not be disproved, Hislop claims that the Druids brought Ishtar to England. This is handy, because the Druids didn’t write anything down. And those records about Druids by others don’t record any such migrations or Ishtar worship.

- Note for later: Ishtar’s symbolic animals were the lion, and the horse. The symbols of Astarte (a goddess of war) were the lion, the horse, the dove, and the sphynx. And though they are considered “fertility” gods today (instead of just pornography) there were no bunnies or eggs among the symbols for these false gods.

But there is a possibility: Perhaps the word Easter does come from some pagan goddess.

Was There Actually a Pagan Goddess Easter, Eostre, Ostara?

A search of all the ancient literature left by the Germanic, Celtic, English peoples and their ancestors combined with a search of all ancient literature about those peoples by their contemporaries up to the 8th century A.D. turns up nothing.

There is nothing in any Edda, nothing in any history, nothing. And it is not for lack of written records about the religious practices and beliefs of those peoples through those

years.

Note this date, the 8th century A.D. This is when the first mention of a possible “goddess” is made. The date of the Easter festival had already been long established. The use of the term Easter or Ostern (German) had already been long established.

The first mention of such a goddess comes from the Venerable Bede in his 725 A.D. *De Temporum Ratione*. Bede wrote:

Eostur-monath, qui nunc Paschalis mensis interpretatur, quondam a Dea illorum quæ Eostre vocabatur, et cui in illo festa celebrabant nomen habuit: a cuius nomine nunc Paschale tempus cognominant, consueto antiquæ observationis vocabulo gaudia novæ solemnitatis vocantes.

The Complete Works of Venerable Bede, Bd. VI, London 1843 [http://oll.libertyfund.org/files/1917/0990.06_Bk_SM.pdf Seite 139 ff.] pp. 178-179 *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina CXXIII B, Bedae Venerabilis Opera, Bd. VI,2, Turnhout 1977

English

Eosturmonath has a name which is now translated “Paschal month”, and which was once called after a goddess of theirs named Eostre, in whose honour feasts were celebrated in that month. Now they designate that Paschal season by her name, calling the joys of the new rite by the time-honoured name of the old observance.

[*Bede: The Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool University Press - Translated Texts for Historians) by Faith Wallis (Apr 1, 1999) p. 54]

It would seem that Bede, who is listing out the English names of the months in this chapter, confirms that there was a goddess named Eostre. But neither Eostre nor a goddess he mentions in the previous sentence, “Hrethra,” are found in any other literature from either earlier nor later.

It is not unlikely that Bede was conjecturing about the origin of the names given that

month names have been named after false gods in other cultures; e.g., July, and August, named after Julius and Augustus upon deification.

We will see a little later that there is another possibility, especially considering that all of the other English month names were seasonal descriptions or events during those times.

January=Giuli; Sun gets stronger

February=Sol-monath, Cake baking

March=Rhed-monath, Otherwise unknown goddess Hretha

April=Eostur-monath, Otherwise unknown goddess Eostra

May=Thrimylchi, Milk the cows three times a day Month

June=Lida, Gentle

July also=Lida, Gentle

August=Vueod-monath, Month the tares / grasses

September=Haleg-monath, Holy Month

October=Vuinter-fylleth; Winter starting with the full moon Month.

November=Blod-monath, Cattle slaughter month.

December=Giul; Sun gets stronger

Claims are often made by using fake quotations preportedly from [Einhard](#) (c. 775 – March 14, 840) in his work [Vita Karola Magni](#) 817 to 833 AD.

Examples of fake quotations:

“Easter – *Ôstara) was a goddess in Germanic paganism whose Germanic month has given its name to the festival of Easter. Ôstarmânoth

is attested as the month-name equivalent to 'April' that was decreed by Charlemagne, but as a goddess Eostre is attested only by Bede in his 8th century work *De temporum ratione*. Bede states that *Ēosturmōnaþ* was the equivalent to the month of April, and that feasts held in Eostre's honor... replaced the "Paschal" observance of Passover."

– Einhard, *Life of Charlemagne*, §29.

"Some scholars have debated whether or not Eostre is [an invention](#) of Bede's, and theories Einhard, connecting Eostre with records of Germanic Easter customs (including hares rabbits and eggs)."

– Einhard, *Life of Charlemagne*, §29.

Both of these fake quotes are from the website [easter-origins](#) and are found repeated in dozens of websites.

Here is Einhard's actual full section 29 on Charlemagne:

29. [Reforms](#)

It was after he had received the imperial name that, finding the laws of his people very defective (the Franks have two sets of laws, very different in many particulars), he determined to add what was wanting, to reconcile the discrepancies, and to correct what was vicious and wrongly cited in them. However, he went no further in this matter than to supplement the laws by a few capitularies, and those imperfect ones; but he caused the unwritten laws of all the tribes that came under his rule to be compiled and reduced to writing. He also had the old rude songs that celebrate the deeds and wars of the ancient kings written out for transmission to posterity. He began a grammar of his native language. He gave the months names

in his own tongue, in place of the Latin and barbarous names by which they were formerly known among the Franks. He likewise designated the winds by twelve appropriate names; there were hardly more than four distinctive ones in use before. He called January, Wintarmanoth; February, Hornung; March, Lentzinmanoth; April, Ostarmanoth; May, Winnemanoth; June, Brachmanoth; July, Heuvimanoth; August, Aranmanoth; September, Witumanoth; October, Windumemanoth; Novemher, Herbistmanoth; December, Heilagmanoth. He styled the winds as follows; Subsolanus, Ostroniwint; Eurus, Ostsundroni-, Euroauster, Sundostroni; Auster, Sundroni; Austro-Africus, Sundwestroni; Africus, Westsundroni; Zephyrus, Westroni; Caurus, Westnordroni; Circius, Nordwestroni; Septentrio, Nordroni; Aquilo, Nordostroni; Vulturnus, Ostnordroni. [*Life of Charlemagne* -- Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne*, 19th century English translation by Samuel Epes Turner]

All Einhard says is that Charles the Great chose to keep the Germanic month names. There is nothing here that speaks about a pagan goddess named Ostara or Eostra.

There is one more name with the term Eostra in it from this general period. [Eosterwine](#). (650 – 7 March 686) was the second Anglo-Saxon Abbot of Wearmouth in Northumbria (England).

Note that in none of these documents is there anything about who Eostra might have been, what purpose she might have served, who her consorts might have been. All the evidence shows us is that the old English had a month with the name Eostra. It shows us that a well respected writer of the church thought that the month name had pagan roots. But that name, even if used for the feast of the Resurrection, was not chosen because the Passover meal was pagan or polluted by paganism. It would be just like non pagans today using the word Thursday for the name of a weekday.

No one heard any more about Eostra/Ostara for a thousand years.

That should be repeated: NO ONE heard any more about Eostra/Ostara for a THOUSAND YEARS!

It wasn't until 1835 when Jacob Grimm began publishing his work on *Teutonic Mythology* that the name Eostra as a goddess was noticed again.

Everything that *we think* we know about Eostra comes from Grimm. But notice how what Grimm says is conjecture:

We Germans to this day call April *ostermonat*, and *ostarmanoth* is found as early as *Eginhart* (temp. *Car. Mag.*). The great Christian festival, which usually falls in April or the end of March, bears in the oldest of OHG. remains the name *ostara* gen. *-un* ;1 it is mostly found in the plural, because two days (*ostartagil*, *aostortaga*, Diut. 1, 266a) were kept at Easter. This *Ostara*, like the AS. *Eastre*, **must in the heathen religion have denoted** a higher being, whose worship was so firmly rooted, that the christian teachers tolerated the name, and applied it to one of their own grandest anniversaries. (Volume 1, p. 290 bold added)

After making what now would be rightly considered an illegitimate venture into etymology of the name Eostre, Grimm continues:

Ostara, *Eostre* **seems therefore to have been** the divinity of the radiant dawn, of upspringing light, a spectacle that brings joy and blessing, whose meaning **could be** easily adapted to the resurrection-day of the Christian's God. Bonfires were lighted at Easter, and according to a popular belief of long standing, the moment the sun rises on Easter Sunday morning, he gives *three joyful leaps*, he dances for joy (Superst. 813). Water drawn on the Easter morning is, like that at Christmas, holy and healing (Superst. 775. 804) ; here also heathen notions **seems to have** grafted themselves on great Christian festivals. Maidens clothed in white, who at Easter, at the season of returning spring, show themselves in clefts of the rock and on mountains, **are suggestive** of the ancient goddess (see Suppl.). (*ibid.* 291 bold added)

Remember what Grimm is working with. He has only Bede and Einhard. Just like you and I have.

According to the second volume of his *Teutonic Mythology*, Grimm even associates the

Easter egg with Eostra. Though, we shall see, that particularly Christian tradition predates any mention of Eostra by 500 years. Grimm wrote:

But if we admit, goddesses, then, in addition to Nerthus, *Ostara* has the strongest claim to consideration. To what we said on p. 290 I can add some significant facts. The heathen Easter had much in common with May-feast and the reception of spring, particularly in matter of bonfires. Then, through long ages **there seem to have** lingered among the people *Easter-games* so-called, which the church itself had to tolerate : I allude especially to the custom of *Easter eggs*, and to the *Easter tale* which preachers told from the pulpit for the people's amusement, connecting it with Christian reminiscences.([Volume 2, p. 780 bold added](#))

Again, notice the conjectural language, but also the confidence he seems to have about his notions.

Everything else about this so called “ancient” goddess Eostra/Ostara has been made up since the late 1800s. And it has been made up out of nothing.

Recently an historian has offered another suggestion. In his article *Ostern. Geschichte eines Wortes* [[D. H. Green The Modern Language Review Vol. 96, No. 1 \(Jan., 2001\), pp. 247-249](#)] Jürgen Udolph suggested that by exemplified usages and historical linguistics believes that the goddess names Ostara and Eostre are false conclusions. Rather Udolph traces “Ostern / Easter” from a Nordic root *ausa* “to pour water,” which was proposed by Siegfried Gutenbrunner in 1966. In this way both the linguistic form of the word in Bede and Einhard along with the name Eostrewine can be maintained, the listing of seasons and seasonal tasks is maintained in Bede, there is no need to create a potential mythology. The implication is that the word Easter would actually etymologically derived from the main baptism service during Easter night.

Before all Sacramental Christians get excited about this article, we need to remember that it too is an historical conjecture. But this conjecture seems to address the evidence as evidence and requires not fanciful and imaginative mythology to be created in support of it.

On the use of Ostern as “Baptize” see also “Ostern”, in: *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde, Volume 22, 2000*.

The neo-pagans and wiccans have made up all kinds of claims that the Easter holiday had to do with fertility and reproduction. They claim that Ashtorah was a reproductive goddess. There is no evidence in the Bible that the asherah poles and other references to Ashera or Ashtorah had anything to do with fertility. And there is nothing that links the Ashtorah of the Bible with the old Babylonian goddess Ishtar.

Some modern archaeologists who try to show the evolution of religions in the middle-east have conjectured that ancient Ugaritic goddess named Athirat might be linked to the Bible’s Ashtorah even though many Ugaritic documents say otherwise. A few of these scholars also conjectured that this Ugaritic goddess might be the equivalent of Babylon’s Ishtar, but this is only conjecture.

So where are we with real history for “Easter”?

The word Easter comes either from the old Anglo-Saxon word meaning “to shine”-possibly to describe the months of the year when the sun began to get brighter and higher during the day. Or it may come from the word “to baptize” indicating the Baptisms which took place on Easter. In 1525 William Tyndale used the Middle-English word “ester” = “Easter” as a translation for Passover and the day of Christ’s Resurrection. The word had already been long used and understood as referring to the day of Christ’s Resurrection when Tyndale made his translation.

Despite what modern pagans and wiccans wish the past might have been, there were no known pagan or wiccan celebrations of a pagan-easter in England or northern Europe in the period from the Middle Ages through the Reformation and up to the late 1800s.

So there are two modern myths that we have debunked: first, it is not true that the name of Easter came from the worship of a pagan spring goddess; second, it is not true that the Easter celebration was a celebration of fertility and reproduction.

Easter Eggs

Where did the Easter Egg come from?

There are several traditions which converge to bring us the Easter egg. And there is some modern nonsense that really has nothing to do with the use of eggs at Easter.



First, there is a sculpture on the Persepolis of ancient Iran of a line of people bearing gifts on the New Year day celebration on the Spring equinox. One of the many different gifts carried by the people in this sculpture appears to be an egg. This was carved by the old pagan Zoroastrians from ancient Persia (modern Iran).

From this sculpture modern pagans have conjectured that Christians stole the idea of using eggs at Easter from the ancient Zoroastrians. The problem is that none of the writers in the ancient Christian church mention this tradition where they came into contact with Zoroastrians.

Still, the modern neo-pagans and wiccans assert that the egg is an ancient sign of fertility. That seems as bright a claim as saying that water is wet.

Of the traditions that actually do contribute to Christianity using eggs in the Easter celebration there are three to consider.

First: In the celebration of the Passover meal, which Christ celebrated the night before He was crucified, a roasted whole egg is placed as one of six food items on the Passover plate. The egg, called Beitzah symbolizes the Passover sacrifice that was offered in the [Temple in Jerusalem](#) and was then eaten as part of the meal on Seder night. The egg was introduced to the Passover meal after the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. The egg was the first dish served at Jewish funerals in the time of Christ's ministry on earth. The egg was also used as a symbol of mourning the loss of the Temple where the Passover Lamb

was sacrificed. It is usually eaten dipped in salt water which symbolizes the bitter tears of the people.

Early Christians in the first and second century continued to celebrate the Passover along with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Primarily the Passover was celebrated because of Christ's institution of the Lord's Supper.

Second: the season preceding Easter is called Lent. The season of Lent is a fast. In [the article on Lent](#) we saw how ancient this practice was and where it started. In both the eastern and western Church this meant fasting from meat and bird flesh—including eggs. Eggs were used to break the Lenten fast on Easter Morning. In preparation for this breaking of the fast the eggs were decorated to commemorate the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the Paschal Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world. The breaking of the shell became a symbol of Christ's rending of the tomb.

Indeed, the use of decorated eggs to celebrate Christ's resurrection on Easter morning is so widespread across the world and so closely tied with the spread of Christianity that one cannot call it anything but a Christian tradition. But that doesn't keep the neo-pagans and modern commentators from trying to claim that Christian's "stole" this so-called "pagan" tradition.

So we turn to the third tradition:

The Easter Hare

The typical image used to demonstrate that that the Easter Bunny was the consort of Ostara/Eostra is this:

As we have seen above, Ostara/Eostra didn't really exist. And since she didn't exist she couldn't have had a bunny as a consort. But where do they get this ancient looking, archaeological type statue of Ostara and the Rabbit?

The problem with the image is that it is of a [Mayan goddess](#) (Guatemalen [Ixchel](#)). This false goddess can only be dated back to the 1600s A.D. Wrong continent. Wrong hemisphere. Wrong epoch.



All those websites, videos, and well meaning people who try to argue that Easter is pagan and use this picture to do so have a basic problem with honesty.

There is an interesting doubling up of the Easter bunny with the fictional goddess Ostara. The modern ‘histories’ of Easter tend to claim 1) that Easter was originally a pagan fertility holiday 2) of devotion to the goddess Ostara (Eastre, however spelled), 3) she used eggs as a symbol of fertility, and 4) she always carried a pet bunny because it was so fertile. Now, all of these 4 claims are fiction.

So where did the bunny really come from?

According to Karl Joseph Simrok’s 1855 book called *Handbuch Der Deutschen Mythologie Mit Einschluss Der Nordischen*, “The rabbit is a pagan symbol and has always been an emblem of fertility.” (page 551) The old 1911 *Catholic Encyclopedia* cites this as proof that Christians cannot use the rabbit in celebration of Easter. But I cannot find this sentence in my copy of Simrok’s book. Perhaps mine is a different edition.

What is interesting about the rabbit or hare is that it has been used by all kinds of religions around the world as a symbol. Each religion fitting its own teaching on the symbol of the rabbit. But in most cases the symbol refers to new life. In the ancient eastern Church the rabbit was used on tombstones and as a symbol of Christ. One author points out that some early Christians viewed the rabbit’s hole as a symbol of the tomb of Christ.

Probably the most complete and systematic study to date is actually Birgit Gehrish’s *Lepusculus Domini, Erotic Hare, Meister Lampe” Zur Rolle des Hasen in der Kulturgeschichte*, Inaugural-Dissertaion zur Erlangun, VVB Laufersweiler Verlag, Wettenberg, Germany, 2005.

Christian art has several examples from the early times through the renaissance of rabbits as a symbol of Christ.

To name just a few The three [hare window](#) in Paderborn, Germany and also in the

monastery Muottatal in Switzerland, where three rabbits are together in a triangle with only one ear each showing, symbolizing the [Trinity](#),



There are actually dozens of examples like this one above scattered all across Europe and Asia.

[Martin Schongauer](#)'s 1470 engraving *The Temptation of Jesus* has three by three rabbits at the feet of Jesus Christ.

His student [Albrecht Dürer](#)'s woodcut of 1497 *The Holy Family with the Three Hares* showing two hares next to each other and the other going down toward a hole with a stone rolled next to it;



Hans Baldung Grien 1512-1516 painted the altar for the [Freiburg Cathedral](#) with the second panel representing Mary's Visitation to Elizabeth where he painted the rabbits about the feet of Mary and Elizabeth;



Titan's Madonna and Child with St. Catherine and a Rabbit which was painted in 1530.



I picked these works of art because they are all pretty much pre-Reformation. They demonstrate that the rabbit or hare was used a symbol of Christ and the Resurrection before the time of the Reformation.

America owes the use of the Easter Bunny to the Pennsylvania Deutch settlers who came from Alsace, a German and French area on the border between the two countries. Back in 1678 [Georg Franck von Frankenau](#) in 1682 wrote against the excessive eating of Easter eggs which parents would leave in the name of the Easter Hare–the Resurrected Christ. The people from this region settled in Pennsylvania and brought with them their symbolism and traditions surrounding the hare representing Christ, the egg representing the tomb, and Christ’s resurrection with the giving and breaking of eggs when the fast of Lent was ended on Easter Sunday.

Summary

Yes, Easter, the eggs, the bunny, all of them are still being perverted into something else by our own society. The devil, the world, and our own flesh don't want to hear about Christ's resurrection and will attack any symbols used to teach the resurrection.

But now you know enough of the real history of Easter and the symbols used by the Christian Church to celebrate this holiday.

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