

CHERRY BLOSSOMS

Spontaneous flowering of ideas

7 May 2026



Last month, I spoke about the holy emptiness of God that transcends even the “highest” philosophical view of Buddhadharma, Middle-Way Consequentialism. Now, I’d like to say a few words about how I see the Buddha in relation to Jesus Christ.

Preamble

I shall be candid. The Buddha *was* an ordinary human being named Gotama who became enlightened, taught for 45 years, and died. A superb teacher of ethics, meditation, and wisdom, I see him as someone not unlike great Christian saints such as St. Francis of Assisi or St. Ignatius of Loyola. I can revere him as St. Gotama, holy and human. In contrast, Jesus of Nazareth *is* the incarnate *logos*, the second Person of the Triune God who took on human nature and is alive today, fully God and fully human. There is a chasm of difference between the two. Notwithstanding Mahayana interpretations of buddhas as transhistorical cosmic beings, the earliest most reliable account of the Buddha is that of an enlightened human teacher who lived and died. No supernatural existence intended. In this respect, I believe the secular Buddhists are right. But faith and devotion on the part of Buddhists led to quasi-deification of the Buddha, finally expressed in Mahayana images and ideas of buddhas as cosmic deities. This evidences the ubiquitous human longing for God, a thirst for the One who transcends mortality and confers fragile humanity with a sense of perennial hope.

But Jesus of Nazareth *was and is* radically different from all spiritual founders, the Buddha included. Gospel accounts show Jesus as evidently divine in origin, supported by numerous accounts of miraculous healing and deliverance, even resurrection from the dead in the case of Lazarus. Jesus himself made astounding claims of his identity with God and the salvific mission he has come to fulfil. But most importantly, Jesus accomplished what no one else in history ever did or could—he bore the totality of humanity’s sins and creation’s fallenness in his very being, suffered and died gruesomely for that, and was resurrected into his glorified body that transformed his earliest disciples who witnessed him from a motley bunch of fishermen, tax collectors, and doubters into courageous proclaimers of the living Christ in the face of persecution and death. This was not a fluke of psychological fiction but a real Presence that truly changed human hearts and human history.

Buddhology in Christ

Early Buddhist tradition based on the Pali *nikaya* and Chinese *agama* texts portrays Gotama the Buddha in more or less realistic ways: a human being who was born, wrestled with human existential issues, got “enlightened” and was “liberated” from suffering at the root, and taught his way of liberation for the next 45 years till his death in Kusinara. As an aside, enlightenment is not achieved but received, no matter how Buddhist rhetoric might construe and extol “self-effort” as the only way. If there is a “self” to exert effort, how is there any possibility of authentic liberation that is truly selfless and free of self-making? Mahayana buddhology many centuries later portrays Gotama Buddha as a quasi-divine being who continues after death as a nebulous stream of “enlightened wisdom and compassion” hovering throughout space and time, in union with infinite other buddhas with whose enlightened consciousness he is merged into an ocean of *dharmakaya*.

In this Mahayana view, every sentient being is said to have buddha-nature, seen either as the potential for future enlightenment or as an eternally present enlightened consciousness obscured by defilements pervading every sentient mind. Either way, this notion of buddha-nature begs the question: how did it get there or what is its source and origin? Buddhists have no answer to that question save that it simply *is* the case. I find that unsatisfactory. I would suggest that the answer lies in Christ, the eternal *logos* who is God the Son. Just as the answer to the question why is there something rather than nothing lies again in God the Creator in Christ. How so?

As I see it, buddha-nature has two sources: first, as divine image of the Triune God who made us; and second, as redeemed and restored spirit made new in Christ. Created in the image and likeness of God, humanity has the potential to grow into the fullness of divinity from the start, But Adam’s fall (however we interpret the Genesis story) meant that this divine potential was corrupted and wounded, even as remnants of it remain. It took Jesus Christ to redeem and restore us with a new and better spiritual nature. Hence, taken together, creation and redemption gave us our “buddha-nature” which is the divine image or spirit in us that enables spiritual growth and transformation into Christlikeness, a fullness of Spirit including but transcending even enlightenment itself. Note that the biblical term “spirit” is what I would identify as “pristine awareness” or “primordial consciousness” in Buddhist *dzogchen* terminology.

Enough said for now. More to be said but I’ve run out of space. Just reflect on this: are you willing to question your assumptions and open enough to allow for a deep experiential encounter with Reality that, if welcomed, would elicit a turning of consciousness that changes everything? I invite you into this journey of wisdom that is authentic faith.

Ad majorem dei gloriam

✠ **Chris**