

The Easter Bunny Controversy!

(The true origins of Easter)

The general purpose of this study is to comment on the Easter Bunny's historical role as a pagan religious icon.

Unfortunately, most people living in today's society are completely unaware of the fact that the Easter Bunny is a religious icon dating back hundreds of years. It's NOT the harmless non-religious figure most people believe it to be.

So where exactly did the Easter Bunny come from? The Easter Bunny was first used as a pagan religious icon back in 16th Century Germany. Originally called "Oschter Haws", or "Osterhas", the Easter Bunny was first introduced to American folklore by German settlers who arrived in Pennsylvania Dutch country during the 1700's.

The anticipated arrival of the "Oschter Haws" was considered one of "childhood's greatest pleasures" next to a visit from Christ-Kindel (i.e., Kris Kringle) on Christmas Eve. Children were led to believe that if they were good the whole year round then "Oschter Haws" would mysteriously appear on Easter morning and lay a nest full of colored eggs.

However, it should be noted that the Easter Bunny really didn't become a part of popularized American culture until after the Civil War. Why is that? Our early American forefathers were very much against the idea of associating a pagan religious icon with the true worship of Jesus Christ, especially on the very day commemorating His Resurrection.

Why were they so opposed to the idea? That's easy! Any attempt to reconcile, merge or even unify two opposing religious beliefs into one, such as paganism and Christianity, is correctly defined as "Religious Syncretism."

Religious syncretism is a very dangerous practice, not to mention heavily denounced by the Lord Himself in the book of Revelation. Did you ever wonder what the "doctrine of Balaam" was all about in Revelation 2:14?

The prophet Balaam was initially responsible for introducing religious syncretism to the nation of Israel. How so? Balaam was unable to bring a curse upon the nation of Israel, so he came up with an idea to introduce God's People to certain aspects of the Moabite religion, the worship of Baal-Peor, which would ultimately result in the people of Israel bringing a curse upon themselves. How so? The Israelites were taught to incorporate the religious practices of the Moabites with their own true worship of God, which in turn brought about God's judgment. Why? Religious syncretism is a form of idolatry!

Speaking of religious syncretism... the Roman Empire had this practice down to an art-form! As Christianity began to make its way through the Empire, it became common practice to adopt, modify and even assimilate pagan religious festivals and deities into Christian theology. How could the Roman Church ever allow such a thing?

1. The Roman Empire used religious syncretism for centuries as a means of expanding and firming up the integrity of the Empire. This method of cultural absorption was primarily used as a peace keeping measure to help ensure that its ethnically diverse population remained friendly with the State, and with each other. The practice seemed to bode well for the Empire in a political sense, but it really should have remained outside the Roman Church.
2. As the gospel message made its journey through the Roman Empire; prospective converts were quite reluctant to give up their pagan practices, festivals and traditions. So what did the Roman Church choose to do about this little problem? In a last ditch effort to appease the reluctant converts, and make Christianity even more attractive to the unbelieving masses, the Roman Church decided simply to "absorb" the pagan religious practices into Christianity.

We're talking about religious syncretism at its very worst! Of course, the Roman Church's plan originally called for the complete removal of all pagan holidays, festivals and traditions from Christianity once the pagan converts became accustomed to the Christian lifestyle. And what's even worse is the fact that the Roman Church seemingly forgot all about

this so-called removal process. It never happened, which is the very reason why pagan religious icons such as the Easter Bunny are still around today, and continue to grow ever more popular in American society.

So what more can I say about the Easter Bunny? Where did it come from? Why is it considered a pagan religious icon? Is it connected in some way with a pagan deity? These are all very important questions, so let's take an even closer look at the Easter Bunny from an historical point-of-view starting with the Anglo-Saxons of 16th Century Germany.

Historically speaking... the Anglo-Saxons of 16th Century Germany held the hare (or "bunny") in the highest possible regard. How so? As a sacred animal, the Saxons would actually go so far as to worship the hare as an earthly manifestation of the lunar fertility goddess "Eostre", or "Eastre" during their pagan religious festival celebrating the vernal equinox. This pagan religious festival would serve to forever link the fertility goddess "Eostre" with her sacred animal symbol, the "Eostre" Bunny.

So who exactly is this pagan fertility goddess?

Well apparently... the Wiccan's still venerate the fertility goddess "Eostre" as an important religious symbol during their annual celebration of the vernal equinox, so let's take a closer look at what they have to say about this pagan deity.

Please note: The following information is taken directly from a website dealing with "Ostara", one of the four lesser Wiccan holidays celebrating the vernal equinox. "Ostara" is one of many alias names connected with the fertility goddess "Eostre."

Eastre

Eastre, otherwise known as Eostre, Easter, Oстера, and Oestre is an Anglo-Saxon fertility goddess celebrated during the vernal equinox (the first day of spring), approximately March 21st on the Gregorian calendar.

The lunar goddess is in her aspect of mother to be. Her symbol is the egg, symbolizing fertility in nature and rebirth from the long cold winter months. The seeds are now sown, ready to grow and ripen. The goddess is fertile, rich with promise and potential life. (It is from the word "oestre" that we get the word "estrogen" – the female hormone). To the Saxons she was "Ostara", who in myth is said to have amused children by turning her bird into a rabbit. The rabbit would then lay colored eggs much to the delight of the children.

Now... it should be noted that the actual relationship between the fertility goddess "Eostre" and her pagan religious symbol, the hare (or "bunny"), did not actually originate in 16th Century Germany with the creation of the "Oschter Haws." No, no, this relationship goes back even further. How much further? Well, apparently the goddess "Eostre" is known all over the world by a variety of aliases in different cultures, countries and time periods. What are some of those aliases? Let's take a look!

- The Romans identified her as "Venus"
- The Greeks identified her as "Aphrodite"
- The Babylonians identified her as "Ishtar"
- The Phoenicians identified her as "Astarte"
- The Egyptians identified her as "Hathor"
- The Ephesians identified her as "Diana"
- The Sumerians identified her as "Inanna"
- The Canaanites identified her as "Asherah"

And the list goes on! Of course, the actual worship of the hare (or "bunny") as a sacred animal in connection with the above aliases of "Eostre", the Saxon fertility goddess, takes us all the way back to ancient Egypt. How so?

Thousands of years ago, the Egyptians began to notice a direct correlation between the menstrual cycles of women and the cycles of the moon. This ancient discovery is the very reason why the moon, the hare, and the egg all became such popular symbols of fertility all over the world. It also helps to explain why the moon is always associated with pagan female deities.

On another related note... the Old Testament of the Bible actually points to the veneration of "Eostre" as an abomination unto the Lord under one of her many aliases, "Ashtoreth", the female counterpart of Baal (2 Kings 23:13).

This leads me to my next question... If the Bible plainly points to the veneration of "Ashtoreth", otherwise known as "Eostre", as an abomination unto the Lord, why then do we continue to associate this pagan fertility goddess, and her sacred religious symbol, the "Eostre" Bunny, with the celebration of our Lord's Resurrection? Isn't an abomination still an abomination?

Of course, some people would simply choose to argue with me on this point by quoting Acts 12:4 in the New Testament. Why is that? Acts 12:4 is the only place in the entire English Bible where the word "Easter" actually appears:

Acts 12:4 - "And when he (Herod) had apprehended him (Peter), he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people."

And so, on the surface level it certainly does appear as if the New Testament is actually endorsing the word "Easter" as an approved Christian holiday, but as the proverbial saying goes, "Appearances can be deceiving." And they are! How so?

The word "Easter" is actually nowhere to be found in the original Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. The actual Greek word used in the manuscripts is "Pascha" meaning "Passover." It's interesting... the Greek word "Pascha" is correctly translated into the English language as "Passover" in 27 of the 28 times the word is used in the New Testament. Acts 12:4 is the only place in the entire Bible where the word "Pascha" is severely mistranslated. Somehow the English translators decided to replace what is clearly "the Passover celebration" with a pagan religious festival called "Easter", or "Eastre."

Please note: You can verify this for yourself by looking up the word "Easter" in a Strong's Concordance (Greek #3957)