

## THE OBSERVER

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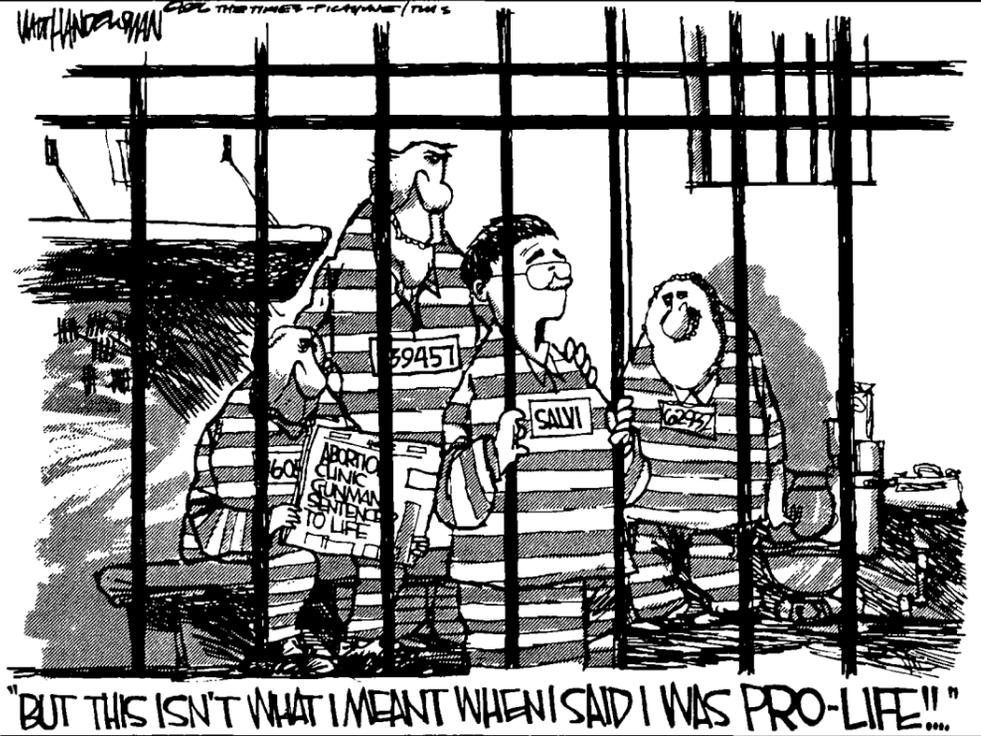
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### ■ AND IN THIS CORNER

## Easter: The full moon fever of those Europeans

Today's column will be utterly void of controversy, with a simplistic and chatty description of a boring topic, like how I have decided to repent my evil ways and rejoin the happy Catholic family in worshipping ecclesiastical control of my thoughts or how my relationship with my dog Marcus embodies the ultimate meaning of Christian ideals.

April Fool!

No, wait, that was yesterday. Dang. I never get my columns printed on any cool days. I mean, what the hell happens on April 2nd? Even Opening Day was yesterday. Today is the Rodney Dangerfield Day.

### Matthew Apple

With that kind of lead-in — and with the knowledge of just how many writers this week will bleed their passion for the Savior onto the page — how can I resist writing about Easter?

I have mixed memories of Easter as a child: being forced to dress up in dumb three-piece suits handed down from my uncle, waking up my parents at 6 a.m. as my siblings and I scoured the living room and dining room for our Easter baskets...

Now there's a thought...what do eggs and bunnies have to do with a Christian holiday? Hmm, I probably ought to do some research before I write any more about this. Hold on. Stay right there, I'll be right back.

Okay, I'm back, that didn't take too long. The wonders of modern technology — I don't even have to go to a library to find authoritative information (books are

obsolete, man). From obscure World Wide Web files, I present the following potentially-jarring religious information:

"...the name 'Easter' was taken from the name of a Teutonic female lunar goddess, Eostre (from whence we also get the name of the female hormone, estrogen). Her chief symbols were the bunny (both for fertility and because her worshippers saw a hare in the full moon) and the egg (symbolic of the cosmic egg of creation), images which Christians have been hard pressed to explain. Her holiday, the Eostara, was held on the Vernal Equinox Full Moon.

"Of course, the Church doesn't celebrate full moons, even if they do calculate by them, so they planted their Easter on the following Sunday. Thus, Easter is always the first Sunday after the first Full Moon after the Vernal Equinox. If you've ever wondered why Easter moved all around the calendar, now you know.

"(By the way, the Catholic Church is so adamant about NOT incorporating lunar Goddess symbolism that they added a further calculation: if Easter Sunday were to fall on the Full Moon itself, then Easter was postponed to the following Sunday instead.)"

(Excerpted from "Lady Day: the Vernal Equinox," by Mike Nichols.)

Food for thought, eh? I have no idea if any of this information is correct. Most likely it's simply interesting speculation — for instance, I'd like to know where the French and German words for Easter come from, because, since Easter is an English word, they sure didn't come from "Eostre." And they still haven't explained my sudden craving for Easter chocolate.

The thing about the moons is pretty interesting, though. It has a ring of truth to it. After all, the "Christmas tree" was adopted by Christianity from various Germanic/Celtic tree-huggers, as was "Santa Claus," whom the Church sainted for no apparent reason.

And, of course, there is the relation of

the Resurrection to various myths from antiquity. The fertility cycles of Adonis (Syria), Attis (Phrygia), Osiris (Egypt), and Dionysus (Greece) are all about death and rebirth, and most involve trees and journeys into the underworld. Practically every culture throughout the world has similar cycles of rebirth and rejuvenation. Easter is just the Christian version.

Difference is, the cycles of antiquity were all celebrated either in August or October at the harvests. The northern Europeans evidently celebrated at the beginning of spring. And since the Church wanted to expand control over Europe, why bother holding a festival of rebirth in the fall? Makes sense.

I don't mean to lessen the importance of Easter at all — just to show that

Christianity doesn't have a monopoly on human culture or history. Easter, the Equinox, what have you, is a time to rejoice at the coming of Spring and the banishment of crappy South Bend weather. I can't believe I'm actually looking forward to 45 degrees and horizontal rain.

So, eat, drink and be merry, etc., etc. Hey, we've got a four-day weekend coming up. Sounds like a three-day celebration to me.

Matt Apple is a creative writing graduate student at Notre Dame. Party hardy at <http://www.nd.edu/~mapple/> or call the idolatrous pagan at [matthew.t.apple.1@nd.edu](mailto:matthew.t.apple.1@nd.edu).



### ■ DOONESBURY

GARRY TRUDEAU

### ■ QUOTE OF THE DAY



"If people don't want to come out to the ballpark, nobody's going to stop them."

—Yogi Berra