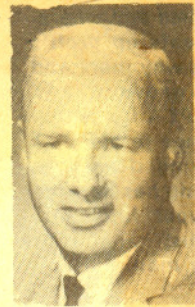


Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM



A friend recently pointed out the word “Easter” is pagan. It is derived from the Anglo-Saxon spring goddess named Eostre. Thus he is advocating we drop the word from our vocabulary.

To the Christian, however, the fact that Easter comes in the spring is just a happy coincident. To him Easter is not symbolized by blooming crocus, fuzzy pussy-willows, or chirping robins. Rather it is the constant reminder that Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead. Even more, He is alive today.

Recently the “divine prophet” of the black muslims, Elijah Muhammad, died in Chicago. His goal in life was to restore black Americans with a new sense of purpose. A worthy goal, although his methods were twisted and perverted. But when he died, he died.

The same is true with his predecessor, the founder of the Islam religion, Mohammed. He died on June 7, 632 — and remained dead.

In Asia there are millions of followers of Gautama Buddha who died in 544 BC at the age of 80. But like all other men, his biography closes with his death. He is remembered only in the jade, emerald, gold and brass statues that abound throughout the world.

Last fall when I was in Thailand I visited the shrine of the emerald Buddah in Bangkok. It is under heavy guard for the King knows that if that particular Buddah idol is ever destroyed the entire Siam civilization will crumble.

Christianity, however, does not center around an

idol or a tomb. The one indisputable and unique factor about Christianity — the one thing that sets it apart from all man-made religions — is the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is this fact that caused the apostle Paul to say, “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain . . .”

Last week I visited a friend in the hospital. His brushes with death had caused him to reach out to God — even though he claimed to be an agnostic. For it is in those moments, when everything material is snatched away, that man can see the clearest. There must be eternal life, we say, because Christ was raised from the dead.

Later that same afternoon I stood in the chapel of a funeral home. On a pedestal in the front of the room was a marble urn. It contained all that was left of the body of a friend — a handful of ashes. Mohammed, Buddah, science, money, prestige, fame — none had an answer for this grieving family. From that perspective all is “sic transit gloria mundi.”

Yet, because Christ is alive, those ashes had no meaning. And with more joy than any agnostic could ever understand, his wife and children were able to gather around that urn and sing, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Easter! Resurrection Day! What a glorious time for the Christian to be alive — or dead.