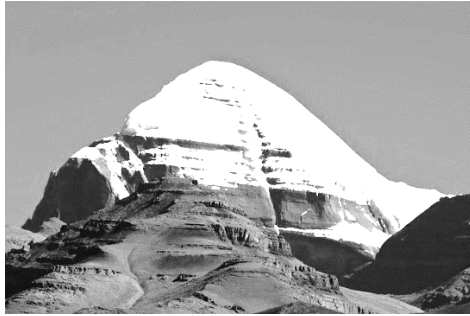
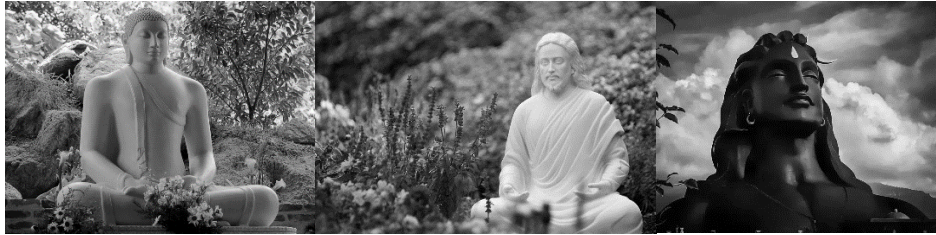


MOUNTAIN RAIN



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RE-ENCOUNTERING CHRIST:
A TENTH ANNIVERSARY REFLECTION



Around Easter in 2014, I had an encounter of faith with Jesus Christ that completely shattered my life and created a seismic shift in my spiritual journey. I have documented this event and its aftermath elsewhere and will not be repeating that here. Since that time, I have undergone an excruciating but fruitfully liberating time of inner evolution and enlightenment. Excruciating because of the total replacement of my identity from Buddhist to Christian, and the upheavals that came with trying to fit into a religious box that never was fitting in the first place. Fruitfully liberating because I have come through that crazy period of social accommodation and personal repression wiser and more mature spiritually. I have come to a place of uncompromising spiritual authenticity, following a time of soul searching and shadow integration in a spirit of ruthless honesty.

Now, I no longer subscribe to many of the dogmas of religious Christianity. Nor do I believe in a monotheistic universe with an inherently existing, permanent, partless God who stands outside creation imposing his sovereignty over it in inscrutable ways. Of course, I admit that the existence of God is not proven or disproven, and is an issue that remains unresolved. But on the basis of available evidence, reason, and direct personal experience, I have come to believe that the monotheistic Christian religion with its God as commonly conceived is deeply flawed and severely oppressive with colonialist and imperialistic overtones as evidenced in western military and economic expansionist history. Thus, while I remain agnostic epistemically with regards to God's existence, I do not believe that the Christian God as conceived by mainstream Christianity exists. In fact, I think that this psychopathological and dystopic idea of God, as I see it, is on balance more harmful than beneficial to humanity and sentient life as a whole.

What does that mean for my faith encounter with Jesus Christ? How do I understand Christ and salvation, especially in light of my breakthrough encounter during that fateful sabbatical meditation retreat some ten years ago? I shall attempt to articulate these issues

in this essay. But first, a preamble to clarify certain presuppositions before launching into my current conception of the person-event and work of Jesus Christ.

No to scriptural inerrancy

First, I reject the dogma of scriptural inerrancy and all its underlying assumptions and implications for textual and doctrinal interpretation. I shall not accentuate this point as I have argued my case in some detail elsewhere. As such, I do not blindly accept literalist church-sanctioned readings of scripture and all their attendant dogmatic and doctrinal ramifications. This opens the way for me to read creatively and hermeneutically in the dialogical space of contemplative experience spanning the reader and the text.

Excluding exclusivism

Secondly, I reject the exclusivist and chauvinistic approach of mainline Christianity (as I have experienced it) particularly its evangelical variants with regards to the veracity, significance, and place of other religions and spiritualities. In particular, I reject the one-upmanship of Christian assertions of Christ over and above other revered pioneers of world spiritualities such as the Buddha and Mahavira, Laozi and Zhuangzi, Shiva and Krishna, to name a few. That said, do I admit of the uniqueness and particularity of Jesus in a way that none of the other spiritual figures could compare? Yes, I do. But do I see Jesus as superior to all others in an inherent sense? No, not at all. Jesus is utterly unique. But so is the Buddha. And Shiva. To me, such judgements of superiority and inferiority are part of a neurotic psychological complex that sadly haunts immature minds. As I see it, there is simply no place for such neuroticism in my present framework of spirituality.

Myth of omnipotence

Thirdly, I do not believe that God is omnipotent or all-powerfully sovereign over every historical happening and personal minutiae of human life. In a previous essay, I have argued against the viability and veracity of a triple-omni God, that is a God deemed as omniscient, omnibenevolent, and omnipotent. I shall not repeat those arguments here. One of these three attributes would have to go in order for the monotheistic God to have some kind of viability. Even then, the plausibility of such a God, that is a double-omni God, remains weak as far as evidential, moral, and rational grounds go. Logically and morally speaking, it is hard to imagine an all-knowing and all-loving God doing so little to intervene in the travails, anguish, and suffering of humanity over so many millennia, despite being not all-powerful. Omnipotence aside, one wonders whether a weak and powerless God despite having all goodness and knowledge is really a God worthy of human supplication and worship on bended knees.

Judicial cosmos is uninhabitable

Fourthly, I have no time for a judicially moralistic and legalistic universe that answers to the whims and fancies of a judicially punitive and bloodthirsty God. Biblically ascribed notions of severe cosmic penalty and capital punishment for human sins, substitutionary atonement by a blameless man for the purpose of sin erasure, God's incessant need for sacrificial blood offerings as means of sin covering or redemption, and divine righteousness and justice as unquestionable alibi for not eradicating suffering completely yesterday are some of the most incredulous ideas that baffle the human imagination, revolting the moral sensibilities of the human heart at least for me. Contra biblical fundamentalism, I reject unequivocally these dogmas of literalist scriptural readings that initially coloured my view of God and his salvific work. In line with my rejection of scriptural inerrancy and infallibility, and critical interrogation of Euro-Americocentric church tradition, I am opting for a new cosmotheology that better articulates a God who makes sense and is worthy of human adoration and worship, love and surrender. I wish to stress that fear of moral accountability is not the issue here. The real issue is moral and intellectual credibility. The question is: what would make for a God that has moral and intellectual credibility as per everyday common sense and a personal if not relatively consensual sense of moral decency?

Middle way beyond extremes

Fifthly, I veer away from the ontological extremes of substantialism and nihilism as well as eternalism and annihilationism, to adopt a "middle-way" perspective of contextual nominalism. This is not a mere act of belief or presupposition but a result of deep ontological probe and rigorous analysis, in the light of empirical observation. In my book *The Christ-Awakened Life: Meditation Beyond Boundaries* and an earlier scholarly essay in the *Journal of Reformed Theology*, I argued for a qualified nominalist formulation of the Trinitarian God. Here, I take a further step to argue for a full nominalist and contextual understanding of God even as my own thinking has evolved and matured. To my mind, there is nothing that is not empty of inherent existence, independent of conceptual framework and system of measurement. Up until the recent past, I have left the terrain of the Trinity untouched by full contextual nominalism and seen the Triune God as empty yet ineffably existent from its own side. Now, I no longer see that position as tenable, even as my direct contemplative experience and critical reflexivity have evolved into new horizons.

(a) Dependent designation

In a contextual nominalist vision of reality, there is nothing that is not dependently designated upon a valid basis by way of a consensually derived conceptual framework and

system of measurement. This applies equally to all persons and phenomena, including the persons of the Trinity and the very notions of relationality and relationship themselves. To say that God in his three persons each has ineffable existence from their own side is in effect to assent to a subtle form of essentialism. This is overstressing the limits of language and conception to assert an ontological essence that can never be proven or validated. It betrays a deeply ingrained mental tendency to grasp onto real existence, clinging to a view of reality that espouses and sanctions such a tendency. This grasping at an essential self and clinging to its view is the deepest root of all suffering and anguish. In other words, such a qualified nominalist view of reality remains entrapped in the causal process of suffering and thus is not indicative of genuine and total freedom.

(b) Examples of dependent arising

In the full contextual nominalist vision, God seen as a singular entity is empty of inherent existence and entirely dependent upon conceptual designation within a conceptual framework and measuring consciousness that establish it. Similarly for the three persons of the Godhead — Father, Son, and Spirit — where each person is empty of inherent existence, equally dependent upon conceptual designation within a conceptual framework and the measuring consciousness that establishes them. Every person and phenomenon is empty of inherency by way of their dependency on causes and conditions, composite parts, and conceptual designation on a valid basis.

An instance of the first type of dependency is seen in the apple seed (cause) receiving sufficient sunlight, moisture, and nourishment (conditions) to give rise to the apple fruit (phenomenon). In the case of a person, the fertilized embryo (cause) and mindstream (cause) in conjunction with a myriad of conditions such as adequate gestation, nutrition, temperature, safe environment, and more to give rise to a person being born from the womb. An instance of the second type of dependency is seen in roots, stem, leaves, petals, stamens, and stigma making up the parts of a flower. As for persons, a human person is composed of cells, tissues, organs, and body parts together with a mindstream of aggregated events such as sensation, perception, emotion, intention, and cognizance in dynamic interplay.

As for the third and subtlest type of dependency, a phenomenon such as a car is not merely an assemblage of car parts (composition) and metals or rubber or plastic materials assembled in a factory (causes and conditions) but emerges into being at the moment when the label and idea “car” is designated on the assembled whole. Similarly for a person. A

person is a label and idea designated or imputed on the conglomeration of physical body parts and mental aggregates in concert with all its activities.

(c) *Even ineffability hides inherency*

In all these cases, the coming into being of any person or phenomenon is contingent on the conceptual consciousness that designates with its conceptual-linguistic framework (e.g. Newtonian physics and English semantics) and measures with its system of measurement (e.g. gross sensory perception). This is the case for all persons and phenomena in the cosmos and is the case for God as well. In the case of God, to say that God is ineffably real though partially dependent on conceptual designation is tantamount to saying that God inherently exists. As shown earlier, any remnant of any phenomenon that is not conceptually imputed remains an instance of inherent existence no matter how we contrive it in terms of “ineffability.” Inherent existence means permanence in terms of unchangingness. An inherent unchanging God can never act in anyway or relate to anything or anyone, not even to itself. For action implies change. So does relationality, as relationship between entities necessitates action on the part of each. Any trace of inherency by logical necessity negates relationality. As for God, so it is for the three persons of the Godhead.

I have shown in my book that inherently existing persons cannot be viable and relate to one another in any way. If the personhood of Father, Son, and Spirit is inherently real, we end up with three Gods and not one. For inherency means strict and rigid demarcation between one thing and another. There is no room for permeability and fluidity, and thus no scope for nonduality of being. Hence, if Godhead’s three persons are ineffably real though dependent on conceptual designation in part, there remains a trace of inherent existence in each person. This trace of inherency negates the viability and relationality of the three persons in the one God. And if so, the Triune God collapses into an unsalvageable ontological heap that makes no sense.

(d) *Single taste of luminous emptiness*

In the final analysis, the one God in three persons can only be if and only if both God and the three persons are empty of inherent existence through and through — completely contingent on conceptual designation and sharing in the one taste of emptiness with all persons and phenomenon without exception. Yet not existing as inherent entities does not mean not existing at all. Conventionally, everything exists and God exists but not as they appear to exist, inherently. Appearing to exist inherently is a falsity that is debunked by analytical and contemplative penetration, thus revealing how phenomena and persons truly exist — as nominally imputed phenomena and persons. The three-one God is still

there, but as contextually and nominally real. The imagined boundary between God and creation melts into a boundless open expanse of dazzling emptiness. It is an emptiness that allows for all relativities to exist nominally.

Bedrock of immaculate experience

Finally, by temperament and inclination, I lean towards an empirical agnostic vision of God and prefer to remain silent and unknowing as to the ultimate reality of such a being. But for the purpose of everyday discourse, I consciously choose to construct a theo-cosmology in which my vision of God challenges and transcends mainstream Christian thinking on the same, taking a leaf out of Asian philosophical cosmologies of the divine that evince far greater intellectual sophistication, moral sensibility, and empirical substantiation than the Christian worldview. As you will see, I do not equate Christ with the Greco-Roman western religious institution and theology that have grown out of the early Middle Eastern soil. Nor do I subscribe to theological indoctrination as a way of knowing the real. Rather, I return to experience, immediate and direct, as the touchstone for my intellectual construction of what is real and divine. A cosmology worth its salt must inevitably rest on the bedrock of empirical observation and direct immediate self-authenticating experience. It is my assertion that rigorously honed contemplative technology (attentional balance) and science (deep ontological insight) are the best means of knowing the real and the divine that we can access as conscious human beings.

Re-encountering Christ without additives

Now, we are finally ready to examine more closely my personal revelatory encounter with Jesus Christ during my sabbatical meditation retreat about ten years ago. At that time and in its immediate aftermath, I felt that this mystical encounter — better termed a Christic encounter — was a convicting knowledge of who Jesus Christ is and what he has done for me and all creation in total accord with how biblical Christianity has theologized it. This conviction was based on the irrevocable sense of certainty of complete erasure of all my sense of guilt, shame, condemnation, and sin of which I had hitherto been unaware. This unawareness was likely due to the hidden subtlety of the trace-level of guilt and condemnation that was present in the depths of my heart and mind. It took an intensive awareness meditation retreat to unveil and deal with this deep-seated and concealed affliction. While there was concomitant realization that nobody but Jesus Christ could have absorbed my sin and guilt *in toto* and gifted to me his purity and righteousness, I was nonetheless too hasty in coming to an intellectual conclusion that this necessarily meant that the Christian God and the mainline conception of Jesus Christ were self-evidently existent in the way they were theologized to. Looking back with retrospective insight, I was

wrong. My direct and immediate experience of Christ and his salvific work was one thing. My theological interpretation of that experience was another.

Let us retrace the steps to see more clearly the elements of my experience that were indubitable. First, there was experience of sinfulness and guilt, shame and condemnation. Secondly, there was the experience of awareness and the relative sense of self-identity “shattering” into pieces. Thirdly, there was the experience of mental imagery of Jesus on the cross absorbing all the black smoke of my sinfulness and guilt, shame and condemnation. Corollary to that image was the image of Jesus shining with brilliant light with its rays streaming into me and suffusing me with his purity and righteousness. These attributes and states that I gave away and imbibed were again my mind’s interpretations of what the imagery of Jesus on the cross symbolized. This imagery and meaning were provided by an online video depiction of the cross of Christ event, which I had previously witnessed with deep emotional stirring. Finally, there was an experience of relief and liberation from this thick sense of sinfulness and guilt, shame and condemnation following that identity-shattering and imaginably redemptive experience. Such is a phenomenological description of my faith encounter experience with no theological overlay.

Re-understanding the faith encounter experience

At the outset, let me play all my cards on the table — I can no longer believe in the traditional mainline Christian theological narrative of redemptive substitutionary atonement vicariously effected by a sovereign all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving Triune God conceived as inherently existing and substantially real, who eternally exists outside the realm of space-time creation, replete with a messianic eschatological plan for human history however its details are conceived. I can no longer believe this caricature of God given the many ontological, existential, moral, logical, and spiritual problems that beset it, decimating its credibility to shreds if not to dust. Nor do I see my faith encounter’s transformative effects as owing to the external action of such an inherent substantialist God whether Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, or all three in concert together. As such, I see Jesus the Nazarene and the cosmic Christ radically differently now than ever before.

(a) The cosmotheandric Christ reality

I admit that ultimately the person and work of Jesus Christ remains a mystery. I do not profess to have fully fathomed who he is and what he has done for me and for all of us. But to the best of my intellectual and spiritual knowledge, based on rigorous contemplative experience and inquiry, I now see God, the cosmos, sentient life, and humanity all intricately and seamlessly entwined in a fabric of reality that is nondually without division

and conflict, in the nature of indescribable peace and luminosity, bliss and love, whose essence is pristine cognizance and naked emptiness. The whole of creation in all its dimensions and planes, multiverses and space-time continua, is completely embedded and embraced in the unfathomable body of transpersonal God that includes both personal and impersonal faces, is imputedly Triune in function and personhood, and abides in three dimensions of essence, nature, and expression. I borrow the term “cosmotheandric” from Roman Catholic theologian Raimon Panikkar to describe this integral fabric of reality. Hence, Christ for me is unequivocally cosmotheandric rather than classically monotheistic.

In this cosmotheandric paradigm, God extends beyond and transcends the multiplex cosmos while being the primordial source, ground, and finality of the cosmos with its life forms and human beings. I see Jesus Christ as the human manifestation of the total action of Triune God in and as creation, inseparable from the reality of all that is — conventionally real flesh and blood with real thoughts and emotions but timelessly resting as primordial consciousness dancing in effulgent blissful display. In a nutshell, God who is Triune by conceptual designation has the essence of cognizant emptiness, the nature of luminous appearance, and the expression of compassionate responsiveness — omniscient, all good and loving, but not omnipotent. For God does not exist separate or apart from creation and all phenomena but *as* creation and phenomena while extending beyond them. Contextually and nominally, Jesus Christ can be designated as “Immanuel” and “Saviour” who is with us and “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” but only from within the conceptual framework and measuring system of the Jewish-Christian worldview. Any individual or group who imbibes this worldview and its conceptual framework then experiences this imputed reality as a dynamic experience for them. But not inherently or universally so, independent of context and community as well as language.

Reframing creation and redemption, I see God *in and as* Christ dynamically and non-causally incarnated or self-emptied as the consciousness-transmuted cosmos with its space-time fabric, laws of physics, elementary forces and quarks, quantum superstrings and entanglements without exhausting himself, within the context of conscious observers with their conceptual framework and measurement system. Christ extends beyond the cosmos and yet is none other than the cosmos. We can say that the cosmos, with its multiverses, is a cosmic dreaming or thought emanation of the supracosmic consciousness that is Christ.

(b) *Psychodynamic and mimetic atonement*

With the foregoing as background, we are now ready to parse more closely the meaning and content of redemption and atonement as I now see them. As mentioned earlier, I do

not see redemption and atonement as sovereignly divine acts performed by an extra-creational substantialist God eternally and ontologically divorced from his creation. I have argued that such a God as conceived does not exist. Thus, what is real for me insofar as redemption and atonement go is the phenomenological fact of erasure of my inner sense of guilt, shame, sinfulness, and condemnation. This phenomenological fact as an experience does not require an objective external truth or entity to render it effective. The causal and experiential efficacy of the person-event of Christ on the cross can just as plausibly (if not more so) rest on the psychodynamic and mimetic potency of this narrative of “substitutionary atonement.”

Psychodynamically, the sense of guilt, shame, sinfulness, and condemnation is a bundle of psychological trauma I received as a child growing up in a strict traditional household compounded by education over six tedious years in highly competitive and prestigious senior schools in a highly competitive Asian society. As a government-funded scholar in my tertiary education years, I was under tremendous pressure to succeed as a student and later as a professional bonded to the national government. A financially challenged, existentially precarious, and relationally stressed family environment added to the heavy toll on my sensitive psychoneurology. Taken together, all these situational events elicited emotions and thoughts of inadequacy, shame, unworthiness, and woundedness that were linked to introjections of astronomical familial and societal expectations of me especially with regards to my career and financial success. It did not help that my dire family situation was heavily dependent on me “making it big” in life. While it helped that I performed excellently in school and university, eventually earning a first class honours, postgraduate certificate with Dean’s commendation, and a doctorate with highly positive appraisal from expert overseas examiners, life turned out in a way least expected resulting in my less than sterling financial success.

Now, I can see how this thorn on my flesh penetrated deep into my psyche and created a hidden but serious wound in my heart. It was not until my sabbatical meditation retreat when I probed below the surface of my mind into its deeper layers that this psychological wound was stirred and excavated. When I viewed the imagery of Jesus on the cross taking in all my guilt, shame, sinfulness, and condemnation — attitudes and emotions I had imbibed as part of my introjected memes surrounding perceived failure and inadequacy, shame and unworthiness — I was naturally moved to tears in an explosive and cathartic way. It was as if this image and narrative of “substitutionary atonement” provided a psychodynamic outlet for the outward release of pent-up traumatic grief and despair associated with my sense of guilt, shame, sinfulness, and condemnation. Furthermore, the

perceived transfer of Jesus' righteousness to me by divine imputation served as a soothing psychodynamic balm for my wounded heart. It also offered a therapeutic touch and served as a healing medicine to nurture and nourish my deeply wounded soul. I felt loved, accepted, safe, and secure, adding to the sensation of a gently comforting psychological cocoon. As the biblical story of redemption goes, so did I follow it without question given the felt psychological support that the storyline offered me. Looking back, I can see how there was personal vested interest in sticking to this theological storyline as it gave me a sense of relief and comfort that I had never felt before through my decades of Buddhist and Tantric meditative practice. In fact, I was not even aware of how deep-seated and alive this hidden sense of self-condemnation really was until this faith encounter experience.

On a related note, I could also connect the narrative of Jesus and sinful humanity of which I was a part, interlocked in a profoundly mysterious act of divine exchange. I deemed this divine exchange as Jesus absorbing into his heart all of my sinful transgressions (broken vows or faulty vow keeping relating to refuge, bodhisattva, and tantric vows), guilt and shame, unworthiness and self-condemnation like thick black smoke while transmitting to me all of his virtue, purity, righteousness, holiness, merit, worth, and divine vitality in the form of streams of brilliant white light. In Tibetan Buddhist meditation, this divine exchange is called the practice of "giving and taking" (*tonglen*). In the case of Jesus, it could be interpreted as an unprecedented and sweeping act of cosmic *tonglen* that effectively and truly erased human sin and replaced it with divine righteousness. By inserting the cross of Christ into a pre-existing plausibility structure found within my Buddhist context, I was thus better able to appropriate and assimilate it psychologically.

Mimetically, I borrow from the work of French philosopher Rene Girard whose mimetic theory offers in my view a cogent and highly plausible explanation of the Christ redemption narrative. As I have elaborated on this mimetic understanding of the Christ atonement in my book *The Christ Awakened Life*, I shall not do so here. Suffice to say here that mimetic atonement dovetails well with the psychodynamic model I discussed in the foregoing paragraphs. For instance, the mimetic mechanism of pent-up social pressure seeking an innocent scapegoat as victimized receptacle of society's inner tensions and conflictual aggressions helps us understand the psychosocial role and function of Jesus on the cross, which was the selected instrument of his torture and excruciating death. It also helps us relate psychologically to our own inner tensions and perturbations of guilt, shame, sinfulness, and condemnation needing desperately a cathartic outlet. Individually and collectively, it is not difficult to understand the psychologically cathartic release mechanism of a crucified but ultimately innocent scapegoat aptly metaphorized by the

religiously-infused label of “sinless Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” In short, I have come to accept and adopt this mimetic understanding of the cross of Christ both as a social fact and a personal reality, insofar as my direct immediate experience has corroborated it. Empirically, there was indeed a cathartic emotional release in my experience of the imagery of Christ on the cross, along with long-term existential implications for my life in its wake that could be understood as psychological and psychosocial reverberations of my cathartic moment. Seen in this light, there is no necessity of invoking a supernatural explanation and theological narrative for this psychodynamic and mimetic reality, a fact that was and is readily verifiable by personal experience stripped bare. Phenomenologically speaking, this psychomimetic explanation makes more sense.

(c) *Integrally psychomimetic and cosmotheandric*

Where does all this leave me? Well, it leads me to the place of peaceful contentedness as I integrate both the psychodynamic-mimetic theory of atonement with the cosmotheandric vision of God and reality. As I have said before, conventional mainstream Christian theology no longer works for me. There is simply zero credibility in that traditional view as far as I am concerned. But the cosmotheandric view of God and Christ does make sense to me, and shows its plausibility in alignment with cutting edge findings and thinking in quantum cosmology and theoretical physics in general. This cosmotheandric vision also aligns well with the findings of historical critical scholarship of the Bible and Christianity, results of which have convincingly demonstrated the plethora of contradictions, forgeries, fallacies, incoherence, implausibility, political machinations and violence including militancy, and overall unreliability underpinning much of Christian scripture and tradition. Hence, a psychomimetic cosmotheandric vision of Christ and his redemptive atonement. What does that look like? I shall delineate my integral vision as follows.

The cosmotheandric God who is Christ is essentially a panentheistic model of the divine. Here, “God” or the divine is not seen as separate from and irrevocably divorced from creation comprising the entire cosmos in all its planes, dimensions, multiverses, and life forms. Instead, “God” is the cosmos but extends beyond it. God can be imputed as the ultimate source, ground, and destination of the animate and inanimate cosmos, whose very “body” is in part the cosmos. The physical, biological, and psychological realities of existence are but modulations of the empty unconfined pure consciousness of God from formlessness into form, from voidness into fullness, from expressionless quiescence into expressive incandescence. Do remember that the term “empty” here does not refer to mere absence or non-existence but the lack of inherent existence that is independent of conceptual designation and measurement system. This emptiness of God’s unconfined

pure consciousness (or pristine awareness) is none other than the absolute space of all phenomena in creation and beyond. Emptiness percolates all the way up and all the way down, through and through the whole of reality without exception. In the panentheistic paradigm, the cosmos emerges from, abides within, and dissolves back into the infinite field of God whose very body is partially the cosmos. The major problem and weakness of this paradigm is in the implication that every human being is by extension God. By the mathematics of infinity, any portion however minute that is subtracted from infinity is itself infinity and what remains of the original infinity is still infinity. But this is only a problem if we assume God to be omnipotent. Since we have already rejected that caricature of God, then it is possible and plausible for every human being and in fact every single mote of dust in the cosmos to be “God.” This implication does not mean that every single phenomenon is comparably all-loving, all-knowing, and powerful but it does mean that every entity is potentially capable of being so. This is especially true for human minds given their hidden potentials for unlimited evolution and expansion. These hidden potentials are not something to be taken at face value in blind faith but is a possibility for us to explore, investigate, and discover for ourselves.

Seen from the perspective of the cosmotheandric God who is seamless with the fabric of cosmic and human reality, what can we make of Jesus the Nazarene who was born, grew into adulthood, taught and inspired disciples with an apocalyptic message of the kingdom of God, incurred the wrath of Jewish religious and Roman secular authorities, and was finally humiliated and crucified to die a gruesome death? And what can we make of the experience of Jesus Christ that I encountered in mystical faith during the middle of my sabbatical meditation retreat? From a middle-way contextual nominalist perspective, Jesus Christ as God the Son in the Trinity is conceptually designated and validly cognized within a conceptual framework and measurement system of the Judeo-Christian meta-narrative. As such, Jesus is no other than an emanation of the cosmic pure consciousness (or pristine awareness) of God in the localized space of my mind even as he is a valid human being existing dependently on the contextual field of Jewish and Christian that provides his substantiation by way of conceptual imputation.

Even if there are no Jews and Christians in the world and in history, Jesus Christ can still be a valid existent being because cosmic pure consciousness *in toto* that is empty of existing from its own side remains able to emanate and impute such a person that is called “Jesus Christ.” This same is true for all historical personalities, the Buddha and Shiva included, and for every one of us. It is precisely this synchronistic and holonic imputation of Jesus Christ dually in the cosmic field and my personal field of consciousness that accounts for

the causal efficacy of the Christ atonement in terms of inner experience. This inner experience of the atonement of Christ for all my felt guilt, shame, sinfulness, and condemnation is phenomenologically real though ultimately empty of inherent existence. It was effected by the complex matrix of conceptual imputation simultaneously on the cosmic, sociocultural, and personal fronts. As such, my faith encounter of Jesus Christ ten years ago that resulted in the radical makeover of my personal identity and worldview need no longer be explained by hard objective truths standing absolutely outside experience and realized in real human history. Rather, as I have argued before, all we have to deal with here are empirically and causally efficacious events happening in a layered imputational fashion that can adequately account for the revolutionary shift in my sense of being and way of living. There is simply no need for an independently, objectively, and inherently existing Jesus Christ who is God the Son out there in order for me to have the radically freeing experience that I did.

Conclusion

Let us now conclude this essay by recapitulating my argument. Given my current disavowal of mainline traditional Christian dogma and theology, and contra the scriptural inerrancy and infallibility fallacy, I now adopt an agnostic position with regards to the existence of the monotheistic Christian God but believe that such a God as traditionally defined is impossible, without merit and credibility, and thus unbelievable. In light of this, I have come to a tentative reconstruction of a cosmotheology that better aligns with my direct immediate contemplative experience and realizations. In this idiosyncratic cosmotheology, which I share here but do not expect others to believe in it simply because I said so, God is Triune in nature but not inherently so by virtue of its dependency on conceptual imputation within a specific ideational framework and measurement system. In other words, God is contingent just as the cosmos is contingent and shares with the cosmos the one taste of emptiness of inherent existence. I call this kind of God a cosmotheandric one, seamlessly joined to the cosmos and humanity in an integral fabric of reality. This God is contingent through and through, all the way up and down, inside-out. Asserting God as non-contingent betrays a deep-seated and unconscious bias of self-referential grasping, an ontological addiction that clings to the minutest trace of inherency in a desperate craving for certainty, definitiveness, and security. But in the end, this minute trace of grasping and clinging entraps one in delusion and suffering, falling short of complete enlightenment.

The cosmotheandric God spontaneously and creatively manifests in myriad forms of liberative capacity, spanning the likes of Jesus the Nazarene, Gotama Buddha, and Adiyogi Shiva, to name a few. Personally, I would even include Guanyin Bodhisattva, Blessed

Mother Virgin Mary, Amitabha Buddha, Arya Tara, Maha Devi Maha Shakti Linga Bhairavi, Vajrabhairava, Vajrayogini, Kalachakra, Heruka Chakrasamvara, and more. But that aside, I see Jesus the man from Nazareth as the central and total manifestation of God *in and as* the cosmotheandric Christ *in and through* whom all others are emanated as reflected radiances and refracted rays. My personal mystical experience of Christ atonement and redemption is predicated upon psychodynamic and mimetic processes operating within the luminous sphere of my subtle mind (or substrate consciousness), and plausibly contextualized within the Tibetan Buddhist meme of giving and taking (*tonglen*) but on an effectual cosmic scale. The reality of the cosmotheandric Christ as conceptually imputed by God as primordial consciousness (or cosmic pure consciousness) is simultaneously valid within the context of Jewish-Christian worldview and theology, imputed into being by the collective psyche of Jewish-Christian culture. It is this subtle and complex intermeshing of the processes of imputed cosmotheandric Christ and imputed psychomimetic Christ that accounts for my personal “salvation” and “redemption” in Jesus Christ, a being whom I pedagogically call “my Lord” in the ambience of devotional nonduality.

In short, this is my tenth anniversary answer to the perennial question and Zen koan in conjunction with Jesus: “Who do you say that I am?” For me, right now, Jesus is an empty Nazarene and empty cosmotheandric Christ — all merely labelled or conceptually imputed — who has redeemed and saved me by way of context-dependent conceptually imputed psychodynamic and mimetic processes, which are themselves empty of inherent existence from their own side. In the end, the only invariant and universal truth across all frames of reference is emptiness of inherency, a truth that is itself empty thus paradoxically establishing its own truth in the very process of negation.

Emaho! How amazing!