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April 3, 2010: A Secular Easter?

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Title: A Secular Easter?

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4/3/2010—A Happy Easter to all the Christian readers of this blog. Actually, Easter, and by extension Christianity, is the subject of this entry. You can imagine some religions as secularized. Judaism, for example, has been approached this way by a variety of people seeking different goals: ethical, cultural, even food. The holidays of the Jewish calendar have obvious secular application: Yom Kippur, personal reflection; Passover, freedom; Shavuot, peace through just law; Succoth, environment and so forth. These holiday can be looked at without any necessary supernatural content, although to do that naturally alters their meaning. But the structure of the calendar and even many of the practices could be retained. You can imagine doing this with Buddhism and Islam as well, very differently in each case. But Christianity is different. As C.S. Lewis said, Christianity is one big miracle. Resurrection is not rebirth. And Jesus of Nazareth is not the same if the resurrection does not occur. And resurrection, although mysterious even in the Gospels, is not something natural. This matter needs to be thought through. Christianity is widely thought to have given birth to “the secular”, a category that hardly exists in other religions but is deeply woven into the Christian West. But can Christianity really co-exist with the secular? Dietrich Bonhoeffer thought it could, but was he right?