Plan.

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**I. The moral lessons given us by Jesus.**

Celebrating Easter, seeing the happy faces of people around, hearing the joyful announcements “Christ is risen”, and, on the whole, enjoining these God-blessed sunny spring days, let us pause for a moment and ponder on some of the moral lessons given us by Jesus.

We well know that Christianity is ethical through and through, but strange as it may seem, the moral teaching of Christ himself is not very circumstantial. On the contrary, He appears rather terse on these matters, and it is in His deeds, not words, that the larger part of His mission found its expression. As a person, with all His inclinations and intentions, He does not seem to be a determined moral reformer, not to speak of a revolutionary; and he was not in the least a scholar or a man of letters. He wrote nothing. He mowed quietly and slowly along the highways and among the villages of Galilee and Judea and spoke to people not about any intricate problems of human existence, or theology, or the mysteries of life and death, but about things which belonged to the realm of daily life; and the words he chose for that were the words of common men, not those of a professor of ethics.

He summed up His “theology” in an amazingly short and simple phrase “God is love”; and meeting people He very often did not teach them, as He actually did from time to time, but offered them a ready sympathy and understanding, even to the degraded and the outcast. To them He spoke in the language of tolerance and benevolence, forgiveness and mercy. That was His love – and that was the beginning of the moral revolution that transformed the world.

**II. When is a Easter?**

The greatest Christian festival of the year is Easter. It is either in March or in April, and millions of people joyously observe Christ’s resurrection. This holy day never comes before March 22 or after April 25.

When is an Easter? That, of course, is celebrated on the first Sunday after the paschal moon, which is the first full moon that occurs on or next after the vernal equinox, March, 21st. So all you need to do is look at the sky? Afraid not. For the moon in question is not the real moon, but a hypothetical moon. This one goes round the earth one month in 29 days, the next in 30 days, though with certain modifications to make the date of both the real and fictional full moons coincide as nearly as possible. It yields a date for Easter that can be as early as March 22nd and as late as April 25th. Today, Easters variability suits antiquarians, and the makers of pocket diaries, many of which devote a Full page to the calculation of Easter in perpetuity. But, nearly 1,700 years on, it does not suit those in (mostly European) countries such as Britain and Germany where both Good Friday and Easter Monday are public holidays. Early Easters are too cold to enjoy. Late Easters are jammed up against the May Day public holiday.

**III. Eastertide.**

Passion Sunday or Care Sunday two Sundays before Easter, is still known as Carling Sunday in parts of the north of England. Carlings are small dried peas, which are soaked in water overnight and then fried in an almost dry pan – when they start to burst they are ready. Greengrocers sell them, pubs serve them, and people eat them at home in a basin with a small piece of butter and plenty of pepper and salt. There seems to be no good reason, apart from the strength of the tradition, why they are eaten on this day.

Palm Sunday is the Sunday before Easter; for people near Marlborough in Wiltshire it meant following a long-established custom in which willow hazel sprays – representing palm – were carried up Martinsell Hill.

Maundy Thursday is the Thursday before Easter: the ‘royal maundy’ describes the gift which for the last five hundred ears or so has been given out by the sovereign on Maundy Thursday to as many men and woman as there are years in his or her age. Once it was clothing which was given out, now it is a sum of money; on odd – numbered years the ceremony usually takes place at Westminster Abbey, in even – numbered ones at a church or cathedral elsewhere in the country – though 1989 seems to have been an exception, for the distribution took place at Birmingham Cathedral in honor of the centenary of the city’s incorporation.

On Good Friday, the day of the crucifixion, hot cross buns are always eaten as a sign of remembrance, and in some baker’s shops and supermarkets they are on sale for many weeks before. It is a nationwide tradition, though hot cross buns were unknown in some places – Bath, for example – until the twentieth century. The buns may in fact pre – date Christianity, since bread consecrated to the Roman gods was marked with lines intersecting at right angels.

People celebrate the holiday according to the beliefs and their religious denominations. Christians commemorate Good Friday as the day that Jesus Christ died and Easter Sunday as the day that He was resurrected. Protestant settlers brought the custom of a sunrise service, a religious gathering at dawn, to the United States.

Today on Easter Sunday, children wake up to find that the Easter Bunny has left them baskets of candy. He has also hidden the eggs that they decorated earlier that week. Children hunt for the eggs all around the house. Neighborhoods and organizations hold Easter egg hunts, and the child who finds the most eggs wins a prize.

In England, children rolled eggs down hills on Easter morning, a game which has been connected to the rolling away of the rock from Jesus Christ’s tomb when He was resurrected. British settlers brought this custom to the New World.

One unusual Easter Sunday tradition can be seen at Radley, near Oxford, where parishioners ‘clip’ or embrace their church – they join hands and make a human chain round it. It is Easter Monday, however, which sees a veritable wealth of traditional celebrations throughout the country: to name bat’ a few, there is morris dancing in many tows, including a big display at Thaxted in Essex; orange rolling, perhaps a descendant of egg roiling, which takes place on Dunstable Downs in Bedfordshire; and for perhaps eight hundred years or more there has been a distribution of food at the Kent village of Biddenden, ten miles from Ashford.

Then there is Leicestershire’s famous hare – pie scramble and bottle – kicking which also takes place on Easter Monday; and another custom kept up in many parts of England and Wales and called ‘lifting’ or ‘heaving’ was taken by some to symbolize Christ’s resurrection. On Easter Monday the men lifted any woman they could find, and the women reciprocated the following day; the person was taken by the four limbs and lifted three times to shoulder height. When objections were made that this was ‘a rude, indecent and dangerous diversion’ a chair bedecked with ribbons and flowers was used instead – it was lifted with its victim, turned three times, and put down.

The Easter parade.

The origin of this very picturesque traditional occasion, known affectionately as Easter Parade and starting at 3 o’clock in the afternoon of Easter Sunday, is not as remote, or mysterious, as many of the traditions and customs of England; there is no religious, or superstitious significance attached to it whatsoever.

In 1858 Queen Victoria gave it the ultimate cachet of respectability and class by paying it a state visit in the spring. For the occasion she wore, of course, a new spring bonnet and gown. This set the fashion for a display each spring of the newest fashions in millinery and gowns, and from then onwards that traditions has expanded; every society lady vied with her rivals to appear in something more spectacular than anything that had seen before.

IV. Easter egg and Easter hare.

An egg has a symbolical meaning in many centuries. It’s well known that eggs had a special significance even in the times of ancient Romans. Eggs were their first disk during meals (“ab ovo”) and they were also in the center of competition as a memory of Zeus’s sons, who hatched from eggs. Such competition took place in France, Germany, and Switzerland. Eggs was a sign of hope, life fertility even in the early epoch. In Christianity, the Lord’s gift, which has begun in Jesus Christ. Eggs’ spreading as the Easter symbols turned to be possible because they sewed as an original rent or as a tax. The Easter was one of the days when this pay could be accomplished.

Excavations witness that traditions of paintings on eggs have been existing for 5000 years and have their regional peculiarities. Especially in Slavonic countries eggs are decorated with many colored pictures of Christian motives. As expensive souvenirs it was a habit to give eggs made of noble metals, marble, was and wood.

The Easter hare, which, children believe, brings the Easter eggs, may be understood as a transformed Easter lamb. In those places, where there was no sheepbreeding, a hare substituted for a sheep in the Raster meal. Due to its ability not to sleep the hare become a symbol of resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Easter Eggs.

Wherever Easter is celebrated, there Easter eggs are usually to be found. In their modern form, they are frequently artificial, mere imitations of the real thing, made of chocolate or marzipan or sugar, or of two pieces of coloured and decorated cardboard fitted together to make an eggs-shaped case containing some small gift. These are the Easter eggs of commerce, which now appear in shop-windows almost as soon as, and sometimes even before, Ash Wednesday is past, and by so doing lose much of their original festival significance.

This is a real egg, hard-boiled, died in bright colours, and sometimes elaborately decorated. In still appears upon countless breakfast-tables on Eater Day, or is hidden about the house and garden for the children to find. In some European countries, including England, the Easter Hare is said to bring the Easter eggs, and to conceal them in odd corners of the gardens, stables, or outbuildings.

Because eggs are obvious symbols of continuing life and resurrection, the pagan peoples of ancient China, Egypt, Greece, and Persia used them, centuries before tile first Easter Day, at the great Spring Festivals, when the revival of all things in Nature was celebrated.

Colouring and decorating the festival eggs seems to have been customary since time immemorial. And old Polish legend says that Our Lady herself painted eggs red, blue, and green to amuse the Infant Jesus, and that since then all good polish mothers have done the same at Easter. A Romanian tale says that the vivid red shade, which is a favorite almost everywhere, represents the blood of Christ.

There are many ways of tinting and decorated the eggs, some simple and some requiring a high degree of skill. They can be dipped into a prepared dye or, more usually boiled in it, or they may be boiled inside a covering of onion-peel. Ordinary commercial dyes are often used today for coloring, but originally only natural ones, obtained from flowers, leaves, mosses, bark, wood-chips, or other sources, were employed. In England, gorse-blossom was commonly used for yellow, cochineal for scarlet, and logwood-chips for a rich purple.

In Switzerland, minute flowers and leaves are sometimes laid on the egg underneath the onion-peel to make a white flower-pattern on the yellow or brown surface.

The decoration of Easter eggs is a traditional peasant art in Eastern and Central Europe. Favorite designs vary in different regions. In Hungary, red flower-patterns on a white ground are often seen; sometimes the decorated eggs are fitted with tiny metal shoes, with minute spurs attached, and curious little metal hangers. In Yugoslavia, the letters XV usually form part of the design. They stand for Christos Vaskrese, meaning ‘Christ is risen’, which is the traditional Easter greeting of Easter Europe. Russian eggs are sometimes elaborately decorated with miniature picture of the saints, or of Our Lord. Polish designs are often geometrical, or abstract, or they may include Christian symbols, like the Gross or Fish, mixed with pagan emblems of new life. Painted eggs of this type, know as pisanki, always appear on the Easter Table.

In some East European countries, scarlet eggs, as symbols of resurrection, are placed on, or buried in, the graves of the family dead. The latter custom was known in northern England until about the middle of last century. One or two of the most beautifully ornamented Pace-eggs – the name by which Easter eggs are still most commonly called in the northern counties – would be saved and kept in tall ale – glasses in a corner cupboard, or some other place where they could be easily seen. In Scotland, Easter eggs are often called Peace or Paiss eggs. ‘Pace’ and ‘Paiss’ are all corruptions of Pasch, or Paschal, of which the original root is the Hebrew word pisach meaning Passover.

In parts of Germany during the early 1880s, Easter eggs substituted for birth certificates. An egg was dyed a solid color, then a design, which included the recipient’s name and birth date, was etched into the shell with a needle or sharp tool. Such Easter eggs were honored in law courts as evidence of identity and age.

Easter Bunny.

That a rabbit, or more accurately a hare, became a holiday symbol can be traced to the origin of the word “Easter”. According to the Venerable Bede, the English historian who lived from 672 to 735, the goddess Easter was worshiped by the Anglo – Saxons through her earthly symbol, the hare.

The custom of the Easter hare came to America with the Germans who immigrated to Pennsylvania in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

From Pennsylvania, they gradually spread out to Virginia, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, New York, and Canada, taking their customs with them. Most eighteenth – century Americans, however, were of more austere religious denominations, such as Quaker, Presbyterian, and Puritan. They virtually ignored such a seemingly frivolous symbol as a white rabbit. More than a hundred years passed before this Teutonic Easter tradition began to gain acceptance in America. In fact, it was not until after the Civil War, with its Legacy of death and destruction, that the nation as a whole began a widespread observance of Easter it self, led primarily by Presbyterians. They viewed the story of resurrection as a source of inspiration and renewed hope for the millions of bereaved Americans.

V. Thoughts from Ireland.

By tradition, Good Friday has always been a day of mourning and fasting, for decorating churches with branches of yew (palm) and other evergreens, and the ceremonial distribution of gifts to the poor.

Many Christians fast and attend services between noon and 3 p. m., the hours Jesus is believed to have spent on the cross, since the day commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus.

On Easter Sunday the churches are beautifully decorated with white lilies. Joyful religious music is heard and sermons ring with hope. Children and their parents traditionally attend church, usually wearing new spring clothes. The mothers and their daughters wear colorful flowered hats. Many other traditions and popular customs, which probably go back to pagan times, are also associated with Easter throughout Europe, for example, the sending of Easter cards and the giving of Easter eggs. Eggs are a symbol of life and fertility or recreation of spring. It was not however until the 19th century, that the practice of giving and exchanging eggs at Easter was introduced in England.

Easter custom, the barrels are gratefully emptied by the participants. In London there is Easter Parade in Battersea Park. What used to be merely an occasion for sporting the latest fashions in the park on Easter Sunday has now developed into one of the most spectacular carnival processions of the year, with military bands, decorated floats, Easter Princess, and all.

Another thing English people traditionally eat at Easter is hot cross-buns. One would hardly use them to cure whooping cough, but in bygone days buns, which had been baked on Good Friday, were thought to have magical healing powers. Because of the spices they contain, hot cross-buns seldom go moldy, and even today country housewives hang a few from the kitchen beams to dry. When needed, the buns can be powdered, mixed with milk or water and given as a medicine. Of course, for the magic cure to work, they have to be buns that were actually baked on Good Friday. For Easter dinners at family reunions Englishmen traditionally eat baked ham or chicken with a famous English apple-pie to follow/

For a good apple pie you will need:

1 lb apples (500 gm)

4 oz flour (100 gm)

2 oz butter or margarine (50 gm)

3 oz sugar (75 gm)

2 oz sultans (50 gm)

1 oz chopped nuts (25 gm)

1-teaspoon cinnamon.

Now you can make a real English apple – pie. Here are the instructions. Put them in the correct order, and number the instructions 1 to 6:

Mix the nuts, sultanas, cinnamon and half the sugar with the apples. Bake in a medium oven (300F) for 30 minutes. Peel and core the apples. Cut them into small pieces and put them into a baking dish. Sieve the flour into a mixing bowl. Sprinkle the mixture over the apples.

Rub the soft butter into the flour with your finger – tips. When the butter melts, the mixture will look like bread – crumbs. Add the rest of the sugar. And now serve the pie hot with cream. Enjoy it! And as Russians say, **Christ is risen!** Expecting the answer, **Christ is risen indeed!**

VI. Easter in England.

Easter it is a time for the giving and receiving of presents which traditionally take the form of an Easter egg and hot cross buns. The Easter egg is by far the most popular emblem of Easter, but fluffy little chicks, baby rabbits and spring time flowers like daffodils, dangling catkins and the arum lily are also used to signify the Nature's awakening.

Nowadays Easter eggs are usually made of chocolate or marzipan or sugar. True Easter eggs are hard-boiled, dyed in bright colours, and sometimes elaborately decorated. Colouring and decorating the festival eggs seems to have been customary since time immemorial They can be dipped into a prepared dye or, more usually, boiled in it, or they may be boiled inside a covering of onion peel Natural dyes are often used for coloring today. They are obtained from flowers, leaves, mosses, bark, and wood-chips.

Egg-rolling is a traditional Easter pastime which still flourishes in Britain. It takes place on Easter Sunday or Monday, and consists of rolling coloured, hard-boiled eggs down a slope until they are cracked and broken after which they are eaten by their owners. In some districts this is a competitive game. But originally egg-rolling provided an opportunity for divination. Each player marked his or her egg with an identifying sign and then watched to see how it sped down the slope. If it reached the bottom unscathed, the owner could expect good luck in the future, but if it was broken, unfortune would follow before the year was out, Eating hot cross buns at breakfast on Good Friday morning is a custom which is also flourishing in most English households. Formerly, these round, cakes marked with a cross, eaten hot, were made by housewives who rose at dawn; for the purpose, or by local bakers who worked through the night to have them ready for delivery to their customers in time for breakfast. There is an old belief that the true Good Friday bun — that is, one made on the anniversary itself — never goes moldy, if kept in a dry place. It was once also supposed to have curative powers, especially for ailments like dysentery, diarrhea, whooping cough, and the complaint known as "summer sickness". Within living memory, it was still quite usual in country districts for a few buns to be hung from the kitchen ceiling until, they are needed. When illness came the bun was finely grated and mixed with milk or water, to make a medicine, which the patient drank.

1. Easter in Ukraine and Russia.

In Ukrainian, Easter is called Velikden (The Great Day). It has been celebrated over a long period of history and has many rich folk traditions that are no longer fully preserved. The last Sunday before Easter (Palm Sunday) is called Willow Sunday (Verbna nedilia). On this day pussy-willow branches are blessed in the church. The people tap one another with these branches, repeating the wish: ‘Be as tall as the willow, as healthy as the water, and as rich as the earth’.

The week before Easter, the Great Week (Holy Week), is called the White or Pure Week. During this time an effort is made to finish all fieldwork before Thursday, since from Thursday on work is forbidden. On the evening of ‘Pure’ (also called ‘Great’ or ‘Passion’ [Strasnyi]) Thursday, the passion (strasti) service is performed, after which the people return home with lighted candles. Maundy Thursday, called ‘the Eater of the dead’ in eastern Ukraine and Russia, is connected with the cult of the dead, who are believed to meet in the church on that night for the Divine Mass.

On Passion (Strasna) Friday – Good Friday – no work is done. In some localities, the Holy Shroud (plashchanytsia) is carried solemnly three times around the church and, after appropriate services, laid out for public veneration. For three days the community celebrates to the sound of bells and to the singing of spring songs – vesnianky. Easter begins with the Easter matins and high mass, during which the pasky (traditional Easter breads) and pysanky and krashanky (decorated or colored Easter eggs) are blessed in the church. Butter, lard, cheese, roast-suckling pigs, sausage, smoked meat, and little napkins containing poppy seeds, millet, salt, pepper, and horseradish are also blessed. After the matins all the people in the congregation exchange Easter greetings, give each other krashanky, and then hurry home with their baskets of blessed food.

The pysanky and krashanky are an old pre-Christian element and have an important role in the Eater rites. They are given as gifts or exchanged as a sign of affection, and their shells are put in water for the rakhmany (peaceful souls); finally, they are placed on the graves of the dead or buried in graves and the next day are taken out and given to the poor. Related to the exchange of krashanky is the rite of sprinkling with water, which is still carried on in Western Ukraine. During the Easter season in Ukraine and Russia the cult of the dead is observed. The dead are remembered on Maundy Thursday and also during the whole week after Easter. For the commemoration of the dead (provody) the people gather in the cemetery by the church, bringing with them a dish containing some food and liquor or wine, which they consume, leaving the rest at the graves.

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