

CHERRY BLOSSOMS

Spontaneous flowering of ideas

5 March 2026



As we survey our world in these dark times, we see the havoc of identity politics rooted in greed, hostility, and delusion manifesting in toxic religious nationalism. As a case in point, moneytheism (the worship of money and its corollary power) legitimized by the bad religion of Christian Nationalism is wreaking havoc on social harmony, civic liberties, economic wellbeing, religious freedom, and that nation's Constitution even as we speak. This affects especially the poor and marginalized while enriching the billionaires and the powerful. To be clear, Christian Nationalism is *not* authentic Christianity. Christian Nationalism is unbiblical and contradicts many gospel teachings of Jesus Christ. It is imperative for us to guard against bad religion driven by afflictive tendencies in our hearts, never permitting these destructive forces with their factual inaccuracies and false statistics to hold our society captive. As citizens, we must exercise our intelligence and our voice in good conscience, consciousness, and compassion.

Bad religion is informed and incited by bad theology. Bad theology fixates on a sort of scriptural literalism and fundamentalism that is in fact self-contradictory. Bad theology jumps into bed with materialistic hedonism and carnal power to preach a false prosperity gospel that is spiritually corrosive. While espousing textual fundamentalism, bad theology is in fact guilty of cherry-picking of scripture in lockstep with preconceived beliefs of their vested interest group in question. Unfortunately, such beliefs are often unsubstantiated by proper scriptural exegesis, fueling idiosyncratic fundamentalist readings that distort and pervert textual meanings. Given the centrality of theology in religious expressions, how can we navigate our readings and understandings of sacred texts in ways that are faithful to their content and spirit, and that avoid the toxicity and harmfulness of bad religion?

Theological Adventure

One way is to re-examine our theological assumptions without fear or favour. An area of theological re-examination in the context of Christianity is, in my view, the ontological foundations of the doctrine of the Trinity. This investigation has no direct bearing on the quagmire of Christian Nationalism *per se* but does evoke salient questions on how we can better comprehend core doctrines for better and enriched spiritual formation. For me, I

have come to a processual and dynamic view of the Trinity that steers away from substantialist or essentialist notions. As I see it, the metaphysics of substance or essence that has informed Christian theology for hundreds of years may need re-examining due to the persistent unresolved problem of tritheism. In light of this, let us set out on a theological adventure to rethink and reimagine the Trinity.

From a processual perspective, Father-Son-Spirit is our ThreeOne God abounding in a ceaseless flow of outpouring and receiving love. The Godhead is a dynamism of eloquent creativity and silence, and a communion dance of delight and lustre. Within the being of God is consummation of unassailable joyful union and overflowing grace. The Three are not inherently autonomous and separate. Neither One nor Three are inherently one or three; inherently other than one or three; inherently both one and three; nor inherently neither one nor three. Rather, both One and Three are imputedly arisen by way of idea and word, as far as we conceive and discourse about One and Three.

A Middle-Way Sort of God

Buddhist Middle-Way dialectics can be thus instructive in helping us come to grips with a Trinitarian God. In the 12th century, St. Thomas Aquinas, a Doctor of the Church, affirmed the notion of “subsistent relations” to explain how the Trinitarian God can plausibly exist. This resembles the Buddhist view of contingent relations and emptiness. But subsistent relations as metaphysically real reinstates the inherency of “relations” as existing from their own side. On that count, I would suggest that Aquinas has not gone far enough. Be that as it may, it is possible to say that God is ineffably real in ways beyond idea and word. Ineffability is a concept that concedes to our inability to discourse beyond word and idea. This sounds unsatisfactory but is unavoidable. Finite minds that are constructs of the processes of thinking, perceiving, feeling, sensing, and intending are habitually grasped as selves (subjects) and grasp at the selves of everything that they in turn construct (objects).

In the end, both finite minds that are Many and infinite being that is One are concessions to linguistic and conceptual discourse. So are persons for that matter. Yet, persons are real to the extent that person-able traits and capacities manifest and function spontaneously as effulgences of the One. The ThreeOne itself is devoid of inherency—it is a process imputed as ThreeOne, not graspable as an entity of any kind. Only emptiness remains. Even so, emptiness being empty can never be reified into a “thing.” This allows for God to nakedly *be* in His most ineffably mysterious way! More to be said in the future. Such a notion of God may well be less susceptible to clinging, preventing the rise of bad religion. Perhaps ...

Ad majorem dei gloriam

⊕ **Chris**