

MULTIRELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND PLURALIST ATTITUDE:  
RAIMON PANIKKAR AND HIS CRITICS

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## ABSTRACT

Theological reflection removed from the experience of encounter with other religious traditions is not adequate to situations of interactive religious pluralism. Some theologians draw explicitly on their experience of multiple crossing of boundaries. This dissertation studies multireligious experience and response to this phenomenon in the life and writings of one such theologian and scholar, Raimon Panikkar (b. 1918).

The dissertation is in four parts: problematic, exposition, interpretation and evaluation. The first chapter sketches elements of the **problematic** of multireligious experience and presents a rationale for focussing on Panikkar's life-work. The dissertation moves in the second part to an **exposition** of Panikkar's thought related to major changes in his geographical location. Thus the second chapter studies Panikkar's writings from the 1940s and 1950s in Franco's Spain. The third chapter recounts the adjustments in his theological stance that took place after his move to India in 1954; it was in India that his encounter with Advaita Vedanta (and Buddhism) gave him by the 1960s the grounds for claiming "multireligious experience." The fourth chapter highlights his recognition and fostering of a pluralist attitude related to his multireligious experience during the period he divided each year between North America and India (1967-1987). The fifth chapter does not focus on geographical context but gives an account of his call for a dialogical dialogue and illustrates the operation, in two of his reflections on the encounter between Hindus and Christians, of what he terms the diatopical hermeneutic.

The third part of the dissertation, entitled **interpretation**, is divided into two chapters that present contrasting understandings of and judgments on Panikkar's approach to religious pluralism. The sixth chapter is a study of the dissenting views of Paul Knitter and others. The seventh chapter is a presentation of the concurring views of Bernard Lonergan and others.

The fourth part of the dissertation is a chapter of **evaluation** in which I take positions in response to two questions raised by critics: Is Panikkar's context that of commitment to the poor? and "Is Panikkar's pluralism a relativism?" I find that he works with a concern for and commitment to the poor and promotes pluralism as relatedness. This eighth chapter concludes with a "postscript" that suggests implications of the pluralist attitude for multireligious Canada.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### FIRST PART: MULTIRELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND PLURALIST ATTITUDE PROBLEMATIC

Preamble: 1

Chapter One: 3-45

BOTH MULTICULTURAL AND MULTIRELIGIOUS

Catholics and Religious Plurality 12

Ambivalence in the Magisterium 14

Multicultural and Multireligious 20

Raising Questions 24

Multireligious Experience in the Context of India 27

Raimon Panikkar 30

The Question and Outline 42

### SECOND PART: RAIMON PANIKKAR EXPOSITION

Chapter Two: 46-80

PANIKKAR IN CATHOLIC SPAIN: MOVING BEYOND ONE-TRADITION LOYALTY

Context: Monoreligious Post-war Spain 46

Paniker, the Catalan 49

Synthetic Vision in a Eurocentric Reflection 54

Openness and Honesty in Life and Reflection 60

Panikkar's Growing Appreciation of Indic Civilization 69

Not Just Religion but Religions 71

Mutual Influence of East and West 73

All Religions Preparatory for Christianity 74

Final Reflections Before Going East 76

Summary 79

Chapter Three: 81-129

PANIKKAR IN INDIA: MULTIRELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Context: India of the 1950s 83

The Failure of Evangelization 86

Panikkar's Christian Identity Challenged 95

Panikkar's Encounter with Hinduism 104

Panikkar's Encounter with Buddhism 112

Faith, Belief and Multireligious Experience 120

The Principle of Identity 126

Summary 128

Chapter Four: 130-174

THE NEW SITUATION: THE PLURALIST ATTITUDE

The Catholic Theologian 130

New Situation, Changing Attitudes 136

The Sayings About the Christ 138

Historical Contexts 140

Religious Pluralism 147

Not only History but Geography 152

Beyond a Fulfillment-Theology to Pluralism 156

The Pluralistic Attitude and Multireligious Experience 158

Multireligious Experience and the Secular 165

Religious Pluralism Includes the Secular 170

Summary 173

Chapter Five: 175-210

THE DIATOPICAL HERMENEUTIC IN THE HINDU-CHRISTIAN ENCOUNTER

Microdoxy and Misunderstanding 177

Diatopical Hermeneutics 180

The Dialogical Dialogue 182

Diatopical Interpretations for Mutual Fecundation 188

The Holy Spirit through Hindu Advaita 189

Hindu Non-dualism through the Christian Trinity 202

Summary 209

**THIRD PART: PANIKKAR'S CRITICS  
INTERPRETATION**

Preface: 211

Chapter Six: 213-238

CRITICS I: THE DISSENTING VIEWS OF PAUL KNITTER AND OTHERS

Panikkar's Pluralism Interpreted as Theory 215

Panikkar's Pluralism as the Embrace of Many Absolutes 220

Knitter's Soteriocentric Orientation 225

Knitter's Later Evaluation of Panikkar 227

Summary 236

Chapter Seven: 239-265

CRITICS II: THE CONCURRING VIEWS OF BERNARD LONERGAN AND OTHERS

Revelation, Culture and Theology 239

Panikkar's Collaborative Foundations for Theology 242

Positive Responses to Panikkar's Pluralism 253

Loneragan's Positive Response to Panikkar 257

Summary 263

**FOURTH PART: IN FACE OF RELIGIOUS PLURALITY  
EVALUATION**

Chapter Eight: 266-301

CONCLUSION: AN ASSESSMENT OF PANIKKAR'S PLURALIST ATTITUDE

Contexts for Panikkar's Response to Pluralism 267

Panikkar and the Roman Catholic Experience of Dialogue 273

Is Panikkar's Context that of Commitment to the Poor? 276

The Complement to Cosmic Confidence 280

Is Panikkar's Pluralism a Relativism? 284

Postscript: Implications for Multireligious Canada 295

Bibliography: i-xxiv

FIRST PART: MULTIRELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND PLURALIST ATTITUDE  
PROBLEMATIC

Preamble

This present work has its roots in earlier research<sup>1</sup> into the religious experience of parishioners of a large Roman Catholic congregation in centre-city Toronto. The study revealed that this congregation was not only a "multicultural church community"<sup>2</sup> but a multireligious community. This community was multireligious not only in the sense that Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists attended the church and participated in Catholic worship. The community was multireligious also in the sense that some members of this congregation of apparently homogeneous Catholic identity could, on a closer viewing, be discovered to be participating in other religious traditions than their Catholic tradition.

One such Catholic was Michael, born to a Hindu family settled in Guyana, who felt the desire to become a Catholic when

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<sup>1</sup>This research was more that of an "observing participant" in the religious life of the church community than that of a "participant observer" maintaining a "distance" from the community. See the comments on these differing research stances in Raymond Brady Williams, *Christian Pluralism in the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), x-xi.

<sup>2</sup>John F. Duggan, S.J. *Religious Experience and the Multicultural Church Community*, thesis report presented as partial requirements for the degree Doctor of Ministry, Regis College, conjointly awarded by T.S.T. and U. of T., 1987. For a summary account of this research see: John F. Duggan, "Opening the Gospel in a Church of Many Cultures," *International Review of Mission* LXXXV(336) 1996: 53-62.

he was a young boy. With the support of his mother he eventually overcame the objections of his father, a Brahmin pandit. When he was accepted into the Catholic church at the age of 13 he was already teaching catechism to adults. Michael has asserted that his becoming Catholic did not entail the rejection of Hinduism:

And at that time I said, well, I still stick up to Hinduism. I didn't give it up. I still usually takes part into our religious function.<sup>3</sup>

Michael asserts that this change in his religious allegiance is a response to a call from beyond himself. He has spoken of the role that his visions and the voice of the Lord had in his becoming a Catholic:

Yes, I sincerely think that God changed my life to switch from Hinduism to Catholicism. Because I was getting these visions and that's what really made me really make a switch. Because the Lord was calling me. And if he wasn't calling me to do His good works, then I wouldn't have been a Catholic today.<sup>4</sup>

Michael has said that he experiences a relationship with the Lord that for him is like the relationship of Abraham to Yahweh. He has claimed that he was called by the "Good Lord" to leave Guyana and to bring his family north to Toronto and to Canada. In this country he has been very involved with various parish communities and with helping the poor through Church organizations like the Saint Vincent De Paul Society. His religious life in Canada has

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<sup>3</sup>Duggan, *Religious Experience and the Multicultural Church Community* (1987), 117.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 121.

continued to be characterized by positive attitudes toward and active relationship with the Hindu tradition:

I don't condemn. I take part if I am being asked to. I go Hindu weddings, I go to Hindu functions where there will be the Hindu priest and you sit with them and you take part in the process.<sup>5</sup>

He has been invited on occasion to pray with Hindu friends when they are in need. He is open concerning the fact that his prayer life includes both Jesus and the Hindu deities such as Hanuman and Ganesh:

I just started it recently; I started to offer my prayers to them, in a short form... just to repeat a few words every morning or every evening before I go to bed. I would say my 'Lord's Prayer' etc. etc. and then I would say ... offer a prayer to Hanuman and to Ganesh is another one; I would say something to Ganesh or Hanuman -- 'I am going to sleep now and I know that you would take care of me.'<sup>6</sup>

## CHAPTER ONE

### BOTH MULTICULTURAL AND MULTIRELIGIOUS

Multireligious experience flourishes in conjunction with a distinctive pattern of religious plurality. It is a phenomenon typical of situations in which there is close encounter among people of distinct religious traditions. This is in contrast to monoreligious situations and situations in which the members of different religious traditions exist side by side without much interaction. In an earlier period, the Catholic countries of Europe were instances of the monoreligious situation. The

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<sup>5</sup>Taped interview with Michael, 1996.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 1996.

societies of the Asian sub-continent, though certainly not monoreligious, have been, in certain periods of history, societies in which religious groups lived side by side but separated from one another. With the Hindu caste system as it functions in India, for example, it can be contended that various taboos against commensality and connubium have kept groups separated and more or less in a state of "encapsulation."<sup>7</sup> Social holding patterns fostered by the caste system have maintained peace among groups with conflicting beliefs, values and practices. At the same time, these patterns have inhibited contact and mutual understanding. However, the segregation of different groups from one another is not the dominant pattern in the cities of North America, and less and less in the cities of Europe, Africa and Asia, including India. What is observed is a

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Ainslee T. Embree comments: "It is the endurance of this civilization, despite its encounter with a host of other cultures and other political influences, that has led many observers to conclude that the Hindu style is absorptive, synthesizing, or tolerant. What they see is something quite different, namely, Indian civilization's ability to encapsulate other cultures and make it possible for many levels of civilization to live side by side. But encapsulation is neither toleration, absorption, nor synthesis." Ainslee T. Embree, *Utopias in Conflict: Religion and Nationalism in Modern India* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), 24-25. Margaret Chatterjee cites favourably the view that "religious plurality" has been in India "primarily a fact, a matter which poses adjustment at the behavioural level rather than provokes intellectual exchange of ideas in the realm of theorizing." She identifies two major strategies in the response of the Hindu community to the successive waves of invaders: "(1) assimilation and (2) water-tight compartment response." Margaret Chatterjee, "Reflections on Religious Pluralism in the Indian Context" in *Culture and Modernity: East-West Philosophic Perspectives*, E. Deutsch, Editor (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 389.



pluralism characterized by intimate, boundary-crossing interaction among people of diverse traditions:

The pluralism that is of interest here occurs when the fences are breached. Neighbours lean over the fence, talk to each other, associate with each other ... Cities become gigantic and increasingly heterogeneous. More and more, people of wildly different cultures are forced to rub elbows all the time.<sup>2</sup>

Contemporary experience of religious plurality generates a range of responses. Close contact among members of the many religious traditions can lead to rejection of the other's tradition or it can lead to conversion to that tradition; it can also lead to the judgement that, without having abandoned one tradition, one belongs in some sense to that other religious tradition.<sup>3</sup> Christians in situations characterized by religious plurality may have significant relationships to one or more religious traditions other than their Christian tradition.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Peter L. Berger, *A Far Glory: The Quest for Faith in an Age of Credulity* (Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1992), 38-39.

<sup>3</sup>David J. Krieger discerns three options arising from the intimate encounter of people of distinct cultures and religions: "The psychological and social tensions created by this unprecedented 'conflict of worlds' have given rise to three specific options or stances which we may, for the sake of convenience, term jumping-back, jumping-over and jumping-in-between." *The New Universalism: Foundations for a Global Theology* (Faith Meets Faith Series, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 35.

<sup>10</sup>There are instances of people of other traditions experiencing allegiance to the Christian tradition. Thich Nhat Hanh is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk who claims relationship with Jesus through encounter with Christians. He writes: "On the altar in my hermitage in France are images of Buddha and Jesus, and every time I light incense, I touch both of them as my spiritual ancestors. I can do this because of contact with these real Christians. When you touch someone who authentically

This is not only the case with those who have been converted to Christianity from another religious tradition, but it is true of those who, beginning from a Christian commitment, open themselves to other religious traditions.<sup>11</sup> Drawing on his Canadian experience with Protestant Christians, John H. Berthrong has highlighted the crisis of identity that some Christians undergo as a consequence of "multiple religious participation":

Multiple religious participation is an urgent question in North America as more people become aware of the richness of traditional Asian and Native American paths of spiritual transformation. As the national Interfaith Dialogue Secretary of the United Church of Canada for nine years in the 1980s, I was often approached by people whose spiritual life had been profoundly altered and enriched through, for example, Buddhist meditation or contact with native elders. Some of these people asked very quietly what I thought of their involvement with other faiths and the fact that some even perceived themselves as Buddhist-

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represents a tradition, you not only touch his or her tradition, you also touch your own. This quality is essential for dialogue. When participants are willing to learn from each other, dialogue takes place just by their being together. When those who represent a spiritual tradition embody the essence of their tradition, just the way they walk, sit, and smile speaks volumes about the tradition." Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995), 6-7.

<sup>11</sup>Christians are coming into a future in which they may access sources from many traditions for their reflection: "Among converts to Christianity both Christianity and their indigenous religious tradition may be authoritative sources for theological reflection. The same may hold true for Christians who convert to another religious tradition. Religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue may be leading us to a situation in the twenty-first century where increasing numbers of people will have multiple authoritative religious tradition sources. They will draw on all of them in their theological reflection." Patricia O'Connell Killen and John DeBeer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 56.

Christians; the key issue they were probing was whether I thought that they were still Christians."

The phenomenon of multiple religious participation is not unique to the present time. Indeed, social scientists have identified various kinds of systems in which Christian commitment in the past has been accompanied by other religious ties and practices.<sup>33</sup> However, the present patterns of globalization have initiated an unprecedented degree of multiple crossing of boundaries.<sup>34</sup> Robert J. Schreiter notes the impact of globalization as it sets a context for theological reflection and

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<sup>33</sup>John H. Berthrong, *All Under Heaven: Transforming Paradigms in Confucian-Christian Dialogue*, (SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 176.

<sup>34</sup>From the perspective of an analysis of the continuing impact of the colonial era, Robert Schreiter has done this kind of study and has distinguished three syncretistic elements and three kinds of dual religious systems. He also observes: "It is obvious that many Christians are able to live with syncretism or dual religious systems without any real difficulty. While they probably should have some problems with syncretism or participating in two religious systems at once, the fact of the matter is that they do not." Schreiter asks: "Does the need for multiple mediations or routes of access to divine power play into this?" Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 148-149, 151.

<sup>35</sup>Schreiter has more recently developed his analysis beyond that of a limited range of syncretic elements and dual religious systems. Writing in the context of globalization, he has responded to the current proliferation of boundary-breaking developments with the inclusive term "hybridities": "Defined simply, a hybridity results from the erasure of a boundary between two (cultural or religious) entities and a redrawing of a new boundary." Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 74.

he relates the phenomenon of "multiple belonging" to the discourse of multiculturalism:

The compression of time, the world of cyberspace, and the movement of peoples mean that people are now participating in different realities at the same time -- there is multiple belonging. This has to be taken into account in any attempt to express identity where multiple cultures interact at the same time. Multiple belonging is behind the discourse of 'multiculturalism,' in which people struggle to find a way of dealing with a variety of cultures, or fragments of cultures, occupying the same space.<sup>15</sup>

Reflection on multireligious participation and belonging, or what we will term multireligious experience, is an imperative for the inhabitants of cities like Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal, just to mention some of the Canadian cities with religiously diverse populations. These are cities that receive relatively substantial numbers of immigrants from areas of the world where religion is considered a significant dimension.<sup>16</sup> Such cities

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<sup>15</sup>Schreier, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (1997), 26.

<sup>16</sup>In 1993, Donald C. Posterski and Irwin Barker characterized the demographic shift associated with recent immigration to Canada as "from mainly white to multicultural." Starting in the 1960s, the dropping of the practice of imposing country-specific restrictive quotas allowed more immigrants to come to Canada from non-traditional source countries. In 1961, 90% of the immigrants came from European countries. In the period between 1981 and 1991, only 25% of the immigrants were from European countries. In 1981, Asians were 14% of the population of newcomers and by 1991 they made up 25% of the immigrants. Statistics Canada figures on the source countries over the 1981-1991 period tell the story of Asian predominance and diverse countries of origin. The top ten source countries were: Hong Kong (96,540), Poland (77,455), China (75,841), India (73,105), United Kingdom (71,365), Vietnam (69,520), Philippines (64,290), United States (55,415), Portugal (35,440), Lebanon (34,065) for a total immigration of 1,238,455. Donald C. Posterski and Irwin Barker, *Where's a Good Church?* (Winfield,

are not only multicultural, they are multireligious. People in these cities encounter those of other religious traditions in the work-place, in the local neighbourhood and community and religious organizations and collaborate and become friends and on occasion marry one another. They learn of the world's religious traditions through the media and in study programmes.<sup>17</sup> The interaction of people of diverse religious traditions provides the opportunity for multireligious experience and supplies a basis for emerging shifts in religious consciousness.<sup>18</sup>

However, many people, including many Canadians, shaped by processes of secularization and by secularist ideology, could be tempted to view religious difference only in terms of its divisive potential and to overlook religious experience as a factor in the dynamics of societal unity.<sup>19</sup> One could question

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B.C.: Wood Lake Books, 1993), 91-92.

<sup>17</sup>A course on world religions is an element of the high school curriculum in the Metropolitan Toronto Separate School System.

<sup>18</sup>For a concise account of infrastructural elements setting the possibility of an emerging religious consciousness see: Bernard Lonergan, "Prolegomena to the Study of the Emerging Religious Consciousness of Our Time" in *A Third Collection*, F.E. Crowe, Editor (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985), 55-73.

<sup>19</sup>In a section on "Religious Pluralism and Multiculturalism," two scholars of multiculturalism observe: "Religion is no longer central to our secular society, thus making it difficult for us to understand -- never mind appreciate -- its significance to other cultural traditions." They pose the difficult questions raised by religious diversity such as: "Is it possible to reconcile ethnoreligious beliefs and practices when they ostensibly run counter to our core cultural values?" but they fail to comment on the potential religion has for creating bonds of community. Augie Fleras and Jean Leonard Elliot,

what attitudes toward human diversity are at work when the religious dimension, which refers to the beliefs and values people consider ultimate, is overlooked or even suppressed. Authentic openness would seem to call for a recognition of the transformative and convergent potential of the orientation to the Transcendent and its social expression. In the encounter of peoples of many religious traditions, multireligious experience could be a primary resource for this positive dynamic.

There are indications that some theologians, including Catholic theologians, have not fully appreciated the convergent potential of multireligious experience. Robley Edward Whitson criticizes the Roman Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner (1904-1984), for neglecting the potential for convergence in the encounter among religious traditions.<sup>20</sup> Whitson interprets Rahner as holding that the church of the future will be a diaspora community, somewhat alienated from the other religious

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*Multiculturalism in Canada: The Challenge of Diversity* (Nelson Canada: Scarborough, 1992), 210.

<sup>20</sup>Whitson says of Rahner: "Far from seeing any creative possibilities for Christianity in the new civilization, Rahner projects a Christianity in a religious ghetto almost completely alienated from the rest (the overwhelming majority of mankind) ... rejects fully any underlying principle of unity in man's religious experience ...." Robley Edward Whitson, *The Coming Convergence of World Religions* (New York/Paramus/Toronto: Newman Press, 1971), 14. Whitson is reading Karl Rahner, *The Christian of the Future* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967). See pages 79-85.

traditions.<sup>21</sup> Whitson writes of another possible future for Christians in their relation to other religious people:

One of the most interesting problems not faced for the future Christian may be posed as a question: can there be any ghetto in the future? The ghetto, for any purpose, is possible only if isolation in way of life is possible. Will such be the situation of the new civilization?<sup>22</sup>

Whitson ponders what could happen if in future people take one another's religious stance seriously:

But what if the encounter in religion ceases to be superficial? What if the continuing development of the convergent process begins to challenge the spiritual and intellectual separation of peoples?<sup>23</sup>

For Catholics (as well as others) in communities like Toronto that are increasing in religious diversity, it appears that multireligious experience can be a frequent phenomenon. One

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<sup>21</sup>Karl Rahner appears to have articulated a more integrative view of the implications of encounter among religions in the original German text of "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions" [*Theological Investigations*, vol. V (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966), 115-134]. Not in the English translation, these sentences are found on page 137 of the German text: "Earlier another religion was practically also the religion of another cultural circle, a history which once communicated only on the edge of one's own history. Today it is different. There is no Western culture enclosed within itself any more, no Western culture at all, which could consider itself simply as the center of world history.... Today everyone is everyone else's neighbor, and therefore determined by the global communication of life-situations: Every religion which exists in the world is, as all cultural possibilities and realities of other men, a question and a possibility offered for all." Translated by David J. Krieger, "Methodological Foundations for Interreligious Dialogue" in *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar*, J. Prabhu, Editor (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), ft.nt. 1, p. 201.

<sup>22</sup>Whitson, *The Coming Convergence of World Religions* (1971), 16.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 34.

aspect of this new situation is the exploratory manner in which some Christians today pass over to other religious traditions and come back to their own with new insight.<sup>24</sup> There appears to be an emerging attitude of openness to religious experience that occurs in the context of another religious tradition. As such, this openness and the resulting multireligious experience urges a renewal both in theological reflection and in Christian praxis in relation to other religious traditions.

#### Catholics and Religious Plurality

Catholic Christians come to this present situation of encounter with other religious traditions within a horizon shaped by the bishops at the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). A positive attitude to other religious traditions was formally mandated in the Council's "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" (*Nostra Aetate*). The decree urged Christians "to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions." The positive attitude to other religious traditions and to the practice of dialogue was accepted as integral to the lives of Catholics. Catholics were to go beyond a passive tolerance of

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<sup>24</sup>John S. Dunne's articulation of this phenomenon has often been quoted: "Passing over is a shifting of standpoint, a going over to the standpoint of another culture, another way of life, another religion. It is followed by an equal and opposite process we might call 'coming back,' coming back with new insight to one's own culture, one's own way of life, one's own religion.... Passing over and coming back, it seems, is the spiritual adventure of our time." John S. Dunne, *The Way of All the Earth: Experiments in Truth and Religion* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1972), ix.



other religious traditions. They should promote (*promoveant*) the truths and good way of life found among the believers of the other religious traditions.<sup>25</sup> The Council went so far as to encourage religious institutes to incorporate ascetical and contemplative practices of other religious traditions into Christian religious life. Thus, *Ad Gentes* 18 suggests that religious institutes,

... should carefully consider how traditions of asceticism and contemplation ... which have been sown by God in certain ancient cultures before the preaching of the Gospel, might be incorporated into Christian religious life.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>*Nostra Aetate* 2 gives the instruction: "Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture." Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," in Austin Flannery O.P., ed, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Northport, New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1987), 739. The Latin text reads: "Filiis suos igitur hortatur, ut cum prudentia et caritate per colloquia et collaborationem cum asseclis aliarum religionum, fidem et vitam christianum testantes, illa bona spiritualia et moralia necnon illos valores socio-culturales, quae apud eos inveniuntur, agnoscant, servent et promoveant." Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II, "Nostra Aetate" in *Constitutiones Decreta Declarationes*, C.e.S.S. Generalis, Editor (Vatican: MCMLXVI), 413-414.

<sup>26</sup>Flannery, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (1987), 834. The Latin text reads: "Instituta religiosa ... Attente considerent quomodo traditiones asceticae et contemplativae, quarum semina iam ante Evangelii praedicationem nonnunquam antiquis culturis a Deo indita sunt, in vitam religiosam christianam assumi possint." "Ad Gentes" in *Constitutiones Decreta Declarationes* (MCMLXVI), 578-579.

There is evidence that some Catholic people have carried out the mandate of the bishops at the Council.<sup>27</sup> These people "acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths" and way of life of others, and those truths and social life and culture become in some sense their own. Not only the members of religious institutes, but Catholics from other walks of life, incorporate the ascetical and contemplative practices of other religious traditions into their own spiritual practice.<sup>28</sup>

#### Ambivalence in the Magisterium

The Catholic Magisterium has demonstrated some ambivalence concerning the possibility of multireligious experience. Pope

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<sup>27</sup>It should not be overlooked that shifts in the attitude of some Catholics to other religious traditions had been initiated prior to Vatican II. One instance is the journey of Hugo M. Enomiya-Lasalle, a Jesuit priest who has promoted the practice of Zen among Christians. In the early period of his interreligious initiatives (1960-1975), he seems to have considered Zen as primarily a meditation practice that could help Christians recover an earlier Christian practice of contemplation without an object (as evidenced in the 14th century classic, *The Cloud of Unknowing*). After 1975, Enomiya-Lasalle promoted a shift away from dualist and static Christian cosmologies toward a non-dualist consciousness that critiqued the Western tendency to rationalist reductionism. Tilmann Vetter, "Father Hugo Makibi Enomiya-Lassalle and Zen" in *On Sharing Religious Experience: Possibilities of Interfaith Mutuality*, J.D. Gort, et al., Editor (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 188.

<sup>28</sup>One instance of the wider Catholic participation in the practices of other religious traditions is the mantra practice of the World Community for Christian Meditation inspired by the teachings and example of Dom John Main, O.S.B. Others would be the many instances of Christians participating in Zen sitting (*zazen*) and in various forms of Yoga practice.

Paul VI, though called the "pope of dialogue,"<sup>29</sup> made a statement early in his pontificate on the limits of sharing in religious matters. His encyclical "*Ecclesiam Suam*" (1964), which inspired the Vatican Council by an appeal for dialogue with other religions (cf. *Nostra Aetate* 4, *Gaudium et Spes* 92),<sup>30</sup> states that Christians "cannot share in these various forms of religion."<sup>31</sup>

However, there are initiatives by Pope John Paul II that appear to have advanced the possibilities of deeper sharing among religious believers. The Pope has been supportive of those of

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<sup>29</sup>Jacques Dupuis S.J., *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 359.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 359.

<sup>31</sup>The first encyclical of Paul VI, "*Ecclesiam Suam*" (1964), images the relation of the Catholic Church to "mankind" in terms of concentric circles. Having addressed the first circle or "Everything Human," he turns to the second circle, that is, the "Believers in God." These are "the Hebrew people," "the adorers of God according to the conception of monotheism, the Muslim religion," and "the followers of the great Afro-Asiatic religions." Although describing those of this second circle as "not so far away from us," Paul VI makes a statement on the limits of sharing with other religions: "Obviously we cannot share in these various forms of religion nor can we remain indifferent to the fact that each of them, in its own way, should regard itself as being the equal of any other and should authorize its followers not to seek to discover whether God has revealed the perfect and definitive form, free from all error, in which he wishes to be known, loved and served. Indeed, honesty compels us to declare openly our conviction that there is but one religion, the religion of Christianity. It is our hope that all who seek God and adore him may come to acknowledge its truth." [ES 107-108] Paul VI, "*Ecclesiam Suam*" in F. Gioia, Editor, *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1994), 78.

other traditions leading a common life with Christians, praising the monks of the various Japanese Buddhist traditions who came to Europe to live with European Catholic monks:

I congratulate those among you who have lived in small groups in the great Christian monasteries and have shared fully their life of prayer and work for three weeks. Your experience is truly an epoch-making event in the history of interreligious dialogue.<sup>32</sup>

In an apparent retreat from encouraging such interactive sharing of prayer, the Pope, while hosting members of the world's religions for a day of prayer for peace at Assisi, deliberately refrained from sharing formulas of prayer with those other religious traditions. He gave his rationale for this decision in a general audience of the faithful (Rome, October 22, 1986), five days in advance of the meeting at Assisi. He distinguished between praying together and "being together in order to pray." The Pope emphasized that he was not making common prayer with the believers of the other religious traditions, though he respected their prayer and he assumed they too would not wish to adopt Catholic prayers.<sup>33</sup> The testimony of a Benedictine monk present at the Assisi event suggests that, though formulas of prayer were

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<sup>32</sup>John Paul II, "To the Lay Monks of the Various Buddhist Schools (Rome, September 26, 1979)" in F. Goia, Editor, *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church* (1994), 219.

<sup>33</sup>The Pope said: "We respect this prayer even though we do not intend to make our own those formulas that express other views of faith. Nor would the others, on their part, wish to adopt our prayers." *Ibid.*, 341.

not shared, in fact Christians experienced themselves praying together with others for peace.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, the Pope's stated intention not to make his own the formulas of another faith tradition was not his last word on the meaning of the Assisi gathering and of the prayers of the other religious peoples gathered there. John Paul II, in the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), recalled the Assisi event and affirmed the prayer of the other religious groups based on the presence of the Holy Spirit in every authentic prayer:

Excluding any mistaken interpretation, the interreligious meeting held in Assisi was meant to confirm my conviction that 'every authentic prayer is prompted by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in every human heart.'<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>"Whatever the case may be, this was a typical situation where classical theology was confronted with a new situation. If one emphasizes the conceptual contents of prayers *communicatio* is impossible. But if one pays more attention to experience and *praxis*, the communion of prayer imposes itself." Pierre F. DeBethune, "The Bond of Peace, A few Theological Reflections about Interreligious Prayer," *Pro Dialogo* 98(2) 1998: 163.

<sup>35</sup>More fully, the Pope wrote: "Thus the Spirit, who 'blows where he wills' (cf. Jn 3:8), who 'was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified' (AG 4), and who 'has filled the world ... holds all things together (and) knows what is said' (Ws 1:7), leads us to broaden our vision and to ponder his activity in every time and place (cf. DV 53). I have repeatedly called this fact to mind, and it has guided me in my meetings with a wide variety of peoples. The Church's relationship with other religions is dictated by a twofold respect: 'Respect for man in his quest for answers to the deepest questions of his life, and respect for the action of the Spirit in man.' Excluding any mistaken interpretation, the interreligious meeting held in Assisi was meant to confirm my conviction that 'every authentic prayer is prompted by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in every human heart.'" John Paul II, "*Redemptoris Missio*" in F. Goia, Editor, *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church* (1994), 101.

By affirming the universal experience of the Holy Spirit, the Pope appeared to be affirming the possibility of the authentic experience of the Holy Spirit in the context of other religious traditions.<sup>36</sup> The significance of the Pope's proclamations on the Holy Spirit have not gone unremarked by other Roman Catholic authorities. The document "Proclamation and Dialogue," a joint document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples drew attention to the theology of history of the Church Fathers and of Augustine. It then noted how these themes were taken up by the documents of Vatican II and how the Magisterium of John Paul II "proceeded further in the same direction," recognizing the Holy Spirit in the lives of others, both before the time of the Christian dispensation and outside the visible Church.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>This initiative is in agreement with the position taken by the Vatican II document "*Gaudium et Spes*" to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of all people. After explaining how Christians come in contact with the paschal mystery, the Council continues: "All this holds true not for Christians only but also for all men of good will in whose hearts grace is active invisibly [*Lumen Gentium*," ch. 2, n. 16]. For since Christ died for all [cf. Rom 8:32], and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold (*tenere debemus*) that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal Mystery (GS 22)." Austin Flannery O.P., ed, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (1987), 924.

<sup>37</sup>"It was to this early Christian vision of history that the Second Vatican Council made reference. After the Council, the Church's Magisterium, especially that of Pope John Paul II, has proceeded further in the same direction. First the Pope gives explicit recognition to the operative presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the members of other religious traditions, as when in *Redemptor Hominis* he speaks of their 'firm belief' as being

Notwithstanding the ambivalence of the Magisterium on the practical expression of interreligious sharing, this recognition of the universal working of the Holy Spirit by Pope John Paul II and by official voices within the Roman Catholic Church suggests a degree of acceptance of the possibility of an authentic religious experience within another religious tradition.

In practice, Christians are not agreed on the degree of religious sharing that is acceptable. Some Christians would not want to go beyond the stage of exchanging information with those of other religious traditions.<sup>33</sup> Others would support the level of sharing engaged in by Pope John Paul II when he invited leaders of the world's religious traditions to gather and pray

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'an effect of the Spirit of truth operating outside the visible confines of the Mystical Body' (n.6). In *Dominum et Vivificantem*, he takes a further step, affirming the universal action of the Holy Spirit in the world before the Christian dispensation, to which it was ordained, and referring to the universal action of the same Spirit today, even outside the visible body of the Church (cf. n. 53)." "Dialogue and Proclamation (1991)" in F. Goia, Editor, *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church* (1994), 617.

<sup>38</sup>Such appears to be the position of Carl Heinz Ratschow for whom the concept of faith can be employed "only in relation to God the Father of Jesus, because the relation to God in other religions is only accessible to us from the outside." [For] "he who has an insight into the devotional relationship to a God, worships this God and becomes His devotee." Carl Heinz Ratschow, *Die Religionen* (Mohn: Gütersloh, 1979), 123-124. [Translated by Krieger, *The New Universalism* (1991), ft.nt. 25, pp. 175-176] For the distinction between sharing as information and as communion, see André Droogers, "Meaning, Power, and the Sharing of Religious Experience: An Anthropology of Religion Point of View" in *On Sharing Religious Experience: Possibilities of Interfaith Mutuality*, J.D. Gort, et al., Editor (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 45.

each in their own way for peace (Assisi, 1986). Still others contend it is valid to pray, not just in one's own way with others, but together with those of another religion.<sup>39</sup> Then there are those who claim to belong in some sense to religious traditions in which they have what they consider authentic religious experience.<sup>40</sup> Such multireligious experience can create a new hermeneutical situation for theology in which other religious traditions have an integral role.<sup>41</sup>

#### Multicultural and Multireligious

This dissertation employs the term "multireligious" to suggest a parallel to the use of "multicultural" in the Canadian

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<sup>39</sup>Arnulf Camps has responded to the Assisi event: "In India there is now already more togetherness than there was at Assisi! After all, in the eyes of Asians, Assisi was a very humble beginning. Asians know that the *homo religiosus* in all of us is capable of more than 'be[ing] together to pray:' he can pray together with other companions on the pilgrimage to full humanity and towards the kingdom." Arnulf Camps, "The Prayers for Peace at Assisi" in *On Sharing Religious Experience: Possibilities of Interfaith Mutuality*, J.D. Gort, et al., Editor, (1992), 265.

<sup>40</sup>This is the case with the Catholic monk Henri Le Saux O.S.B. who committed himself to the experience of Advaita Vedânta and was known as Abhishiktânanda.

<sup>41</sup>William Cenkner asks: "Should we not look upon religious experience doubly-determined with coefficients from two faith traditions as the new hermeneutical situation from which a future theology emerges?" William Cenkner, "Review Symposium," *Horizons* 13(Spring) 1986: 130.



context.<sup>42</sup> This is done somewhat tentatively, with the knowledge that multiculturalism receives a mixed reception in some areas of Canada. Toronto, as well as being the city that receives the largest numbers of immigrants annually,<sup>43</sup> is perhaps Canada's most culturally and religiously diverse city. Some have suggested multicultural policies have contributed to the fragmentation of relations among the various groups in the city.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, there is little unanimity among the provinces of Canada on the term "multicultural". The province of Quebec has not accepted multiculturalism but supports a policy of interculturalism. Those who prefer the term "intercultural" have contended that, when contrasted with multicultural, intercultural

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<sup>42</sup>Introduced in 1971 as a formal government commitment, multiculturalism is also protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. See article 27 which reads: "This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians." "Constitution Act" in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, J.H. Marsh, Editor (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1982), 500.

<sup>43</sup>"More than half the 1.5 million immigrants who landed in Canada in the past six years -- the largest total since the time of Confederation -- settled in Ontario, largely in the Toronto area, says the report by the applied research branch of Human Resources Development Canada.... An earlier study by Statistics Canada found that almost all the new immigrants to Ontario settle in Metro Toronto. It absorbed 55,695 in the year ending April, 1994 -- five times as many as the surrounding region." Elaine Carey, "Ontario Gets Lion's Share of Immigrants Study Finds," in *The Toronto Star*. 1996, Toronto. A2.

<sup>44</sup>Bissoondath notes that Toronto turned out to be "the intolerance capital of Canada," at least on the basis of a poll carried out by Ekos Research Associates Inc. for the Federal Government (reported in the *The Globe and Mail* March 10, 1994). Neil Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1994), 3.

promotes a dynamic of interaction. They view the term "multicultural" as implying multiplicity and fragmentation.<sup>45</sup> In response to this interpretation, the defenders of multiculturalism claim that multiculturalism's promotion of cultural identity works to protect minority ethnoracial groups in society.<sup>46</sup>

Corresponding to the situation and focus of the researcher, the phenomena that typify "multireligious experience" have been named in various manners with a more exterior or more interior connotation. Besides "multiple religious participation," John H. Berthrong has spoken of "dual citizenship" in his study of recent

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<sup>45</sup>Drawing from a schematisation of possible societal arrangements proposed by Julien Harvey, André Charron defines multiculturalism as the next thing to mere juxtaposition of cultures. He writes: "*Le multiculturalisme, où les cultures d'origine demeurent entières, et où chacun des groupes conserve et épanouit sa propre culture, formant une mosaïque dans une société de marché: les divers groupes et les diverses communautés vivent selon leurs différences et les façons de vivre de leurs pays d'origine.*" André Charron, "Du culturel à l'interculturel: incidences sur l'intervention chrétienne et le service pastoral" in *Pluralisme culturel et foi chrétienne: actes du Congrès de la Société canadienne de théologie*, (St. Laurant, Québec: Les Éditions Fides, 1993), 292.

<sup>46</sup>Fleras and Elliot conclude: "Our opinion is at variance with thoughtful analysts who argue that we have 'too much multiculturalism.' While respecting their concerns as legitimate and thought-provoking, we suggest that many of the problems confronting Canada stem not from too much multiculturalism, but from not enough of it! Much has been accomplished in the last twenty years, but too many Canadians continue to rebel against accepting our multicultural heritage as legitimate component of a progressive Canadian society. This refusal has denied ethnoracial minorities their rightful place as bona fide players in a high-stakes game." Fleras and Elliot, *Multiculturalism in Canada: The Challenge of Diversity* (1992), 280.

Confucian-Christian dialogues.<sup>47</sup> Achiel Peelman writes of the prevalence of "religious dimorphism" among North American native peoples who integrate both Christianity and Aboriginal spirituality.<sup>48</sup> Christopher Duraisingh holds that the influence of Hindu and Christian traditions in the lives of Indian Christians is such that they can be described as "doubly-determined or co-constituted" by these traditions.<sup>49</sup> Robert Cummings Neville lists a number of "tao-daimon" (participation-

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<sup>47</sup>Berthrong relates a question raised by Confucians to Christians during the international dialogues at Hong Kong in 1988 and Berkeley, California in 1991: "At least one question raised in the context of these two formal dialogues was a challenge of historic proportions to the Christian participants. In its most stark formulation, some Confucian participants asked if a person could be a Confucian-Christian, which is to say, a person so formed by the Confucian and Christian traditions that she or he saw herself or himself as having a dual citizenship in both traditions." Berthrong, *All Under Heaven: Transforming Paradigms in Confucian-Christian Dialogue* (1994), 67.

<sup>48</sup>"The religious situation of many Amerindians can best be described as religious dimorphism: the simultaneous or successive belonging to two religious systems... These interactions extend from the simple juxtaposition of the two religious systems to their almost complete integration." Achiel Peelman, *Christ is a Native American* (Ottawa: Novalis, 1995), 158. A recent pastoral message of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops articulates the question Christian Native Peoples ask in relating to their Aboriginal spiritual traditions: "Can I be both Christian and Indian? or must I choose?" Commission for the Evangelization of Peoples: CCCB, *Rediscovering, Recognizing and Celebrating the Spiritual Heritage of Canada's Aboriginal Peoples* (May, 1999).

<sup>49</sup>Duraisingh agrees with Mark Sundur Rao's "affirmation that the content of memory and imagination of hosts of Indian-Christians is *doubly-determined or co-constituted* by the simultaneous operation of two traditions." Christopher Duraisingh, "A New Expression of Identity," *Religion and Society* 26 (December) 1979: 96.

distancing) models by which a scholar of religious traditions might guide his or her practice of engaged scholarship. First in his list of models is that of "multiple religious identity."<sup>52</sup>

Taking a lesson from the multiculturalism debate, the term "multireligious" is used in this dissertation with the awareness that there are potentially both positive and negative implications to its use. The term "multireligious" suggests an emphasis on the separation of religious traditions. On the one hand, the word can be employed to defend the right of a religious tradition and its members to a distinctive identity in the public arena.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, there is the danger that the term "multireligious" could obscure or detract from the reality of a convergence of religious traditions.

### Raising Questions

In the situation of an encounter among a plurality of religious beliefs, values and practices, those who maintain an openness to other people and groups can live in a certain

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<sup>52</sup>The other models are "deconstruction," "abstraction and syncretism," and "scholarship as the first encounter with religion." Neville writes of the scholar who takes the methodology of participation-distancing seriously: "In the case of the spiritual scholar, the spirituality of the scholarship itself is one religious identity that can be integrated with full participation in an organized religion; indeed, with multiple religious identity, a scholar can have a rich cultic life in several religious traditions." Robert Cummings Neville, "The Emergence of Historical Consciousness" in *Spirituality and the Secular Quest*, P.H.V. Ness, Editor (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), 150.

<sup>53</sup>Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992).

tension. They wish to be open to the truth and good found in the other tradition, at the same time as they wish to maintain commitment to what they consider true and good in their experience of their own tradition. The search is for a way that would not polarize into either a fanaticism that excludes appreciation of the beliefs, values and practices of others or a relativism that has decided antecedent to the encounter that all religious traditions are basically equivalent.<sup>52</sup> Relativism has been described as "the gravest problem of our time."<sup>53</sup> In the present situation of religious plurality, it can be asked whether there exists an attitude toward other religious traditions that

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<sup>52</sup>Arnulf Camps writes that Asian theologians, "seek holism, aware of the fact that the whole truth is found only by harmonizing the partial truths. This leads to a spirituality of double loyalty. Such spirituality must be distinguished from relativism or fundamentalism, attitudes which are not helpful to human beings in their spiritual endeavours; relativism resolves the problem before it is even raised and fundamentalism ignores the riches God has given to each nation and people." Camps, "The Prayers for Peace at Assisi" in *On Sharing Religious Experience: Possibilities of Interfaith Mutuality* (1992), 264.

<sup>53</sup>As Cardinal Ratzinger views the contemporary situation, there is prevalent a mistaken sentiment that convinces people that they cannot claim a religion's concrete statements of faith to be true. Ratzinger writes: "Hans Kelsen expressed the spirit of our era when he maintained that Pilate's question 'What is truth?' is the only appropriate standpoint vis-a-vis the great moral and religious problems of mankind. Truth is replaced by majority decision, he says, precisely because there can be no commonly binding accessible standard for man... Thus the multiplicity of cultures becomes a proof of their relativity. Culture is put in opposition to truth. This relativism, a basic sentiment of enlightenment man reaching today far into theology, is the gravest problem of our time." Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, "Christ, Faith and the Challenge of Cultures," *Origins* 1993: 683.

would avoid both fanaticism and relativism?<sup>54</sup> Indeed, what is the potential for multireligious experience within the Catholic tradition? How can a Catholic Christian maintain Christian identity and be open to religious experience in another religious tradition? If such a relationship between identity and openness is possible, are there resources in Catholic theological thought for promoting and evaluating this experience? These questions open an area of creative exploration for theological reflection. Theologians like the German Jesuit Karl Rahner have reflected on relations to other religious traditions as dogmatic theologians articulating Christian self-understanding in terms of Christian sources and in anticipation of an encounter.<sup>55</sup> However, more and more Catholic theologians experience the demand to reflect from within the situation of a sustained encounter. Encouraged by

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<sup>54</sup>This is the direction of Donald C. Posterski's search for collaborative attitude in a pluralist society. He writes: "The double commitment to themselves and to others can create tension for collaborators. Although they desire to include people compassionately, collaborators are ready to exclude people when genuine moral and spiritual differences exist. Collaborators who live with a redemptive vision pull away from 'win-lose' scenarios. Whether the debate centers on racist or gender issues, while making their own case clear, collaborators take the views of others seriously." Donald C. Posterski, *True to You: Living our Faith in our Multi-minded World* (Winfield, B.C.: Wood Lake Books Inc., 1995), 43.

<sup>55</sup>In an article drawn from notes of a lecture given April 28, 1961, Rahner states that contemporary contact with people of other religious traditions is a challenge to the claim of Christianity to be "the absolute religion, intended for all men, which cannot recognize any other religion beside itself as of equal right" (56). Karl Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions" in *Christianity and Other Religions*, J. Hick and B. Hebblethwaite, Editors (Glasgow: Fount Paperbacks, 1980), 52-79.

developments in the methodology of theological reflection, they follow a more existential and inductive approach that can draw directly from multireligious experience.<sup>56</sup>

### Multireligious Experience in the Context of India

Reflection on the basis of multireligious experience has been going on for some time now in the encounter between the Christian and Hindu traditions. From the side of the Hindu community, Indians of the intellectual classes were exposed to Christian beliefs and practices through English medium education during the colonial period. Major figures undertook to combine Christian and Hindu elements in the Indian situation. Others turned their efforts to a reform and revitalization of Hindu traditions. Particularly influential were a group of young Bengalis who gathered around the devotee of Kali, the mystic Sri Râmakrishna. The leader of this group, Vivekananda, made a lasting impression on Western consciousness at the 1893 Parliament of Religions held in Chicago. The influence of this

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<sup>56</sup>Jacques Dupuis holds that there was development in Vatican II itself over the question of method. A document promulgated late in the council sessions, *Gaudium et Spes* (GS) affirmed an inductive method that would attend to the "signs of the times" and reflect on the present situation in light of the Gospel: "It is no longer a question of going from principles to concrete applications but, in the opposite direction, of taking as a point of departure the reality as experienced today with the problems it raises, to search for -- in the light of the revealed message and through theological reflection -- a Christian solution to these problems" (14). Dupuis sees this method as employing the hermeneutical circle that has an interpreter (in this instance, the local ecclesial community) moving between the text (scripture, tradition, magisterium) and the context in all its complexity. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (1997).

group continues to the present day in the social and educational outreach of the Râmakrishna Order that they founded.

One member of that circle of young Bengalis, Bhawani Charan Banerji, a classmate of Vivekananda and a friend of Râmakrishna, was baptized in 1891 into the Anglican Church and that same year joined the Roman Catholic Church, taking the name Brahmobandhav (Sanskrit for Theophilus). To Brahmobandhav he added the name Upadhyay (teacher). In 1894 he put on the saffron robe worn by the Hindu mendicant holy men (sanyâsis) and declared himself a Catholic sanyâsi.<sup>57</sup> Brahmobandhav Upadhyay believed that Vedanta could serve Christians in India as scholastic philosophy had served Western Christians in past.<sup>58</sup> However, he based his understanding of the relation between his Hindu and his Christian identity on the natural-supernatural distinction that he found in Catholic scholastic thinking:

We are Hindu so far as our physical and mental constitution is concerned, but in regard to our immortal souls we are Catholic. We are Hindu Catholic.<sup>59</sup>

Catholic thinkers of a later generation encountering the Hindu tradition did not find Brahmabandhav Upadhyay's natural-

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<sup>57</sup>M.M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1969), 100.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 100.

<sup>59</sup>*Sophia* (July, 1898). Julius Lipner, "Introduction: Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (1861-1907): A Resume of his Life and Thought" in *The Writings of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (including a Resume of his Life and Thought)*, J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch S.J., Editor (Bangalore: The United Theological College, 1991), xxxviii.



supernatural distinction adequate. A Hindu Catholic does not simply add Christian religion (the supernatural) to Hindu culture (the natural). The Hindu tradition must be encountered as authentically religious. In 1950, the French Orientalist, Jules Monchanin, and the Benedictine monk, Henri Le Saux, established an ashram in which Hindu and Christian could meet at the level of the spiritual search. Monchanin thought that:

Advaita (non-dualism) and the praise of the Trinity are our only aim. This means that we must grasp the authentic Hindu search for God in order to Christianize it, starting with ourselves first of all, from within.<sup>60</sup>

Developments in Catholic theological thinking leading up to and influencing Vatican II (1962-1965) and subsequent Catholic reflection have emphasized that the natural-supernatural distinction is not to be considered a separation.<sup>61</sup> For a theologian like Karl Rahner (1902-1984), with his emphasis on the universal, salvific will of God, humanity as it is does not exist separate from the offer of grace. The vision of a graced world shapes the contemporary doctrine of salvation offered to all and, given the social and historical nature of the human being, anticipates that the graced response is articulated in the world's religious traditions. Rahner's confidence in God's offer

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<sup>60</sup>Gavin D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism: The Challenge of Other Religions* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 10.

<sup>61</sup>In the notes of his April 28, 1961 lecture, Karl Rahner asserts: "If one gives more exact theological thought to this matter, then one cannot regard nature and grace as two phases in the life of an individual which follow each other in time." Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions" (1980), 64.

of grace has led him to assert a general revelation (and special revelation) that holds to the possible truth and validity of other religious traditions.<sup>62</sup> He considers it the task of the historian of religions to establish through empirical research on the religious traditions something of what the dogmatic theologian working in an a priori fashion from Christian sources has anticipated.<sup>63</sup>

### Raimon Panikkar

This study of multireligious experience turns to Raimon Panikkar,<sup>64</sup> who is well-versed in the Catholic tradition in

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<sup>62</sup>As a Catholic dogmatic theologian, Rahner recognized that other religious traditions could hold supernatural elements arising as the result of grace. For this reason, other religious traditions could be recognized as "lawful religion" (61). The belief that this is an effective possibility derives from the Gospel vision that shapes Christian confidence in the "universal and salvific purpose of God" (62). In addition to the salvation history of the Old and New Testament, Rahner writes of "general salvation-history" (74). Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions" (1980).

<sup>63</sup>"Compared then with the task of a historian of religion, which is to discover Christ a posteriori in non-Christian religions insofar as this is possible, the reflections of a dogmatic theologian ... are a priori. They can only give something like provisional hints to the historian of religion, and perhaps he can then direct and sharpen his search and his inquiry for a task which the dogmatic theologian cannot assume." Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 312.

<sup>64</sup>Both Panikkar's surname and his given name have shifted at various points in his publishing history. His earliest work is under the name "Raimundo Paniker." After 1954, that is, after his first visit to India, he changed his surname to Panikkar. Most of his publishing since that time has been under the "Panikkar" surname. However, there are also citations under the spelling Pannikar. His given name has been written as "Raymond" or "Raimundo" or "Raimon" and even "Ray" according to the language and cultural perspective in which he is working at the

Europe, India and North America and is a renowned student of the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Panikkar has experienced the transition from monoreligious to multireligious contexts and developed an account of multireligious experience and proposed a pluralist attitude related to his intimate participation in other religious traditions. He is Professor Emeritus of the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he was Professor of Comparative Philosophy of Religion and History of Religions from 1971 to 1986. He holds three doctorates: a first one in philosophy, a second in chemistry and a third in theology.

At the present time, with his return to the Catalan country after his retirement from Santa Barbara, his preferred version of his given name is "Raimon." It is important for bibliographical research to be alert to these possible variations.

Michael Barnes contrasts a "theology for dialogue" which anticipates interreligious encounter and the new problematic of a "theology of dialogue" which reflects from within the encounter. He cites the work of Raimon Panikkar as "seminal": "Panikkar's intra-religious dialogue arises from the personal encounter with the other and the attempt to integrate that experience into the traditional Christian understanding of the ways of God." Michael Barnes, *Christian Identity and Religious Pluralism: Religions in Conversation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 135.

Received from the University of Madrid in 1946, after the completion of his studies in Bonn and Madrid. Raimundo Panikkar, *El Concepto de Naturaleza. Análisis Histórico e Metafísico de un Concepto* (Madrid: C.S.I.C., 1972 [1951]).

Received in 1958, again after studies in Bonn and Madrid. Raimundo Panikkar, *Ontonomía de la Ciencia: Sobre el sentido de la ciencia y sus relaciones con la filosofía* (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1961).

Received from the Pontifical Lateran University, Rome in 1961. Included in, R. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London, 1964).

Besides a significant research and teaching career in Spain, Italy, India, Latin America and North America, Panikkar has published more than fifty books and five hundred major articles in six languages.<sup>69</sup> Presently making his home-base in the small village of Tavertet outside of Barcelona, he continues to sustain diverse interests and commitments. In the past years he has been busy presenting at conferences, giving spiritual retreats and revising works for publication.

Panikkar is also well-acquainted with the Canadian concerns on multicultural and intercultural issues. He has a thirty-year continuing relationship with what was the Monchanin Cross-Cultural Centre (founded in 1963) and is presently known as the "Intercultural Institute of Montreal." This institute describes itself as "dedicated to the promotion of cultural pluralism and to a new social harmony."<sup>70</sup> Panikkar has contributed regularly to the institute's journal, *Inter-Culture*.<sup>71</sup> It is indicative of

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<sup>69</sup>J. Prabhu, "Preface," in *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar*, J. Prabhu, Editor (1996), ix. See also, Dominic Veliath, *Theological Approach and Understanding of Religions* (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti College, 1988?), 83. Veliath supplies a detailed bibliography up to 1985.

<sup>70</sup>Intercultural Institute of Montreal flyer.

<sup>71</sup>Among the papers published by Panikkar in *Interculture* are "Learning from India" (July-September 1981), "Alternatives to Modern Culture" and "Cross-Cultural Economics" (October-December 1982), "Introduction: A Cross-cultural Approach to Human Rights" (January-March 1984), "A Dialogue on Human Rights" (April-June 1984), "Peace and Cultural Disarmament" (Fall 1985), "Transforming Christian Mission into Dialogue" (Fall 1987), "The Religion of the Future" (Spring 1990), "Medicine and Religion" (Fall 1994).

the nature of Panikkar's relation to this organization that the dedication of the Indian edition of his book, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, was to the Monchanin Centre -- "of which the courageous praxis actualizes the theory of this book."<sup>72</sup> Panikkar's concern to relate his existential situation and reflection to the urgent issues of our time and to respond to these issues is joined to his conviction that these issues can only adequately be addressed by drawing deeply on the spiritual traditions of humankind.

Panikkar's pioneering work in the praxis of encounter among the world religions has led to his being named by one dialogue theologian as "the apostle of interreligious dialogue."<sup>73</sup> He is noted for his creative theological contributions arising out of the encounter between Hindus and Christians. William Cenkner writes:

The theological encounter between groups of Hindus and Christians may well be the most vibrant example of inter-religious dialogue existing today. The works of Raimundo Panikkar are but one special example.<sup>74</sup>

Ewert H. Cousins judges that Panikkar is one who has entered a new stage of human consciousness, "one in whom the global

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<sup>72</sup>"Au Centre Interculturel Monchanin: dont la praxis courageuse actualise la theorie de ce livre - d.d.d. R.P." R. Panikkar, *The Intra-Religious Dialogue* [Indian edition] (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1978).

<sup>73</sup>Leonard Swidler, *After the Absolute*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 44.

<sup>74</sup>William Cenkner, "Hinduism" in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, and Dermot A. Lane (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1987), 466-469.

mutation has already occurred and in whom the new forms of consciousness have been concretized."<sup>75</sup> M.M. Thomas identifies the issue that shapes much of Panikkar's thought:

In fact the starting point in many of his writings is the new theological significance of the pluralistic existence in which we find ourselves.<sup>76</sup>

Gerald James Larson claims that Panikkar's formulation of the notion of pluralism,

... is the only sustained, careful and serious presentation of the notion of pluralism in the contemporary literature of religious studies and philosophy.

Walter H. Capps, in his survey of the development of religious studies as a discipline, notes Panikkar's ability to live in a "Catholic-Hindu environment," his knowledge of the languages of India's scriptures and his lived experience of these traditions. In Capp's judgment, Panikkar shares some theological perspectives with Karl Rahner and Jean Daniélou. Rahner works on the principle that grace perfects nature. However, he has not studied the other religions in depth, starts from Christian theological principles and develops a theology in which Christianity explicates and fulfills other religions. Daniélou also holds the view that Christianity fulfills the other

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<sup>75</sup>Ewert H. Cousins, "Raimundo Panikkar and the Christian Systematic Theology of the Future," *Cross Currents* 29 (1979): 143.

<sup>76</sup>M.M. Thomas, *Risking Christ for Christ's Sake* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987), 30.

<sup>77</sup>Gerald James Larson, "Contra Pluralism," *Soundings* 73.2-3 (Summer/Fall 1990), 312.

religions but his scholarly knowledge of the period of early Christianity's contacts with the other religions allows him to speak more precisely than Rahner concerning Christianity in relation to the other religions. Capps contrasts Panikkar's attitude to other religious traditions with that of Rahner and Daniélou:

His attitude is also distinctive in that he views Christianity as something other than a competitor in an arena filled with other aspirants toward cultural, religious, and intellectual respectability. When Panikkar thinks of the non-Christian religions, he is thinking both comprehensively, precisely, and in a fundamentally noncombative way. Hence, the form and spirit of his response bear structural similarities to the attitude of Rahner and Daniélou, but the detail is more precious, and the arguments cast in a manner that invites other historians of religion to take them seriously.<sup>78</sup>

Capps identifies "the uniqueness of Panikkar's perspective"<sup>79</sup> in that Panikkar combines a positive theology of creation and anthropology with a distinctive understanding of the explicative function of religion. Both Christianity and the other religions explicate one another:

Both have something substantial to contribute to the dialogue. Each can make a positive contribution to the greater welfare of the other. The religions of the world can affect Christianity as Christianity affects the world's religions. Both sorts of religions are active participants in the explicatory process.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Walter H. Capps, *Religious Studies: The Making of a Discipline* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 282.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 283.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 283.

Raimon Panikkar's life reveals a gradual discovery and appropriation of the faith traditions that became available to him as living sources. Over the years, not only has he developed a lively relationship to other faith traditions, he has actively reflected and written on the meaning of this lived encounter.

Panikkar's efforts to give written expression to his experience are consistent with his distinctive conception of the intellectual life. An accomplished academic, he does not consider that his vocation as a scholar permits the separation of the existential from the intellectual dimensions of his life. In a reflection first published in 1978, he sums up his career under two headings: "existential risk and intellectual burden."<sup>31</sup> The "existential risk" has been to live "in more than one culture and religion":

... to accept the risk of conversion without alienation, assumption without repudiation, synthesis or symbiosis without syncretism or eclecticism. It is not that I willfully consider myself to be a religious and a secular man. It is rather that I am by birth, education, initiation and actual life a man living from and sharing in the original experiences of the western tradition, both christian and secular, and the indian tradition, both hindu and buddhist.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Raimundo Panikkar, "Philosophy as Life-Style" in *Philosophers on Their Own Work*, A. Mercier and M. Svilar, Editors (Peter Lang: Bern/Frankfurt am Main/Las Vegas, 1978), 200. See also the expanded version of this article: Raimon Panikkar, "Philosophy as Life-style" in *A Dwelling Place for Wisdom* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 77-108.

<sup>32</sup>Panikkar, "Philosophy as Life-style" (1978), 201.



Having identified the broad lines of the "existential risk" which he has accepted, he turns in this article to a succinct statement of his approach to the intellectual life. He writes that the "intellectual burden ... consists in expressing these basic experiences in an intelligible way."<sup>83</sup> His work evidences the close relationship he has maintained between context and reflection, in a basically inductive methodology of reflection. In his writing, he has been alert to the problematic presented by his life narrative and the concerns of his time and place. He has been constantly developing his theological positions in response to the changes in his personal horizon.

Panikkar holds that it is possible to live to some extent within more than one religious tradition. He bases his position on the human capacity to have "authentic internal religious experience in more than one religious tradition" and thus to "try to understand and eventually integrate more than one religious tradition."<sup>84</sup> Though Panikkar's language for the phenomenon of multireligious experience shifts, it is consistently personalist

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 202.

<sup>84</sup>However, a Philosophy of Religion that will speak about the religious dimension today is primarily based on the fact that human nature is "metaontologically one." Panikkar writes: "The main thing favouring such an enterprise is not the individual's psychological capacity to sincerely experience more than one religious tradition, but the fact that there exists something like a fundamental religiousness, a constitutive religious dimension in Man, an inbuilt religious or basically human factor, whatever we may care to call it." R. Panikkar, "Growth in Comparative Religion," in *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (New York, N.Y./Ramsey Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1978), 68-69.

and existential in tone. Besides having used the phrase "multireligious experience,"<sup>85</sup> he has more frequently written in terms of "identity".<sup>86</sup> In one section of his 1996 essay, "A Self-Critical Dialogue," he reflects on "the question of identity". Confessing himself Christian and reflecting on his "Hindu identity," he writes of his "two sub-identities":

I call these two belongings sub-identities for personal and philosophical reasons. Personally, I have discovered secularity after having experienced to the full, I would dare say, the most severe roman catholic tradition. And I have discovered buddhism also after having plunged into the most strict vedântic orthodoxy.<sup>87</sup>

The use of the terms "multireligious" and "multireligious experience" in referring to Panikkar's work is consistent with the practice of the editor of a number of Panikkar's English language works. Thus, Scott Eastham employs both the terms

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<sup>85</sup>Panikkar employed the term "multireligious experience" in an essay written on his return to Spain after fifteen years in India: Raimundo Panikkar, "Fe y creencia. Sobre la experiencia multirreligiosa [sic]. Un fragmento autobiográfico objetivado." *Homenaje a Xavier Zubiri* (Madrid: Editorial Moneda y Crédito, 1970, vol. II), 434-459. This same article was translated into English and republished as part of a collection of his works on interreligious dialogue. See R. Panikkar, "Faith and Belief: A Multireligious Experience" in *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (New York, N.Y./Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1978), 12-13.

<sup>86</sup>He writes: "I have stressed time and again that identity has been taken to mean what differentiates a thing from another, *singularity*, or what identifies a thing with itself, disregarding differences, *individuality*." Raimon Panikkar, "A Self-Critical Dialogue" in *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar*, J. Prabhu, Editor (1996), 262. See also: R. Panikkar, "Singularity and Individuality: The Double Principle of Individuation," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 11/112(1-2) 1975: 141-166.

<sup>87</sup>Panikkar, "A Self-Critical Dialogue" (1996), 265.

"multireligious" and "multireligious experience" in his "Introduction" (1992) to Panikkar's book, *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness*. Eastham gives an account both of the context of multireligious experience and of the pluralist attitude Panikkar fosters:

He [Panikkar] points out that true pluralism is neither an unrelated plurality nor a new ideological superstructure designed to keep everybody in their assigned cultural slots. Genuine pluralism is of another order altogether, and it derives from lived experience. Is it possible to experience the truth of more than one cultural tradition without alienation or schizophrenia? Well, many people have multicultural experiences, either at home or abroad. Most commonly, our 'modernity' permits us to compromise the values of one or both cultures; we skate over the surfaces. So the question should be rephrased: Is it possible for one human being to penetrate to the core, the soul, the religion, the deepest values of more than a single culture? A much riskier venture, since the entire person -- body, mind, spirit -- will be put at risk. Even more: Must such a journey be always a one-way ticket, or is it possible to return? Raimon Panikkar's life and work testify that both the crossing over and the return are not only possible, but imperative in our day when formerly insular cultures are encountering one another (and more often than not colliding) on an unprecedented scale. Panikkar is a living Rosetta Stone, if you like, who demonstrates not only that the multireligious experience is possible and real, but that it is going to profoundly transform both the people and the traditions involved.<sup>86</sup>

In addition to employing the terms "multireligious" and "interreligious" Panikkar coins the term "intrareligious" in order to recognize and to promote the personal integration of multireligious experience. Not only has Panikkar engaged in the

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<sup>86</sup>Scott Eastham, "Introduction" in Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness*, S. Eastham, Editor (1993), vi.

exterior dialogue among religions (interreligious dialogue), he has lived to some extent with participation in these other traditions (multireligious experience) and engaged these traditions in a personal and interior response (intrareligious dialogue). It might be said that Panikkar fits his own description of a person open to "multireligious experience," as one who,

... starts by making a real, heartfelt, unselfish effort -- a bold and hazardous one -- to understand the belief, the world, the archetypes, the culture, the mythical and conceptual background, the emotional and historical associations of his fellows from the inside. In short, he seriously attempts an existential incarnation of himself into another world -- which obviously involves prayer, initiation, study and worship.<sup>89</sup>

In this early reflection,<sup>90</sup> Panikkar presents multireligious experience as the initiative of an exceptionally committed person. Other students of religion have written in a similar vein. Kenneth Paul Kramer calls to his reader's attention gifted and well-known Catholic figures such as Swami Abhishiktânda, Enomiya-Lassalle and Thomas Merton.<sup>91</sup> Such religious figures,

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<sup>89</sup>R. Panikkar, "Faith and Belief: A Multireligious Experience" in *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (New York, N.Y./Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1978), 12.

<sup>90</sup>The original Spanish version was 1970.

<sup>91</sup>He writes: "... it will be helpful to speak of another distinction, that between a one-source practitioner against a two-source practitioner (that is, between a single-tradition loyalty and a dual-tradition loyalty). In the former case, whether a Hindu or a Buddhist, whether a Jew or a Christian, the adherent actively practices only one religious path, the one that is absolute for her or him. Other religious practices, while acknowledged, are nevertheless relegated to a subordinate,

who have related to other religions while taking care not to put them in a "subordinate, non-absolute position,"<sup>92</sup> merit close attention when discerning the meaning of multireligious experience. What is to be learned from their lives can be significant in understanding both the challenges and potential responses to challenge intrinsic to Christian life and theological reflection today. However, it must be said that, in the present situation, multireligious experience is not restricted to a few creative people. Panikkar, himself, has written more recently:

The meeting of religions is not merely the business of academicians or of only a few 'enthusiasts' but has become a question of the very religious life of the mature human being today.<sup>93</sup>

Panikkar recognizes the problem that arises in the encounter between Hindu and Christian traditions when a "superficial cordiality" leaves the two communities in an uneasy and

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nonabsolute position. However, there are those -- such as Swami Abhishiktanda (who practiced the teachings of Hindu Vedanta and Christian mysticism) and Enomiya-Lassalle and Thomas Merton (who practiced both Zen Buddhist and Christian spirituality) -- whose lives were formed by a dual allegiance to seemingly contradictory worldviews." Kenneth Paul Kramer, "Extra-, Inner-, Intra-, Inter-religious Voices," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 30(2) 1993: 203.

<sup>92</sup>See Kramer's reflection in the previous footnote.

<sup>93</sup>R. Panikkar, "In Christ There is Neither Hindu nor Christian: Perspectives on Hindu-Christian Dialogue" in *Religious Issues and Interreligious Dialogues*, Charles Wei-hsun Fu and Spiegler, Gerhard E., Editors (New York/Westport, Connecticut/London: Greenwood Press, 1989), 483.

potentially volatile relationship.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, he has worked intentionally in the Indian context to counteract such socio-cultural and religious dynamics.<sup>95</sup>

### The Question and Outline

Panikkar asks the question that arises at the present time in the Christian who is encountering other religious traditions:

Can I be an authentic Christian; that is, can I live the depth and plenitude of the Christian message and at the same time make room in myself for other religions without assigning them a secondary role?<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>"The problem then arises in a manner so acute, that we have not the right to overlook it by proffering the excuse that an apparent and superficial cordiality is better left undisturbed. If we do not tackle the problem in all humility and sincerity, then we shall never overcome an underground uneasiness that will emerge only to grow destructive and harmful to both sides at critical moments in the history of individuals and of the two communities. Christianity desires that the Hindu become a Christian. Hinduism has no such wish to make Christians Hindus -- to the Hindu one cannot in fact become what one is not; yet Hinduism will obviously prohibit Hindus from being unfaithful to their Hindu dharma. Is there any solution to this problem?" R. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964, 1968), 3.

<sup>95</sup>The pattern of "encapsulation" has been understood as a threat to Indian Christianity. One student of the Indian scene comments: "India has theologians of intellectual acumen -- Raimundo Panikkar, Samuel Rayan, Matthew Vellanickal -- who have already initiated a changing role in Indian theology. They may help to prevent one of the greatest threats to Indian Christianity: the danger that it may gradually become an Indian subculture. They will do so by attempting to extend the kingdom of God in India beyond its Judeo-Christian exclusivity to the depth and breadth and height envisioned in the gospel of Christ." Kathleen Healy, *Christ as Common Ground: A Study of Christianity and Hinduism* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1990), 18.

<sup>96</sup>Panikkar, "In Christ There is Neither Hindu nor Christian: Perspectives on Hindu-Christian Dialogue" (1989), 475. Panikkar has put a similar question to people of all religious traditions, asking: "Is it possible, while adhering sincerely and convincingly

In response to this question, Panikkar affirms that the full Christian life today must include the possibility of sharing the religious experience of people of other religious traditions:

A full Christian life today is not possible as long as there is indifference to or only a negative tolerance of other religions. The commandment to love our neighbours is also a demand to know them, and they cannot be known if their religiosity is not also shared. This participation makes our neighbours' beliefs a religious question for ourselves. Our neighbours' faith is part of our own religious development. If we are not able in some way to attain the religious experience of our cocitizens, we cannot pretend to have understood their beliefs, much less presume to pass judgement upon them.<sup>97</sup>

To enter into the religious experience of other peoples is not an automatic process but it is the patient effort of those who move from mutual love to deeper knowledge. For Panikkar, the encounter must have both an experiential and a mystical dimension:

The encounter of religions has an indispensable experiential and mystical dimension. Without a certain experience that transcends the mental realm, without a certain mystical element in one's life, one cannot hope to leave behind the particularism of one's own religiosity, much less to broaden and deepen it when one comes to encounter a different human experience.<sup>98</sup>

Panikkar strives to maintain a Christian identity while entering into a relationship with other religious traditions

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to one religion, to show one's self unprejudiced and just towards another?" Raimundo Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man: Icon - Person - Mystery* (New York: Orbis, 1973), 1.

<sup>97</sup>Panikkar, "In Christ There is Neither Hindu nor Christian: Perspectives on Hindu-Christian Dialogue" (1989), 475-476.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 487.

without putting them into a secondary role. He has been enabled in this by a pluralist attitude integral to his multireligious experience. This first part has highlighted the **problematic** this dissertation addresses, the question of the intelligibility of multireligious experience. As well, it has presented a rationale for exploring this problematic in the life and work of Raimon Panikkar. The second part of the thesis is an **exposition** of Panikkar's thought set in the narrative of his major geographical transitions. The account of his self-understanding as a Christian in relation to other religions will begin with the second chapter which covers the Spanish period from the early 1940s to his first visit to India in 1954. The third chapter will address the India period to the late 1960s. The fourth chapter will cover aspects of the period when his scholarly career took him between India and North America and after 1987 saw him based in the Catalan country near Barcelona. The fifth chapter will study what Panikkar proposes as a hermeneutic that addresses the issue of the encounter between radically distinct cultures and religious traditions. Such encounter provides the test case for his conviction that apparently irreconcilable doctrinal differences need not hold the various religious traditions in thrall. For Panikkar, a dialogical dialogue that engages the full dimensions of the human person holds potential for movement beyond fixed positions. The third part, comprising the sixth and seventh chapters, will indicate something of the **interpretation** of various critics, both dissenting and



concurring, with respect to Panikkar's efforts to express and foster a pluralist attitude in relation to multireligious experience. This will allow, in the fourth part, the eighth chapter, a constructive **evaluation** to be articulated concerning Panikkar's multireligious experience and pluralist attitude. Finally, the postscript will draw out implications for living in a multireligious society from his account of multireligious experience and the pluralist attitude he has identified and proposed.

SECOND PART: RAIMON PANIKKAR  
EXPOSITION

Only another person - or I myself in a second moment - can make me aware of my presuppositions; when that happens, I cannot hold them as I had done previously, but am led to either reject them, or to keep them as 'suppositions' or as assumptions.<sup>1</sup>

CHAPTER TWO

PANIKKAR IN CATHOLIC SPAIN: MOVING BEYOND ONE-TRADITION LOYALTY

This chapter reviews the writings of Panikkar's earliest period of intellectual creativity (1944-1954) as a priest of *Opus Dei* in Franco's post-war Spain. It is hoped that from this reading some understanding can be garnered of factors that played their role in his later assertion of multireligious experience. His occasional references to Indian culture and religion will point up the stirring in him of an interest in the matter of Christian relations to other religious traditions. This review is made with the knowledge that the encounter with India's cultures and religions became central to Panikkar's life project only after his first visit to India in the mid-1950s.

Context: Monoreligious Post-war Spain

The monoreligious context of Panikkar's early years suggests that transitions were entailed in his reaching a point where he could claim multireligious experience. It was taken for granted by most Spaniards of the 1940s and 1950s that Catholic

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<sup>1</sup>Raymond Panikkar, "Metatheology or Diacritical Theology as Fundamental Theology" in *The Development of Fundamental Theology*, J.B. Metz, Editor (New York, N.Y.: Paulist Press, 1969), 45.

Christianity was the sole true religion. For the mindset of the time, the possibilities of authentic religious belonging were limited to forms of acceptance or rejection of the institutional Catholic church.<sup>2</sup> Social and economic location played a significant role influencing particular attitudes toward the Church. The industrial and agricultural working classes were alienated from the Church hierarchy, which drew support from the rural aristocracy and portions of the urban middle-class. The Church's history of close ties with particular classes and with the State had helped make the Church a target of hostility. Between 1931 and 1936 the influence of the Church was seriously weakened by the political dominance of the secularist Republican party. The period of the Republic (1931-1936), and of the Civil War (1936-1939) that brought down the Republic, saw the

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<sup>2</sup>Panikkar in 1991 illustrates the encompassing nature of this worldview with an anecdote concerning the Spanish Civil War, Bilbao, 1936. He says: "The basques are catholic and fighting with the 'communists' against Franco. A foreigner, a protestant minister, takes the occasion to explain to a group of workers: 'Here you are, believing christians and fighting against your fellow-catholics joining the red brigades. Join the protestants who are the real followers of the Gospel which is what you want.' Violent reaction of the 'communists' basques up to the point that the protestant minister must save himself: 'We have abandoned and are fighting the Only One Catholic, Apostolic and true Church outside of which there is no salvation and now you, dirty fellow, want us to join an heretical sect...?'" Panikkar then gives his interpretation: "They knew what was christian identity in the unbroken roman catholic myth. They put all their lives -- and eternal lives -- at stake. They were not fighting just to conquer a piece of earth or bread... That unifying myth of friend and foe alike is today no longer too common." Raimon Panikkar, "On Catholic Identity" in *Warren Lecture Series in Catholic Studies* (Tulsa: University of Tulsa, 1991), ft.nt. 14, p. 20.

destruction of Church property and the killing of thousands of priests and religious. The victory of Franco's forces over the Republicans was perceived as a victory for the Catholic Church in Spain. The Franco regime, while avoiding extremes of totalitarianism that might have alienated the Church, satisfied the conservative leanings of the majority of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. During the post-war period, the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Spain became the main legitimating support of dictator Franco's government. For a Spaniard of that time, a sense of identity was closely tied to the profession of Roman Catholic belonging.

In many regions of Spain, especially in places where agriculture dominated the way of life, Catholic people were cut off from contact with developments in Catholic self-understanding occurring worldwide. The clergy and people in the few industrialized and entrepreneurial areas of Spain were more open to outside influences. Catalonia, especially, with its history of commerce with France and other parts of Europe, was a region in which the clergy were encouraged to study the European languages and to address current intellectual and social issues. It was also an area where there was less anticlericalism than in

other areas of Spain.<sup>3</sup>

Paniker, the Catalan

Raimundo Paniker (later Panikkar) was born in the city of Barcelona, the heart of Catalonia, on November 3, 1918. He was the first child of a Roman Catholic mother, a Catalan, and a Hindu father, an industrialist and Brahmin from south India.<sup>4</sup> He has described his early formation in the Catholic faith as narrowly orthodox.<sup>5</sup> His initial upbringing neglected the religious dimensions of his father's Hindu tradition. Joseph Prabhu explains:

Great as the influence of his father might have been in other ways, it did not extend to his religious upbringing. Panikkar's exposure to the world of India as a youth was scholastic rather than ritualistic and consisted of the study of the Sanskrit classics under the supervision, among others, of the Spanish Sanskritist Juan Mascaro.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>For the above see: William Ebenstein, *Church and State in Franco Spain* (Princeton: Center of International Studies, Princeton University, 1960); also, Raymond Carr, *Spain: 1808-1975* (Second ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); James Cleugh, *Spain in the Modern World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953); Frances Lannon, *Privilege, Persecution, and Prophecy: The Catholic Church in Spain 1875-1975* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

<sup>4</sup>Veliath, *Theological Approach and Understanding of Religions* (1988), 81-83.

<sup>5</sup>Panikkar has written: "Here I am a Man brought up in the strictest orthodoxy, who has lived as well in a milieu that is 'microdox' from every point of view." Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (1978), 5.

<sup>6</sup>Prabhu, "Lost in Translation: Panikkar's Intercultural Odyssey," in *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar*, J. Prabhu, Editor (1996), 5. However, in responding to an interviewer's assumption that he was not brought up Christian,

Panikkar did his secondary school studies with the Jesuits of Barcelona. At the end of the Republic and during the period of the Spanish Civil War, his family -- the father being Indian held a British passport -- was able to leave Spain to settle for a time in Germany. When the family returned to Spain at the end of the Civil War, Panikkar continued on in Germany studying chemistry at the University of Bonn. While in Spain on vacation in 1939, the outbreak of the Second World War prevented him from returning to his studies in Germany.<sup>7</sup>

At the end of 1939 Panikkar met the charismatic founder of *Opus Dei*,<sup>8</sup> Padre Escrivá de Balaguer, and in 1940 he joined what

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Panikkar says: "I was brought up in both the Christian and Hindu traditions. I am of Hindu religion and Christian faith, with a spiritual temperament to try and synthesize things and not be a split personality." Raymond Panikkar and Ian Stephens, "Is Jesus Christ Unique? Dialogue between Ian and Ray," *Theoria to Theory* I (January) 1967: 135.

<sup>7</sup>Panikkar's brother, Salvador, has written a personal account of these early years, supplying details of the family history. See Salvador Pániker, *Primer Testamento* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1985), 113 ff. Panikkar himself reflects on this era: "Without having had to experience a war or having been in military or paramilitary service, my life still has been marked by wars. My birth coincides with the end of World War I. Then, in 1936, the Spanish Civil War interrupted my life, both externally and internally. Many of my classmates were stationed at this front or that; some of them died there. Three years of Nazi Germany up to two months before war broke out in September 1939 let me see the brutality of this military regime. Once safely back in Spain, I suffered from the knowledge that classmates were scattered across many different fronts and that familiar cities had been bombed." Panikkar, "Philosophy as Lifestyle" (1993), 83.

<sup>8</sup>Founded in 1928 by José María Escrivá de Balaguer, *Opus Dei* (*Sociedad Sacerdotal de la Santa Cruz y Opus Dei*) was given Papal approval as a Secular Institute on February 24, 1947. Michael Walsh, *The Secret World of Opus Dei* (Toronto: Grafton Books,

was at that time a small group of dedicated Catholics.<sup>9</sup> *Opus Dei* attracted Panikkar as a way of serious commitment with a new vision for the Christian life.<sup>10</sup> The group was different from traditional Catholic religious groups of the time in that the majority of those who entered *Opus Dei* continued to work in their secular professions. As well, most of the members, though taking various vows, did not become clerics but remained lay. The group counselled its members to keep silent about their membership in *Opus Dei* and about their particular ministries. This group focused its attention on the educated elite and attracted many young Spaniards to its membership. In the 1950s, as a result of the high standards of education of its membership and its solid political connections, *Opus Dei* was considered "the most

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1989), 55.

<sup>9</sup>Pániker, *Primer testamento* (1985), 114. Although Panikkar and *Opus Dei* parted ways in 1965, he explains in a prefatory letter to his diary that he does not regret having had this experience nor having gone beyond it: "... ni siquiera excusarme, justificarme o vanagloriarme de mis años de entonces dentro del *Opus Dei*. No estoy arrepentido de aquella etapa de mi vida, ni tampoco de haberla superado." Raimundo Panikkar, *Cometas: Fragmentos de un Diario Espiritual de la Postguerra* (Madrid: Euramerica, 1972), 19-20.

<sup>10</sup>Michael Walsh reports a 1984 interview with Panikkar on the subject of *Opus Dei*: "*Opus*, says Panikkar, when he first came across it was almost a 'counter-cultural' movement. People like himself joined it because it appeared to offer a way to overcome 'routine' Roman Catholicism. They simply wanted to take their religion seriously, to follow the Gospel in the totality of the demands it makes upon someone who wants to be a disciple of Christ." Walsh, *The Secret World of Opus Dei* (1989), 30.

influential religious group in Spain."<sup>11</sup>

Notwithstanding his training and academic achievements, Panikkar was not missioned exclusively to university teaching.<sup>12</sup> He was assigned by his *Opus Dei* superiors to pastoral ministry with students.<sup>13</sup> Between the time of his ordination as a priest in 1946 and his trip to India in 1954, he gave some two hundred conferences to people of all professions and social backgrounds.<sup>14</sup> In addition, he carried on an active correspondence with many people.<sup>15</sup> However, Panikkar's pastoral

<sup>11</sup>Ebenstein, *Church and State in Franco Spain* (1960), 32; Lannon, *Privilege, Persecution, and Prophecy* (1987), 225-230.

<sup>12</sup>His teaching positions during this period include: "1943-45 Assistant to the Chair of Psychology, Madrid; 1946-1951 Professor for Indian Culture and Comparative Cultures, Madrid; 1950-1951 ... Professor of Religious Sociology; 1952-53 Professor of Philosophy of History, Madrid ..." Cheriyan Menacherry, *Christ: The Mystery in History; A Critical Study of the Christology of Raymond Panikkar* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), ft.nt. 7, p. 20.

<sup>13</sup>His brother, Salvador, comments ironically: "Sus múltiples licenciaturas y doctorados, su impresionante currículum académico, todo eso le condujo a ser el director espiritual de alguna insignificante residencia de estudiantes." Pániker, *Primer testamento* (1985), 114.

<sup>14</sup>Panikkar writes in his diary from the post-war period: "... el horizonte de mi experiencia iba desde antiguas amistades profesionales y científicas hasta casi dos centenares de tandas de ejercicios espirituales de toda clase, abarcando desde las que entonces aún se llamaban muchachas de servicio, hasta profesores universitarios..." Panikkar, *Cometas* (1972), 19.

<sup>15</sup>His secretary during this period has given her impression of him gathered from the letters she was typing for him: "My impression of doctor Panikkar as a priest was very positive, mostly based on the letters he wrote to different people, whose names I never knew, because he would put them in afterwards by hand. The text of those letters revealed not only a lively and



activities did not keep him from being involved in the intellectual issues of his time. With contacts gained through his international education and facilitated by his knowledge of a number of languages, he maintained active communication with European intellectual circles. He was a founding editor and vice-director of the journal *Arbor*, the official organ of the "Superior Council of Scientific Investigation" [C.S.I.C.] of General Franco's government.<sup>16</sup> In addition, he was director of the "Patmos" collection, a prolific writer of articles and book reviews for various journals, and involved in congresses and

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broad intelligence, but also a great openness, discretion and sensitivity. He was not an authoritarian person but just the opposite. He always showed understanding towards human weaknesses. He was a witness to his Christian convictions." [N.B. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are those of the author of this dissertation.] "Mi impresión del doctor Panikkar como sacerdote era muy positiva, mayormente basada en las cartas que escribía a diferentes personas, cuyos nombres nunca supe, porque los ponía él después a mano. Los textos de aquellas cartas revelaban no sólo una inteligencia viva y amplia, sino también una gran apertura, discreción y sensibilidad. No era una persona autoritaria, sino todo lo contrario. Mostraba siempre comprensión hacia las debilidades humanas. Era un testigo de sus convicciones cristianas." María del Carmen Tapia, *Tras el Umbral: Una Vida en el Opus Dei* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 1992), 36-37.

<sup>16</sup>"The C.S.I.C.', in the view of Ibañez Martín, the A.C.N.P. [Asociación Católica de Propagandistas] Minister of Education, 'was born, above all, to serve God ... to inject theology into all our cultural activities.' Its periodical *Arbor* was the platform for the intellectuals of the Opus: its aim 'to rechristianize culture'. Its leading spirit, Calvo Serer, employed the formulas of the integrists of the nineteenth century: Protestantism=the Enlightenment=liberalism=Marxism. The Catholic unity of Spain had been recreated by the victory of Franco." Carr, *Spain: 1808-1975* (1982), 764.

philosophical societies.<sup>17</sup>

Synthetic Vision in a Eurocentric Reflection

An autobiographical comment by Panikkar supports a consideration of his early writings for understanding his later work. In a letter dated Easter, 1987, he writes: "... I sense an amazing continuity in my life."<sup>18</sup> In his 1993 publication, *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness*, Panikkar makes reference to his early insights, writing that, "for many decades he has been concentrating on the problem of a

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<sup>17</sup>His brother, Salvador Panikér, comments that Panikkar's early intellectual contributions deserve more attention than they have received. Salvador notes Panikkar's book reviews of works by Rahner, Barth and Cullman and his work as director of the "Patmos" collection in publishing works by such figures as Guardini, LeClerq, Pieper, Holzner, Stolz, Thibon, and Guitton. Panikér, *Primer Testamento* (1985), 114. Panikkar's secretary during this period relates that in 1948 at the age of 28 he was secretary general of the International Congress of Philosophy and later the first secretary of the Spanish Society of Philosophy. Tapia, *Tras el Umbral* (1992), 30.

<sup>18</sup>This letter in place of a foreword for a book that reviews his life-work is an occasion for a self-evaluation by Panikkar. The above citation more fully: "There has been evolution in my ideas, I assume, progress, and eventually also some kind of mutation. But something has always struck me, which is different from what has happened to other people. I do not have the impression of being a 'converted' person, one who has undergone a 'rupture', a 'passing over', or an 'enlightenment' if you so want. I have never abjured the past nor rejected my tradition(s). If I have abandoned some ideas it is because they have given birth to their successors, begotten new ones. I do not feel I have repressed, rebuked, anything. I feel rather that I have assimilated old things, discovered their value and transformed their effects and appearances. I am saying that I sense an amazing continuity in my life. I seem all the more to have overcome the past accepting and assimilating it into a present which is still in joyful pilgrimage, full of hope." R. Panikkar, "Instead of a Foreword: An Open Letter," in Veliath, *Theological Approach and Understanding of Religions* (1988), XIII.

'Visión de síntesis del universo'.<sup>13</sup>

In 1944 at the age of 26 Panikkar published the first major article of his intellectual career in the founding issue of the periodical *Arbor*. This essay, "A Synthetic Vision of the Universe,"<sup>20</sup> with which, as he has written, he "debuted in the intellectual arena,"<sup>21</sup> reveals the early provenance of basic elements of his theological method and vision. The study is not a consideration of a purely theoretical issue, but is a response to the condition of "those who are sick," his "contemporaries."<sup>22</sup> He states that there is an "evil," an "anxiety or ... restlessness"<sup>23</sup> and that, "the evil is universal."<sup>24</sup> He identifies that evil as the lack of a synthetic vision of the world that would unify human life, giving unity and purpose to

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<sup>13</sup>Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness* (1993), ft.nt. 3, p. 79.

<sup>20</sup>Raimundo Paniker, "Visión de Síntesis del Universo," *Arbor* 1 1944: 5-40.

<sup>21</sup>In his book *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness* (1993), Panikkar makes reference to this first study and observes that "Man's innate thirst for unity and harmony" means that the call for a synthetic vision cannot be put off as "pious wishful thinking." See ft.nt. 20, p. 6.

<sup>22</sup>Paniker, "Visión de Síntesis" (1944), 5-6.

<sup>23</sup>"La inquietud, o, como ya se distinguía, el desasosiego humano, se extiende a todos los ámbitos de la vida, y quien no lo nota es un inconsciente." *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>24</sup>"... se puede hacer una sola afirmación acerca de la actual enfermedad humana: el mal es universal." *Ibid.*, 6.

the sciences and bringing peace to human desires and anxieties.<sup>25</sup> For Panikkar, the roots of the contemporary evil were to be found in the loss of the sense of God at the end of the Middle Ages, a loss of the sense of self in the Enlightenment and Age of Idealism, and a confusion about the world in the present Technological Age:

Man, in a process that the history of thought clearly identifies, lost God at the close of the Middle Ages, lost himself in the century of the Enlightenment and the Age of Idealism, and has become lost, has gone missing in the middle of the world in the present age, in the era of technology.<sup>26</sup>

Whereas the Middle Ages was completely focused on God and in this manner spontaneously oriented to "the real order,"<sup>27</sup> "modern man," perhaps because disconnected from all else, "is interested primarily in himself."<sup>28</sup> In this early article, he writes from within a homogeneous cultural and religious context in a fashion

<sup>25</sup>"El mal de la época actual es la falta de *síntesis* ... una *síntesis* que unifique toda la vida humana, que abarque al hombre en su totalidad, que lo haga santo y sabio, fuerte y humilde, que dé un sentido de unidad a todas las ciencias y un fin último a todas las acciones, que alcance la paz para el hombre, paz a su inquietud científica -- que no significa ni reposo ni solución de todos los problemas --, paz a sus ansias de superación, paz a sus anhelos de felicidad y paz incluso a los hombres entre sí. *Síntesis* que no desprecie el menor átomo humano, pero que lo coloque en su sitio con visión de conjunto y misión particular." Ibid., 7.

<sup>26</sup>"El hombre, en un proceso que la historia del pensamiento marca distintamente, perdió a Dios al finalizar la Edad Media, se perdió a sí mismo en el siglo de las luces y en el idealista, y se ha perdido, se ha extraviado en medio del mundo en la época contemporánea, en la época de la técnica." Ibid., 5.

<sup>27</sup>"... el orden real." Ibid., 25.

<sup>28</sup>"... se interesa primariamente por sí mismo." Ibid., 25.

that suggests a horizon limited to that of the Western world. Indeed, this text is evidence of his unconscious Eurocentric bias at this time. In 1960, when he revised the above passage for his collection *Humanismo y Cruz*, he showed that he was aware of the overtly "Western" nature of his earlier analysis. He changed the text to read, in place of the universal "man," -- "Western [my underlining] man, in a process that the history of thought clearly identifies."<sup>29</sup>

In this article, Panikkar does not appear aware of the claims of other religious traditions. In order to affirm the existential nature of Christianity, he contrasts it with the "merely religious" and "the pure essence of Religion":

... at the moment we do not find ourselves in the merely religious terrain, but in full Christianity -- and Christianity contains much more than what the pure essence of Religion demands.<sup>30</sup>

Further in the text, he writes:

One must elevate Philosophy converting it into *Theology*. It is necessary to make Religion effective. To deepen it, revitalize it, converting it into *Christianity*. The intimate compenetration of both, of

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<sup>29</sup>The revised text reads: "El hombre occidental [my underlining], en un proceso que la historia del pensamiento marca distintamente ...." Raimundo Panikkar, *Humanismo y Cruz* (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, S.A., 1963), 8-9. The "Nota Preliminar" is dated "Roma, fiesta de San Miguel Arcángel, 29 de septiembre de 1960".

<sup>30</sup>"Cierto es que en el mismo campo de la Religión hay dos sabidurías superiores a la sabiduría metafísica; pero ya no nos encontramos entonces en el terreno meramente religioso, sino ya en el pleno Cristianismo -- y el Cristianismo contiene mucho más que lo que la pura esencia de la Religión exige --." Paniker, "Visión de Síntesis" (1944), 14.

Theology and Christianity -- containing in potency both Philosophy and Religion -- constitutes what really can call itself a *Christian synthesis*, the objective synthesis that we come looking for.<sup>31</sup>

As well, citing the Beatitudes as a new ideal that would not be possible for the fallen nature or rational mind to propose, he contrasts philosophy and the synthetic vision of faith. Panikkar puts forward the view that any synthetic vision that is not Christian is, for that reason, a false synthesis:

From which the construction of a total synthesis leaving out faith, not only would not achieve its purpose, but would end up in error; in other words, a Philosophy that is not Christian is not for that reason false; a synthesis that is not Christian is necessarily false.<sup>32</sup>

Panikkar laments the fragmentation of worldviews. Religious people are satisfied to remain with their personal solutions that relate only in an extrinsic fashion to the other spheres of life; the scientist simply neglects to ask about the relation to the whole.<sup>33</sup> He does a phenomenological analysis<sup>34</sup> of the synthesis

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<sup>31</sup>"Se necesita elevar a la Filosofía convirtiéndola en Teología. Se requiere hacer efectiva a la Religión. Profundizarla, vitalizarla, convirtiéndola en Cristianismo. La íntima compenetración de ambas, de Teología y de Cristianismo -- conteniendo en potencia a la Filosofía y a la Religión -- constituye lo que realmente puede llamarse *síntesis cristiana*, la síntesis objetiva que se venía buscando." Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>32</sup>"De ahí que en la construcción de una síntesis total prescindiendo de la fe, no sólo no se llegará tan lejos como ella, sino que se desembocará en el error; con otras palabras, una Filosofía no cristiana no por esto es ya falsa; una síntesis no cristi (1944) ana es necesariamente falsa." Ibid., 23.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 9.

that would respond adequately to the problem. The synthesis would be distinct and superior to its component elements, would have the quality of being but would not be empty in content, would be dynamic -- pure act, love, life, truth, the good -- "This synthesis would have to be God!"<sup>35</sup>

In this first article, the basic outline of Panikkar's later holistic theological vision -- including the cosmic, the human and the divine -- is already in place. He writes:

Never perhaps as today, the world in its totality, human life in its complexity, God in his infinity and transcendence, have become problematical for us.<sup>36</sup>

For Panikkar, at the beginning of his writing career, there is an urgent and "universal" crisis, it is structured in a tri-partite fashion -- a crisis in human beings' relation to God, human life, and world -- and the response to the crisis must be an existential response engaging the whole person, who is constituted not merely by the intellect, but by sensibility (*el sentimiento*), intellect (*el intelecto*) and will (*la voluntad*).<sup>37</sup>

Yet both the diagnosis he makes and the synthetic vision that responds to the so-called "universal evil" that he discovers are at this point set within a Western horizon and give little room for a consideration of the role of other religious traditions.

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<sup>35</sup>"¡Esta síntesis debe ser Dios!" Ibid., 11.

<sup>36</sup>"Nunca quizá como hoy, el mundo en su totalidad, la vida humana en su complejidad, Dios en su infinitud y trascendencia, se nos han vuelto problemas." Ibid., 5.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 27-28.

Openness and Honesty in Life and Reflection

In this early period, Panikkar developed responses to what he perceived as external and internal threats to Christian identity. He perceived threats from without to include a rationalism and a reductive scientism which undercut the integral Christian vision. In "De Deo Abscondito" (1948), Panikkar takes a strong position against the threat of rationalism and its pessimism concerning the human situation.<sup>38</sup> A rationalist approach to evil would make evil into an absolute; whereas, Christianity has other resources in Grace, the Spirit that blows where it wills (Jn 3:8). In the struggle against evil, Panikkar would follow the lead of John the Baptist and Christ in preaching and practising both penance and charity.<sup>39</sup>

Against rationalism, Panikkar holds an understanding of God as mystery. Admitting that the contemporary reluctance to acknowledge the experience of the divine is to some extent a cultural phenomenon, he makes a further point. He states that the experience of the absence of God is not just a culturally induced eclipse of the experience of God, it is also God's own discretion: "this withdrawal of God has two distinct facets: one

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<sup>38</sup>"Plantado el problema en el campo puramente especulativo, la situación es realmente pavorosa; se racionaliza el mal, y con ello se le convierte en absoluto .... El pesimismo es -- ciertamente -- el mejor auxiliar del Racionalismo." Raimundo Paniker, "De Deo Abscondito," *Arbor* XI 1948: 3.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.



is the eclipse of God, the other his discretion."<sup>40</sup> In other words, for him, God's very nature is to be hidden, ineffable, unknowable.<sup>41</sup> In his view, the reaction to agnosticism has been to over-emphasize the knowability of God and to neglect the classical apophatic theology.<sup>42</sup> That God is hidden is not only for mystical purification of the individual but it has "an important role to play in the life of the peoples. At base, it is the mystery of Christ."<sup>43</sup> The divinity is hidden in Christ and faith is necessary to recognize this divinity in Christ. So also the meaning of history is hidden without faith. The answer to the problems of history are known in coming to know Christ as Divine and Human.<sup>44</sup>

In an article entitled variously "Intellectual Honour" (1953) or "The Intellect and its Praxis" (1963), Panikkar emphasizes that the person is a unity. Truth is found beyond the purely rational and the world of essences in a perception of existential totality:

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<sup>40</sup>"... este retraimiento de Dios tiene dos facetas distintas: la una es el eclipse de Dios, la otra su discreción." Ibid., 12.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 13.

<sup>42</sup>Panikkar writes in a footnote: "Insisto en que la teología negativa no desplaza ni vuelve innecesaria a la positiva. No son dos vías antinómicas (Oriente griego) o aun opuestas (Nicolás de Cusa), sino que se complementan (Tomás de Aquino)." Ibid., ft.nt. 49, p. 13.

<sup>43</sup>"... un papel importante en la vida de los pueblos. En el fondo, es el misterio de Cristo." Ibid., 14.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 15-16.

The human person is a unity and the scientific cancer, in spite of our brilliant civilization, destroys that unity. Our declining rationalist epoch believed too seriously that the truth of a thing resided in a simple rational judgement, disconnected from the totality. Truth also has its rights, but these are found in reality itself, beyond the rational dialectic. The true truth -- and that is a redundancy -- transcends the world of the essences to give over to the existential.<sup>15</sup>

For Panikkar, only a vision of relatedness of the various dimensions of the human is adequate to the unity of the human person. Intellectual activity must be tied to life, responsive to reality, include contemplation, be a joining of knowledge and love. The temptation is to know only for the sake of knowing. In this disconnected rational knowing, error may be avoided, but he asserts, truth is more than the lack of error.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>"El hombre es una unidad y el cáncer científicista, a pesar de nuestra flamante civilización, la destruye. Nuestra declinante época racionalista ha creído demasiado en serio que la verdad de una cosa residía en un escueto juicio racional, desconectado de la totalidad. La verdad tiene también sus derechos, pero éstos se encuentran en la misma realidad, allende la dialéctica racional. La verdadera verdad -- y es redundancia -- trasciende el mundo de las esencias para desembocar en lo existencial." Panikkar, *Humanismo y Cruz* (1963), 61-62. Originally, Raimundo Paniker, "Honorabilidad Intelectual," *Arbor* 24 (1953), 316-324.

<sup>16</sup>"Esta tentación ha hecho estragos en la mente racionalista europea de los últimos años ... Ella estriba en que sólo estudie por conocer lo estudiado, segregándolo de la realidad, en que sólo investigue por dominar la parcela investigada, en que desconecte el mundo de las esencias del de las existencias para que mi razón pueda correr más sin el lastre de la realidad, en que caiga en el separatismo de la razón, en que desconecte mi actividad intelectual de mi vida, en que excomulgue mi intelecto de mi existencia, en que caiga en la emboscada idealista y me canse de pensar la realidad -- que me frena, me domina y me condiciona --, para dedicarme a entretenerme en lo pensado -- que no pone riendas a mi afán de independencia --. *Cogito cogitatum*. Entonces estoy seguro de que me no equivoco, pero no salgo de mí

Panikkar perceived that the threat from within to Christian identity came from the Church's search for security. Church identification with the Franco regime had led to a decline in the image of the Roman Catholic Church among many Spaniards. The Church in much of Spain was theologically stagnant and isolated from developments in the world-wide Catholic community. Panikkar called for a renewal of the Roman Catholic Church in Spain through existential authenticity and creative theological reflection.

In his role as a priest in pastoral ministry, Panikkar writes to the Cardinal Primate of Spain in 1950 concerning the criticisms of the Church he had heard in his work with university students. He admits sympathy for the peculiar situation of the Church in Spain; it had come through a period of attack. However, he makes the point that both the Church and Spain have entered into a new era. Panikkar writes in terse fashion: "Certainly one cannot forget the Nineteenth century, nor the years 31 nor 36; but 1950 is not 1939."<sup>17</sup> He repeats the criticisms of the "faithful Christian people" against the hierarchy: "You are sowing scandal and fomenting hatred with this

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mismo. Y la carencia formal de error no es todavía la verdad." Ibid., 67.

<sup>17</sup>"Ciertamente no se puede olvidar el siglo XIX, ni los años 31 ni el 36; pero 1950 ya no es 1939." Panikkar, *Cometas* (1972), 248.

shameless 'alliance' with the constituted power ...."<sup>48</sup> He recounts his daily experience:

I meet every day with young university students whose faith is shaken owing to this silent scandal of the alliance of the Church with the rich. The saying is a common one, but not less certain for that.<sup>49</sup>

For Panikkar, the Christian vision is far from being a "humanism." In an article published in 1951, "Christianity is not a Humanism,"<sup>50</sup> he asserts that it is in the concrete details of the Christian fact and vision that the incompatibility with the worldview of humanism becomes evident. He asks what possible reason there might be to term the Christian conception of life a humanism:

It is not fitting to argue over names: but why is it necessary to term 'humanism' a doctrine which essentially defends that the human being is not sufficient unto himself or herself, that nature is fallen, that reason ought to submit itself to faith and the will to Revelation. What has humanism to do with a conception of life which proclaims blessing to the poor and to those who weep, who suffer and are persecuted? What connection to humanism does a thesis have which holds that a person ought to deny himself and carry his cross, that affirms the necessity of transforming oneself, of metamorphosis into God to the point of reaching union with Him? It appears that a Christian humanism is ashamed and shows human respect when confronted with the central fact of Christianity on

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<sup>48</sup>"Ustedes están sembrando el escándalo y fomentando el odio con esta 'alianza' sin pudor con el poder constituido ...." Ibid., 249.

<sup>49</sup>"Me encuentro todos los días con jóvenes universitarios cuya fe se tambalea debido a este sordo escándalo de la alianza de la Iglesia con los ricos. La frase es vulgar, pero no menos cierta." Ibid., 252.

<sup>50</sup>R. Paniker, "El Cristianismo no es un humanismo," *Arbor*, 1951, XVIII: 165-186.

earth: the death of Christ naked on a cross, condemned by the legitimate civil and religious authority.<sup>51</sup>

In an article originally published in 1951, entitled "Christian Customs and Theological Realism in our Culture,"<sup>52</sup> Panikkar appeals for authenticity in claiming Christian identity. He promotes an "apostolate" that is open to view, avoiding mere labels:

Why an inauthentic apostolate that fears truth and the light of the sun? Why attach to things and human activities the adjective Christian in place of encountering their more valuable substantive nucleus which will manifest their existential thirst for Redemption?<sup>53</sup>

Panikkar states that the "the Christian culture will then be

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<sup>51</sup>"Sobre nombres no cabe discusión; pero ¿por qué hay que llamar 'humanismo' a una doctrina que defiende esencialmente que el hombre no se basta a sí mismo, que la naturaleza está caída, que la razón debe someterse a la fe y la voluntad a la Revelación? ¿Qué tiene que ver con el humanismo una concepción de la vida que proclama bienaventurados a los pobres y a los que lloran, sufren y son perseguidos? ¿Qué significa el humanismo en una tesis que defiende que el hombre debe negarse a sí mismo y coger su cruz, que afirma la necesidad de transformarse, de metamorfosearse en Dios hasta conseguir la unidad en El? No parece sino que el humanismo cristiano se avergüence y tenga respetos humanos del hecho máximo del Cristianismo en la tierra: la muerte de Cristo desnudo en una Cruz, condenado por la legítima autoridad civil y religiosa." Ibid., 184.

<sup>52</sup>Panikkar, *Humanismo y Cruz* (1963), 112-116. Originally, Raimundo Paniker, "Etiquetas cristianas y realismo teológico en nuestra cultura," *Arbor* 18 1951: 595-597.

<sup>53</sup>"¿Por qué un apostolado inauténtico que tiene miedo a la verdad y a la luz del sol? ¿Por qué pegar a las cosas y a las actividades humanas el adjetivo de cristianas en lugar de encontrar su núcleo sustantivo más valioso que nos mostrará su sed existencial de Redención?" Ibid., 112.

Christian if it begins being truthful."<sup>54</sup> He proposes a simple method for achieving this goal of truthfulness: "Less diplomacy, less strategy -- less fear and false prudence -- and more courage and sincerity."<sup>55</sup>

Panikkar calls for a "theological realism" which he describes as a greater love for the truth as it is. This realism is theological because

... only the dark ray of faith reveals to us, like an ultraviolet light, the intimate and real structure of things and the situations of the created world.<sup>56</sup>

Panikkar complains that the problematic thesis concerning grace "as not to be experienced" became an excuse for not studying the intimate action of God in the world. God then became a superfluous hypothesis.<sup>57</sup> However, in the perspective of theological realism not only is God active in every human event

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<sup>54</sup>"La cultura cristiana será luego cristiana si empieza siendo verdadera." Ibid., 113.

<sup>55</sup>"Menos diplomacia, menos estrategia -- menos miedo y falsa prudencia -- y más valentía y sinceridad." Ibid., 113. Panikkar's pleas for openness at this time are intriguing in view of the reputation *Opus Dei* has had for maintaining secrecy concerning its membership and operations.

<sup>56</sup>"... solamente el caliginoso rayo de la fe nos descubre, cual luz ultravioleta, la estructura íntima y real de las cosas y de las situaciones del mundo creado." Ibid., 114. For an account of his Christian optimism based on theological realism see Paniker, "De Deo Abscondito," (1948): 24.

<sup>57</sup>"Hubo un tiempo en que la discutida y problemática inexperimentabilidad de la gracia sobrenatural sirvió de cómoda disculpa para prescindir del estudio de la íntima acción de Dios sobre el mundo creado. Y con este y otros abandonos más graves Dios se iba convirtiendo en una hipótesis superflua." Panikkar, *Humanismo y Cruz* (1963), 114.

but central importance is attached to

... the factual ontological and historical primacy of Christ the point of attraction -- or of repulsion -- of all people considered individually and collectively.<sup>58</sup>

In Panikkar's Christocentric vision, the "cosmic Christ" has changed human nature so that it is immoral not to attend to the change introduced by Christianity.<sup>59</sup>

Panikkar is critical of those who would keep quiet about the Christian vision. However, his concern in this article is not with the evangelization of those who have had no contact with Christian faith. Rather, he wishes to demonstrate the power of the Christian vision to those living within a Christian culture:

When we make an apologetic to those who do not believe we prescind from faith; but with our brothers in a Christian culture we are not able to cut off our possibilities. There is also a debt of charity due to Christians; also there exists the best apologetic, which is to demonstrate the fullness of the Christian vision of all things.<sup>60</sup>

Panikkar's reaction to a lack of tolerance of theological

<sup>58</sup>"... el fáctico primado óntico e histórico de Cristo punto de atracción -- o de repulsión -- de todos los hombres individual y colectivamente considerados." Ibid., 115.

<sup>59</sup>"Este Cristo cósmico, en el cual descansa todo y por el cual todas las cosas han sido hechas, ha variado la estructura misma de esta hipotética naturaleza humana y, en consecuencia, cualquier elaboración cultural que no tenga en cuenta la tergiversación axiológica cristiana podrá ser muy 'moral' para un buen humanista, pero lleva consigo la mayor de las inmoralidades, puesto que quien no está con El, contra El se ha colocado." Ibid., 115.

<sup>60</sup>"Cuando hagamos apologética, frente a los que no creen prescindamos de la fe; pero con nuestros hermanos y en una cultura cristiana no podemos amputar nuestras posibilidades. Hay también un deber de caridad frente a los cristianos; existe también la mejor de las apologéticas, que es mostrar la plenitud de la visión cristiana de todas las cosas." Ibid., 115.

innovation indicates the importance he attaches to an exploratory and open approach in theology. In an article published in 1951, he critiques an attitude of "microdoxy" resulting from "intellectual fear and the prudence of the flesh."<sup>61</sup> Microdoxy, an attitude which reduces orthodoxy to the repetition of traditional formulae,<sup>62</sup> inhibits the efforts of those who would illumine with their faith present human concerns. For Panikkar, culture and the Church grow and develop and new ideas contribute to this ongoing process.<sup>63</sup> Without the freedom to present undeveloped and exploratory ideas the forgotten aspects of reality will not be uncovered.<sup>64</sup> He is critical of those who do not admit the urgency of contemporary questions and so will not go beyond traditional formulae articulated in the Catholic manualist tradition.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>"... el miedo intelectual y la prudencia de la carne" Panikkar, *Humanismo y Cruz* (1963), 117. Originally, Raimundo Paniker, "El miedo intelectual y la prudencia de la carne," *Arbor* 19 (1951): 532-534.

<sup>62</sup>Panikkar, *Humanismo y Cruz* (1963), 119.

<sup>63</sup>"La cultura -- y más aún la Iglesia, que es un organismo vivo -- crece y se desarrolla. En este crecimiento intervienen muchos factores. Uno de ellos son las ideas." *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>64</sup>"Parece como si sólo los que no tienen fe pudieran ser los audaces y aventurar opiniones -- opiniones, digo, y no dogmas -- que serán corregidas y limadas en la serena discusión, pero que descubrirán aspectos olvidados de la Realidad." *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>65</sup>"y cuando alguien se esfuerza por introducir estos interrogantes en el acervo de las preocupaciones teológicas, surge entonces la falsa prudencia de la carne, que se ha adueñado del intelecto y del espíritu de los que no se dan cuenta de la gravedad del momento, y no toleran que se diga de manera diferente lo que viene repitiéndose 'tan sencilla y claramente'



Panikkar's Growing Appreciation of Indic Civilization

Panikkar, writing on occasion in a manner that suggested he was unaware of other cultures than those of the West and other religious traditions than the Christian, showed himself open to development in his attitude toward the world's cultures and religious traditions. There is evidence in his early writings of an appreciative response to the cultures and religious traditions of the East and the beginnings of reflection on the relation between Christianity and other religious traditions. In a publication in *Arbor* in 1944, a historical study of the genesis of science for the purpose of understanding biomathematical science,<sup>66</sup> he makes a comment on the holistic approach of Indian science. He contrasts the Indian with the Greek approach. Indian science is considered to have value insofar as it helps one to act in this life in order to reach the next life; the Greek focus is on the present life and on science as theoretical understanding of life.<sup>67</sup>

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en las tesis latinas de los manuales *ad usum*." *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>66</sup>Raimundo Paniker, "La Ciencia Biomatemática: Un Ejemplo de Síntesis Científica," *Arbor* I 1944: 349-372.

<sup>67</sup>"... desde el punto de vista histórico, prescindir de las opiniones y del pensamiento de las culturas orientales, anotando solamente que silenciarlas aquí no significa su inexistencia. En la India, por ejemplo, hay una completa elaboración de los diversos conceptos de ciencia, como ciencias experimentales, teóricas y sagradas, unificadas todas por su justificación como ciencias de la vida. Todas las ciencias se valoran por razón de los conocimientos que directa o indirectamente proporcionan en orden a comportarse de tal manera en esta vida a fin de poder después alcanzar la otra. Si la ciencia se justifica por ser ciencia de la vida en la India, en Grecia esta frase se entiende

In "De Deo Abscondito," he admits that the East presented a legitimate challenge to the West. He refers to "the dilemma that the pagan East poses to Europe."<sup>68</sup> The dilemma is that either Christianity is identified with the present state of things, in which case the Christian religion is abhorrent, or Christianity has not been able to influence Europe over the last 15 centuries, in which case it is ineffective. Panikkar's response to the dilemma presented by the East is to state that Europe, though Christian, had given in to "the tragic human capacity to cut itself off from the good."<sup>69</sup>

In Panikkar's diary for this period, *Comets: Fragments of a Spiritual Diary of the Postwar*, the one early reference to India is a 1948 meditation on the meaning of Mahatma Gandhi's life and death on the occasion of his assassination. Panikkar comments that Gandhi is a symbol in the East but has a message for the West. The message is that in face of the impossible political tasks of our time we must call on spiritual resources. Writing on the 31st of January, 1948, the day of Gandhi's assassination, Panikkar states what he holds to be the message that Gandhi addresses to the West:

And this is his lesson; the task is too great to trust to quantitative means and methods. He will not be able

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como de la vida presente." Ibid., 356.

<sup>68</sup>"... el dilema que el Oriente pagano plantea a Europa." Ibid., ft.nt. 12, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup>"... la trágica capacidad humana para apartarse del bien." Ibid., ft.nt. 12, p. 4.

to move his people with any party, nor with any organization; but he will move it with his soul, with the intrinsically superior value of a spiritual substance, and it is then when he changes himself into a singular being -- perhaps foreign to the West -- and it is then when he stakes his life; because he knows that it is his soul that has value, which is great.<sup>70</sup>

### Not Just Religion but Religions

There is evidence that Panikkar was developing a systematic account of the relations among the various religious traditions as early as 1948. His secretary at this time remembers Panikkar giving her the original manuscript of *Religi3n y Religiones*<sup>71</sup> to copy. She recalls pointing out to Panikkar that he had made a repeated error in pluralizing the word "religion." Formed in the Catholic attitudes prevalent in Spain of that era, she took for granted that only one religion could be true religion.<sup>72</sup> For

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<sup>70</sup>"Y este es su lecci3n; la tarea es demasiado grande para confiar en medios y m3todos cuantitativos. No podr3 mover a su pueblo con ning3n partido, ni con ninguna organizaci3n; pero lo mover3 con su alma, con el intr3sico valor superior de una substancia espiritual, y es entonces cuando se convierte en un ser singular -- acaso extra3o al Occidente -- y es entonces cuando juega con su vida; porque sabe que es su alma que vale, la que es grande." Panikkar, *Cometas* (1972), 245-246.

<sup>71</sup>The original manuscript was written in English, but to the present moment has not been published in that language. Raimundo Paniker, *Religi3n y Religiones* (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1965).

<sup>72</sup>This was an attitude common to more than Roman Catholics in Spain. In a later work Panikkar reflects back on the official Church attitude prior to Vatican II: "If there were only one true and authentic religion, there would be no plurality of religions.... As far as I can gather it is only in the Second Vatican Council that the plurality of religions is officially acknowledged in the Catholic Church. Before, either the other religions were taken as superstitions, with more or less truthful elements, or christianity was believed to be more than just a religion." Raimundo Panikkar, "Indic Christian Theology from the Perspective of Interculturalism" in *Religious Pluralism: An*

her, the plural form -- "religions" -- could give the impression, the false impression, that the other religions were true religions.<sup>73</sup>

Panikkar's responsibilities as a reviewer led him into the consideration of religious traditions other than Christianity. In 1951, he reviewed favourably a book entitled *Aspects interieur de l'Islam* by an Arab and Franciscan, Jean Abd-El-Jalil. He states that he is moved by the open spirit of the author who demonstrates

... the strength of a great soul against the myopic reactions of those who, through their own spiritual narrowness, impoverish Christian dogma.<sup>74</sup>

He considers particularly significant the chapters in the book on "the Koran and Muslim thought" and on "the East that prays." What strikes Panikkar is the realization that both chapters make evident

... the profound religiousness of those peoples, which contrasts with the religious indifference of a great

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*Indian Christian Perspective*, K. Patil, Editor (Delhi: I.S.P.C.K., 1991), 256.

<sup>73</sup>"Él me dio el manuscrito para copiarlo y, al revisarlo yo, vi que la palabra 'religiones' estaba escrita siempre en plural. Hasta entonces mi educación religiosa estaba basada en el singular: un país, un presidente, un rey, una religión, etc. Me pareció, pues, que el manuscrito tenía un error repetido: la palabra religión estaba siempre pluralizada." Tapia, *Tras el Umbral* (1992), 37.

<sup>74</sup>"... el esfuerzo de un alma grande en contra de las reacciones miopes de quienes, por estrechez espiritual propia, empequeñecen el dogma cristiano." R. Paniker, *Abd-El-Jalil, Jean: Aspects interieurs de l'Islam*. -- Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1949; 235 pp., *Arbor* XVIII (1951): 309.

part of the West.<sup>75</sup>

### Mutual Influence of East and West

Panikkar also held at this time the conviction that there could be at least a limited mutual fecundation of East and West. In 1951, Panikkar reviewed the commemoration volume for the silver jubilee of the Indian Philosophical Congress. He writes that, on the one hand, Western thought has an impact in shaping the mentality of India: "The complex and rich mentality of India is continually fecundated by Western thought."<sup>76</sup> On the other hand, India and its Hindu culture view European culture with fresh eyes. As a result, the East can identify advantages and defects of Western thought. The ancient theological tradition of India enables it to evaluate the contribution Western philosophy makes to real human problems.<sup>77</sup>

The role of interreligious encounter and the significance of

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<sup>75</sup>"... la profunda religiosidad de aquellos pueblos, que contrasta con la indiferencia religiosa de gran parte de Occidente." Ibid., 309.

<sup>76</sup>"... se sigue dejando fecundar por el pensamiento occidental la compleja y rica mentalidad de la India." Raimundo Paniker, "The Indian Philosophical Congress, Silver Jubilee Commemoration Volume," *Arbor* XX 1951: 281.

<sup>77</sup>"Al no estar vinculada la cultura hindú al repidante proceso dialéctico de la filosofía occidental, puede enjuiciarla en su conjunto con una visión difícil de obtener en Europa. Además, la India mira todavía con ojos vírgenes la cultural europea y esto la capacita no sólo para observar ventajas y defectos, sino también para comprobar los resultados y efectos de las ideas. Y, finalmente, posee una tradición teológica milenaria, que la capacita para juzgar la contribución de la filosofía moderna de Occidente a los problemas auténticos y reales de la humanidad." Ibid., 281.

mutual fecundation which are themes in Panikkar's later work receive an early mention in his 1953 review of a book by Henri DeLubac, *La rencontre du Bouddhisme et de l'Occident*.<sup>78</sup> Panikkar begins with two criticisms which are intended as suggestions for future tasks to be performed. First, he says that, in spite of its title, the book is not the description of an actual encounter but only a history of the encounter between Buddhism and Christianity. That contact is still to be entered into and described. Second,

... in the history of this meeting there is no description of the transformation of the East or, if one wishes, of Buddhism, on encountering Western culture (this could not be written from Europe or from America), nor is there described the influence of Buddhism on European culture, that is to say the directions that Western culture has followed thanks to Buddhist influences.<sup>79</sup>

#### All Religions Preparatory for Christianity

Again in 1953, Panikkar reviewed the book *Christus und die Religionen der Erde: Handbuch der Religionsgeschichte*<sup>80</sup> edited by

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<sup>78</sup>*The Encounter of Buddhism and the West.*

<sup>79</sup>"En segundo lugar, en la historia de este encuentro no se nos describe ni la transformación que el Oriente o, si se quiere, el budismo ha experimentado al encontrarse con el mundo occidental (esto no puede escribirse desde Europa ni América), ni tampoco la influencia del budismo en la cultura europea, es decir, los derroteros por los que ha seguido la cultura occidental debidos a influencias budistas." Raimundo Paniker, "Henri De Lubac: La rencontre du Bouddhisme et de l'Occident. París (Aubier-Éditions Montaigne), 1952; 285 págs.," *Arbor* XXV 1953: 482.

<sup>80</sup>*Christ and the Religions of the Earth. A Handbook of the History of Religions.*

Franz König, a history of religion which, Panikkar informs his reader, approached other religious traditions in a manner that respected the religious nature of the phenomena examined. Panikkar notes that this text has identified the dilemma of relativism and exclusivism but has chosen to opt for neither. Between considering all religious traditions equal, with Christianity as one among many, and considering Christianity as the only true religion, with all the others simply false and in error, there is a third alternative. This is the inclusivist position that

... the non-Christian religions are true religions -- and insofar as they are such, they contain authentic learnings and values --, because they are precursors and preparatory for Christianity, are a *propadaia cristou*, a Christian postulant.<sup>81</sup>

In his favourable review of this strong formulation of the inclusivist position, Panikkar exposes something of his own developing position on a Theology of Religion. He writes in a way that intimates his recognition of both continuity and discontinuity between Christianity and other religions:

The Religion of Christ, being the true and unique absolute religion, possesses, a link of continuity with everything -- think of Abraham the uncircumcised, the

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<sup>81</sup>"... las religiones no cristianas son verdaderas religiones -- y en cuanto tales contienen conocimientos y valores auténticos -- porque son precursoras y preparadoras del Cristianismo, son una *propadaia cristou*, un postulantedo cristiano." Raimundo Paniker, "Christus un die Religionen der Erde. Handbuch der Religionsgeschichte. (Cristo y las religiones de la tierra. Manual de historia de religiones.) Herausgegeben von Universitäts professor D. Dr. Franz König. Wien (Herder-Thomas Morus-Presse), 1951. Tres vols. (XIII, 674, 784, 777 págs.).," *Arbor* XXIV 1953: 462.

mysterious and cosmic Melchisedech and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, true man -- with the entire humanity and an absolute point of discontinuity in the same Christ, firstborn of God, conceived by work of the Holy Spirit and Redeemer of the universe. But this would be already a Theology of Religion, while the manual that we are reviewing limits itself to a history of religions.<sup>82</sup>

### Final Reflections Before Going East

Panikkar's prologue to Jean Guitton's book, *La Virgen Maria* (Madrid 1952), provoked a pastoral letter from Cardinal Segura and criticism from a Jesuit mariologist writing in the periodical *Razón y Fe*.<sup>83</sup> Following this controversy, Panikkar was sent by his *Opus Dei* superiors to Rome in 1954.<sup>84</sup> It appears that the leadership of *Opus Dei* became increasingly concerned about Panikkar's public profile and decided that he should be sent to India.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>"La Religión de Cristo, siendo la religión verdadera y siendo la única absoluta, posee, con todo, un vínculo de continuidad -- piénsese en Abraham el incircunciso, en el misterioso y cósmico Melquisedec y en María, Madre de Jesús, verdadero hombre -- con la humanidad entera y un punto absoluto de discontinuidad en el mismo Cristo, unigénito de Dios, concebido por obra del Espíritu Santo y Redentor del universo. Pero esto sería ya Teología de la Religión, mientras que el manual que reseñamos se limita a una historia de las religiones." *Ibid.*, 462.

<sup>83</sup>J. A. DeAldama, S.J., "La Virgen María. Al margen de un libro reciente," *Razón y Fe* 662 (Marzo) 1953: 281-292. Panikkar's positive endorsement of Guitton's book drew a strong critique from this Mariologist.

<sup>84</sup>Pániker, *Primer testamento* (1985), 114 ff.

<sup>85</sup>Panikkar's openness to progressive theological developments was noticeable in the context of his being a member of *Opus Dei*, a group that was firmly associated with the ideology of "National Catholicism." Michael Walsh comments concerning



Aware that he was going to India very soon, Panikkar addressed the meaning of this journey in a reflection entitled "My last comet from the West"<sup>86</sup> dated "XII 54".<sup>87</sup> Panikkar is being "sent" at a time when he felt very committed to the cultural world of the West. He recognizes that he has been very much a European person. Indeed, he states that he had been at the point of letting go of the few links with the world that was part of him through his Hindu father. His transfer to India occurred,

... when I had already almost abandoned that profound world of the East that continued flowing through my chromosomes.<sup>88</sup>

Nonetheless, he has already a number of developed positions on the relation of Christianity and Hinduism. What appears to be missing from these reflections in his diary is the notion that he articulated in his review of DeLubac's *La rencontre du Bouddhisme*

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National Catholicism: "Its fundamental tenet was the identification of being a Spaniard with being a Catholic. Love of country was to be associated with a rejection of all heterodoxy, Protestant or Jewish, liberal or socialist. Religious faith and political identity were as one: they were integral -- hence the broad name for this kind of politico-religious stance not, of course, confined to Spain, 'integrism', its proponents being the 'integrists'." Walsh, *The Secret World of Opus Dei* (1989), 42-43.

<sup>86</sup>"Mi último cometa de Occidente." Panikkar, *Cometas* (1972), 194-196.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 196.

<sup>88</sup>"... cuando ya había casi abandonado aquel mundo abismático del Oriente que seguía latiendo en mis cromosomas." Ibid., 194.

*et de l'Occident*, that India and Hinduism could contribute to Christianity and Western thought.

Panikkar anticipates that the ideas that he is putting forward will lead to suffering. He accepts this suffering "as my participation in your Cross"<sup>89</sup> and, even before going to India, predicts that he will be accused of being influenced by pagan ideas:

Perhaps, then they will say that many of my ideas are of hindu origin and eastern pagan flavour; perhaps they would accuse me of contagion from those cultural and religious forms which they call pagan. I am not going to defend myself ahead of time; but I would state clearly that perhaps what I would say I already think and I say now that I have not even touched the soil of India, nor know its languages.<sup>90</sup>

His notion of Hinduism is that it is both true and mixed in with many superstitions:

I know that the profound and in great part true hindu culture is stained with and wrapped in superstitions and often has degenerated. I do not hold any illusions.<sup>91</sup>

He goes to India with the idea that Christ is the fullness of all religion. He holds that the realization of that fullness occurs

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<sup>89</sup>"... como mi participación a tu Cruz." Ibid., 194.

<sup>90</sup>"Acaso luego se dirá que muchas de mis ideas son de proveniencia hindú y de sabor pagano oriental; acaso se me acuse de contagio de aquellas formas culturales y religiosas que se llaman paganas. No voy a defenderme antes de tiempo; pero quisiera dejar sentado que todo lo que acaso luego diga ya lo pienso y digo ahora que no he pisado aún el suelo de la India, ni conozco sus lenguas." Ibid., 195.

<sup>91</sup>"Sé que la profunda y en gran parte verdadera cultura hindú está teñida y envuelta en supersticiones y que ha degenerado muy a menudo. No me hago ilusiones." Ibid., 195.

only in Christianity. His view is that Hinduism must die and rise again, undergo a conversion to a distinctive form of Christianity, without losing its own values:

I know that my idea that Christ is the fullness of all religion, in practice, and in the concrete human order, cannot be accepted, given that if the doctrine of Sankara could be interpreted in Christian terms, to give an example, its present crystallization is not so, and in any case, needs a conversion which, although it would be a true overcoming, takes -- and ought to take -- the form of death and resurrection.<sup>32</sup>

### Summary

This sketch of Panikkar's context and review of his writings in the period 1944-1954 has identified themes and emphases that provide understanding of what his vision of Christianity was when he first encountered India. He is a Catalan Catholic and by education and disposition open to learn about other cultures and peoples. His desire to articulate an integral or synthetic vision of Christian identity is evident. He is responding to what he perceives to be the basic evil afflicting this era -- the fragmentation of vision resulting from a scientific mentality and rationalist view of truth.

For Panikkar, Christianity is praxis as well as vision. He is involved as a spiritual counsellor to University students and

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<sup>32</sup>"Sé que mi idea de que Cristo es la plenitud de toda religión, en la práctica, en el orden concreto humano no puede aceptarse, puesto que si la doctrina de Sankara puede interpretarse en cristiano, para poner un ejemplo, su cristalización actual no lo es y que, en todo caso, se necesita una *conversión* que, aunque sea una verdadera superación, toma -- y debe tomar -- la forma de muerte y resurrección." Ibid., 195-196.

has heard their criticisms of the Church in Spain. He is concerned that the Roman Catholic Church in Spain not compromise Christian identity by identification with the State. Conscious of the urgent needs of a changing country and world, Panikkar views theological reflection as a creative and exploratory undertaking. He espouses a Christian realism that draws on faith in the relationship with God, a Christian realism that recognizes truth not simply as logical operation but in its fuller dimensions. This faith is Christocentric and it is Christ who is the fulfillment of all. This faith has the capacity to recognize the presence of the God whose nature is mystery, hiddenness. For Panikkar, Christianity is the fulfillment of all religious traditions. However, it is a Christianity understood not simply as institution but in the horizon of God as mystery.

Though Panikkar had articulated his positions in terms of the religiously homogeneous context of Franco's Spain, his reading had also brought him some awareness of India and Hinduism. Even before going to India, he had begun to formulate thoughts on the relationship between Christianity and Hinduism, working toward a vision of mutual influence. His unconsciously Western and Eurocentric stance had begun to give way to a vision that included the East. Yet the existential impact of this encounter would only come in India itself.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PANIKKAR IN INDIA: MULTIRELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

In Panikkar's early India period, that is, from the time of his arrival in India in the mid-1950s and continuing into the later 1960s, Panikkar entered into an active relationship with Hindus and the Hindu religious tradition, particularly in its *advaitic* (non-dualist) forms.<sup>1</sup> To a lesser extent, he made contact with Buddhists and studied the Buddhist traditions.<sup>2</sup> He

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<sup>1</sup>Panikkar explains: "Advaita Vedânta, based mainly in Sankarâcârya's interpretation of the Upanisads and the Brahma Sûtras, is one of the Hindu philosophical schools that predominates in many spiritual circles today. It understands itself as the culmination of all religions and philosophies insofar as it leads to and interprets the 'ultimate experience' of nonduality, i.e., the essential non-separability of the Self (*âtman*) and 'God' (*brahman*). Among the three classical 'ways' of salvation in Hinduism, *karma* (works), *bhakti* (adoration and surrender) and *jñâna* (meditative knowledge), this school represents the last. In fact, 'realization' or 'liberation' is said to be reached only by an intuitive consciousness. Advaita (as differentiated from Advaita Vedânta) would be the fundamental principle of nondualism (*a-dvaita*: nonduality), devoid of its connections with the rest of the Vedântic philosophical garb." R. Panikkar, "Advaita and Bhakti: A Hindu-Christian Dialogue" in *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (1979), ft.nt. 1, p. 288. For a study of Panikkar's relation to Advaita Vedânta see Kana Mitra, *Catholicism-Hinduism: Vedântic Investigation of Raimundo Panikkar's Attempt at Bridge Building* (Lanham/New York/London: University Press of America, 1987).

<sup>2</sup>Panikkar's writings on Buddhism come from later years of his early India period: R. Panikkar, "Das erste Bild des Buddha. Zur Einführung in den buddhistischen Apophatismus," *Antaios* 6 1964: 372-385; R. Panikkar, "The Crisis of Madhyamika and Indian Philosophy Today," *Philosophy East and West* 16 1966: 117-131; R. Panikkar, "Buddhismo è Ateismo?" in *L'Ateismo Contemporaneo*, Vol. IV: *Il Cristianesimo di fronte all'Ateismo* (Torino: 1970), 449-476; R. Panikkar, "Nirvana and the Awareness of the Absolute" in *The God Experience. Essays in Hope*. J.P. Whelan, Editor (Toronto: 1971 [1969 Italian]), 81-99.

described his experience as "multireligious" in an article entitled: "Faith and Belief. Concerning the Multireligious Experience. An Objective Autobiographical Fragment."<sup>3</sup> This was his contribution to a 1970 Festschrift honouring the Spanish philosopher, his former teacher, Xavier Zubiri.<sup>4</sup> He developed the piece as a response to the question asking how it had gone with him in India during the fifteen years since his departure from Spain. He writes:

It is natural that after fifteen years of absence from the Spanish scene the most simple and at the same time profound question would be to ask me how it had gone with me; that is, through what ups and downs my human pilgrimage had passed. To this question which Xavier Zubiri addressed to me the past year, I would like to give a sincere response, although partial, for obvious reasons. I 'left' a Christian, 'discovered' myself a Hindu and 'I return' a Buddhist, without ceasing to be

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<sup>3</sup>Raimundo Panikkar, "Fe y creencia. Sobre la experiencia multireligiosa. Un fragmento autobiográfico objetivado." *Homenaje a Xavier Zubiri* (Madrid: Editorial Moneda y Crédito, 1970, vol. II), 434-459.

<sup>4</sup>Xavier Zubiri (b. 1898, Spanish philosopher) is variously described as a Christian ontologist or a Christian existentialist. After extended studies in theology, philosophy and science in which he related neo-scholastic philosophy to the work of Husserl, Heidegger and Ortega Y Gasset, he taught for a period in Madrid and then after leaving Spain during a portion of the Civil War, returned to teach in Barcelona (1940-1942). In 1942, he stopped his University teaching and from that time on gave private seminars, which were held in high esteem and well-attended. His studies convinced him that science and the humanistic disciplines were separate points of view on the same reality. Zubiri held that philosophical and theological studies gained in relevance from the study of science and the recognition of the limits of science. For Zubiri, "religion, the relation to deity, is the fundamental root of existence" and the "ontological structure of personality." Neil McInnes, "Zubiri, Xavier" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, P. Edwards, Editor (New York: The MacMillan Company & The Free Press, 1967), 383.

the first.<sup>5</sup>

Panikkar's claim at this point in his life to have remained a Christian while discovering his Hindu roots and returning to Spain enriched by Buddhism raises the question of the intelligibility of such an assertion.<sup>6</sup> This chapter reviews his writings from 1954 to 1970, in order to discover how Panikkar understood his multireligious experience. It was in this first period of intense encounter with India that he began to write about the possibility of having authentic religious experience within other religious traditions. At the end of this period, he had come to the conviction that his multireligious experience was not anomalous but what could be discerned from his experience is "partially paradigmatic of the spiritual situation of our time."

Context: India of the 1950s

How did Panikkar perceive the cultural and religious traditions of India on his arrival in the mid-1950s? He has

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<sup>5</sup>"Es natural que después de tres lustros de ausencia de la palestra española la más simple y a la vez más profunda cuestión sea la de preguntarme cómo me ha ido; esto es, por qué peripecias ha pasado mi peregrinación humana. A esta pregunta que me hizo el año pasado Xavier Zubiri, quisiera darle una respuesta sincera, aunque parcial, pro razones obvias. 'Salí' cristiano, me he 'descubierto' hindú y 'regreso' budhista, sin dejar por ello de ser lo primero." Panikkar, "Fe y creencia. Sobre la experiencia multirreligiosa [sic]" (1970), 435.

<sup>6</sup>Panikkar is aware that some will doubt the possibility and intelligibility of the attitude that allows him to claim multireligious experience. He writes: "Prescindiendo de mi buena y subjetiva intención, algunos dudan de la posibilidad y aún de la misma inteligibilidad de una tal actitud." Ibid., 435.

<sup>7</sup>"... parcialmente paradigmática de la situación espiritual de nuestro tiempo." Panikkar, "Fe y creencia. Ibid., 435.

published his impressions of this post-colonial era in a book entitled *La India, Gente, Cultura, Creencias* (1960).<sup>9</sup> Writing as one who comes from outside the culture, that is, as a Spaniard, he is struck by Britain's continuing impact on India.<sup>9</sup> Addressing his Spanish readership, he laments the fact that for the people of India the West is identified solely with English culture. The questions people ask him indicate to Panikkar that they spontaneously view Spain and Europe as extensions of Britain.<sup>10</sup>

Panikkar holds that India is to be identified as neither East nor West but that it has a distinctive "theological-historical *Kairos*"<sup>11</sup> as the intermediary between East and West. India, to some extent like Spain, engages Western culture free from both the errors and the accomplishments of Western

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<sup>9</sup>*La India, Gente, Cultura, Creencias* (Madrid, 1960) [*India, People, Culture, Beliefs*] was first written in Spanish. The original preface in French translation is dated "Inde, janvier 1959." We are reading the French version: R. Panikkar, *Lettre Sur L'Inde* (Tournai, Belgique: Casterman, 1963).

<sup>9</sup>"L'impact d'une autre culture est le *premier* fait qui frappe celui que pénètre le monde culturel de l'Inde." Panikkar, *Lettre Sur L'Inde* (1963), 9.

<sup>10</sup>"L'Inde n'a pas connu l'Europe, mais elle a subi le poids du joug britannique. Elle connaît l'Angleterre que pour elle est presque synonyme de l'Europe. Ici, 'vie occidentale' se confond avec 'vie anglaise'. Les contacts avec le continent européen ont été superficiels et plutôt rares." *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>11</sup>"... *Kairos* théologico-historique ...." *Ibid.*, 48.



civilization.<sup>12</sup> He distinguishes Spain from Europe and judges Spain and India similar in that these countries, unlike Europe (and America), have not succumbed spiritually to the enthusiasm for technical progress:

Europe, and perhaps America also, has become enthusiastic about technical progress and has put itself at risk following these advances, thereby sacrificing a part of its spiritual substance.<sup>13</sup>

He holds out hope that India (and Spain) will be able to take advantage of technology without sacrificing their spiritual resources.<sup>14</sup> As Panikkar sees it, Indians have not participated in the "desacralization,"<sup>15</sup> the separation of the sacred from the profane, that has come to characterize most Europeans and the British. He cites as an instance of the Indian spiritual

<sup>12</sup>"... elle y arrive sans être chargée des erreurs de la civilisation occidentale -- il y a un péché culturel de l'Occident -- et sans expérience de ses résultats. En d'autres mots et *mutatis mutandis*, cela applique aussi à l'Espagne ...." Ibid., 48.

<sup>13</sup>"L'Europe, et peut-être aussi l'Amérique, s'est enthousiasmée pour les progrès de la technique et a risqué pour suivre ces progrès, d'y sacrifier une partie de sa substance spirituelle." Ibid., 48.

<sup>14</sup>"Si l'Inde ne s'engage pas avec trop de fougue dans cette voie d'industrialisation, d'éducation' (sur ce point elle peut, tout comme l'Espagne, se réclamer d'un passé), si elle parvient à éviter les écueils où a sombré l'Europe, elle pourrait s'approprier les valeurs techniques de l'Occident sans avoir à en payer le prix au détriment de ses ressources spirituelles comme l'a fait l'Europe." Ibid., 48-49.

<sup>15</sup>Panikkar considers desacralization the prime cultural sin of the West: "... qu'il n'est pas seulement en soi détestable, mais est à l'origine de conséquences tragiques ... qu'on appelé la laïcisation de la culture européenne et qu'on dénommerait plus exactement *désacralisation*." Ibid., 62-63.

attitude the work of Indian philosophers trained in Western philosophy. They employ identical concepts to those of their Western colleagues but the meaning these concepts express is spiritual.<sup>16</sup>

### The Failure of Evangelization

Panikkar's focus in *La India, Gente, Cultura, Creencias* is evidence that early in his stay in India he took up the theological issues concerning Christian relationships to Hinduism. In a chapter entitled "The Contemporary Religious Problem,"<sup>17</sup> Panikkar reflects on the lack of success Christianity has had in India. The context for this failure is the whole Indian community with its strong sense of the sacred. As he sees it, although the Government of India speaks of being a secular State, the community of Indian peoples understands itself as a sacred community. Its unity is not primarily political, but it is to be found in the Vedas, the Bhâgavadgîta and India's religious past.<sup>18</sup> There is no human activity in the Indian

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<sup>16</sup>Thus, Panikkar claims that the Indian philosophers who called themselves idealists would have been termed spiritualists in Europe: "Aussi peut-on employer des mots identiques en pensant différemment. J'ai connu des philosophes que se disaient idéalistes et qu'on appellerait en Europe 'spiritualistes'." Ibid., 57.

<sup>17</sup>"Le Problème Religieux Actuel." Ibid., 75-107.

<sup>18</sup>"Bien que la République fédérale de l'Inde tienne à se présenter comme un *État laïque* -- expression utilisée par le gouvernement mais qui ne figure pas dans la Constitution -- et en dépit de l'impact laïcisant de l'Europe, la communauté des peuples indiens est, avant tout, une communauté sacrée." Ibid., 75.

context that is not related to the "divine principle and its transcendent end."<sup>19</sup>

Panikkar provides a sketch of the situation of Christianity in India in the late 1950s. After a massive evangelization effort extending over centuries, only 2% of the population are Christian.<sup>20</sup> The Christianity of the missionaries is a stranger to the country. No matter how much the missionaries protest against the colonial powers and the impact of their policies, Christianity remains identified with these same powers:

As a general rule, Christianity has appeared tied to Europeans -- colonizers, dominators or civilizers, of little importance the label.<sup>21</sup>

The failure of Latin Christianity to enter into positive relations with the Malabar Christians and their Eastern rites confirms Latin Christianity's status as a stranger to India. Panikkar agrees with the judgement that the identification of Christianity with European cultural forms creates a "Latin wall" more difficult to penetrate than the great wall of China.<sup>22</sup>

Panikkar recognizes that the nature of the relation of Christianity to Hinduism has been a matter of intense debate for centuries. However, he judges that the terms of the problem have

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<sup>19</sup>"... principe divin et sa fin transcendente." Ibid., 76.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 78.

<sup>21</sup>"En règle générale, le christianisme est apparu lié aux Européens -- colonisateurs, dominateurs ou civilisateurs, peu importe l'étiquette." Ibid., 79.

<sup>22</sup>"... une muraille plus infranchissable que celle de China: la muraille latine." Ibid., 80.

been not well posed even up to the present time:

Present terminology stumbles on the expression *hindu catholicism* and even more on the problem of adaptation. Since the famous Roberto de Nobili, right at the beginning of the XVII century, the partisans of a positive solution have considered Hinduism more as a social and communitarian organisation than as a religion and have accepted, as a result, the possibility of integrating it with Christianity. Their adversaries reject the presuppositions of this theory.<sup>23</sup>

Panikkar identifies two basic positions in the failed approach to Hinduism by Christianity. One position is that of those who -- like Roberto de Nobili -- consider Hinduism to be a cultural phenomenon and only a cultural phenomenon. Since Hinduism is considered to be merely a set of particular customs and practices, Christianity as religion can bring Hinduism to religious fulfillment. It is in relation to this presupposition about the solely cultural nature of Hinduism that those who take this position employ the term "Hindu Catholicism." A second position is that of those who hold that Hinduism is a religion and, as such, a false religion that must be rejected. For those holding this position, Christianity can, in no way, adopt or Christianize the present customs and beliefs of Hindus.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>"La terminologie actuelle achoppe sur l'expression *catholocisme hindou* et plus encore sur le problème de l'adaptation. Depuis le fameux Roberto de Nobili, tout au début du XVII siècle, les partisans d'une solution positive considèrent l'hindouisme plus comme une organisation sociale et communautaire que comme une religion et admettent, en conséquence, la possibilité de l'intégrer dans le christianisme. Leurs adversaires rejettent les présupposés de cette théorie." Ibid., 76.

<sup>24</sup>Panikkar describes the two positions as they might be expressed in practice: "... si l'hindouisme n'est autre chose

For Panikkar both these positions are the result of the influence of a Western humanistic mentality.<sup>25</sup> Both positions derive from a mistaken dualism between between culture and religion.<sup>26</sup> Panikkar's position is that Hinduism is both a

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qu'un ordre social qui plaît aux indigènes parce qu'ils y sont habitués depuis plus de quatre mille ans, on peut se féliciter de le voir assumé par les chrétiens, ceux-ci n'ont qu'à s'appeler 'hindous catholiques', marcher pieds nus, manger avec les mains, se servir de santal, de kudumi, du cordon, s'asseoir par terre, saluer à leur manière et se marier selon leurs castes et leurs coutumes propres. Mais si l'hindouisme est vraiment une religion, et si tous ces rites ne sont que des manifestations d'une foi idolâtre, panthéiste ou moniste, alors pas de compromis possible; les catholiques n'ont qu'à constituer, comme ce fut généralement le cas jusqu'à présent, une caste à part; ils ne pourront faire ni *upanaya*, ni *shraddha* et ils auront à abjurer ces pratiques païennes. Ils pourront être des catholiques *indiens*, mais pas hindous; le seul lien qui les unira à ceux-ci se situera sur le plan national et non sur celui de la spiritualité." Ibid., 81.

<sup>25</sup>"En effet, la manière même de poser la question révèle un climat humaniste, typique de la mentalité qui règne en Europe depuis plusieurs siècles, même chez beaucoup de chrétiens." Ibid., 82.

<sup>26</sup>Panikkar interprets the Chinese rites controversy in a similar fashion in a later (1991) reflection. There was no dichotomy of culture and religion in China. The rites were expressions of a religious attitude: "The controversy over the Chinese rites in past centuries offers a telling example. The Western-Christian theological justification of those Chinese practices under the 'excuse' that they were only civil, secular, politesse-like ceremonies devoid of religious connotation simply did not hold for the Chinese. And yet, it was the only way of defending the case before the Roman authorities. Those ceremonies were certainly not rigidly tied to dogmatic beliefs, as the Western mentality of the times would only understand religion, but they were part and parcel of an homogeneous and organic culture which neither accepted the dichotomy between religion and culture nor considered religion a dogmatic affair. The Chinese rites were not the religious rites of a culture (as the West discussed), but the cultural rituals of a religion (as the West overlooked)." Raimundo Panikkar, "Indic Christian Theology from the Perspective of Interculturalism" in *Religious Pluralism: An Indian Christian Perspective*, K. Patil, Editor

cultural and a religious reality. He rejects a dualist approach that would separate natural from supernatural, profane from sacred:

Let us simply recall that nature does not exist in a pure state; that Christianity has not come to transform a person living a purely natural existence, but a fallen person, and that the 'nations will find hope in Him' as Isaiah says (XL. 10) and as Saint Paul repeats (Rom. XV. 12). Moreover Hinduism as it is -- society and religion -- all together -- is part of the plan of Providence, this plan which he has allowed *in fact* for these people, these sons and daughters who populate this sub-continent. Let us recall that a religious person of good faith, even if his or her religion is objectively false -- is closer to God than an unbeliever or a materialist without any religion; that the dichotomy 'Hinduism - profane society' and 'Hinduism - religion' does not have meaning from the historical and existential point of view, nor from the ontological Christian point of view (nor Hindu, moreover).<sup>27</sup>

For Panikkar, human beings are both religiously and culturally oriented at once. This means that it is improper to treat their customs and practices as a-religious. Hinduism, with

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(Delhi: I.S.P.C.K., 1991), 269.

<sup>27</sup>"Rappelons simplement que la nature n'existe pas à l'état pur; que le christianisme n'est pas venu transformer un *homme* vivant d'une pure existence naturelle, mais un homme déchu et que les 'nations trouveront en Lui l'espérance' comme le dit Isaïe (XL. 10) et comme le répète saint Paul (Rom. XV. 12). De même l'hindouisme comme tel -- société et religion tout ensemble -- fait partie du plan de la Providence, ce plan qu'il a permis de faire pour les hommes, ses fils qui peuplent ce sous-continent-là. Rappelons encore qu'un homme religieux de bonne foi -- même si sa religion est fautive objectivement -- est plus près de Dieu qu'un incrédule ou un matérialiste sans aucune religion; que la dichotomie 'hindouisme - société profane' et 'hindouisme - religion' n'a pas de sens du point de vue historique et existentiel, ni du point de vue ontologique chrétien (ni hindou, d'ailleurs)." Panikkar, *Lettre Sur L'Inde* (1963), 82-83.

its particular cultural and social expression, should not be torn away from its own context to be adapted to a different conception of religion. Rather, Hinduism should find its own proper cultural and religious fulfillment, which at this point in his thought (1960), Panikkar anticipates will be a "Christianizing" of its distinctive "structures":

This, moreover, is what the facts have revealed. It is a matter of transforming the sacred Hindu order, of purifying it, in order to help it attain its true fullness, that which is its own and not another's. It is a matter moreover of bringing Hindu society to Christianity in unifying and Christianizing its own structures.<sup>28</sup>

The issue is not one of a better apologetic nor of a fuller adaptation. It is an issue of a "conversion," not to particular doctrinal formulae, no matter how apt from a particular cultural perspective, but to the living Christ.<sup>29</sup> In the Christian

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<sup>28</sup>"C'est d'ailleurs ce que les faits ont révélé. Il s'agit de transformer l'ordre sacré hindou, de le purifier, l'aider à atteindre sa vraie plénitude, celle que lui est propre et non une autre. Il s'agit encore d'amener la société hindoue au christianisme en unifiant et en christianisant ses propres structures." Ibid., 83-84.

<sup>29</sup>Panikkar stresses that this conversion is to Christ in and with the Church and that the Church cannot identify itself with a particular theological formulation: "... il s'agit en un mot d'une véritable *con-version*, non pas aux formulations doctrinales de la théologie occidentale en tant que telle, mais au Christ, au Christ toujours vivant et intercédant pour nous. Certainement -- il faut le souligner pour éviter dès le départ toute tendance hérétique -- le Christ vivant réel est *dans* l'Église, avec l'Église. Il est la Tête même de l'Église et son Époux. Donc l'Église ne peut s'identifier à une formulation théologique particulière, même si celle-ci exprime de façon adéquate la réalité chrétienne sous l'angle intellectuel d'un horizon culturel déterminé." Ibid., 98.

message there is a tension between the external Kerygma and the interior, mystical aspect of the Good News:

... the Good News has an interior, mystical and personal aspect that ensures that the Word, the seed that is sowed, must grow and bear fruit in the soul of the one who receives it freely and with love. Christ descends and incarnates himself in the soul of each believer, says the traditional mysticism. The Christian fruit, even if the sowing comes from very far, will no longer be a stranger, nor strange; constituted all at once because it receives from the heavens and because its roots reach up from the earth, it develops as a native plant nourished by a sap that is supernatural and natural at the same time.<sup>30</sup>

Panikkar considers it urgent to confront Christian conceptions, themselves the result of a self-definition in the face of Hellenism, with Indian conceptions. Indeed, he believes that, given the religious nature of Indian philosophy, the encounter between Christian and Indian thought is of world-historical significance:

... not only comparable but much more important than the adoption, in the Middle Ages, of the Aristotelian philosophy by Christian wisdom.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>"... la Bonne Nouvelle a un aspect intérieur, mystique et personnel qui fait que la Parole, la graine semée doit croître et porter du fruit dans l'âme de celui qui la reçoit librement et avec amour. Le Christ descend et s'incarne dans l'âme de chaque croyant, dit la mystique traditionnelle. Le fruit chrétien, bien que la semence soit venue de très loin, ne sera plus étranger, ni étrange; constitué à la fois par ce qu'il reçoit du ciel et par ce que les racines aspirent de la terre, il se développera comme une plante autochtone nourrie par une sève surnaturelle et naturelle à la fois." Ibid., 99-100.

<sup>31</sup>"... non seulement comparables mais bien plus importantes que l'adoption, au moyen âge, de la philosophie aristotélicienne par la sagesse chrétienne." Ibid., 95. Panikkar is not original in holding such a belief. Witness the thought of Brahmabandhav Upadhyay. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (1969), 100.



However, Panikkar claims that it is not merely the confrontation of systems of thought but the living of Indian Christianity, a mystical incarnation of Christ by those who live in Indian culture, that will be key to the evangelization he envisions.<sup>32</sup>

*La India, Gente, Cultura, Creencias* can be understood as evidence of a conversion process in Panikkar the Spaniard and Catholic Christian opening himself to Indian cultural and religious traditions in the experience of a Christ mysticism.<sup>33</sup> He is in conversation with many Indians and curious to know the reality of the country, the hopes and possibilities of its people.<sup>34</sup> He conveys the sense of having come to a clearer

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<sup>32</sup>"Mais plus importante encore est la vie chrétienne indienne, l'incarnation mystique du Christ dans ceux qui vivent de la culture et des traditions indiennes." Panikkar, *Lettre Sur L'Inde* (1963), 100.

<sup>33</sup>There is a tone of self-reflection in Panikkar's comments on Father Zacharias, a Spaniard who arrived in India in 1912. Zacharias had gone to India with the idea that he had to bring Christ to the Hindus but his willingness to study the religion led him beyond this position. Panikkar states that the important point "is the internal dynamism of his attitude which made of him a pioneer and a man led by the Spirit towards ways which by far transcended those he had imagined." R. Panikkar, "The Mutual Fecundation" in *The Emerging Culture in India*, T. Paul, Editor (Alway: Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy, 1975), 9.

<sup>34</sup>In 1957 Panikkar published an article on the spirituality of contemporary Hindus. He distinguishes three kinds of persons: the "caste" of the "literate," the "orthodox," and "the people" (114). Panikkar notes that the first "occidental man" said: *Questio mihi factus sum*. Not so the "folk" of India who take a telluric stance and accept what is: "He is another thing among the things of the cosmos. He is not a foreigner, a tourist, a visitor to this world. Neither is he the lord or master of creation. He is part of it, he is a piece of this cosmos. He belongs to nature as the forest and the animals and the rivers

understanding of his Spanish and European roots through the encounter. He holds out hope that India in its spiritual vitality has much to contribute to a secularized West. The tone of his reflections are positive without being uncritical.

This text documents the initial phase of Panikkar's existential engagement with India and its religious traditions. His theological issues arise in the context of this survey of the India he is coming to know. Panikkar holds that neither an incorporation of Hinduism into Christianity on the premise that it is exclusively a cultural phenomenon, nor the rejection of Hinduism as false religion, is proper. He concludes that an interior, mystical and personal "conversion" is needed. This conversion is not without difficulties, but based on the mystery of Christ, it follows the law of the Cross, the pattern of death and resurrection.<sup>35</sup> This is not only a conversion of an individual but it is a conversion respecting the social nature of the person. Hinduism must die and rise again to its fulfillment. In his view, this is not Christianity supplanting Hinduism but Hinduism reaching its fulfillment by its own proper development

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belong to it." Raymond Panikkar, "Contemporary Hindu Spirituality," *Philosophy Today* III (Number 2/4) 1959: 123.

<sup>35</sup>"Ce parachèvement, cette sublimation ne permet pas d'ignorer la loi de la Croix, la nécessité de la mort qui précède la résurrection. Il ne faut donc pas croire à un compromis idyllique ni à la possibilité d'une évolution toujours harmonieuse suivant une même ligne horizontale; il s'agit réellement de mort et de résurrection." Panikkar, *Lettre Sur L'Inde* (1963), 84.

into Christ and into a distinctive form of Christianity.<sup>36</sup>

### Panikkar's Christian Identity Challenged

Panikkar informs his reader that on his departure for India from Europe he "'left' a Christian."<sup>37</sup> The review in Chapter Two of his life and work during his early years in Spain has given some idea of how Panikkar understood his Christian identity in 1954. His diary reveals that he understood the criticisms and suffering that came his way as consistent with his vocation as a Christian. He took the position that the urgent nature of contemporary issues called for an exploratory, creative theological approach that would not be stuck in past formulations of doctrine. He recognized the limits of human knowing. Central to his theological vision was the ineffable God (*Deus absconditus*) and Christ as the fulfillment of the whole cosmos and all people and Christianity as the fulfillment of religious traditions.

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<sup>36</sup>In a later work, Panikkar takes the approach that Christ did not come to found a new religion but that Christianity is itself "paganism, or to be more precise the complex Hebrew-Helleno-Greco-Latino-Celtico-Gothico-Modern religion converted to Christ more or less successfully. Christianity in India, to take one example, should not be an imported, fully-fledged and highly developed religion, but Hinduism itself converted -- or Islam, or Buddhism, whatever it may be. It has to be added immediately that this converted Hinduism is, substantially, the same as the old one and yet something different, a new creature." Raymond Panikkar, "The Relation of Christians to their Non-Christian Surroundings" in *Christian Revelation and World Religions*, J. Neuner S.J., Editor (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 168-169.

<sup>37</sup>"'Salí' cristiano." Panikkar, "Fe y creencia. Sobre la experiencia multirreligiosa [sic]". See ft.nt. 5 in this chapter.

Notwithstanding his Hindu ancestry through his father, his early religious formation drew almost exclusively from the Christian tradition. Though he had read in Eastern philosophy, Hindu and Buddhist, and was conversant with the history of religions, he had not encountered the East at existential depth. His visit to India in 1954 happened at a point when, as he has testified in his diary, he felt more intensely committed to the European intellectual scene than to his Hindu ancestry.

Although professing an inclusivist theological vision at the end of his years in Spain,<sup>38</sup> nonetheless, Panikkar reports experiencing his encounter with India and its religious traditions as a shock. What had been a notional apprehension of the challenge of other world religious traditions to Christian identity became real. He employs the image of Abraham leaving Ur for a new land and states that he had left a "microdox" environment to live in "the land of humans." He gives a "personal," "psychological," "not strictly autobiographical" account of the dilemma that faced him at that time:

Here I am brought up in the most rigid orthodoxy, having lived, to the extreme, within a milieu that is microdox from every point of view.... This one goes forth, forsakes the land of Ur, and dwells in the land of humans (indeed he knew it before, but not through experience, nor in the experience of his flesh like

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<sup>38</sup>That he holds an inclusivist position at the end of this period is evident in his positive review in 1953 of the history of religions text edited by Franz König. See Paniker, "*Christus un die Religionen der Erde. Handbuch der Religionsgeschichte.* (Cristo y las religiones de la tierra. Manual de historia de religiones.) Herausgegeben von Universitäts professor D. Dr. Franz König." (1953), 461-463. See Chapter Two, pages 74-76.

Job). Then instantly he finds himself confronted by a dilemma: either he must condemn everything around him as error and sin, or he must throw overboard the exclusivistic and monopolistic notions he has been told embody truth -- truth that must be simple and unique, revealed once and for all, that speaks through infallible organs, and so on.<sup>39</sup>

In the Catholic tradition, the "dilemma" Panikkar refers to can present itself in the question of how to interpret the teaching *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.<sup>40</sup> Panikkar addresses this teaching that 'outside the Church there is no salvation' in an article that was first published in German in 1955,<sup>41</sup> the year following his arrival in India. The teaching has been subject to diverse interpretations. In one extreme of the possible interpretations, the doctrine epitomizes an attitude of condemnation directed toward those who are not Catholic. The Church is considered solely in its institutional, sociological

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<sup>39</sup>"Heme aquí formado en la más rigida ortodoxia, habiendo vivido, para el colmo, dentro de un ambiente a todas luces microdóxico. ... Este hombre va, abandona la tierra de Hus y vive en la tierra de los hombres (la conocía antes, pero no con sávida ciencia, ni con la experiencia de su carne como Job), encontrándose entonces inmediatamente frente al dilema o de condenar como error y pecado a todo lo que le rodea o de repudiar las ideas de exclusividad y monopolio que le habían dicho que representaban la verdad, que sólo puede ser una, que fue revelada una vez por todas, con sus órganos infalibles, etc." Panikkar, "Fe y Creencia. Sobre la experiencia multirreligiosa [sic]" (1970), 437.

<sup>40</sup>"Outside the Church there is no salvation."

<sup>41</sup>"Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus" is the title for the Spanish translation of the German original. This present study is using the Spanish translation. Panikkar, *Humanismo y Cruz* (1963), 163-177. The German original had the title "*Die innere Unzulänglichkeit einer nicht-christlichen Welt*," and was published in the journal *Neues Abendland*, München (1955), X, 5.

expression and is the unique locus of the salvation that comes in Jesus Christ. Where the institutional Church is, there is salvation. Being outside the Church, that is, not being explicitly a Roman Catholic, is considered a rejection not only of the Church but of Christ, and must then mean condemnation.<sup>42</sup>

Panikkar, however, interprets the teaching in terms of his inclusive understanding of Christ and Church: whoever is not explicitly against the Church is somehow in the Church and participating in Christ.<sup>43</sup> Panikkar has a broad understanding of

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<sup>42</sup>The meaning of the Catholic doctrine "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" was fiercely debated in the 1940s and 1950s by American Catholics centred in the Archdiocese of Boston. The position of Leonard Feeney, S.J. and the group of zealous Catholics who followed him, was that only Roman Catholics in the state of grace would be saved. They reached the point of accusing their Archbishop, Richard Cardinal Cushing, of heresy when he did not agree with their literalist interpretation of the doctrine. Feeney was dismissed from the Society of Jesus. Four years later, refusing to go to Rome to discuss his doctrinal position, he was excommunicated by order of the Holy See, in an action approved by Pope Pius XII. Francis A. Sullivan, S.J. expresses his bewilderment at the position taken by Feeney and his followers: "It is possible to understand how medieval Christians could have made such a judgment, given their limited knowledge of the world outside Christendom, and their apparent inability to imagine how Jews or Moslems could be without guilt in their refusal to become Christians. But it is indeed hard to understand how Fr. Leonard Feeney, a man of the twentieth century, could make such a judgment about all the millions of people in the world who were not Roman Catholics. But if he did not judge them all guilty, the only alternative is that he must have believed that God condemns the innocent to the torments of hell, and that would be a more grievous error than the first." Francis A. Sullivan S.J., *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1992), 136.

<sup>43</sup>"Quien no está contra la Iglesia está de alguna manera dentro de la Iglesia. La Iglesia es algo como 'el lugar geométrico' del mensaje de Cristo, es la verdadera comunidad de los santos, a la cual cada hombre puede pertenecer en tanto que

salvation. Salvation is not just about life in an afterworld, having nothing to do with the values of this world.<sup>44</sup> The salvation (*salus*) referred to is of all created being and includes the salvation of material reality. Salvation is the healing both of human structures and of the whole person:

*Salus* means the health of all human structures, perfecting which (better, saving which) we are able to attain the total development of our whole personality; that is, to reach our final end, for this end is not only the well-being of the superior part of our soul, but the divine fulness of our being.<sup>45</sup>

He holds that, in a fully inclusive understanding of salvation and Church, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* is "the ancient, classical axiom of true theology."<sup>46</sup>

The article "Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus" gives a clear statement of Panikkar's inclusivist Christology and ecclesiology

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no lucha contra ella. La Iglesia está allí donde hay una participación en Cristo." Panikkar, "Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus" (1963), 174-175.

<sup>44</sup>"*Salus*, salvación, significa algo más que la vida del otro mundo (quizá conseguida mediante una buena confesión en el último momento), más que una vida que está pensada independiente de los valores de este mundo, como si éste no hubiera sido creado por Dios y salvado por Cristo...." Ibid., 163.

<sup>45</sup>"*Salus* indica la salud de todas las estructuras humanas, perfeccionando las cuales (mejor, salvándolas) podemos conseguir el desarrollo total de nuestra personalidad; esto es, alcanzar nuestro último fin, pues este fin no es sólo el bienestar de la parte superior de nuestra alma, sino la plenitud divina de todo nuestro ser." Ibid., 163.

<sup>46</sup>"El antiguo axioma clásico de la verdadera teología '*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*' no solamente tiene una significación escatológica e individual, sino también una envergadura mundana, de acá, sociológica." Ibid., 163.

of Church as sacrament at the time of his arrival in India. His thought is Christocentric.<sup>47</sup> His notion of the role of Christ is explicitly linked to what he finds in the Gospel of John. Thus, he understands the doctrine of creation in Genesis in terms of the beginning of the Gospel of John. All created beings participate in Christ:

Just as all the happenings of the Old Testament ought to be understood in the light of the definitive revelation of the New, one ought also here not only complete, but also deepen and comprehend, the beginning of Genesis by the beginning of the Gospel of Saint John: Christ is the ontic mediator; that is, beings, created things, are precisely being, because they participate in Christ.<sup>48</sup>

His Christocentric position shapes his understanding of Church and world. The Church is not limited to the hierarchical, visible institution, but is the Body of Christ, forming itself, dynamic, mysterious.<sup>49</sup> As all creation is related to Christ, so the whole world is related to the Church. In this broad sense of

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<sup>47</sup>"Si tomamos seriamente el pensamiento cristocéntrico, tenemos que superar un modo de pensar frecuentemente amanerado, racionalista (con lo que no queremos negar los derechos legítimos del pensamiento racional)." Ibid., 165.

<sup>48</sup>"Así como todas las manifestaciones del Antiguo Testamento se deben entender a la luz de la revelación definitiva del Nuevo, se debe también aquí no solamente completar, sino también profundizar y comprender, el principio del Génesis por el comienzo del Evangelio de Juan: Cristo es el mediador óntico; esto es, los seres, las cosas 'hechas', son exactamente ser, porque participan de Cristo." Ibid., 166.

<sup>49</sup>"La Iglesia es la realidad en cuanto va realizándose, es el cuerpo de Cristo que va formándose, misterioso, por ahora temporal, aun en devenir, con suspiros y dolores, pero ya apuntando, verdaderamente en camino. Ella sola junta las partes del ser dispersas, que alguna vez serán en su plenitud." Ibid., 164.



Church, which is neither merely the visible Church nor disconnected from the visible Church,<sup>50</sup> there is nothing of our human "world" which is outside the Church.<sup>51</sup> The teaching *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* is based both on the ontological and on the personal and sociological relation of Christ and Church and world.<sup>52</sup>

Panikkar, in this article, is not writing to a Hindu audience. Rather, he is addressing "modern" Europeans whom he considers to be affected by dualist ways of thinking.<sup>53</sup> He is reacting to the European context in which "the faith" is in

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<sup>50</sup>"Y, sin embargo, la Iglesia no es sólo lo meramente visible. El cuerpo de Cristo se extiende más allá, sin que por esto se deje desconectar de su corporeidad visible." Ibid., 176.

<sup>51</sup>"... fuera de la Iglesia puede existir, quizá, un trozo de mundo, pero no este nuestro mundo." Ibid., 164.

<sup>52</sup>"Aquí se afirma, por tanto, que la exclusividad de la salvación, que la Iglesia siempre ha reclamado para sí, no es una exclusividad moral, sino más bien ontológica; no solamente individual, sino también sociológica." Panikkar, "Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus" (1963), 165. In a later (1972) reference to the this teaching and the ecclesiological issues it raises, Panikkar distinguishes institutional and ontological Church: "The 'Church', outside which there is grace (and thus salvation), is the institutionalized or visible Church. The 'Church', outside which there is no salvation, is the ontological Church, whose relations with the 'visible' one is a serious ecclesiological problem." Raimundo Panikkar, "Prolegomena to the Problem of Universality of the Church" in *Unique and Universal: Fundamental Problems of an Indian Theology*, J.B. Chethimattam, Editor (Bangalore: Centre for the Study of World Religions, Dhamaram College, 1972), 163.

<sup>53</sup>"Según la opinión dualista, existe algo así como un orden 'profano', 'natural', 'mundano', 'de este mundo', que existe sólo y por sí, sin relación a Cristo." Panikkar, "Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus" (1963), 168.

decline,<sup>54</sup> speaking to those who have ceased

... to think clearly [*en cristiano*] and whose intellectual life is an exterior commitment to the categories of rationalist thought.<sup>55</sup>

Although he is not explicitly addressing the Indian situation and the encounter between Christianity and Hinduism, Panikkar anticipates an objection that might be made by those who are aware of the existence of cultures that are religious but not Christian. He writes:

Perhaps one objects that these thoughts might be relevant for an atheistic culture, but that, however, one could have a naturally religious culture, that would not necessarily have to be Christian.<sup>56</sup>

Panikkar maintains that his arguments are relevant to the case of all cultures that are religious. He holds that there are many kinds of Christian cultures<sup>57</sup> and that all cultures that are not

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<sup>54</sup>"... la creciente disminución de la fe en Europa ...." Ibid., 167.

<sup>55</sup>"... no piensa en *cristiano* y cuya vida intelectual es un compromiso exterior con las categorías del pensamiento racionalista." Ibid., 165.

<sup>56</sup>"Quizá se objete que estos pensamientos podrían valer para una cultura atea, pero que, sin embargo, podría haber una cultura natural religiosa, que no necesariamente ha de ser cristiana." Ibid., 172.

<sup>57</sup>"... hay múltiples culturas cristianas." Ibid., 172. Panikkar identifies three types of relationship between Christianity and culture: a first type characterizes a culture that is "pre-christian," (*precristiana*) that has an "obediential potency" with respect to Christ in that an invisible force maintains it open to Christianity without the culture yet having heard the "Message of the Cross"; for example, Renaissance culture which lacked the courage to choose for or against the cross; a second type that is "for-christianity" (*para-cristiana*), is aware of its own provisional nature and has some positive experience of Christian grace; the sense of imperfection in this

in decline are in some sense Christian, since no religious tradition is independent of Christ.<sup>58</sup> For a culture not to sink into barbarism it cannot be merely natural and rational:<sup>59</sup>

In the real world faith, grace, sin, repentance, salvation, humility, hope, obedience, angel and devil, etc., play a definitive role. A merely natural and rational culture cannot adequately perceive these factors, much less direct or shape them interiorly; it needs the supernatural and uncreated definitive love, that continually, without interruption, probes and penetrates the world.<sup>60</sup>

This 1955 article, "Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus," provides evidence of Panikkar's willingness to address directly key conflictual issues. It was Panikkar's attempt to articulate an intellectual response to the dilemma that faced him in existential fashion when he first went to India in the mid-1950s. He could neither deny the centrality of Christ and Church nor

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culture, its openness, is a preparation for a new order, "For this a christian grace is necessary, although it is often invisible" -- "Por eso es necesario una gracia cristiana, aunque sea muchas veces invisible." A third type of culture is really "christian" in that it is interiorly penetrated by the supernatural end of human life -- "... es decir, cuando se deja interiormente compenetrar por el último y único fin sobrenatural de la vida humana." Ibid., 175-176.

<sup>58</sup>"... ninguna religión es independiente de Cristo." Ibid., 172.

<sup>59</sup>"Una cultura en el sentido de Rousseau no es una verdadera cultura, y lentamente conduce a la barbarie." Ibid., 173.

<sup>60</sup>"En el mundo real la fe, la gracia, el pecado, el arrepentimiento, la salvación, la humildad, la esperanza, la obediencia, el ángel y el diablo, etc., juegan el papel definitivo. Una cultura meramente natural y racional ni siquiera puede percibir adecuadamente estos factores, menos aún dirigirlos y conformarlos interiormente; le falta el amor definitivo increado, sobrenatural, que continuamente, sin interrupción, escudriña y penetra el mundo." Ibid., 173.

could he condemn those who were not explicitly Roman Catholic or Christian, among whom were his family relations.<sup>61</sup> In this article, he demonstrated his ability to take a theological position that retained connection with the Christian tradition while interpreting Church teaching in the broadened horizon of his changing experience.<sup>62</sup>

### Panikkar's Encounter with Hinduism

Panikkar's book, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, completed for the most part by 1957,<sup>63</sup> presents further evidence of the

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<sup>61</sup>His brother, Salvador, gives an account of Panikkar's visit to their father's first wife which highlights Panikkar's willingness to adapt to local customs and the positive response this evoked in the Hindu relatives. Salvador Pániker, *Segunda Memoria* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1988), 186.

<sup>62</sup>Panikkar's understanding of "extra ecclesiam nulla salus" is reiterated in the new "introduction" to the revised version of *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*. After noting that there are "many ways of getting around it" and that H. Kung "seems to abjure it altogether," Panikkar writes: "My interpretation is to turn it around and affirm that the statement means that the Church is the locus of salvation, wherever this place may be and however it may appear." Raimundo Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany* (Revised and Enlarged Edition, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981), ft.nt 37, p. 18.

<sup>63</sup>Panikkar's best-known work, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, was published in 1964 (revised and expanded version, 1981). The second foreword of the book, dated "Rome, Easter, 1962" (xii) indicates that the text to be published was, with "a few minor adjustments and some bibliographical additions" (xi), the text Panikkar had completed five years previously in India. Thus the first foreword is dated "Banaras, Easter, 1957" (xi). The book drew attention to a significant theological voice in the area of the Hindu-Christian interreligious encounter. There was a happy coincidence between its publication and the ecumenical and interreligious initiatives promoted by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The book jacket for the 1968 reprint

extent to which he had engaged the Indian situation early in his stay in India. In its structure and characteristics, this work demonstrates something of what he was about in his encounter with Hinduism. He gives his view of what it is that impels Hindus and Christians to the encounter and presents a specific understanding of "conversion" as a way to mutual understanding in the encounter.

*The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* is structured in three sections. As Panikkar expresses it in the "Foreword," the first section

... describes the Hindu-Christian encounter on its ontological and concrete existential level, trying to show that there is a living Presence of Christ in Hinduism.<sup>64</sup>

It is his notion of the "living Presence of Christ" that distinguishes his theological position from the typical fulfillment theology.<sup>65</sup> For Panikkar, Christ is not only in the future as the goal of Hinduism, but is also present as the one

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envisions a broad audience for the text and notes the timeliness of the subject it addresses: "This is a most valuable, scholarly, sympathetic, and devout book, which should be of great interest to Hindus, Christian missionaries, and general readers of religious writing. Particularly relevant and timely in the light of the new Vatican Secretariat for non-Christian Religions, and the Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*." Raymond Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964, 1968).

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., viii.

<sup>65</sup>One author comments on the impact in theological circles of Panikkar's *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*: "It is from that book, it may be said, that the theory of the 'presence of Christ' in the religious traditions, derives its name." Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (1997), 149.

who inspires, and is the force active from the beginning:

Christ is not only the ontological goal of Hinduism but also its true inspirer, and His grace is the leading though hidden force pushing it towards its full disclosure.<sup>66</sup>

He makes the suggestion that "Christ" may be "understandable" to the Hindu. In his view, the Hindu would not question the possibility of the indivisible yet unmixed relationship that the Christian claims for Christ and God. Nor does he believe that the Hindu would object to the notion that where God acts it is through Christ. As he sees it, the difficulty for the Hindu comes when Christ is identified with "Jesus the Son of Mary":

Hinduism would not find much difficulty in accepting this and would call it perhaps Isvara (Lord). The stumbling-block appears when Christianity further identifies, with the required qualifications, Christ with Jesus the Son of Mary. A full Christian faith is required to accept this identity. The Hindu can only respect this belief which to him seems absurd. The way to the living Christ is not precisely pure reasoning.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (1964, 1968), ix.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 24. In the 1981 revised version of this text, Panikkar reasserts the point of impasse: "If Christ is the point of contact, yet only Christians can fully accept this necessary identity with Jesus, we cannot hope for a very fruitful dialogue." He adds new material which shifts the issue from a doctrinal disagreement on the relation between Jesus and Christ to an existential agreement based on communion in the Spirit. He suggests that the "Spirit of God" is the place where the encounter between Christian and Hindu takes place: "We are referring to the Spirit of God as the place where the encounter, if at all, takes place. It is only in the Holy Spirit that prayers meet, intentions coalesce and persons enter into communion." He adds: "In other words, we meet in the Spirit, the Spirit of God, which for the Christian is the Spirit of Christ. Let me clarify that we are not dealing here with a mere semantic quibble. It is not a question of whether this Spirit is God's or

The second section of the book concerns the doctrinal relationship between Hinduism and Christianity. Panikkar asks what the conjunction "and" might mean in the phrase "Hinduism and Christianity." He rejects such disjunctive relationships as "falsehood-truth, darkness-light, sin-sanctity, damnation-salvation and similar pairs."<sup>66</sup> He considers another set of relationships, "potency-act, seed-fruit, forerunner-real presence, symbol-reality, desire-accomplishment, allegory-thing-in-itself,"<sup>67</sup> more acceptable. At this point Panikkar seems to have taken the position of a fulfillment theology. He writes:

Hinduism because it is a kind of Christianity in potency, because it has already a Christian seed, because it is the desire of fulness, and that fulness is Christ, is already pointing towards it, already contains, indeed, the symbolism of the Christian reality.

He then links this second set of relationships with the pattern of the paschal Mystery, the "certain relationship belonging to

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Christ's or Siva's. It is a matter of agreeing on the fundamental nature of this Spirit." Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany* (1981), 57-58.

<sup>66</sup>Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (1964, 1968), 35.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 35.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 59-60. Panikkar qualifies his use of the potency-act analogy by immediately explaining that "This passage or transit is neither a natural nor an automatic one" (60). He goes on to note the historical, personal-existential, and mystical considerations that limit this analogy. In the revised and enlarged edition of this text, Panikkar is even more clear about the objections to the potency-act "model" or what he terms "fulfilment theology." Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany* (1981), 90-96.

the Christian dynamism of death and resurrection."<sup>77</sup> Yet, even in this early text (1957-1964), he considers a fulfillment theology not adequate to the relationship of "Hinduism and Christianity." For Panikkar, the copulative "and" in the phrase "Hinduism and Christianity" ultimately points to a "sui generis" relationship, a relationship that is more adequately spoken of as "transcendent" and described in trinitarian language.<sup>78</sup> He writes:

We would have been misunderstood if the 'and' of our problem were translated by an optimistic 'towards' or by a pessimistic 'versus'. This 'and' is not only ambivalent, but transcendent, similar to the copulative that links the Father *and* the Son *and* the Holy Spirit in the Trinity.<sup>79</sup>

The third and perhaps the most creative section of *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* is a Christian reading of a text central to Vedantic forms of Hinduism -- the *Brahma Sûtra* of Badarayana.<sup>80</sup> The problem addressed by this text is the relationship between the absolute and the relative, God and the World. Panikkar's reading suggests that the Iśvara (Lord) of the

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<sup>77</sup>Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (1964, 1968), 35.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 36.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 63.

<sup>80</sup>Panikkar focuses his reflection on the second aphorism of the *Brahma Sûtra*: "Whence the origin etcetera of this." He takes the obvious meaning of the scriptural text to be: "Brahman is that from which the origin, etcetera, of this world proceed." His Christological interpretation recognizes Isvara as "that from which" of the text and discerns a parallel with the function of Christ in the relation between God and World. Ibid., 74 ff.



Sankarite Vedanta tradition is functionally equivalent to Christ in Christian tradition.<sup>75</sup> He is proposing that a particular, significant text in the Vedantic tradition, the *Brahma Sûtra* of Badarayana, viewed through Christian eyes, has intimated the presence of Christ becoming articulate within that Hindu tradition. This is a concrete, a *posteriori* discovery of a bridge between Christianity and Hinduism.<sup>76</sup>

The discovery of a certain functional equivalence between Isvara and Christ as a bridge between Christianity and Hinduism is intriguing in view of the apparently irreconcilable orientations of the two traditions. Panikkar begins *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* with a forceful statement of the impasse in the encounter between Christianity and Hinduism. A section of the first chapter entitled "THE SEARCH FOR A MEETING-PLACE" sets up an account of the conflicting goals of the traditions. He asserts that any attempt to avoid a deep encounter and to live in a state of "mere co-existence" would be destructive for both religious traditions. Central to Christian identity is

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<sup>75</sup>"May I venture, now, a new reading into our text that will not be altogether foreign to the Christian tradition and yet can claim to be a commentary? . . . . *That from which all things proceed and to which all things return and by which all things are* (sustained in their own being) that 'that' is God, but *primo et per se* is not a silent Godhead, not a kind of inaccessible Brahman, not God the Father and source of the whole Divinity, but the true Isvara, God the Son, the Logos, the Christ." Ibid., 126.

<sup>76</sup>Cf. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (1978), 316.

Christianity's universalist claim "to be the *Mystery* that God has revealed for the whole world."<sup>77</sup> He judges that were Christianity to deny this aspect of its identity it would be an "unnatural suppression" leading either to the internal "corruption" of Christianity, or to an external "compensation" expressed in attacks on the other religious traditions.<sup>78</sup> Christianity has both the right and the duty to claim to be the religion for everyone:

...Christianity devoid of its claim of being the universal religion (and in consequence of its having a right -- or rather a duty and a responsibility before the whole world), would not be Christianity.<sup>79</sup>

Similarly, Hinduism, respecting its own dynamism, could not simply co-exist with Christianity. For Panikkar, an attempt by Hinduism merely to co-exist with a "militant" Christianity would make it vulnerable to such a Christianity and lead to the destruction of Hinduism. On the other hand, co-existing with a "passive" Christianity would go against Hindu principles of tolerance because it would imply the destruction of Christianity, that Christianity had become what it is not meant to be. He states the dilemma bluntly:

Christianity desires that the Hindu become a Christian.  
Hinduism has no such wish to make Christians Hindus --

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<sup>77</sup>Panikkar makes reference to a series of scriptural texts to illustrate what he means: Matt. 13:35; Rom. 16: 25-26; Eph. 3:8 ff.; Col. 1:26 etc. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (1964, 1968), ft.nt. 1, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 2-3.

to the Hindu one cannot in fact become what one is not; yet Hinduism will obviously prohibit Hindus from being unfaithful to their Hindu *dharma*. Is there any solution to this problem?<sup>80</sup>

His solution is a type of "conversion" that need not be a formal, sociological shift from one religious tradition to another but is a shift that emphasizes personal transformation. In a section entitled "THE EXISTENTIAL ENCOUNTER," he writes concerning the need to maintain both Christianity and Hinduism in a dialogue that is an encounter "in my heart" of both traditions. This encounter occurs in such a manner that it does not destroy either tradition but relates them in a "personal synthesis":

In my heart I can either embrace both religions in a personal synthesis (which may be intellectually more or less perfect and achieved), or destroy and replace one of the two which would have been 'killed' by my very love for it. It is here where religion exists, where religions may truly 'co-ek-sist' (it is then rather an 'in-esse' than a 'co-esse'). Meanwhile they can only sincerely co-ek-sist, by co-in-sisting (i.e. in dialogue).<sup>81</sup>

This emphasis on encounter "in my heart" is consistent with the approach taken by other Christians in India to the Hindu-Christian encounter.<sup>82</sup> As Panikkar views the matter, the dialogue between Christian and Hindu, in order to be true "understanding," must go beyond a superficial acquaintance to a kind of

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>82</sup>See the work of Henri Le Saux (Abhishiktânanda), an experienced guide in Panikkar's exploration of the Advaita Vedânta tradition: for example, Abhishiktânanda, *Hindu-Christian Meeting Point Within the Cave of the Heart* (Bombay: Institute of Indian Culture, 1969).

"conversion":

A Christian will never 'under-stand' Hinduism if he is not con-verted to Hinduism. Never will a Hindu 'understand' Christianity unless he becomes a Christian.<sup>83</sup>

It appears that he is making a plea to people of all religious traditions for sympathetic understanding of religious traditions not their own, a passing over to the standpoints of others and a coming back which is a creative, transformative act that goes beyond a mere holding together in thought of contradictory beliefs. At the same time, he is moving toward the existential fact of a "personal synthesis" which will give him the confidence to claim a Hindu (and Buddhist) identity and multireligious experience.

#### Panikkar's Encounter with Buddhism

As we have seen from Panikkar's early Spanish period, there is evidence that he read about Buddhism, desired direct encounter with Buddhists and had reflected to some limited extent on the history of mutual influence between Buddhism and European thought.<sup>84</sup> In his early India period, the majority of his opportunities for encounter and study were with advaitic Hindus and Hinduism. In 1961 Panikkar returned to Europe and the Pontifical Lateran University to defend his doctorate in

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>84</sup>See our reference in Chapter Two to Panikkar's review of De Lubac's work: Paniker, "Henri De Lubac: *La rencontre du Bouddhisme et de l'Occident*. Paris (Aubier-Éditions Montaigne), 1952; 285 págs.," *Arbor* XXV 1953: 482-483.

theology, the fruit of his studies of Hinduism (later to appear in *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*). The same year he defended his doctoral thesis on the encounter with Hinduism, however, he published an article entitled "Pluralismus Toleranz und Christenheit."<sup>85</sup> This article demonstrates that, very soon after his arrival in India,<sup>86</sup> he had already pursued opportunities for contact with Buddhists and that he found himself in sympathy with Buddhism. In the article he relates an anecdote that indicates that as a result of his adherence to certain Buddhist truths he considered himself in some sense a Buddhist, even if not so in a "juridical" sense. The anecdote concerns his attendance at the International Buddhist Congress that took place in 1956 in Rangoon, Burma, to celebrate 2500 years of Buddhism. A professor of Indology and the president of one of the sessions of the Congress, who knew Panikkar, spotted him among those attending. The professor, an orthodox Hindu, asked in a friendly and ironic fashion:

'What are you doing here? If you are not a Buddhist!' To which I [Panikkar] responded: 'What are you doing here? If you are not a Buddhist!' He said to me: 'I am a Buddhist.' I responded: 'I also am a Buddhist. I am so with the same rights and the same reasons that you use in order to call yourself a Buddhist without

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<sup>85</sup>"Pluralism, Tolerance and Christendom." "Pluralismus Toleranz und Christenheit", in *Pluralismus Toleranz und Christenheit* (Nürnberg 1961), 117-142. The version we are working with is the Spanish translation published as: Raymond Panikkar, *Los Dioses y el Señor* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Columba, 1967), 116-146.

<sup>86</sup>He arrived in India in 1954 and the article refers to his participation in a Buddhist event two years later in 1956.

being one (he is an orthodox Hindu), for if you have recognized in Buddhism certain truths that would allow you to call yourself Buddhist, without being so in a juridical sense, why would you deny this possibility to me?'<sup>87</sup>

In this same article, "Pluralismus Toleranz und Christenheit," Panikkar makes clear that by embracing multireligious experience and pluralism he does not intend to take a relativist position. He distinguishes his understanding of pluralism from a pluralism under the influence of liberalism<sup>88</sup> which would hold that all systems are equally valid, that various, contradicting truths are necessary and that, therefore, there is no definitive truth. He finds the liberal account of pluralism unacceptable and states a position with respect to truth:

... if all systems are equally valid, one could not reach the truth; if contradictions are necessary, there would be a diversity of truths. In the end, there would be no access to a definitive truth.<sup>89</sup>

He draws the conclusion that, in a liberal concept of pluralism,

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<sup>87</sup>"¿Qué hace Ud. aquí? ;Si Ud. no es budhista!' A lo que le respondí: '¿Qué hace Ud. aquí? ;Si Ud. no es budhista!' Me dijo: 'Yo soy budhista'. Le respondí: 'Yo también soy budhista. Lo soy con los mismos derechos y las mismas razones que Ud. emplea para llamarse budhista sin serlo (él es hindú ortodoxo), pues si ha reconocido en el budhismo ciertas verdades que le permiten llamarse budhista, sin serlo en sentido jurídico, ¿por qué me niega esta posibilidad a mí?'" Panikkar, *Los Dioses y el Señor* (1967), 135-136.

<sup>88</sup>"... puede ser un concepto pregnado de liberalismo." Ibid., 116.

<sup>89</sup>"... si todos los sistemas fueran igualmente válidos, no se podría alcanzar la verdad; si fueran necesarias las contradicciones, habría varias verdades. En fin, no habría acceso a una verdad definitiva." Ibid., 116.

tolerance would mean indifference, a lack of resistance to evil, and apathy and skepticism before the ultimate questions of human life.<sup>90</sup> He characterizes this liberal form of pluralism as the "rule of autonomy carried to the extreme."<sup>91</sup>

Panikkar claims another possible meaning for pluralism that has to do with the reality of history and the dynamic, unfinished nature of our own being, the fact that we are on the way.

Pluralism can mean that

... in our real, historical world there does not exist a monolithic uniformity; it can signify that the truth is certainly one, but that it possesses a pluridimensional reality, not because reality or truth are not one, but because we are not a unity, we have not yet reached the unification of our being.<sup>92</sup>

Panikkar, consistent with his view of the relational nature of reality, takes the position that a Christian understanding of pluralism should not hold with a plurality of truths but with a plurality of aspects of the one truth.<sup>93</sup> A concept of pluralism influenced by liberalism would give priority to autonomy in

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<sup>90</sup>"Este pluralismo lleva necesariamente al concepto de la tolerancia como indiferencia, como falta de resistencia frente al mal, como una cierta apatía y un puro escepticismo ante los últimos interrogantes de la existencia humana ...." Ibid., 116.

<sup>91</sup>"... el imperio de la autonomía llevada a su grado extremo." Ibid., 117.

<sup>92</sup>"... en nuestro mundo histórico y real no existe una uniformidad monolítica; puede significar que la verdad es ciertamente una, pero que posee una realidad pluridimensional, no porque la realidad o la verdad no sean una, sino porque nosotros no somos uno, no hemos llegado todavía a la unificación de nuestro ser." Ibid., 117.

<sup>93</sup>"Por eso, no se trata de una pluralidad de verdades, pero sí, precisamente, de aspectos de la verdad única." Ibid., 117.

opposition to a heteronomous position in which a single order is imposed from above. In his view, Christians should hold a position distinct from the extremes of autonomy and heteronomy, a kind of middle way which he terms ontonomy.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, in this article, Panikkar has presented a Christian vision with characteristics consistent with key elements in the Buddhist vision: the relatedness of the whole,<sup>25</sup> the dynamic and transitory nature of the real,<sup>26</sup> the priority of orthopraxy.<sup>27</sup>

In his early India period Panikkar makes a few comments that reveal that he has come to understand Buddhism in terms of his trinitarian vision. There is one such reference in *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* in which he notes that Buddhism had addressed

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<sup>24</sup>In this instance, between the extremes of autonomy and heteronomy, he opts for what he terms ontonomy: "No se trata en este caso de la autonomía reaccionaria de los conceptos liberalistas, sino de una madura ontonomía (si me permite la palabra), como ley intrínseca de las distintas esferas jerárquicas del ser, sin caer en el otro extremo, en la heteronomía." Ibid., 117.

<sup>25</sup>In an early work Panikkar explains his concept of ontonomy in a manner that emphasizes relatedness as distinction without separation: "I name ontonomy, faced with the two other extreme positions, as the recognition or as the development of the laws appropriate to each sphere of being or of human activity, with distinction of higher and lower spheres, but without separation or unjustified interferences." "Llamo ontonomía, frente a las otras dos posturas extremas, al reconocimiento o al desarrollo de las leyes propias de cada esfera del ser o de la actividad humana, con distinción de las esferas superiores o inferiores, pero sin separación ni interferencias injustificadas." Paniker, *Ontonomia de la Ciencia: Sobre el sentido de la ciencia y sus relaciones con la filosofía* (1961), 11.

<sup>26</sup>Panikkar, *Los Dioses y el Señor* (1967), 118.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 130-133.



the question of the relation between the absolute and the relative.<sup>23</sup> Another, more direct reference, is found in *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man: Icon - Person - Mystery* (1973).<sup>24</sup> In this text while giving what he proposes as a dynamic account of the relations in the Trinity, he portrays the Father begetting the Son in a total self-emptying. What comes to mind for Panikkar is the apophatic spirituality of Buddhism:

Is it not here, truly speaking, in this essential apophatism of the 'person' of the Father, in this *kenosis* of Being at its very source, that the Buddhist experience of *nirvana* and *sunyata* (emptiness) should be situated?<sup>25</sup>

Toward the end of the 1960s Panikkar made a more intense study of Buddhism. In 1970, his major essay on the relation between Buddhism and atheism was published in an encyclopedia of contemporary atheism.<sup>26</sup> This work was also developed as a book

"This is in my opinion not just a Vedântic problem; in the final analysis, the *amr* of the Koran, the *Logos* of Plotinus and the *Tathâgata* of Buddhism, for example, spring from a similar view as to the necessity for an ontological link between those two apparently irreconcilable poles: the absolute and the relative." Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (1964, 1968), 120.

<sup>23</sup>Written c. 1964; see Chapter Five, page 190 ff.

<sup>24</sup>Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (1973), 46-47.

<sup>25</sup>R. Panikkar, "Buddhismo è Ateismo?" in *L'Ateismo Contemporaneo*, vol. IV: *Il Cristianesimo di fronte all'Ateismo* [4 vols., edited by the Faculty of Philosophy of the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome, and directed by Giulio Girardi (Turin: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1967-1970)] (1970), 449-

in which Panikkar evaluated the many hypotheses seeking to explain the silence of the Buddha about God.<sup>102</sup> Panikkar's article, "Nirvana and the Awareness of the Absolute" (1971 [1969 in Italian]),<sup>103</sup> presents some of his conclusions from these more extensive studies. He takes the position that "the elimination of the name of God is, for the Buddha, the supreme religious undertaking."<sup>104</sup> The Buddha's attitude is distinctive in that it is neither the "transcendent transcendence" of the Jewish-Christian-Islamic and post-Christian Western traditions nor the "immanent transcendence" of the Hindu traditions: "It would rather say that the true awareness of the Absolute is to have none."<sup>105</sup> It is consistent with India's decision for "the primacy of the Spirit" in contrast to the decision of the West "for the Logos."<sup>106</sup> Panikkar recognizes that the Western traditions are aware that God is not an object and that God can only be addressed in the vocative, that is, can only be known in an I-

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<sup>102</sup>R. Panikkar, *El Silencio del Dios* (Madrid, 1970). This book has seen later revised editions including: Raimundo Panikkar, *The Silence of God: The Answer of the Buddha*, ed. P.F. Knitter (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989 [1970]).

<sup>103</sup>Raymond Panikkar, "Nirvana and the Awareness of the Absolute" in *The God Experience. Essays in Hope*, J.P. Whelan, Editor (New York/Paramus/Toronto: Newman Press, 1971 (1969 Italian)), 81-99.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 82.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 82.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., 82.

Thou relationship.<sup>107</sup> But he sees the Buddha going even further in saying that God cannot be named "because he is not."<sup>108</sup> While both Christians and Muslims have chosen to speak of a hidden name of God, Buddha has chosen no name. For the Buddha, any speculation on the Absolute distracts from the existential, concrete effort to seek release from suffering.<sup>109</sup> Before the question of Nirvana or no-Nirvana, the Buddha's response is only silence. But this is not a silence motivated by fear of entering into contradiction for "the Buddha wishes to teach us to know silence, to love it and to grasp its message."<sup>110</sup> Panikkar understands that the Buddha is not an "agnostic" but is "the Enlightened One" who wishes to foster "a total confidence in life, in what is given to us, without seeking to replace reality with our own ideas."<sup>111</sup> In Buddhism, Panikkar has found a spiritual tradition that is congruent with his own emphasis on a contemplative and apophatic spirituality, on a dynamic vision of reality, on a priority given to "total confidence in life" over theory.

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<sup>107</sup>He illustrates with the Bible text: "You shall not utter the name of Yahweh your God to misuse it" (Exodus 20:7). Ibid., 83.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., 83.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., 84.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 85.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 88.

Faith, Belief and Multireligious Experience

During the Christmas season of 1966, Panikkar gave an address to a French audience of whom the majority were non-believers. In the talk he explored the thesis that "faith is a constitutive human dimension."<sup>112</sup> "Creatureliness" is the "relation" to God that humans share with all beings, faith is our "ontological relation" to God. Panikkar rejects a notion of faith that would make it the privilege of a select group. Faith distinguishes human beings from other kinds of beings and is the ground of the unity of humankind:

By faith Man is distinguished from other beings. But precisely because of this, faith is a human characteristic that unites mankind. Thus faith is not the privilege of some individuals or the monopoly of certain defined groups, however large their membership.<sup>113</sup>

He contrasts this position on faith with the position taken by those who, since Descartes, have based human unity solely on

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<sup>112</sup>R. Panikkar, "Faith as a Constitutive Human Dimension" in *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (New York/Ramsey/Toronto: Paulist Press, 1979), 190; originally an address given to a French audience, many of whom were unbelievers. See foot note 2, page 218. This article was first published as 'La foi dimension constitutive de l'homme,' *Mythe et foi*, edited by E. Castelli (Paris: Aubier, 1966); also published as *L'Homme qui devient Dieu. La foi dimension constitutive de l'homme* (Paris: Aubier, 1969). See the English version: 'Faith: Constitutive Dimension of Man,' *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Temple University Press), Vol. VIII, No. 2 (Spring 1971).

<sup>113</sup>Panikkar, "Faith as a Constitutive Human Dimension" (1979), 190.

reason.<sup>114</sup> The recent history of wars, of inter-generational conflict, and "the failure of idealism and ensuing chaos of philosophy"<sup>115</sup> has shaken humanity's confidence in reason. In Panikkar's view, the contemporary recognition of the limited role of reason is particularly significant for interreligious (and intrareligious) dialogue. For Panikkar, the position that "faith is a constitutive dimension of the human" is "the key to one of the most important problems of our time: the encounter of religions."<sup>116</sup> The encounter is a "religious dialogue -- even at the level of faith -- rather than a mere rational dispute."<sup>117</sup>

In this same 1966 address, Panikkar holds that conversion, even a conversion in the sense of shifting from one religious tradition to another, does not necessarily imply a loss of faith or a rejection of one's past. He asks what for him is a rhetorical question:

Has a Hindu becoming Christian to denounce all his Hindu past? Or has a Christian becoming Buddhist to forego what he still believes is valid in the Christian tradition?<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup>"For several centuries, Western Man has been indoctrinated that his humanity (and consequently his universality) was grounded in reason. The effort to discard theology, and faith along with it, to reduce the latter to a corner in humanity's sacristy so that the real human encounter can be realized in the domain of pure reason, of true and uncontaminated philosophy, has characterized 'modern' philosophy since Descartes." Ibid., 192.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 193.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 191.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., 191.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., 195.

He continues this line of questioning to propose a distinction: "Has conversion necessarily to entail alienation? Should we then not distinguish faith and belief?"<sup>119</sup>

This question and the fuller development of his positive response are elaborated in the first chapter of *The Intra-religious Dialogue* (1978) entitled "Faith and Belief: A Multireligious Experience."<sup>120</sup> This is the revised English translation of the Spanish article published in 1970 in which Panikkar claimed multireligious experience, the capacity to have authentic religious experience in the context of another religious tradition. The article is then presented as "a reply in outline" to those who had wondered whether this "attitude" was "objectively tenable or even intelligible."<sup>121</sup> Panikkar begins his argument by asserting that the "ecumenical spirit" that characterizes the age is too "restricted."<sup>122</sup> While acknowledging the right of other traditions to exist, this ecumenism can only envision a one-way relationship to these other traditions. Panikkar sees that,

... the great temptation for ecumenism is to extrapolate -- to use a native growth beyond the bounds of its native soil.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 195.

<sup>120</sup>Panikkar, "Faith and Belief: A Multireligious Experience" in *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (1978), 2-23.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., 3.

This is the case with the language of the "confrontation of religions". Philosophies and theologies of religion written in "Judeo-Graeco-Modern categories" are considered to be universal:

Thus Asia, for example, compelled to speak in some European language, will have to say 'way' instead of *tao*, 'God' instead of *Brahman* and 'soul' instead of *âtman*; it must translate *dharma* as 'justice', *chan* as 'meditation', and so forth.<sup>124</sup>

This more restrictive form of ecumenism contrasts with his proposal for a "ecumenical ecumenism" which,

... does not mean cloudy universalism or indiscriminate syncretism; nor a narrow, crude particularism or barren, fanatical individualism. Instead it attempts a happy blending -- which I make bold to call androgynous before calling it theandric -- of these two poles, the universal and the concrete, which set up the tension in every creature. In other words, the identity our age so frantically seeks is not individuality (which ends in solipsism), nor generality (which ends in alienation), but the awareness of that constitutive relativity which makes of us but connections in the mysterious warp and woof of being.<sup>125</sup>

Panikkar puts forward an image that expresses the play between the "concrete" and the "universal." The image presented is that of a parish (the intimate, "concrete" parish is contrasted with the larger, impersonal province). Whereas the "province may betoken narrowness of mind bordering on myopia and lead to fanaticism and intolerance," the "parish might connote safeguarding a particular reality, a human scale of things,

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<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., 4-5.

organic and personal life."<sup>126</sup> The "parish" is the expression of "a miniature universe quantitatively speaking, but the entire universe speaking qualitatively (although symbolically)."<sup>127</sup>

Panikkar does not deny the possibility of crossing the borders of cultural and religious traditions. Rather, he is accounting for his own crossing from a "microdox" Roman Catholic environment. As was indicated at the beginning of this chapter, his encounter with India put him in a dilemma: either he must reject Hinduism and all religious traditions other than Christianity as sin or he must give up exclusivist notions of truth.<sup>128</sup> The solutions generally proposed to the dilemma did not satisfy him. He considers and rejects the "eclectic answer" and the casuistry of those who find "that some nook is left for those who profess error through no fault of their own".<sup>129</sup> What he comes up with as a solution to his dilemma is neither an exclusivist, nor typically inclusivist position, but a distinctively relational vision. In this solution he takes a direct position against indifferentism and relativism. He writes:

So he overcomes the temptation of *relativism* by

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>127</sup>Panikkar develops the image of the parish in a manner suggestive of his emerging pluralist attitude stating that, "from the steeple of the parish church many other steeples can be seen." Ibid., 4.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., 5.



acknowledging *relativity*. Instead of everything falling into an agnostic or indifferent relativism, everything is wrapped in an utter relativity of radical interdependence because every being is a function in the hierarchical order of beings and has its own place in the dynamism of history, a place not incidental to the thing but actually making the thing what it is.<sup>130</sup>

Panikkar begins with the conviction that faith is a constitutive dimension of the human. The human is openness to the transcendent, that which surpasses, and the transcendental, the experience of the ineffable, that which cannot be expressed. Belief is a formulation, the expression of faith. Though belief and faith are distinct, they cannot be separated, for belief expresses faith and faith is the dynamic source of belief. Panikkar attests to his belief in a God who made the universe, in a Christ who has redeemed humankind, in the Spirit who is the pledge of everlasting life.<sup>131</sup> Yet he asserts that these statements must be understood in a manner that remains aware of Mystery:

For me all these phrases are just translations in a given tradition, of something that outsoars all utterance. I refer to those dogmas (as they are called) which make sense of my life and convey what truth is for me. I cannot dispense with these phrases because they make up my belief; but neither must I forget that they are phrases, neither more nor less.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>131</sup>"... I (who for the present purposes can be anybody) live by certain underlying persuasions that express themselves in my personal act of faith: I believe in a God who made the universe, in a Christ who redeemed mankind, in a Spirit who is our pledge of everlasting life and so forth." Ibid., 7.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid., 7.

In fact, Panikkar can envision two believers, one a Buddhist and the other a Christian, being completely at odds concerning what they believe, while being quite attuned in terms of the authenticity of their faith:

Both believe in truth but the phrase 'God exists' sums up the truth for one Man, while for the other the phrase 'God does not exist' sums it up. At this point the more exact statement enters: Both have *faith* in the truth, but for the one this faith expresses itself in the *belief* that 'God exists', while for the other it expresses itself in the contrary proposition, 'God does not exist'.<sup>133</sup>

### The Principle of Identity

In *Le mystère du culte dans l'hindouisme et le christianisme* (1970),<sup>134</sup> Panikkar explores the question of multireligious experience by drawing on the contrast between Western and Indian ways of thinking. He claims in the foreword to this work that it was "written from the interior of both the Indian and Christian traditions."<sup>135</sup> The West with its long-term commitment to the principle of non-contradiction has given priority to what the mind can achieve in distinguishing and analyzing. The technological and modern developments that originated in the West find their inspiration in this principle. In contrast, the encounter with India, its philosophy and spirituality, raises

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<sup>133</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>134</sup>R. Panikkar, *Le mystère du culte dans l'hindouisme et le christianisme* (Paris: Les Éditions Du Cerf, 1970).

<sup>135</sup>"... de l'intérieur même des traditions hindoue et chrétienne." Panikkar, *Le mystère du culte dans l'hindouisme et le christianisme* (1970).

awareness of another possible way of thinking giving primacy to the principle of identity.<sup>136</sup> To give primacy to the principle of identity shifts the focus of concern from the determination of the specific nature of things to the relationship that exists among them, from the part to the whole. This whole is always approached but never fully reached or achieved. The sense of transcendence, of moving beyond, is maintained in Indian culture inspired by the principle of identity. This is very concretely expressed in the encounter between Christian and Hindu. When the principle of non-contradiction is given primacy there is an anticipation that each encounter is somehow a crisis of choice. So one must be either Hindu or Christian.<sup>137</sup> With the primacy given to the principle of identity the question is not whether one is Hindu or Christian. Rather, the question that arises within this worldview is 'why cannot I be both hindu and christian at the same time?' with the anticipation that somehow indeed I can be so.<sup>138</sup> The emphasis in this way of thinking is on the whole, on that which joins rather than that which

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<sup>136</sup>In contrast to the emphasis in the West on the principle of non-contradiction, "... toute l'histoire spirituelle de l'Inde est passionnée par la quête du principe d'identité: A est A." Ibid., 38.

<sup>137</sup>"Les problèmes des Occidentaux sensibles à la religion sont significatifs: le Christ est-il homme ou Dieu? L'Église est-elle visible ou invisible? Dieu est-il un ou trine? Suis-je chrétien ou hindou? Est-ce péché ou non?" Ibid., 40.

<sup>138</sup>"Correspondant aux problèmes évoqués, voici comment on pourrait formuler certaines questions religieuses: Comment ne sommes-nous pas, nous aussi, homme et Dieu? Est-il besoin d'une Église visible pour sauver la spiritualité? Pourquoi ne puis-je pas être hindou et chrétien à la fois?" Ibid., 40.

distinguishes.

### Summary

The dilemma into which Panikkar saw himself placed in his encounter with India and its religious traditions invited a creative theological reflection. He could not retreat into what he termed a "microdox" attitude, assert a "univocal" truth, nor consider other religious traditions to be simply false. In order to encounter others in an authentic fashion and to understand their religious traditions, Panikkar early reached the conclusion that one would have to be, in some sense, converted to the other tradition. On returning in 1970 to Spain and Europe after more than a decade in India, he was willing to make the challenging claim of authentic religious experience within both the Hindu and Buddhist religious traditions. His "multireligious experience" called for theological interpretations that would help make intelligible his claim.

In this first India period, he developed reflections on how it is possible to remain fully Christian and yet claim these other identities. He had brought from his earlier Spanish period a critique of a reduced notion of God that would diminish the appreciation of mystery. The notion of God, as Panikkar has elaborated it, is dynamic, ineffable and trinitarian. His practical and doctrinal experiments with the relation between Christianity and Hinduism led him to affirm in *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (1964) the significance of Christ and a certain functional equivalence of Christ with Isvara of Hindu belief. He

claimed that the relation between Christianity and Hinduism was neither that of fulfillment nor of conflict but a "transcendent" relation understood on the analogy of the relation of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. He continued to search for articulations more adequate to express fidelity to the Christian tradition and openness to the other religious traditions. Through this period he pursued studies of Buddhism and interpreted the Buddha's silence on the question of God as a profound religious act, evidence of cosmic trust. Consistent with his positive appreciation of Buddhism was his claim to a relational rather than a relativist position.

In positing faith as a constitutive human dimension, he countered the claim of reason to be the sole common, human bond. The distinction (without separation) between faith and belief provided a basis for an ecumenical ecumenism that viewed the encounter of religious traditions as a potential deepening of faith. At the end of this period, he asserted within an Indian way of thinking that gave primacy to the principle of identity the intelligibility of his claim to multireligious experience.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE NEW SITUATION: THE PLURALIST ATTITUDE

During the period stretching through the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, Panikkar's academic career took him between India, Europe, and North America. From 1962 to 1963 he was Professor of Religious Sociology at the International University 'Pro Deo' in Rome. From 1964 to 1966 he did research in India. At various times during the 1960s and 1970s, he was in demand as a lecturer at North American Universities including McGill in Montreal, Canada. From 1967-1971 he was visiting Professor of Comparative Religion at Harvard University. In 1971 Panikkar began his tenure as Professor of Comparative Philosophy and History of Religions at the University of California, Santa Barbara. During this period, he regularly returned to India each year, spending a number of months in Varanasi. Since 1987, he has been Professor Emeritus of the University of California, Santa Barbara. Presently, he makes his home in Tavertet, a small village outside of Barcelona in the Catalan country.

#### The Catholic Theologian

The previous two chapters have traced Panikkar's passing over from the homogeneously Catholic Spain under Franco to the religiously plural context of India. We have seen that this shift of geographical context had been the occasion for his personal and existential dilemma in relation to openness to other

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<sup>1</sup>Veliath, *Theological Approach and Understanding of Religions* (1988), 82.

religious traditions, especially to Hindu Advaita Vedānta and, to a lesser extent, the Buddhist religious traditions. It must be noted, however, that his reflection on the encounter with other religious traditions, though arising from personal experience, has had a significant communal and ecclesial dimension. During the 1950s and 1960s he was a contributor in the community of theologians and scholars working to identify and foster a new attitude to the world of many religious traditions and to articulate a theology of religions.<sup>3</sup> He saw such work come to ecclesial recognition and acceptance at Vatican II (1962-1965).<sup>4</sup>

In an article first published in 1965, Panikkar reflects on the relation of Christians to their "non-Christian surroundings."<sup>5</sup> He states in the introduction to this piece that

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<sup>3</sup>Among his writings on this theme: R. Panikkar, "Common Grounds for Christian-non-Christian Collaboration," *Religion and Society* 5(March) 1958: 29-36; Paniker, *Religión y Religiones* (1965); Panikkar, "The Relation of Christians to their Non-Christian Surroundings" in *Christian Revelation and World Religions*, J. Neuner S.J., Editor (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 143-183.

<sup>4</sup>Panikkar assisted in the preparation of the Declaration on the Sacred Liturgy, the first of the documents promulgated by the Council (1963), but was in India during the later years of the Council. For mention of his presence at the Vatican Council: Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (1973), 41.

<sup>5</sup>Panikkar, "The Relation of Christians to their Non-Christian Surroundings" in *Christian Revelation and World Religions*, J. Neuner S.J., Editor (1967), 143-183. This article was first published in a special number of *Indian Ecclesiastical Studies*, IV, 3-4, July-October 1965. It is of some interest to note that the Vatican Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*) was promulgated

he is not dealing with "the general problem of the encounter of religions."<sup>5</sup> Rather, he is taking an anthropological approach, formulating a "theological anthropology" that corresponds to "the new degree of consciousness"<sup>6</sup> arising from

... the present encounter of peoples, cultures and religions which has been made sociologically possible by modern technological developments.

He is unhappy with the term "non-Christian". Not only is it an expression of an unconscious "theological colonialism" but it is not "scientific" to describe another religious tradition only by the negative quality of being not-Christian, when these same religious traditions may be more different among themselves than they are from Christianity. It is not valid to contend that only Christianity is true, and that to be non-Christian means to be false. For Panikkar, from Christian faith, Christ is already present in the other religious traditions and these traditions "do belong to and fit into the Christian economy of salvation."<sup>7</sup> He understands "non-Christian surroundings" to refer to "the situation of a Christian living in a world where Christ is not

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October 28, 1965.

<sup>5</sup>Panikkar "The Relation of Christians to their Non-Christian Surroundings" in *Christian Revelation and World Religions*, J. Neuner S.J., Editor (1967), 143.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 143.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 144.

<sup>8</sup>In presenting his claim that Christ is present in other religious traditions he makes reference to his early work *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*. Ibid., ft.nt. 1, p. 145.



explicitly acknowledged as the Lord."<sup>7</sup> He makes three statements about the anthropological situation of Christians: they have "no monopoly" on "goodness" and so the moral doctrines of universal love are shared in all the religious traditions;<sup>8</sup> they have "no monopoly" on "truth" and thus the history of religion demonstrates that "so-called Christian truths are to be found in other religions";<sup>9</sup> and they have "no monopoly" on "salvation" as "conscience," "reason" and "the Christian doctrine of God's universal saving will" indicate.<sup>10</sup> For Panikkar, "a Christian is simply a conscious collaborator with Christ in his threefold function of creating, redeeming and glorifying the world."<sup>11</sup>

This work articulates themes around the "act of faith" that become important in Panikkar's later work on the pluralist

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 145.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 145-146.

<sup>9</sup>He writes: "Cf. any history of religions; e.g., the 3 volumes edited by F. Koenig, *Christus und die Religionen der Erde*, Freiburg, 1951." Panikkar "The Relation of Christians to their Non-Christian Surroundings" in *Christian Revelation and World Religions*, J. Neuner S.J., Editor (1967), ft.nt.4, p.146.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 147.

<sup>11</sup>Making reference to the thought of Karl Rahner, Panikkar writes: "We speak of more or less conscious collaboration (cf. 1 Cor. 3.9), because we do not exclude an ontic collaboration on the part of all those whom today some would like to call 'anonymous Christians', or others would prefer to consider as 'men of goodwill'". Panikkar's footnote is to K. Rahner *Schriften zur Theologie*, Einsiedeln (Benziger), 1962, V, 155 and to A. Röper, *Die anonymen Christen*, Mainz. 1963. Panikkar "The Relation of Christians to their Non-Christian Surroundings" in *Christian Revelation and World Religions*, J. Neuner S.J., Editor (1967), ft.nt. 8, p. 147.

attitude. Thus, he analyses the "act of faith" as not only a "theological" but a "cosmological" virtue; through faith one believes not only in God, but also in human beings and so trusts in "the so-called nonbelievers."<sup>14</sup> The person of faith "sees" that the tolerance that lets the wheat and tares grow together reflects "the real and divine order of things."<sup>15</sup> Panikkar affirms that it is faith that allows people of conflicting beliefs to unite:

Real faith is just the opposite to what people without faith seem to think it is: it is not something which divides people, but something which unites them; not a cause of separation but of union. It is from a merely rational point of view that plurality of beliefs is a scandal, because it is incomprehensible; whereas from a higher point of view true plurality has its place. If faith is what it claims to be, it should be as tolerant as God himself: a man of faith, precisely because of his faith, will trust the God who trusts men and the cosmos so wonderfully (cf. Wis. 12.18).<sup>16</sup>

Panikkar sets up the problem and states its solution. The problem for "modern man" is that of "communication" in "the jungle of opinions, feelings and perspectives of our fellow beings." "Reason" which "seems to be the most universal and

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<sup>14</sup>"Real faith is not so much concerned with making others believe, but in believing; and doing so, it trusts also the so-called nonbelievers." Ibid., 152.

<sup>15</sup>"If we have faith we share in God's world vision, we discover why the sun shines on the good and evil alike and the rain falls on the just and on sinners, and if God allows the wheat to grow together with the tares, the man of faith 'sees' that it is neither due to a legislator's caprice, nor to a cosmic necessity, but is the expression of the real and divine order of things." Ibid., 152.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 153.

common denominator" cannot bridge the gulf.<sup>17</sup> Panikkar's solution is communication at the level of the "sacred," a *communicatio in sacris*:

... that only in Christ is communion possible, that only in the realm of the sacred is there personal exchange, that the only deep human communication is the *communicatio in sacris*: only when people pray together or perform a sacred action is there real communion.<sup>18</sup>

In promoting shared prayer and sacred action Panikkar recognizes the canonical tradition that says that Catholics may not participate in worship that denies "the faith" (*negatio fidei*).

He sees the Decree on Ecumenism 8 (November 21, 1964) of the Vatican Council respecting this tradition while opening a door to communion among people of different groups. He writes:

It goes without saying that our *communicatio in sacris* does not mean the indiscriminate full participation in the rites of other confessions when it carries with it a real danger of scandal or *negatio fidei* (which is intrinsically wrong). And yet a new conception of the canonical *communicatio in sacris* is emerging nowadays in the Church, which while conserving the core of the traditional notion opens a door so as to find a place for that deep communion which exists amongst people belonging to different confessions.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Panikkar writes that, "we may all know that 2 and 2 make 4, or that nuclear war is dangerous, or that it is unjust that two-thirds of the world go hungry and so on, but it seems that a sharing in rational truth does not bring about personal communion and efficacious action." Ibid., 161.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 161.

<sup>19</sup>He quotes the Latin text: "... *licitum est immo et optandum, ut catholici cum fratribus seiunctis in oratione consociantur.*" [... it is allowable, even desirable, that Catholics should join together in prayer with their separated brethren.] Ibid., ft.nt. 24, p. 162.

New Situation, Changing Attitudes

In "Christianity and World Religions,"<sup>1</sup> Panikkar addresses the question, "What, according to Christianity, is the relation between itself and other religions of the world?"<sup>2</sup> He gives his account of the history of shifts in attitude to other religious traditions that Christianity has undergone over the past 2000 years. He describes the history of Christian relations to other religious traditions as an oscillation between affirmation of one's religious tradition and negation of the other traditions:

It seems that since the time of Peter, James and Paul, the first Apostles, there has always been present throughout the twenty centuries of Christian life, a tension between inclusiveness and exclusiveness, i.e., a tension between reaching self identity by affirmation (of one self) or negation (of the other).<sup>3</sup>

In his view, responses that imperialistically affirm Christianity or critically negate the other religious traditions are not adequate to the contemporary situation. Panikkar judges that theological reflection must address, in the present time, a situation without previous parallel.

Panikkar sets the stage for his reflection on the question of the relation of Christianity to other religious traditions by stating the nature of the present times. He writes:

The *kairos* of our times -- to use a Christian expression -- is unique. Never before have religions

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<sup>1</sup>R. Panikkar, "Christianity and World Religions" in *Christianity* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1969), 78-127.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 79.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 79.

mingled to such an extent as now, never have they been in such a shared crisis as today, never have horizons been so unbounded as those of our planet and never before has there appeared such a *supra* and *extra* religious spirit as is now challenging the whole traditionally religious approach to man and to reality.<sup>23</sup>

For Panikkar, that the situation is "new" means that, "in one way or another," the solution must also be new.<sup>24</sup> His theological strategy joins fidelity to tradition with an openness to growth:

The *principle of continuity*, fundamental for any living tradition, will have, of course, to be respected; but this principle should not be opposed to the *principle of renewal* and growth.<sup>25</sup>

He recognizes that the difficulty comes in judging whether the proposed new solutions are Christian. He points to the Church and *sensus fidelium* as it evolves -- even under the influence of these new proposals -- as the judge of what will be proposed.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 80.

<sup>24</sup>"... given that the situation is *new*, or at least not a repetition of a previous one, the solution will also have to be new in one way or another and not a mere copy of old answers." Ibid., 81.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 81.

<sup>26</sup>In a later article that incorporates some of the same historical analysis and comment, he further develops his ideas on the theological task. He states that the criterion for the next growth in Christian self-understanding is not a logical development from any previous one. Theology can freely create through its "praxis" the basis for new self-understanding: "Theology does not merely repeat past doctrines or only draw implicit consequences from them. It also creates something new. Its decisions and insights can be momentous, they can strike a new direction that is not a mere 'development' of an already existing dogma. There are mutations and there is freedom in the real world. Theology is not only exegesis, it is also praxis, not simply a matter of drawing conclusions, but also of

Panikkar looks for the criteria for a balanced answer to his question in "Scripture, History and Theology."<sup>1</sup> He states that he does not wish to deny the Christian teaching that the sources of Revelation are two -- Scripture and Tradition. However, "for the sake of clarity," he wishes to distinguish History and Theology as, respectively, the factual and the theoretical "interpretation" of the "basic principles" drawn from Scripture. Tradition, for Panikkar, is "considered not only as doctrinal hermeneutics, but as vital and existential crystallization of that same revelation."<sup>2</sup>

#### The Sayings About the Christ

Panikkar begins his reflection with what he describes as a "cursory"<sup>3</sup> review of Scripture for its understanding of Christian identity in relation to other religious traditions. Under the heading "the Old Testament," he refers to the "Hebrew

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establishing new premises and creating new situations. In other words, the history of Christian self-understanding is not a logical unfolding of premises; it is the fruit of a series of factors, many of which are free movements of the human and divine spirit." Panikkar, "The Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges: Three Kairological Moments of Christic Self-Consciousness" (1987), 97.

<sup>1</sup>Panikkar, "Christianity and World Religions" (1969), 80.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 80.

<sup>3</sup>"This survey of Christian scripture is necessarily cursory, but we are fairly certain that the image of Christ could not have been very different from what we have been delineating...." For a pastoral approach to this issue Panikkar makes reference to R. Guardini's *The Lord*, London: Longmans, 1956 [translation of the German *Der Herr*, Wurzburg: Werkbund, 9th ed., 1951]. For a scientific approach he recommends articles under *kyrios* in Kittel's "Worterbuch." Panikkar, "Christianity and World Religions" (1969), ft.nt. 18, p. 85.

Bible" as having undergone a "positive evolution" with regard to its judgement of the other religious traditions. The superiority of Yahweh to other gods -- "the other gods are not even gods"<sup>22</sup> -- leads "even dialectically, to a recognition that Yahweh is also God for other peoples."<sup>23</sup> Thus the God of the tribes of Israel becomes "the universal God caring for all."<sup>24</sup>

In a section entitled "the New Testament" Panikkar reviews "the sayings of Christ," "the acts of Christ," and "the sayings about Christ." As he reads them, the sayings of Christ are "ambiguous" concerning relations with those outside Israel. On the one hand, Christ appears to be concerned only with the house of Israel; on the other hand, he sends his disciples out to all nations.<sup>25</sup> Christ's acts show the "same ambivalence as his words."<sup>26</sup> On the one hand, he acts as a Jew, fulfilling the law and receiving baptism from John; on the other hand, he does things that could "not but be irritating to the orthodox Jew."<sup>27</sup> However, it is in the sayings about Christ that Panikkar sees an unambiguous understanding of who he is in his relation to the other religious traditions. He writes:

In whatever ways the Ideas on Christ, as put forward by

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 82.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 81.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 82.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 82-83.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 83.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 84.

the writers of the New Testament originated, the fact remains that from the very beginning he was considered the manifestation of the cosmic or pre-existent Christ, first born of all creation, only begotten Son of the Father, the one in whom the whole universe has its consistency, Judge of both living and dead, the light which illumines every man coming into this world, the one from whom everything has come, and to whom everything returns, the beginning and the end of everything, expression of the invisible God, image of the Father, splendour of the Divinity in whom all the treasures of the Godhead are hidden, so that in him the Divinity dwells bodily.<sup>16</sup>

It is the image that the first Christians held of Christ as "the Pantocrator, the ruler of the universe, the Lord,"<sup>17</sup> that he sees undergoing a series of interpretations and these "interpretations crystallized in History."<sup>18</sup>

#### Historical Contexts

Panikkar turns to History to explore the range of Christian self-understanding of its relations to other religious traditions. He identifies five periods: "from the beginning until the Arian controversy," "from Arius until the clash with Islam," "from the clash with Islam until the discovery of America," "from the discovery of America to the end of the Modern Age," and "from the end of the Modern Age until our times."<sup>19</sup> Five operative words characterize the primordial concern or Christian attitude in relation to other religious traditions of

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 84-85.

<sup>17</sup>To support this interpretation, Panikkar refers to Guardini, *The Lord* (1956). Ibid., ft.nt. 18, p. 85.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 85.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 86-97.



each period. These words are "witness, conversion, crusade, mission and dialogue."<sup>40</sup> His study discovers attitudes that in each period vary to some extent from the original vision of the first Christians. However, he presents the contemporary Age of Dialogue as undertaking the recovery and transformation of that original vision.

Panikkar divides the first encounters of Christians with other religious traditions -- "from the beginning until the Arian controversy" -- into the time of the Apostolic Fathers (approximately 90 to 160), the time of the Apologists, and the time of the great schools (such as Alexandria and Antioch).<sup>41</sup> His reading is that it is only in this third time, the time of the schools, that "the real confrontation takes place."<sup>42</sup> Two ideas dominate the period, that of superiority and that of universality. What he finds significant is that the Christian sense of superiority was not only "tamed" but was "modified" by the belief that the Christian faith was also universal. Christians were led to recognize truth already in the world.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 85. Later in the text, he explains: "It should be emphasized that the five above-mentioned moments are neither dialectical nor strictly chronological but rather *kairological*. One moment does not exclude the other but complements and eventually corrects it." Panikkar, "Christianity and World Religions" (1969), 97.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 86.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 87.

<sup>43</sup>"In the mind of the Fathers Christian faith is not simply superior, it is also universal. This, however, amounts to recognizing that in one way or another it is also present in the

They identified Jesus with the pre-existent Christ of Jewish wisdom and/or with the Spirit."<sup>44</sup> The Christian obligation in this first period was to be a "witness" to the ends of earth concerning Jesus of Nazareth as the manifestation of the Divine. Christians were not intending to found a new religious tradition but in all that they said was the echo of the words of Paul to the Athenians: "I am disclosing what you unknowingly are already worshipping."<sup>45</sup> Panikkar writes of the belief of the first Christians about Christ:

Christ in a way belongs to everybody, because he is the Revelation of what is already there -- a revelation indeed which, once known, is extremely demanding, for it asks for the recognition of its earthly manifestation and confronts us with the foolishness of the Cross upsetting all our human wisdom."<sup>46</sup>

Christian self-identity in the period leading up to the Arian controversy brought Christians in conflict with the religious traditions of the time. Christians felt that they had every right to appropriate and evaluate what was good in the religious traditions. They understood that Christ, as the pre-existent Wisdom, was related to all religious tradition. They saw Jesus, "as the fulfilment and at the same time the

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world outside, unless one is prepared to declare that there is only sin, darkness and error outside Christianity. In other words, if the Christian faith has a universal message because it teaches a universal truth, it has to identify itself with truth and thus to say that wherever truth is there is also Christian faith." Ibid., 87.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 87.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 89.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 89.

judgement of every religion"; Christ was "the epiphany, i.e. the manifestation of the Hidden Mystery at work everywhere...."<sup>41</sup>

Panikkar sums up this first period as a time in which Christians asserted intrinsic relation to the other religious traditions, an assertion that led to tension and conflict:

As Jesus was considered a new challenge and a new expression of every form of religiousness, it is obvious that Christians were bound to come in conflict with the conservative forces of every religious sect. No wonder, then, that the sharpest criticism of other forms of religiousness is also to be found in this period, from its very beginning.<sup>42</sup>

The Arian controversy (located by Panikkar between Nicea 325 A.D. and Constantinople 331 A.D)<sup>43</sup> begins the second of the periods Panikkar identifies. The anti-Arian movement reacted to Christ being understood as a created being, as lower than the Creator. No longer could the Church community term Jesus the "First Born" for that would tend to support the Arian position. As Panikkar notes, this reaction had pastoral consequences:

Christology began to be independent of the Doctrine of the Trinity; Christ became somehow the God of the Christians....

The shift in Christian self-identity was from the Christian as a witness, to the Christian as the one converted to Christianity:

The followers of Christ were not primarily those who

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 90.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 91.

<sup>43</sup>"The Arianic dispute which took place around Arius (256-336) dominates the whole 4th century and can be roughly located between the Council of Nicea in 325 and that of Constantinople in 331." Ibid., ft.nt. 27, p. 122.

recognised in Jesus the epiphany of the pre-existent and uncreated divine reality, but those who simply declared that Jesus was God, always of course with the necessary theological safeguards, though these were almost quickly forgotten in the popular and common approach. To be a Christian amounted to being converted to Christianity. Conversion is here the keynote.<sup>51</sup>

An exclusive attitude was emerging. Christianity began to consider itself as the perfect and true religious tradition in contrast to false religious traditions. However, at this point, Christianity was not yet considered an "enemy religion"<sup>52</sup> by those of other religious traditions.

The period "from the clash with Islam until the discovery of America" resulted in the hardening of the antagonistic and exclusivist character of Christian self-identity. The religious and the political became closely linked. During this third period, after a time of peaceful collaboration in Spain with Jews and Muslims, Christians adopted an adversarial attitude and set themselves a goal to dominate 'enemy' religious traditions:

The crusade is here the dominant keynote. The others are not simply non-Christians, but 'infidels', non-believers, with a connotation of perfidy....<sup>53</sup>

Of the fourth period, Panikkar writes, "It was again a historical fact which awakened a new consciousness among Christians."<sup>54</sup> When Europeans discovered America at the end of

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 92.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 92.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 93.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 94.

the fifteenth century, they had to reshape their thinking to justify, not a defensive war or a crusade of reconquest like the wars against the Muslims, but an "outright conquest." Panikkar describes the mission theology that developed:

*Mission* is here the leading keynote; no longer to conquer an empire or to install Christendom but to plant the Church, no longer to kill the bodies but to kill the evil of the other religions and civilizations.<sup>54</sup>

For the most part, the prevalent theology was one of "condemnation" and had no room for the other religious traditions in the Christian economy of salvation.<sup>55</sup> Panikkar notes how this theology eventually turned its critique on Christianity itself:

Interestingly enough this theology has two 'moments', one of which is that it attacks all things non-Christian in the name of Christian faith as the works of the devil, condemns all religions as false and their followers as people on the road to be damned, etc., and the second, when in the name of the same Christian faith, the attacks are directed to collapsing and

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 94-95.

<sup>55</sup>Panikkar makes mention of a contrary, less negative theology evidenced by the instruction given to missionaries by the Pontifical Congregation *de propaganda fidei* in 1659: "Do not in any way attempt and do not on any pretext persuade these people, to change their rite, their customs and their manners, unless they be openly opposed to religion and morality. For what can be more absurd than to drag either France or Spain or Italy or any country of Europe into, say China? Not your ways but your faith must bring in a faith that neither rejects nor offends the ways and customs of any nation, except they be evil, but rather wants them to be preserved in their full and perfect integrity. And since it is but natural to man to esteem and to love most what is his own, and especially his own people, there is nothing more likely to cause dislike and hatred than the abolition of national custom.... Therefore you are never to compare the ways of these peoples to those of Europe, but rather must you with all diligence, get yourselves used to the latter." Ibid., ft.nt. 50, p. 95.

disintegrating Christendom, Christianity is also condemned equally as the work of the devil and any religion is considered to be the result of human pride.<sup>56</sup>

The contemporary period, extending "from the end of the modern age until our times," has seen European and Western self-confidence shaken. The end of the colonial period and the loss of political and economic control has deflated the myth of Western superiority. Neither exclusivist nor inclusivist attitudes suffice. The "modern age" has passed.<sup>57</sup> The Christian churches have been pushed by historical events to change their attitudes toward other religious traditions:

... it is for the most part no longer a strategy but a religious task in itself i.e., the dialogue is in itself an act of religion, a sacred act, a ritual by which man recognizes, first, his individual insufficiency and, secondly, his constitutive relatedness to his fellow-beings in order to be fully himself.<sup>58</sup>

In Panikkar's view, notwithstanding the evidence of changes in attitude and practice, there is as yet no theology of religion "capable of embracing from within the religious facets of more than one religious tradition."<sup>59</sup> His analysis, in this article that began as an intentionally Christian reflection on "the Christian fact," inspires him to call for a different way of

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 95.

<sup>57</sup>Panikkar comments: "Seldom is such unanimity evidenced as when it is said, that we have reached the end of the so-called modern age." Ibid., 95.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 96.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 96.

doing theology. In this present Age of Dialogue, the reflection is to emerge from the religious event of encounter, an encounter which reveals "individual insufficiency" and "constitutive relatedness." Those involved go beyond learning from their dialogue partners. They open themselves to being "convinced" and to desiring "to engage in a common search for truth."<sup>61</sup>

### Religious Pluralism

In a section of "Christianity and World Religions" entitled "Religious Pluralism," Panikkar gives a "condensed" account of what can be gleaned from historical study concerning the matter of the Christian relationship to other religious traditions. He presents this account,

... by delineating the problem, the dynamism, the solution, together with its underlying reasons of the first of all-Christian assembly, the so-called Council of Jerusalem.<sup>62</sup>

The "problem" of the Council of Jerusalem was the contention that, "unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." He draws a parallel with later contentions while implying that they are similarly vulnerable:

Unless you are circumcised according to the philosophy of Plato or of Aristotle or of Thomas or of a Luther or of Marx or of Heidegger you cannot be saved, because you will not be able to express adequately the

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<sup>61</sup>"The password today is *dialogue*. And dialogue implies not only an open position ready to listen to the other as also to learn from him, but also an attitude, ready to be convinced and to engage in a common search for truth." Ibid., 95.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 117.

Christian mystery and thus will fall into heresy.<sup>62</sup>

The "dynamism" that the Council of Jerusalem was addressing was the growth of the Church outside traditional boundaries impelled by too many people with different worldviews:

The Church was at home within Judaism until its growth made it feel uncomfortable there. There were too many people coming from another background. The price for survival was to break its links with Judaism up to a certain point. Later on, the 'walls' are geographical or political or cultural or philosophical. But the bounds of those walls become unbearable when too many people live "extra muros", outside the walls belonging to other different worlds.<sup>63</sup>

The "solution" taken by the First Council could not completely satisfy anyone because it had two countervailing dimensions to it. One was to abandon old positions: "We should not trouble those peoples who turn to God"; the other was,

... to save the continuity, a break in the speed in order to allow the rest of the community to follow also, and not to break from the other end.<sup>64</sup>

In the patterns of history, "the same reason" can be identified -- the fact that "faith" and its concrete expression are not adequately distinguished:

The identification ... of Christian faith, with a particular cult, or doctrine or philosophy or culture, or religion. If you do not distinguish between essence and existence you cannot be Christians (then you fall into pantheism); if you do not accept our notion of historicity you cannot be Christians (then in that case Incarnation becomes a docetist meaninglessness); if you do not affirm that God is Being you cannot understand

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 118.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 118.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 118.



the Father of Jesus Christ and thus cannot take part in the sacramental saving mystery.<sup>65</sup>

In this article, Panikkar clearly distinguishes between religious and cultural pluralism. He observes that the church has been willing to abide with cultural pluralism (as well as philosophical and theological pluralism). Religious pluralism, however, is another matter. The Gospel is supposed to be preached to all peoples. Yet the question arises as to how it will be preached to Hindus and Buddhists within their basic religious horizons that are quite different from the Western Christian horizon. He writes:

In the present-day Christian consciousness nobody will find anything objectionable in people following different and even incompatible philosophical schools and being regarded at the same time as true and orthodox Christians. The appropriate word for this is *pluralism*. There is in the Church today ample place for a philosophical as well as for a theological and even cultural pluralism. The Church has stressed again and again that it is not committed to any particular culture, but by and large there is no place so far for religious pluralism. That pluralism is just beginning to dawn nowadays.<sup>66</sup>

He goes on to give an intimation of what a positive statement of this religious pluralism might be. At least one aspect of what he is proposing in a tentative fashion is the affirmation of other religious traditions as belonging to the "Christian economy of salvation." He holds that this proposal is in its earliest stages without the proper tools to handle the problem:

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 119.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 119.

That the so-called (in my opinion wrongly) non-Christian religions may have a place in the Christian economy of salvation is still an unassimilated idea, though it is finding more and more acceptance. One has to say that the categories, and the tools to handle the problem are not yet ready. It is neither a question of ill-will nor short-sightedness, but as long as there are no tools to manage the problem, there is a risk that in over-hurried synthesis some element of vital importance may be lost. Patience is not only a personal virtue, it is also historically imperative.

Panikkar's plea for a theology of religions more adequate to the situation of religious pluralism in his article "Christianity and World Religions" ([1965] 1969) found an immediate response in unprecedented developments coming out of Vatican II (1962-1965). Panikkar participated in the early stages of the Council, but could not have easily predicted *Nostra Aetate*, the Vatican Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to World Religions, a product of the last stages of the Council (1965). His appreciative response to Vatican II's work on attitudes to the other world religious traditions is evident in his article, "Christ, Abel, and Melchizedek: The Church and the Non-Abrahamic Religions" (1971).<sup>62</sup> He understands *Nostra Aetate* to be breaking new ground in form and content alike. In form, he judges it as the initiation of a reflection on a new situation of emerging global unity; indeed, his overall judgement is that the document nowhere condemns others but represents an effort to understand

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>62</sup> Raymond Panikkar, "Christ, Abel and Melchizedek: The Church and non-Abrahamic Religions," *Jeevadhara* I (Sept/Oct) 1971: 391-403.

the world's religious traditions and to find a basis for cooperation.<sup>63</sup> In content, he reads *Nostra Aetate*<sup>64</sup> as affirming the religious traditions as paths to salvation,<sup>65</sup> and hinting at a theology of religions that could begin to address the issues of religious pluralism.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, for Panikkar, *Nostra Aetate* is a significant encouragement to a new attitude toward other religious traditions and to multireligious experience. Thus he understands the text that states that Catholics should "acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual goods found among these men" to put forward (with "due restraint") "a tremendous innovation":

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 392.

<sup>64</sup>Here Panikkar is referring specifically to the text of *Nostra Aetate* No. 2: "*Sic .. religiones, quae per totum mundum inveniuntur, inquietudini cordis hominum variis modis occurrere nituntur proponendo vias, doctrinas scilicet ac praecepta vitae necnon ritus sacros.*" Panikkar translates: "Likewise, other religions to be found all over the world strive variously to meet the restless searchings of the human heart by proposing ways, which consist of doctrines, rules of life, and sacred rituals." Ibid., 394.

<sup>65</sup>"The underlying theological grounds for this attitude seem perfectly simple. If God wishes all men to be saved and the wish is not mere velleity, then it follows that God offers all human beings a *normal* opportunity to gain salvation. Now the religions of the world claim to do precisely that, neither more or less. If they do not serve that purpose, they serve no purpose at all." Ibid., 396-397.

<sup>66</sup>"The problem is the vindication of *religious pluralism*: the acknowledgement of each world religion's status and role in a theology that shall be genuinely catholic -- that is, universal. To put the matter in traditional language, we must find out the place (including the *locus theologicus*) of mankind's religions in the christian economy of salvation." Ibid., 398.

... we might say that the text declares the true shape of communication with the other religions is *communicatio in sacris*: that is, cooperation ... in the religious sphere -- cooperation with them in their capacity as believers.

### Not only History but Geography

In subsequent years, Panikkar has continued to reflect on the unfolding of Christian attitudes to the other world religious traditions. In "The Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges: Three Kairological Moments of Christic Self-Consciousness" (1987), Panikkar draws on his historical overview worked out in "Christianity and World Religions" ([1965] 1969).<sup>71</sup> As the earlier article indicated, he has identified five periods in the self-understanding of Christians with their corresponding attitudes to other religions. Because the attitudes typical to earlier periods continue to influence later periods, he underscores their qualitative nature by terming them not chronological but "kairological" moments of Christian history.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 401.

<sup>72</sup>In "The Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges: Three Kairological Moments of Christic Self-Consciousness" (1987), Panikkar makes reference to "Christianity and World Religions" where he says the five periods are explained "at greater length." See ft.nt. 11, p. 115.

<sup>73</sup>Panikkar had already termed these five moments "neither dialectical nor strictly chronological but rather kairological" (97) in his article published in 1969. At that point he explained in a footnote: "I understand this neologism, built on the word *kairos* (a welcome, favourable, proper, right, definite and also eschatological, i.e. last and ultimate time) over against *chronos* (period of time), the peculiar historical consideration, which takes history to be not a mere succession of telling of events but rather a peculiar temporal disclosure of man and the world." Panikkar, "Christianity and World Religions"

The periods are characterized by their distinctive forms of Christian self-understanding: the "witnessing" of the first centuries, the emphasis on "conversion" as an antidote to the forced adherence to official religion of the Byzantine period, a long period of "crusade" shaped by opposition to Islam, a period of "mission" paralleling the colonial expansion of Europe world-wide, and the present period of "dialogue."<sup>7</sup> Yet with the coming of the Age of Dialogue, characteristics of the previous periods continue to exert their influence:

To be sure, the Christian somehow retains all five traits. There is something of a *witness* in all Christians, and they will feel uneasy if they are not somehow better than non-Christians (*conversion*), if they do not have the courage to confess their faith (a *militant*, a *crusader*), and do not sense the burden and responsibility of caring for the whole world (*mission*). Now discovering that they are not alone, Christians open up to *dialogue*. We are just at the beginning of a new spiral of the interaction between Christians and the peoples of other belief systems.

Panikkar states that while his method of theological reflection is "empirical and historical,"<sup>8</sup> it is also "geographical":

History and tradition are *loci theologici* (sources of theological activity). Any contemporary theological reflection that ignores the new context is methodologically flawed. Neither dogma nor Christian self-understanding are ahistorical and ageographical

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(1969), ft.nt. 52, p. 126.

<sup>7</sup>Panikkar, "The Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges: Three Kairological Moments of Christic Self-Consciousness" (1987), 93-95.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 95.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 92.

facts. Geography as much as history is a human as well as a religious category.

Working with the image of three rivers, the Jordan, the Tiber and the Ganges, he identifies the three significant geo-theological moments of Christian history. Christianity will always have its origin in the Jordan; in the upward movement to a Transcendent God. This is also the source of its exclusivist attitudes to the other religious traditions. The Tiber river represents the long centuries of Roman and Western formation of Christianity. The Christianity of the Tiber is directed inward. There is no other because all is included in the one dominant pattern of Western Christianity. This is the inclusivist attitude that would include all others in a world centred on Christ and Church. Finally, there is the Ganges, representing all the other rivers of humankind; the Ganges river symbolizes pluralism. A "post-colonial" theology will be a "dialogical theology" in which "subject matter," "language" and the "agenda" are "created in the dialogue itself." If the second moment was characterized by "inwardness" that established "identity by difference" and claimed uniqueness for the doctrines of Christian revelation, this third moment is characterized by "outwardness" that strives to be in relationship. He concludes:

... the third moment will feel more comfortable if it discovers that all those doctrines and sayings are humanity's common good and that Christianity simply incarnates the primordial and original traditions of

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 98.

humankind."<sup>12</sup>

The broad lines of Panikkar's perception of the relation of Christianity to other religious traditions are in place. A new situation of intense contact among religious traditions compels Christians and the Church to consider new responses. Panikkar has indicated that resources for these new responses can be found in Scripture and Tradition, including the more recent developments of Tradition at Vatican II. He is in sympathy with the focus of the first Christians on Jesus the Christ as "cosmic Logos."<sup>13</sup> As noted above, he is critical of the notion of Christ as "the God," the icon of the Christian group conceiving itself as either an adversary or as a beneficent civilizing force in relation to other cultures and religious traditions. Panikkar, in his account of the Council of Jerusalem, appears committed to a balanced and patient strategy maintaining growth and continuity. Yet he calls for a response beyond the historical pattern of oscillation between inclusive and exclusive theology,

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 102.

<sup>13</sup>Panikkar writes: "The leading and central idea of Christian faith regarding our problem hinges upon the notion held about Jesus. According to whether Jesus is considered simply a man, or the Jewish Messiah, or the cosmic Logos, etc., the relations of Christianity [to/and?] the religions of the world will vary." Panikkar, "Christianity and World Religions" (1969), 87. A later writing emphasizes that the same belief has a new context: "Christianity's claim to have seen Christ as the Pantocrator, by whom and for whom everything has been made, Alpha and Omega, beginning and end of the universe, First Born of creation, universal redeemer and only saviour, still holds true. But the proper context of these affirmations must be investigated." Panikkar, "In Christ There is Neither Hindu nor Christian: Perspectives on Hindu-Christian Dialogue" (1989), 479.

identity achieved through dominating affirmation of self or critical rejection of the other. He points to another kind of response to other religious traditions, an attitude that harmonizes under the title of "pluralism" the recognition of one's historicity and the acceptance that others have different perspectives.

#### Beyond a Fulfillment-Theology to Pluralism

Panikkar's move in the latter part of the 1960s to North America, with its many faith traditions in close interaction facilitated by processes of secularization, sharpened the issue of religious pluralism for him.<sup>12</sup> During this period from the late 1960s to his retirement from the University of California, Santa Barbara in 1987, much of which time was spent in North America, his reflections focused on what he has termed the "myth of pluralism".<sup>13</sup> He identified a shift in consciousness that held implications for Christian self-understanding and openness to other religious traditions. In an article entitled "Chosenness and Universality: Can Christians Claim Both?" (1988), he points out the theological implications of what he judges to

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<sup>12</sup>For a similar reading of the North American situation, see the work of Peter L. Berger: "It is my position that modernity has plunged religion into a very specific crisis, characterized by secularity, to be sure, but characterized more importantly by pluralism." Peter L. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1979), xi.

<sup>13</sup>Raimundo Panikkar, "The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of Babel -- A Meditation on Non-Violence," *Cross Currents* XXIX 1979: 197-230.



be going forward:

... the widely accepted idea that we are now at a turning point in history and that the encounter of present-day Christian consciousness with other cultures and religions can no longer follow the homogeneous and evolutionary pattern of what is termed fulfillment-theology.<sup>44</sup>

He characterizes fulfillment-theology as subordinating other religious traditions and beliefs to Christianity. All people, in terms of this theological position with its attitude of superiority, are called to become Christian:

If we are the best, we simply invite the others to become this best also -- i.e., the same as us. Or, put less crudely, God is calling everybody to become Christian.

Panikkar identifies a crisis around the universality of Christianity. Christian self-understanding as being open to all people conflicts with the reality that Christianity, taking specific cultural form, is in fact not open to all people. With a shift to pluralist attitudes and a letting go of the belief that Christians control all true religious tradition, the crisis is compounded:

The difficulty arises when we concretize the concept of universality, and it becomes insurmountable if Christians accept pluralism and no longer claim that

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<sup>44</sup>Raimundo Panikkar, "Chosenness and Universality: Can Christians Claim Both?," *Cross Currents* (Fall) 1988: 320. Earlier versions of this article were given in lectures at Jyotiniketan, Jerusalem (1973) and at Union Theological Seminary, New York (1977).

<sup>45</sup>Panikkar, "Chosenness and Universality: Can Christians Claim Both?" (1988), 310.

they are the only custodians *de vera religione*.<sup>22</sup>

Panikkar does not claim to have a solution to the crisis in Christian self-identity in this age of pluralism; rather he takes the position that the determination of Christian self-identity today is an ecclesial issue. He recalls that the first Council of Jerusalem made the decision that circumcision should not be required for entrance into the Christian community; Panikkar asks whether a similar decision, with the views of the whole of humankind somehow included in the discernment, could be made to eliminate the barrier that baptism presents for some who follow Christ:<sup>23</sup>

This decision has to be taken ecclesially. It should be possible to say that 'it appears to the Holy Spirit and us' that circumcision or baptism is no longer needed. It is for this reason that I am asking for a Council of Jerusalem II in order that humankind as a whole may discern the signs of the times.<sup>24</sup>

#### The Pluralistic Attitude and Multireligious Experience

Panikkar's study of Christian relations to other religious traditions draws attention to the pluralistic attitude that characterizes the Age of Dialogue. A pluralistic attitude makes possible multireligious experience. Rather than immediately

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 310.

<sup>23</sup>Baptism, for the Hindu who follows Christ, can mean being cut off from normal relations with family and friends. For an account of this issue see Kathleen Healy, *Christ as Common Ground: A Study of Christianity and Hinduism* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1990), 21.

<sup>24</sup>Panikkar, "Chosenness and Universality: Can Christians Claim Both?" (1988), 324.

excluding the creative exploration of another, seemingly contradictory, religious tradition, the pluralistic attitude approaches the other tradition from the dialogical stance of one who listens, and is ready to risk being converted.<sup>11</sup> A pluralistic attitude for him is one that rather than imposing a logical theory on reality identifies and fosters synthetic vision and shared myth.

Panikkar deplores the fact that extant philosophies of religions are mere extrapolations of one culture's philosophy of religion to other religious traditions. His sketch of what a more adequate "Philosophy of Religion" might be indicates that, as early as 1968, he was moving towards a distinctive brand of pluralism. This is a "mystical adventure of seeing truth from within more than one religious tradition" which respects the

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<sup>11</sup>Under the title "*Dialogical Tension instead of Dialectical Conflict*," Panikkar writes: "This contrast between the dialectical and the dialogical modes of dwelling in our pluralistic reality may be the great difficulty and yet it is the proof of all that I have tried to say. Not accepting the dialectical conflict and transforming it into a *dialogical tension* -- is this not what the Christian and Jain martyrs, for instance, did, and what contemporary resisters and dissidents are still doing?" Panikkar, "The Myth of Pluralism: the Tower of Babel -- A Meditation on Non-Violence" (1979), 218.

<sup>12</sup>Panikkar has written that the problem set by pluralism does not have a theoretical resolution; he also claims "pluralism is rooted in the deepest nature of things." Anticipating that these statements could be seen as contradictory, Panikkar answers that by pluralism he means "a myth in the most rigorous sense: an ever-elusive horizon in which we situate things in order to be conscious of them without ever converting the horizon into an object." Thus, pluralism itself is a myth and so not reducible to logos (theory). In addition, neither "Man" nor "Reality" are "totally transparent to theory." Ibid., 203.

"religious root" that opens room for a "natural and healthy pluralism." He writes:

It almost goes without saying that the Philosophy of Religion I anticipate ... would allow the most variegated beliefs and religious traditions to flourish in its field, uprooting only isolationism and misunderstanding (not to say resentment and envy) to make room for a healthy and natural pluralism. We will have a true Philosophy of Religion not by lumping everything together, but by discovering Man's religious root, which grows, flowers and gives fruit in the most multiform way. Only the walls may fall, and private gardens open their gates... Such a philosophy results only from the mystical adventure of seeing truth from within more than one religious tradition.

For the North American context, Panikkar, without wanting to detach himself from his Christian identity, is less intent on establishing continuity with Christian worldviews and more concerned with identifying and fostering a shared attitude, myth or vision. Thus his critique of "Christendom" is extended to all systems that might try to impose their particular order on others. He proposes a non-violent, non-aggressive way that he knows finds resistance from the "realist."<sup>2</sup> His focus is on

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<sup>2</sup>R. Panikkar, "Epoché in the Religious Encounter" in *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (New York, N.Y./Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1978), 51-52. Originally published as "The Internal Dialogue -- The Insufficiency of the So-called Phenomenological 'Epoché' in the Religious Encounter", *Religion and Society*, vol. XV, No.3 (1968).

<sup>3</sup>"The 'realist' will immediately remind me that we are not God and that with such pacifistic attitudes we blur any distinction between good and evil; we might split India into a dozen states, undermine the United States' role as guardian of Democracy, ruin Catholicism, destroy society, allow the 'criminals' (always the others) to overrun 'us,' pervert human institutions and let chaos dominate the world." Panikkar, "The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of Babel -- A Meditation on Non-Violence" (1979), 223.

"pluralism" as "the human attitude which faces intolerance without being broken."<sup>13</sup> The pluralistic attitude is both "insight" and a rooting in "inner power" -- a "mutation" of the cosmotheandric reality:

Here again, drinking poison and not being harmed by it has always been one of the signs of those who believe. Taking into oneself the poison, like Shiva, assimilating the evil, this kind of tolerance obviously demands a deeper insight into the nature of Man and Reality and a stronger hold on the source of inner power. Here, maybe, one begins to glimpse the proportions of a radical *metanoia* -- a mutation not of Man alone, or of the World alone, or of God alone, but all three dimensions of the Real -- in concert and cooperation.<sup>14</sup>

Panikkar no longer speaks as he did in "Pluralism, Tolerance and Christendom," of pluralism as aiming at "definitive truth."<sup>15</sup> In a later work, "Can Theology be Transcultural?" (1991), he will even speak of "the pluralism of truth."<sup>16</sup> The pluralism he espouses is a theologoumenon<sup>17</sup> that functions to critique

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 222.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 223.

<sup>15</sup>Panikkar, *Los Dioses y el Señor* (1967), 116.

<sup>16</sup>See footnote 98.

<sup>17</sup>Karl Rahner explains the role of the theologoumenon: "A theologoumenon is a proposition expressing a theological statement which cannot be directly regarded as official teaching of the Church, as dogma binding in faith, but which is the outcome and expression of an endeavour to understand the faith by establishing connections between the binding doctrines of the faith and by confronting dogmatic teachings with the whole of secular experience and all a man -- or an age -- knows. Such a proposition may be not materially differ from one which is actually of faith. It can be implicitly contained in a truth of faith, in the intelligible perspective involved in the latter, in the historical origin of the conceptual apparatus it employs,

totalitarian systems and all-encompassing theories."

He considers his position on the pluralistic nature of reality a restatement of the Christian trinitarian insight" as well as the myths of other traditions:

The problem of pluralism arises, I would contend, because the very nature of reality is pluralistic. The underlying myths for the doctrines of the Trinity and nondualism and many other myths, might stand for this

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etc." Karl Rahner, "Theologoumenon" in *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopaedia of Theology* (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1970), 232.

"Panikkar admits that any authentic theology "formulates at the same time something of the human condition that transcends local boundaries" (13). However, he holds that history and present-day observation make evident the dark side of totalitarian expression and the nonsense that appears when the claims to universal validity are formulated. What he terms his "own theologoumena" [sic] are efforts to counter the totalitarian impulse: "the *Supernome* to deal with the 'no other name'; the *pars pro toto* effect to deal with the *Catholica*; the *homeomorphic equivalents* to deal with the different religions; the *Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (which is not the Christ known to Christians); my defense of *pluralism* up to the very pluralism of truth against sheer plurality and rigid uniformity." Raimon Panikkar, "Can Theology be Transcultural?" in *Pluralism and Oppression: Theology in World Perspective*, P.F. Knitter, Editor (Lanham, Maryland: College Theology Society & University Press of America, 1991), ft.nt. 17 p. 20.

"Karl Rahner writes of pluralism and the Trinity in a similar fashion to that of Panikkar: "Let us now further consider -- in keeping with a theology of the 'traces' and 'reflexions' of the inner-trinitarian plurality -- that it is quite thinkable that the pluralism of the finite creature is not merely a consequence and indicator of its finiteness, as a merely negative qualification, but also a consequence -- even though not naturally recognizable as such -- of that divine plurality which does not imply imperfection and weakness and limitation of being, but the supreme fullness of unity and concentrated force: then we may say candidly, though also cautiously, that being is plural in itself, and formulate this as a general principle without restrictions." Karl Rahner S.J., "The Theology of the Symbol" in *More Recent Writings* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), (226-227).

insight. Or, to go back to our original Jewish parable at Babel the Lord confused Man's dream of a monolithic and totalitarian vision of reality.<sup>138</sup>

The "problem of pluralism" can arise in the apparently irreconcilable dimensions of multireligious experience. In such experience, contradictory beliefs must be directly faced by the person who feels a sense of belonging to diverse traditions. One instance of this problem of pluralism would be that of the contrast between Christian and Hindu notions of the Absolute. Advaitic Hindu belief in a passive, impersonal Brahman cannot be easily reconciled with the Christian notion of an active and personal God. Yet Panikkar would hold that both Hindu and Christian doctrines can be found in the other religious tradition and interpreted as "homeomorphic equivalents."<sup>139</sup> He explains that this is a creative task requiring empathy, a degree of conversion enabling interpretation of the other tradition and openness to the possibility of mutual fecundation:

The task of this creative hermeneutics will not always be easy but will depend upon mutual empathy and the degree to which the interpreter has entered into and has been converted by the tradition he or she wishes to interpret. Only from here will spring the possible fecundation between the two traditions, a fecundation that frees them from the danger of dying of

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<sup>138</sup>Panikkar, "The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of Babel -- A Meditation on Non-Violence" (1979), 216.

<sup>139</sup>"There is no Christian doctrine that one cannot more or less find in Hinduism. The Trinity, the Incarnation, the love of neighbour, the Resurrection -- all of these things may be found in Indian wisdom. We are speaking of doctrines, for facts as such are unique, in Hinduism as they are in Christianity. Also, we are speaking of homeomorphic equivalents, not of first-degree analogies." Panikkar, "In Christ There is Neither Hindu nor Christian: Perspectives on Hindu-Christian Dialogue" (1989), 483.

asphyxiation.<sup>102</sup>

Panikkar proposes that pluralism is not a dilemma to be resolved at the theoretical level but is an existential problem:

Pluralism is today a human existential problem which raises acute questions about how we are going to live our lives in the midst of so many options. Pluralism is no longer just the old schoolbook question about the One and the Many; it has become a concrete day-to-day dilemma occasioned by the encounter of mutually incompatible worldviews and philosophies.<sup>103</sup>

For him, the problem of how one is to live one's life in the face of "incompatible worldviews" does not yield facile resolution. It is a challenge that can be met neither by force nor by evasion:

Here pluralism appears as an awareness leading to a positive acceptance of *diversity* -- an acceptance which neither forces the different attitudes into an artificial unity, nor alienates them by reductionistic manipulations.<sup>104</sup>

Multireligious experience is consistent with a vision of reality that holds any single religious perspective is incapable of exhausting human experience. Panikkar's notion of pluralism is predicated on an acceptance of one's limited capacity to know the fullness of the mystery. Pluralism is both a sense of the plenitude of the mystery and a confidence in the other as a source of understanding and thus an anticipation of the plausibility of other traditions:

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<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 483.

<sup>103</sup>Panikkar, "The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of Babel -- A Meditation on Non-Violence" (1979), 201.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 208.



No religion, ideology, culture, or tradition can reasonably claim to exhaust the universal range of human experience. Thus a *pluralism* distinct from the mere coexistence of a plurality of worldviews is a present-day necessity. Pluralism does not mean a super-ideology, or any super-system for that matter, but it implies an almost mythical confidence that other perspectives may also be plausible.<sup>125</sup>

### Multireligious Experience and the Secular

Panikkar's insertion into the increasingly secularizing context of North America (and Europe) was a major influence on his shift from explicitly Christian (or Hindu or Buddhist) religious language to a language of pluralism that spoke more directly to the secular person. Chapter Three studied his claim after his early years in India to have entered deeply within the Hindu and Buddhist religious traditions while remaining Christian. At the beginning of his years in North America he began to articulate a deep relation to secular experience also.<sup>126</sup> It was with the book *Worship and Secular Man* (1973) that Panikkar

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<sup>125</sup>Raimundo Panikkar, "Have 'Religions' the Monopoly on Religion?," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* II 1974: 516.

<sup>126</sup>"It is not that I willfully consider myself to be a religious and a secular man. It is rather that I am by birth, education, initiation and actual life a man living from and sharing in the original experiences of the western tradition, both christian and secular, and the indian tradition, both hindu and buddhist." Panikkar, "Philosophy as Life-style" (1978), 201.

first gave notice of his participation in the secular.<sup>117</sup> In that concise text, he begins by noting that his methodology is to interpret secularization from within. His professional commitment to the study of comparative religion is joined to the existential risk of taking on a secular viewpoint while maintaining fully his religious identity. He explains his methodology:

This essay is also intended to be a contribution to the study of comparative religion, if by that we do not simply mean a 'comparison of religions', but the illumination of one or more religious problems with the help of more than one religious tradition.<sup>118</sup>

He discerns a phenomenon unique to our time, what he terms "the sacred quality of secularism."<sup>119</sup> Thus, he draws this conclusion on the basis of a consciousness that gives positive valuation to time and history:

... secular man does not need to be anti-religious or anti-sacred, for he stands for the positive and, in a way, sacred value of time and temporal reality.<sup>120</sup>

He considers inadequate the attitude of "translators" who feel "that we already have the solution and the problem is merely

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<sup>117</sup>Panikkar points to the fact that this work witnesses to a personal shift when he writes in the "Preface" [dated 1972, Santa Barbara, California]: "This essay, which undeniably reflects -- and refracts -- an autobiographical itinerancy, took origin in a paper presented to a consultation, 'Worship in a Secular Age', organised by the World Council of Churches in 1969." Raimundo Panikkar, *Worship and Secular Man* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973).

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 11.

one of presenting it in a more presentable way." This attitude does not deal with the substantial issues in a "pluralistic society" in which there are no longer shared forms of worship.

In order to be authentic, worship must express belief. When the symbols fail to express belief, "the living ritual has

degenerated into deadly ritualism." Translation or adaptation does not ask questions about the kind of belief that worship is communicating; nor is translation the creative act that will

shape new forms of worship. The *locus theologicus* for the

response to the problem of worship today is in the local

community, with the artist and the theologian.

Secularization is a change in symbols, an ambivalent

process which, according to the perspective of different

groups, can be perceived as either destroying or purifying

worship. This ambivalence is made more acute by,

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Ibid., 14.

Ibid., 18.

"What I am trying to suggest is that the *locus theologicus* for our problem is neither Academia, nor Vaticanum (neither philosophy, or Theology) but the concrete Assembly in a particular spot, the voice of the Spirit, life amid the bustle of the street, or in the solitude of one's own room, the house, or, -- why not? -- the studio of the artist and also of the theologian!" Ibid., 24.

"For Panikkar, "Secular means ... the temporal world, the temporal aspect of reality." Negatively viewed, "the so-called secular world as distinct from the sacred world which is regarded as ultimately important and real." Viewed positively, "the liberation of mankind from the grip of obscurantism ... the full human being assuming his responsibilities." Ibid., 10.

Ibid., 18.

... the double dynamism of the the present-day world: on the one hand there is undoubtedly a process of universalization and even uniformation. This reinforces the challenge to find a genuinely universal and really human form of worship. Contemporary man abhors nothing more than esoterism and closed groups. On the other hand, there is also a parallel trend towards the particular and the concrete; the human being wants to express himself and this is only possible within a particular context and against a definite background.<sup>116</sup>

From the History of Religions Panikkar draws what he terms the "Principle of Complementarity" by means of which he analyzes the relationship of worship to life. When the identification of worship and life were taken for granted, then the difference between the two was stressed in order to maintain a healthy, dynamic tension: "When the priest and monk were part and parcel of society, their estrangement was equally underscored."<sup>117</sup> On the other hand, in a secular society in which the difference between worship and life was considered basic, that is, when there was "separation of Church and State, God's and Caesar's different realms, civil and religious life,"<sup>118</sup> then an opposite dynamic, that of identification, asserted itself. Thus, when the secular dominates daily life and has asserted itself over the sacred, identity between worship and life is stressed:

The real love for God is service to man, godliness is cleanliness, work is worship, the city of God is to be planted here on earth, neither Garizim nor Jerusalem, all the rivers are the Ganges and all water is equally holy, the altar is a simple table and the temple a

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<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 18-19.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., 57.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., 57-58.

plain house, Indra is Varuna and all the gods are only names of one and the same Power. And so on. There are many examples.<sup>119</sup>

The principle of complementarity also "claims to blend two characteristics of every human truth: universality and concreteness."<sup>120</sup> As Panikkar sees it, both value and truth claim universality without ceasing to be concrete:

It is the phenomenological as well as theological characteristics of any mature religious attitude to aim at a universal validity without watering down its claim to concreteness.<sup>121</sup>

There are implications to this urge to universal validity. He has a vision of what full human living entails and at the centre is worship as the openness to communion among the members of society.<sup>122</sup> The challenge is to shape a worship adequate for the members of a "pluralistic society," a society in which there is no shared pattern of worship.<sup>123</sup> That traditional forms of

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 58.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., 63.

<sup>122</sup>"In order to achieve a full human life I have to live in communion with my fellow beings. Man cannot live, nor surely, survive, in isolation. But there is no real human communication unless the roots of human existence are laid bare and communion is established at that profundity. Communion means something more than just exchanging information. In other words, unless the communication is religious there is no real human communion; unless there is *communicatio in sacris* (in the classical theological language) there is no communication, but only an exchange of goods or words or a simple acknowledgement of the presence of the other in order to have freedom to proceed further without obstacles." Ibid., 65.

<sup>123</sup>"The tremendous challenge of these corrolaries is that worship cannot be sectarian, cannot exclude all those who live

worship do not take into account the increasing religious diversity of the age is an issue for Panikkar. In his account, the Christian mystery is to be open to all people. At stake is the matter of what the Christian fact entails and how one conceives identity and responsibility as a Christian:

Either we identify the Christian *fact* with historically existing Christianity -- and then we have one religion among others, with no more rights than any of them, or we believe that the Christian mystery bears a universal message capable first of all of being understood, and then followed by any man regardless of his colour, culture, and religion. If this is the case, it is the task of Christians with such conviction to look for forms of expressing this universal belief in manners appropriate to the secular man of today. I do not think I am watering down the Christian message; on the contrary, I am convinced that this is the only way in which it can be loyal to its *kerygma*: the good and astounding news of liberation.

#### Religious Pluralism Includes the Secular

In the "Preface" (1979) of the revised and enlarged version of the *Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, Panikkar traces the origin of his experience of the secular to his early period in India. He recalls a personal crisis that he experienced when, during his first visit to India he reached his "ancestral dwelling-place." It seems that he was asked to chose between supporting one group

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and work together with me, while at the same time it has to be concrete and meaningful to the individual person. And this is the enormous difficulty in a pluralistic society. Worship should be the inspiring force in any work, be the guiding principle of the eight or so hours of our daily activity; but how can it be this if we share this activity with people who do not concede such a worship or find it meaningless or even repulsive?" Ibid., 64.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 68.

in their struggle for justice against another group asserting claims to traditional Brahmin identity.<sup>155</sup> He speaks of a sudden perception of the sacredness of everything, even the secular. He finds that a gift has been given him to experience compassion for both groups:

Was it that a third great Symbol in the form of Compassion was taking hold of me? Risking my life in offering my services to everybody without accepting their respective dialectics, I found myself suddenly in the World of Time. And from there the sacredness of everything, even of the secular, dawned upon me. Thus I am at the confluence (sangam) of the four rivers: the Hindu, Christian, Buddhist and Secular traditions.<sup>156</sup>

Panikkar explores the impact of secularity on a rethinking of his Hindu and Buddhist and Christian identity. In his book *Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype* (1982), he contrasted Eastern and Western traditions in an immanence/transcendence schema. His secular vision does not leave him satisfied with this schema. The secular is not in opposition to the sacred; rather it is sacred and profane that are opposed. This is an instance of the mutual fecundation of traditions and consistent with his relationist (not relativist)

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<sup>155</sup>The image Panikkar employs is drawn from the *Bhagavad Gita* of the field of war. Panikkar, like Arjuna, is put into a dilemma by the call to struggle with his own kin: "The Black one wanted to enlist me as a warrior in the Field of Righteousness. The White one wanted me to be a brahman in favour of what seemed to me to be an unjust *status quo*. Both were my kith and kin, but I remained a conscientious objector, mistrusted by both." Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany* (1981), ix.

<sup>156</sup>Ibid., x.

vision. Secularity challenges Buddhist, Hindu and Christian traditions to a revisioning of their central beliefs:

But the impact of secularity might very well lead us to say, 'Let us have a better understanding of tradition.' And then I, as a Buddhist, would call for a renewed meaning of *pratityasamutpada* (radical relativity), which would bring me to a new understanding of the Buddhist message. Or I, as a Hindu, would begin to look for a new understanding of *karma*, or a new understanding of *dharma*, which would in turn lead me to totally revised understanding of the modern *sannyasin*. Or I, as a Christian, might try to overcome the scheme of immanence/transcendence by speaking of incarnation."

Panikkar's experience of secular identity is explicitly a mystical intuition of the real. In "Philosophy as Life-Style" (1978), he gives a condensed summary of his intellectual expression of his experiences. He discerns parallels between the symbols that are Advaita, Trinity and Secularity. He asks the question: "Can the plurality of one's own experiments and experiences find understandable expression?" and he responds by claiming a non-dualist (*advaita*) "intuition," one that neither separates nor identifies the secular and the sacred, "time and timelessness":

This is the proper locus for *advaita*, by which I understand that intuition opening up a world-view in which the diversities are neither absolutized (dualism: God-World, Matter-Spirit) nor ignored (monism: pure materialism, pure spiritualism), neither idolized (pantheism: all is mysterious and divine) nor reduce [sic] to mere shadows (monotheism: one principle, monarch and many subjects). A *tensile polarity* is an ultimate characteristic of the real. Here the symbols

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"Raimundo Panikkar, *Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1982), 23.



are Secularity, Advaita and Trinity: time and timelessness are coextensive and correlative; the ultimate intuition is non-dualistic, reality is triune.<sup>122</sup>

### Summary

Through the 1960s Panikkar was intimately involved as a Catholic theologian in the reorientation of the Catholic Church and theological reflection to a world of many religious traditions. As Panikkar reflected on the history of the shifts in Christian identity in relation to other religious traditions during the past 2000 years, he recognized the significant impact of historical factors on Christian identity. He identified a kairological shift out of the colonial and modern era into what he termed the Age of Dialogue. Notwithstanding the opening at Vatican II to other world religions as ways of salvation and the promotion of dialogue with these traditions, the reflection remained undeveloped. Beyond tentatively admitting there might be a providential dimension to other religious traditions, Christian theology did not have an adequate account of what it meant to be Christian in relation to the other religious traditions in this present age. Willing to admit cultural and theological pluralism, Christian theological reflection had difficulty affirming religious pluralism.

Panikkar made an effort to understand pluralism at the beginning of the 1960s.<sup>123</sup> He took a position on the existential

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<sup>122</sup>Panikkar, "Philosophy As Life-Style" (1978), 202-203.

<sup>123</sup>For an instance of this effort see Chapter Three, the section entitled "Panikkar's Encounter with Buddhism".

nature of truth and gave priority to orthopraxis. The way forward beyond a fixation on contradictory doctrines was through the mystical virtue of tolerance that not only spoke that truth but lived the truth. In "Pluralism, Tolerance and Christendom" (1961), Panikkar was still writing of truth as one and definitive.<sup>131</sup> At the end of the 1960s and in the subsequent decades of the 1970s and 1980s he moved to a position on pluralism that he considered a trinitarian position, his "theologumenon"<sup>132</sup> on the pluralistic nature of reality. In Panikkar's view, the response to fragmentation in a "pluralistic society" can only be a *communicatio in sacris*, a communion at the level of what is ultimate, a sharing in the "myth of pluralism," which includes the secular in positive relation to the sacred.

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<sup>131</sup>Panikkar, *Los Dioses y el Señor* (1967), 116.

<sup>132</sup>Panikkar, "Can Theology be Transcultural?" (1991), 20. Cf. footnote 96 above.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE DIATOPICAL HERMENEUTIC IN THE HINDU-CHRISTIAN ENCOUNTER

Panikkar holds that there are features of the West that impede understanding of cultural and religious traditions that have originated outside the Western world. In this chapter, we note those features, describe Panikkar's effort to articulate a method of "dialogical dialogue" that avoids the pitfalls of dialectical and doctrinal approaches, and we review two instances of his implementation of his method in the Hindu-Christian interreligious encounter.

Panikkar judges that the West is characterized by an impulse toward universalization. With this in mind, he questions the motivation that inspires some Western approaches to other religious traditions. He suspects that since the West can no longer exercise overt political control in this post-colonial era, it is tempted, consciously or unconsciously, to impose its understanding of the world through indirect means. The comparative religious studies that puts forward a "global overview" is at base an attempt to dominate.

As well, Panikkar judges that the West, formed in the

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"Comparative studies are still fashionable today because they belong to the thrust toward universalization characteristic of western culture. The West not being able any longer to dominate other peoples politically, it tries to maintain -- most of the time unconsciously -- a certain control by striving toward a global picture of the world by means of comparative studies." Raimundo Panikkar, "What is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?" in *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*, G.J. Larson and E. Deutsch, Editor. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 116.

experimental spirit of Science, has an understanding of what it means to know that is characteristically aggressive, a conception of knowing as "more a seizing than an understanding." Such a conception of knowing as an active appropriation neglects the possibility of knowing as being possessed as well as possessing. This is a theme that reoccurs in Panikkar's thought; in the encounter with the East, the West and Western Christians are hindered by their understanding of what it means to know, an epistemology that can be characterized as a "hunter epistemology":

For this reason I reject at this level the 'epistemology of the hunter' that the enlightenment has given us. I understand by the 'hunter epistemology' to point with the reason, to focus on an object clearly and distinctly, hold it separate (the second rule of Descartes), and shoot, in order to hit the target. This hitting the target is the named or mis-named knowledge. To know is to hunt; 'to grasp', to conquer; but it is not *cognoscere*, that is to say, to come to life jointly with ... to a new existence. For this

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In his 1961 article, "Pluralism, Tolerance and Christendom," he makes what he terms "a mild criticism of the West," "una ligera crítica al Occidente," in that after Descartes and particularly after Kant "todo conocimiento es más una *aprehensión* que una *comprensión*." Panikkar, *Los Dioses y el Señor* (1967), 120.

In another work, Panikkar states that for "mutual understanding" one needs to go beyond knowing to loving. He writes that knowledge is "always an egocentric movement," whereas, "mutual love overcomes that egocentric position of knowledge. When I love, I go out, I give up, I am the guest, I am no more at home, I am received and possessed. Pure knowledge hurts the rest of the non-assimilated things. I may reach some synthesis by an intellectual victory over my opponent. I bring only the spoils of the adversary to my system. Sankara, let us say, is overcome or understood, but the Sankarites remain outside, unconvinced." Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (1964, 1968), 24-25.

reason, when epistemology separates itself from ontology, it reduces itself. And from this my final criticism, if you wish, to the so-called scientific knowledge is that it treats of a knowledge that does not require love. In contrast full knowledge, as I understand it, necessarily implies love.<sup>4</sup>

### Microdoxy and Misunderstanding

In distinctions pertinent to the Roman Catholic emphasis on doctrinal issues, Panikkar has contrasted microdoxy, heterodoxy and orthodoxy. He writes: "Microdoxy does not mean heterodoxy [incorrect teaching or worship]. The *doxa* is correct, only it is diminished, minimized."<sup>5</sup> With microdoxy, the notion of orthodoxy, correct teaching or worship, is reduced to a clinging to traditional formulations, which take priority over the meanings that are intended. Their function in relation to mystery is neglected. Such microdox formulations no longer evoke

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<sup>4</sup>In an interview given in Madrid, September 28, 1992: "Por esto rechazo a este nivel la 'epistemología del cazador' que nos ha dado la ilustración. Yo entiendo por 'epistemología del cazador' el apuntar con mi razón, enfocar el objeto claro y distinto, separar (la segunda regla de Descartes), y tirar, para tocar el blanco. Ese dar en el blanco es el llamado o mal-llamado conocimiento. Conocer es cazar; 'aprender', conquistar; pero no es *cognoscere*, es decir, nacer juntamente con ... a una nueva existencia. Por eso, cuando la epistemología se separa de la ontología, se degrada. Y de ahí que mi crítica última, si se quiere, al llamado conocimiento científico es que se trata de un conocimiento que no requiere amor. En cambio el conocimiento pleno, como yo lo entiendo, implica necesariamente el amor." Raimon Panikkar, "La mística del diálogo: Entrevista de Raúl Fonet-Betancourt con Raimon Panikkar" in *Jahrbuch für kontextuelle Theologien/Yearbook of contextual Theologies*, R. Fonet-Betancourt and H.C. Hoeben, Editor. (Frankfurt: IKO-Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation: Frankfurt, 1993), 30.

<sup>5</sup>"... microdoxia no quiere decir heterodoxia. La *doxa* es correcta, sólo que se encuentra disminuida, minimizada." Panikkar, *Los Dioses y el Señor* (1967), 122.

that which is "open, mysterious, hidden."<sup>6</sup> Microdoxy finds itself:

... identified with the usual formulas without penetrating to the reality that is meant, the *res significata*, as Saint Thomas Aquinas would say.

Panikkar illustrates what he means by "microdoxy" in an example drawn from the history of the colonization of India. The Portuguese explorers, merchants and missionaries of the 16th century encountered a group of Christians in the South of India. They treated these St. Thomas Christians as heretics because they did not behave, worship or articulate their belief in the same fashion as the Catholic Portuguese:

... the people were not kneeling to take communion, and were going so far as to drink from the chalice; the priests were entering into marriage ... and were even 'reading' the Mass in the vernacular; during the celebration all understood what was said, they were talking with one another and were singing both in choir and spontaneously. They were using certain incorrect formulations, which perhaps gave reason to consider these jacobites as monophysites. In a word, there was produced a new schism in the Church, owing to the identification of the faith with a certain conception of it.

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"... que ya no es abierta, misteriosa, oculta." Ibid., 122.

"... identificada con las fórmulas usuales sin penetrar en la realidad mentada, en la *res significata*, como diría Santo Tomás de Aquino." Ibid., 122.

"... el pueblo no se arrodillaba a comulgar, y hasta se atrevía a beber del cáliz; los sacerdotes contraían matrimonio ... e incluso 'leían' la Misa en una lengua popular; durante su celebración todos comprendían lo que en ellas se dice, hablaban unos con otros y cantaban a coro y en desorden. Utilizaban ciertas formulaciones no correctas, que tal vez diesen motivo para considerar a los jacobitas como monofisitas. En una palabra, se produjo un nuevo cisma en la Iglesia, debido a la identificación de la fe con una cierta concepción de ella."

The encounter of widely diverse religious traditions receives an inadequate response from those of a microdox mindset. To enter deeply a radically different cultural or religious situation is to discover the limited applicability and vulnerability of specific conceptual formulations. In the new context, familiar ways of speaking are no longer appropriate. In his account of interreligious encounter, Panikkar wishes to keep open the possibility of going beyond fixed positions and fixed formulations. Cultural and religious barriers can be crossed. There is the possibility of movement, but it need not be the movement of inclusion affected by a dominant conceptual system over another less successful system. Rather, there is the movement that enters relationship and "at the beginning without proper understanding, then slowly by dispelling false imaginations and misconceptions" reaches a shared understanding and in its train the new, more appropriate expression.<sup>3</sup>

This is also a movement that challenges the person to pass over to the other religious tradition and to be challenged to deeper faith.<sup>4</sup> This multireligious experience goes beyond the external interreligious and interpersonal encounter to the

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Ibid., 121-122.

<sup>3</sup>Panikkar, "What is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?" (1988), 132.

<sup>4</sup>"... religious dialogue must be genuinely religious, not merely an exchange of doctrines or intellectual opinions. And so it runs the risk of modifying my ideas, my most personal horizons, the very framework of my life." Panikkar, "Epoché in the Religious Encounter" (1978), 50.

interior meeting of traditions through intrareligious experience. Intrareligious experience, to be a full encounter of the religious traditions, necessitates that the person engaged in this interior encounter become open to the risk of conversion.<sup>11</sup> Insofar as intrareligious experience involves vulnerability to the faith tradition of the other person, it acts as a corrective to the Western spirit of universalist expansion, aggressive notion of knowing and microdox ways of thinking.

### Diatopical Hermeneutics

In order to make clear what is demanded for cross-cultural understanding, Panikkar has highlighted the contrast between situations that represent the unfolding of a basically homogeneous tradition,<sup>12</sup> and situations that involve a crossing over between traditions. A radically cross-cultural situation is one in which the cultures or religious traditions which meet have not shared in common founding events or texts. For situations of

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<sup>11</sup>The depth to which dialogue must go is indicated by Panikkar's exhortation that dialogue must become "intrareligious dialogue, i.e., an inner dialogue within myself, an encounter in the depth of my personal religiousness, having met another religious experience on that very intimate level." Ibid., 40.

<sup>12</sup>He identifies two forms of hermeneutics, the morphological and the diachronical, as appropriate to the homogeneous cultural or religious situation. The morphological hermeneutics is exemplified in the person with more knowledge sharing that knowledge with a person less educated in that particular domain. The diachronical, a 'cutting through' the gap of time, is exemplified in the mature person deepening in appreciation of the roots of his or her cultural or religious tradition. In both instances, tools for coming to know are available within the single stream of the tradition. See R. Panikkar, "Introduction" in *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (New York/Ramsey/Toronto: Paulist Press, 1979), 8-10.



crossing between traditions he maintains a distinctive hermeneutics,<sup>14</sup> which he terms a "*diatopical* hermeneutics":

I call it *diatopical* hermeneutics because the distance to be overcome is not merely temporal, within one broad tradition, but the gap existing between two human *topoi*, 'places' of understanding and self-understanding, between two -- or more -- cultures that have not developed their patterns of intelligibility or their basic assumptions out of a common historical tradition or through mutual influence.<sup>15</sup>

With a *diatopical* hermeneutics, the ultimate human horizon is called into question.<sup>16</sup> In a situation in which basic horizons are radically different, to experience a shared understanding, there must be a new disclosure, a new set of founding events. It is in the experience of the encounter that the basis of mutual comprehension is generated.<sup>17</sup> In order to reach understanding in *diatopical* situations, the hermeneutical circle must be created:

We understand because we are within a hermeneutical

<sup>14</sup>Panikkar's definition of hermeneutics: "Hermeneutics is the art and science of interpretation, of bringing forth significance, of conveying meaning, of restoring symbols to life and eventually of letting new symbols emerge. Hermeneutics is the method of overcoming the distance between a knowing subject and an object to be known, once the two have been estranged." Ibid., 8.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>16</sup>"*Diatopical* hermeneutics stands for the thematic consideration of understanding the other without assuming that the other has the same basic self-understanding and understanding as I have. The ultimate human horizon, and not only differing contexts, is at stake here." Ibid., 9.

<sup>17</sup>In a perceptive reading of Panikkar's proposals on dialogue, Bernard Lonergan has commented that Panikkar's approach is especially pertinent to the initiation of the interreligious encounter. Lonergan, "Prolegomena to the Study of the Emerging Religious Consciousness of Our Time" (1985), 70.

circle. But how can we understand something that does not belong to our circle? If I smile to a monkey in sign of friendship the ape is likely to attack me. He sees my teeth and interprets my behaviour as a sign of wanting to bite him. If I move the head vertically up and down some people will understand that I agree, and others that I disagree. Something limited was considered a suitable symbol of perfection for the Greeks, because it was intelligible. In India it would be the opposite. In other words, how do we communicate prior to handing down (this is the tradition) the key to deciphering our message?

### The Dialogical Dialogue

Panikkar identifies a method of dialogue appropriate to the distinctive nature of the diatopical situation. The method points to dimensions beyond the purely rational and logical, that is, the dimension of the "heart" in the formation of a shared myth:

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"Panikkar, "What is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?" (1985), 130-131. Panikkar views interpretation as a demanding enterprise and writes that he wishes "to overcome the unauthentic hermeneutical device of interpretation by proxy. We mean the pseudo interpretation based on a paradigm of intelligibility which is not one's own, but which one assumes belongs to the 'other,' the 'native,' the 'primitive.' In this way we show generosity and condescension in accepting other people's views because they make sense for them, though not for us. If we try to report other people's beliefs without in some way sharing in them, we prevent ourselves from expressing what we think is the correct interpretation. Nor can we truly report the interpretation other others, for what they believe to be true we have rejected. In other words, the belief of the believer belongs to the phenomenon itself. Our own interpretation has to face the challenge of meeting both our own convictions and those of the representatives of the document we interpret." Raimundo Panikkar, et al., *The Vedic Experience: Mantramāñjarī* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 22.

"In parallel fashion, Bernard Lonergan calls attention to the development necessary for understanding: "There is needed in the theologian the spiritual development that will enable him both to enter into the experience of others and to frame the terms and relations that will express the experience." Bernard

The method in this third moment is a peculiar *dialogical dialogue*, the *dia-logos* piercing the *logos* in order to reach that dialogical, translogical realm of the heart (according to most traditions), allowing for the emergence of a myth in which we may commune, and which will ultimately allow understanding (standing under the same horizon of intelligibility).<sup>11</sup>

In a paper entitled "The Dialogical Dialogue" (1986),<sup>12</sup> Panikkar develops an account of a method appropriate to the encounter of people of distinct religious traditions. What he terms the dialogical dialogue addresses the particular problem that comes up in cross-cultural situations. The fact that cultures no longer remain in isolation from one another demands that all problems be set methodologically in "pluricultural parameters."<sup>13</sup> He states that his method "could be the 'missing link'"<sup>14</sup> between those who take a "doctrinal" approach to the encounter of religions and those who, like W.C. Smith, understand the encounter as "a living dialogue between human beings."<sup>15</sup> Panikkar's particular emphasis can be gathered from his

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Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 290.

<sup>11</sup>Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (1979), 9.

<sup>12</sup>Panikkar informs the reader that the source of this article was a series of rewritten and revised lectures he gave at Benares Hindu University but which he never published. The article is now published in a collection to honour W.C. Smith. See R. Panikkar, "The Dialogical Dialogue," *The World's Religious Traditions*, ed. Frank Whaling (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 201-221.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 202.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 201.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 201.

conviction that the lack of understanding among religious traditions has more to do with "existential attitudes" shaped by political and economic and administrative factors than with differences in doctrine.<sup>4</sup>

In espousing the dialogical dialogue Panikkar wishes both to complement and to identify the limits of the dialectical dialogue.<sup>5</sup> Panikkar affirms the role of dialectics, which he defines as the art of judging between true and false by means of thinking.<sup>6</sup> He makes the further point, however, that for personal, cross-cultural and pluralistic situations, something more than dialectics is needed. The person is complex and not just a "rational animal." An appreciation of more than the rational is needed and the encounter is between persons, not just between doctrines.<sup>7</sup> For cross-cultural situations, the dialectical dialogue, which takes a particular cultural stance that emphasizes the principle of non-contradiction, fails to appreciate the need to establish first a context for

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<sup>4</sup>"The lack of proper understanding among religions is not so much a matter of doctrinal differences -- these exist also among schools of the same religion -- but of existential attitudes -- down often to economic, administrative and political reasons." Ibid., 220.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 205.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 206.

<sup>7</sup>Personal problems involve the whole of the human and however central reason is to the human, it is not the whole of the human: "It is not by dialectically convincing the patients that the psychotherapist will cure them. It is not by proving one side to be right that a war can be avoided. There is no dialectical proof for love. Not less, but something more is required." Ibid., 207.

communication.<sup>29</sup> The dialogical dialogue, on the other hand, works positively with the diatopical situation to establish shared 'space' (*topos*). Pluralistic situations teach that there can no longer be a unique or best system in any absolute sense.<sup>30</sup>

Panikkar's thoughts on the dialogical dialogue include personalist and ontological positions. The personalist elements include the notion that besides the subjective 'I' and the objective 'It' there is the 'Thou.' The 'I/Thou' relationship cannot be reduced to an 'I/Non-I' nor to an 'I/It' relationship.<sup>31</sup> Panikkar describes the partner in the dialogical dialogue:

In the dialogical dialogue my partner is not the *other* (it is not he/she, and much less it), but the *thou*. The *thou* is neither the *other* nor the *non-ego*. The *thou* is the very *thou* of the *I* in the sense of the subjective genitive.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Panikkar gives an instance of the kind of "cross-cultural problem" that would call on the method of dialogical dialogue: "A cross-cultural problem arises from the encounter of two cultures, e.g. when somebody defends that the earth is a living being and should be treated as such against a technological view of the planet. It cannot be solved dialectically." Panikkar, "The Dialogical Dialogue" (1986), 207.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 202.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 215.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 219. The personalist theme is evident in Panikkar's central essays on pluralism. He writes in the text of his address to the 1977 Panikkar Symposium at Santa Barbara: "To have treated the other as otherness instead of an *alius*, to have reified the other and not to have allowed him a place in my-self, is one of the greatest confusions the human being can fall into." He continues: "The awareness of the other as other (*alius*) and not just as otherness makes of him a fellow, a companion, a subject (and not an object), a source of knowledge, a principle

As well, central to the dialogical dialogue is what Panikkar terms "dialogical intentionality," "the sincere will to

dialogue. This is the crucial point of contrast between the

dialogical and dialectical dialogue; the dialectical dialogue can be an expression of the will to power but the dialogical dialogue

cannot. Panikkar writes:

Here no pretense would do. The dialectical dialogue can be an instrument to power and can be a means to the will to power. This is not the case with the dialogical dialogue. It is for this reason that any further intention, like to convert, to dominate or even to know the other for ulterior motives, destroys the dialogical dialogue.

The dialogical intentionality leads Panikkar to take the other as a source of understanding and implies an epistemology expressed in what he terms the principle of "Understanding as Convincement." This principle is Panikkar's conviction that

of initiative as I myself am. This alone allows me to listen to the other, to be known by him and not just to know him. There can be no true pluralism until the other is discovered." -- A Panikkar, "The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of Babel -- A Meditation on Non-Violence" (1979), 218.

--Panikkar, "The Dialogical Dialogue" (1986), 209.

--Ibid., 210.

David J. Krieger relates Panikkar's "Understanding as Convincement" to the hermeneutical requirement formulated by W.B. Kristensen: "Let us not forget that there is no other religious reality than the faith of believers. If we want to make the acquaintance with true religion, we are exclusively thrown on the pronouncements of the believers. What we think, from our standpoint, about the essence and value of foreign religions, surely testifies to our own faith or to our conception of religious belief, but it our opinion of a foreign religion differs from the meaning and the evaluation of the believers themselves, then we have no longer to do with their religion. Not only our own religion, but every religion is, according to the faith of believers an absolute entity and can only be

"we cannot understand a person's ultimate convictions unless we somehow share them."<sup>35</sup> In another essay, Panikkar underscores the transformation that must occur in the one who understands. In this expansive notion of understanding nothing is truly understood until it is loved:

Many traditions (if not almost all) have emphasized the active and transforming character of understanding: one becomes what one understands -- at the same time understanding only that which one is ready to become. Medieval scholastics said it this way: one understands only what one loves. Most important is the kind of becoming that creates communion with reality.<sup>36</sup>

Panikkar's ontological position that there is a creative and

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understood under this aspect." Krieger, "Methodological Foundations for Interreligious Dialogue," in *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar*, ft.nt. 17, p. 209.

<sup>35</sup>Panikkar, "The Dialogical Dialogue" (1986), 215. Panikkar has expanded on this principle in other writings. He starts from the problem presented by contradictory beliefs and writes: "The next step is to understand the other's position, and at once a tremendous difficulty arises. I can never understand his position as he does -- and this is the only real understanding between people -- unless I share his view; in a word, unless I judge it to be somewhat true. It is contradictory to imagine I understand another's view when at the same time I call it false. I may indeed say I understand my partner in dialogue better than he understands himself. I may say he is mistaken because he contradicts himself, even say I understand his position because I understand his premises; but clearly I cannot uphold his view as he does unless I share it. When I say I understand a proposition and consider it untrue, in the first place I do not understand it because, by definition, truth alone is intelligible (if I understand a thing I always understand it *sub ratione veritatis*); in the second place I certainly do not understand it in the way of someone who holds it to be true. Accordingly, to understand is to be converted to the truth one understands." Panikkar, "Faith and Belief: A Multireligious Experience" (1978), 9.

<sup>36</sup>Raimon Panikkar, "Preparing a Dwelling Place for Wisdom" in *A Dwelling Place for Wisdom* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 11.

not just an evolutionary dimension to being<sup>37</sup> corresponds to his epistemological position:

The *logos* may be coextensive with the *on*, but still there 'is' the *pneuma* 'between', and 'where Spirit, freedom'. And where there is freedom, thought cannot dictate, foresee or even necessarily follow the 'expansion', 'explosion', life of Being.<sup>38</sup>

Each person is a source of understanding and as such potentially creative and not necessarily conforming or conformed to another's way of thinking.<sup>39</sup>

A characteristic of the dialogical dialogue that makes it both threatening and attractive is its potential to reveal one's own myth, the presuppositions one lives by:

In the dialogical dialogue, we are vulnerable because we allow ourselves to be 'seen' by our partner, and vice versa. It is the other who discovers my myth, what I take for granted, my horizon of intelligibility, the convictions of which lie at the source of my expressed beliefs. It is the other who will detect the hidden reasons for my choice of words, metaphors and ways of thinking. It is the other who will interpret my silences and omissions in (for me) unsuspected ways.<sup>40</sup>

One of the results of participation with a partner in the dialogical dialogue is that both can come to a more explicit understanding of their distinct horizons and beliefs.

#### Diatopical Interpretations for Mutual Fecundation

In addition to articulating the principles and method of his

<sup>37</sup>Panikkar, "The Dialogical Dialogue" (1986), 212.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 213.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 214.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 218.



diatopical hermeneutic, Panikkar has undertaken specifically diatopical interpretations. Among others, these are reflections on Vedic sacrifice, the myth of Prajâpati, the myth of Sunahsepa, and studies of karma and trinity.<sup>42</sup> In this chapter, two instances of his diatopical interpretations come under review. These studies that reflect on the encounter between Christian trinitarian thought and Hindu *advaita* illustrate his attention to the possibility of a mutual fecundation among religious traditions. The emphasis in the first study is on the renewal of the Christian trinitarian spirituality, particularly by a rediscovery of the role of the Spirit through the encounter with *advaita*. The second study explores the possibility of a deepening of the *advaitic* tradition as it returns to ground itself in the core intuition of nondualism, which Panikkar asserts leads neither to dualism nor to monism.

#### The Holy Spirit through Hindu Advaita

In the preface to *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* dated Easter, 1973, from Santa Barbara, California, Panikkar informs his reader that this study was written ten years

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<sup>42</sup>Francis X. D'Sa, S.J., "The Notion of God" in *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar*, J. Prabhu, Editor, (1996), 29.

"Le Saux stresses the universality of religious experience and the central role of trinitarian spirituality in the Christian response to the challenge of Advaita. In his 1971 introduction to this English language edition of a French text, he demonstrates his awareness of the impact of religious pluralism on Christian theological positions. He writes: "It is no longer possible to accept the affirmation of 'crisis theology' that outside the biblical revelation all is darkness and sin; even the theology of 'fulfillment' is unable to do justice to all the facts of religious pluralism. On the other hand, a theology of 'cross-fertilization' scarcely leaves room for the claims of the gospel;

"As a result, the initial text was written in French. The major portion of the text was also published in English in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (1968) under the title, "Toward an Ecumenical Theandric Spirituality."

Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, India. published as *The Mountain of the Lord* in 1966 by the Christian Ecumenical Review 38 1986: 82-92. This text was originally "Pilgrimage to the Source: Hindu and Christian at Gangotri," The 1986). For an account of the pilgrimage see: Two Pilgrims, collaboration de l'Abhisikṭānanda Society (Paris: O.E.I.L., 1973 Sélection avec introduction et notes de R. Panikkar avec la coeur: *Le Journal intime du moine chrétien-sannyāsi hindou* 1948- weeks in Vārāṇasī (336). Henri Le Saux, *La montée au fond du* December of 1965, Abhisikṭānanda was with Panikkar for three were together again in October and then in January of 1965. In the Ganges and then returned with him to Uttarāśhī (321). They Panikkar made a pilgrimage with Abhisikṭānanda to the source of Uttarāśhī." The notes also indicate that from June 1 to 7 The notes for May 19, 1964 indicate: "Arrivée de R.P. à publication of the diaries of Henri Le Saux (Abhisikṭānanda). Panikkar supplies an introduction and the notes for a

"Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (1973), vii.

Abhisikṭānanda (Henri Le Saux, O.S.B.), "who had entered deeply French" with the Hindu sannyāsi and Benedictine monk, retreat was broken and his thought challenged by conversations in Ganges at Uttarāśhī in the Himalayas. The silence of his and writing of this book took place in a hut on the banks of the earlier" (most likely 1964). He reports that his reflection

into the encounter with *Advaita Vedānta*.<sup>46</sup>

Panikkar describes his own text as "overcondensed"<sup>47</sup> and claims that he would have wished for five hundred pages,

. . . to offer a sympathetic treatise on the history and philosophy of the conception of the Trinity throughout the ages and within the several religious traditions of mankind.<sup>48</sup>

The present text of only eighty-two pages is evidently not such a "treatise." Rather, as Panikkar informs the reader in his "introduction" to the text, it is:

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and the same has to be said of current attempts to discover the mystery of Christ in every kind of myth or religious affirmation, despite their having little or no relation with the historical mission among men of Jesus of Nazareth, and even less with the Church which continues his work." Henri Le Saux, O.S.B., *Saccidānanda: A Christian Approach to Advaitic Experience* (Delhi: I.S.P.C.K., 1974), xi-xii.

<sup>46</sup>Vedānta (literally 'the end of the Vedas') is the group of philosophical viewpoints which accept the authority of the Vedas and that understand that there is a single, self-existing reality, Brahman, on which all else depends. Vedānta can be contrasted with Indian philosophical traditions which posit a plurality of self-existing beings. Vedānta is generally understood to further divide into three major traditions. The leading figures in these traditions are Madhva (*dvaita* or dualism), Ramanuja (*visistadvaita* or qualified non-dualism) and Sankara (*advaita* or non-dualism). There are further schools associated with each of these figures. See Stuart C. Hackett, *Oriental Philosophy: A Westerner's Guide to Eastern Thought* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 126 ff. Panikkar explains *advaita* in terms of the God-world relationship: "i.e. the non-dual character of the Real, the impossibility of adding God to the world or *vice versa*, the impossibility of putting in *dvanva*, in a pair, God and the world." Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (1973), 36.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., vii.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., vii-viii.

... far more a meditation than an erudite study, far more a mystical and 'praying' theology than an analytical and cogitative philosophy.<sup>41</sup>

In addition, it can be understood as a creative effort to express the fruits of his multireligious experience. He wishes to present a "paradigm of experience,"<sup>42</sup> the experience of one who is "gathering or concentrating in oneself more than one of the human phyla in which mankind's fundamental insights have accumulated."<sup>43</sup>

Panikkar identifies his method as "empirical" but not in the detached manner of a phenomenological *epoché* for it involves "a certain kind of participation."<sup>44</sup> Conscious that there is a relation between authentic subjectivity and true objectivity, he wishes to go beyond an objectified conception of religious phenomena. He is interested in identifying more than "doctrines" and "structures"; he wishes to embrace the "belief of the

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 7. Rowan Williams describes Panikkar's book on the Trinity as "one of the best and least read meditations on the Trinity in our century." Rowan Williams, "Trinity and Pluralism," in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, G. D'Costa, Editor (Orbis Books: Maryknoll, New York, 1990), 3.

<sup>42</sup>Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (1973), x.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., xi.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>45</sup>"... there is a positive and strict correlation between all authentic subjectivity and all true objectivity. Modernist 'subjectivity' is erroneous when it eliminates objectivity; but even more erroneous is juridical objectivity -- and legalism -- when it stifles all true subjectivity." Ibid., 3.

believer."<sup>54</sup>

Panikkar reflects in the 1973 preface that the text is guided by a "a cosmotheandric and thus non-dualistic vision of reality."<sup>55</sup> He sums up this vision in three compact statements that appeal to observation of the broad range of human experience. The first is about the "universality of the experience and the reality"<sup>56</sup> of the three persons manifest in the personal pronouns:

No known language lacks the 'I, Thou, He/She/It' with the respective plural forms. It is in this ultimate and universal structure that the Trinity is reflected or, to speak theologically, because the Trinity is 'I, Thou, He/She/It, We, You, They', human experience presents this character. The Trinity appears then as the ultimate paradigm of personal relationships (and neither substantial nor verbal).<sup>57</sup>

The second statement affirms that reality is constituted by interrelationships and links this belief to the Trinity. No separations that our minds make can change the radical nature of interrelatedness: "The Trinity as pure relation epitomises the radical relativity of all that is."<sup>58</sup> The third statement claims that, notwithstanding the diversity of the universe, there is a fundamental unity to reality. Panikkar notes that our experience of the "person" as contrasted with the "individual" opens our

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., xiv.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., xiv.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., xv.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., xv.

understanding to "this mystery of unity and diversity."<sup>53</sup> The individual, not the person, is quantifiable. The person is "neither monolithic oneness nor disconnected plurality" but "implies constitutive relationship."<sup>54</sup>

Panikkar expresses his conviction that Christianity in its contemporary Western mode was restricted unnecessarily to semitic and mediterranean cultural expression.<sup>55</sup> Under the influence of *Advaita Vedânta*, he moves creatively beyond Western spiritualities of Image and Person to that of Spirit. He recovers the fuller dimensions of trinitarian teaching as he reflects from the situation of dialogue with *advaitic* thought.

To begin his reflection, Panikkar identifies a basic tripartite division of spirituality drawn from the Hindu tradition: the ways of action, love and knowledge -- *karmamârگا*, *bhaktimârگا* and *jñânâmârگا*. He renames these spiritualities to indicate the creative purpose of his reflection as he notes the parallel functioning of these spiritualities in other religions. *Karmamârگا*, "the way of sacred action i.e. ritual action leading to salvation, the fulfilment of duty, realisation of one's *dharma*, obedience to the law, the keeping of the commandments and

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., xv.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., xv.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 26.

so on,"<sup>62</sup> he chooses to title "iconolatry" because basic to "an iconolatric spirituality is the cultic act of adoration of an 'image' of God, believed to represent the true God."<sup>63</sup> In Panikkar's judgement, the positing of an image for God, viewed phenomenologically, was as much a "morphological" feature of Israel's religion as it was of the other semitic and mediterranean religions. Israel's critique of the idols of the neighbouring religions was that these idols "did not constitute the idol which corresponds to the biblical theophany of God."<sup>64</sup> Panikkar recognizes iconolatry as a "basic form of human religious consciousness."<sup>65</sup> The various "iconomorphic" spiritualities develop specific "iconographical" patterns which

. . . tend to eliminate all those types of icons which do not fit its main iconological pattern: Israel will not allow 'idols'; Islam will not permit pictures; tribal religions will not care much about 'ideas' on the divine (theologies); etc.<sup>66</sup>

However, the history of religions demonstrates that there are

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 16-17. Stuart C. Hackett interprets the Hindu concept of *karmamarga* in a parallel fashion as the "way of works, which instructs the individual in performing those actions and developing those habits, both ritualistic and ethical, that will, by right action, tend to cancel out the effects of wrong action in this or previous lives." Hackett, *Oriental Philosophy: A Westerner's Guide to Eastern Thought* (1979), 127.

<sup>63</sup>Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (1973), 18.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 18.

other possible religious attitudes besides that of iconolatry.

*Bhaktimârga*, "the way of devotion and love,"<sup>47</sup> he re-names personalism. Panikkar then explains personalism by contrasting it to iconolatry:

In religious personalism, obedience, for example, is no longer as in iconolatry, unconditional submission but the acknowledgement of God's right to command. Love is no longer the outburst of spontaneous affection or unconscious ecstasy but a mutual giving. Worship is no longer annihilation of the self before the Absolute but the voluntary affirmation of his sovereignty. Sin is no longer cosmic transgression but a refusal to love, and so on.

Panikkar judges that "the monolithic monotheism of orthodox judaism was revived in a certain mode of living out christianity."<sup>48</sup> He asserts: "It is still very much the ancient Old Testament concept of Jahweh, the God-Idol of Israel which forms the basis of the christian concept of God."<sup>49</sup> His aim is "to bring out the possibility of a complementary contribution which would overstep the historical boundaries of christianity as presently constituted."<sup>50</sup> He claims that the Christian concept of God, particularly as represented in the Gospel of John, is quite distinct from that of the "Jahweh of the jewish

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 19.



tradition."<sup>22</sup> The early Christians embraced the "trinitarian scandal" and claimed not merely that Jesus was divine, a divinized man, but that he was the Son of God, "the divine icon itself, which commands man's obedience and adoration and which man must needs follow, even consume."<sup>23</sup> Panikkar writes:

The crime of Jesus in the eyes of the jews, at least according to the christians of the first generations, was that he dared to oust Jahweh, the icon of Israel and himself occupy his place.<sup>24</sup>

This conception of God which understood Jesus as the icon of Jahweh eventually led to the trinitarian articulations of the Word. Panikkar laments that Christians let slip their consciousness of God as Trinity:

For many Jesus became simply the God of the christians, and this indeed is exactly the impression that is conveyed to the hindu, for example, by the occasional preaching of the Gospel that he may hear. Christians are for him those people who worship God under the name and form of Jesus.

Panikkar is not simply critiquing iconolatry in favour of personalism. The renewal of trinitarian consciousness goes beyond both Jahweh of the Jewish tradition understood as Father, and Jesus in early Christian tradition understood as the Son of God. A fully trinitarian view is not exhausted by either iconolatry or by personalism:

Religious personalism is after all nothing other than a

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 21.

form of spirituality. Personalism and iconolatry are, in their differing degrees, inherent dimensions in every religion, corresponding to different phases of its evolution. Personalism, however, has no more right than iconolatry to identify itself with religion, since it is incapable by itself of exhausting the variety and richness of the experience of the Absolute.

Panikkar turns to the third universal form of spirituality-- *jñānamārga*. At the beginning of his chapter on "Forms of Spirituality," he had introduced the three forms as "action, love and knowledge, or, to put it in other terms, spiritualities centred around iconolatry, personalism and mysticism." Thus *jñānamārga* is translated both as a way of "knowledge" and as centred on "mysticism." The section of the chapter in which Panikkar explains the third form of spirituality he entitles "Advaita - *Jñānamārga*." His translations of the Sanskrit titles for the first two forms of spirituality were "iconolatry" and "personalism," words of Western provenance. That he chooses to translate *jñānamārga* by *advaita*, Sanskrit for "non-dual," is an indication that he considers this third spirituality, the way of knowledge, or mysticism, as a distinctively Eastern contribution.

Through contact with Advaita Vedānta Panikkar claims a new awareness of the limitations of a theology and spirituality that would neglect the Spirit. He notes that God identified as Person is considered by some Christian theologians to be the basis of

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 10.

"adult religion";<sup>73</sup> yet many thinkers and theologians raise serious difficulties concerning the personalist concept of God:

. . . the existence of evil and suffering, the difficulty if not impossibility of reconciliation between human liberty and divine will, even the concept of 'person' and so on . . . .

He asks: "Is there such a thing as an experience of God that does not lead to interpersonal dialogue?"<sup>74</sup> He finds an answer in the Upanisads:

It is here that Hinduism, among other religions, has something to say. The Upanisads indeed point to a religious attitude that is not founded upon faith in a God-Thou, or a God-will-sovereignty, but in the supra-rational experience of a 'Reality' which in some way 'inhales' us into himself. The God of the Upanisads does not speak; he is not Word. He 'inspires'; he is Spirit.<sup>75</sup>

In articulating a dynamic and relational vision of the Trinity, a theological perspective grounded in reflection on spirituality, Panikkar intends to be in continuity with classical traditions of Christian reflection on the Trinity:

We would like to approach the trinitarian mystery in a more direct way following up the more dynamic thrust of the greek patristic tradition and the latin bonaventurian scholastic.<sup>76</sup>

Panikkar indicates his "dialogical intentionality," his readiness to receive from other traditions. He writes:

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 45.

Perhaps the deep intuitions of hinduism and buddhism, which come from a different universe of discourse than the greek, may help us to penetrate further the trinitarian mystery. After all, is not theology precisely the endeavour of the man of faith to express his religious experience in the mental and cultural context in which he is situated?<sup>33</sup>

Following the dynamic approach to Trinity, Panikkar notes that the Father begets the Son and does so in a total self-emptying which brings to mind the apophatic tradition of Buddhism:

Is it not here, truly speaking, in this essential apophatism of the 'person' of the Father, in this kenosis of Being at its very source, that the Buddhist experience of *nirvana* and *sunyata* (emptiness) should be situated?<sup>34</sup>

Having questioned the notion of "substance" in talk about the Trinity (since it tends to lead into modalism), Panikkar turns to *advaita*:

The *advaita* which helps us express suitably the 'relation' God-World is again a precious aid in elucidating the intra-trinitarian problem. If the Father and the Son are not two, they are not one either: the Spirit both unites and distinguishes them. He is the bond of unity; the *we* in between, or rather within.<sup>35</sup>

Panikkar recognizes the role Hindu thought can play in focusing attention on Spirit:

There is no doubt that hindu thought is especially well prepared to contribute to the elaboration of a deeper theology of the Spirit. Indeed, is not one of the fundamental urges precisely this, to rise and strive towards the discovery and realisation of the Spirit --

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 46.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 46-47.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 62.

striving and thrusting that is worthy of admiration and often inspired, though sometimes, also, tragic?"

Finally, Panikkar relates the "immanent" Spirit, the Spirit in which we worship through the Son, to the Father, to the *atman* of the Upanisads:

It is to this Spirit that most of the upanisadic assertions about the Absolute point, when seen in their own deepest light. One could cite almost every page of the Upanisads for examples. Indeed what is the Spirit but the *atman* of the Upanisads, which is said to be identical with *brahman*, although this identity can only be existentially recognized and affirmed once 'realisation' has been attained? [sic] 'In the beginning was the Logos' the New Testament affirms. 'At the end will be the *atman*' adds the wisdom of this cosmic Testament to the canon that is not yet closed."

From his dynamic and relational perspective, Panikkar critiques the Augustinian conception of the Trinity (the Father, Being; the Son, Intellect; the Spirit, Love) as valid but "anthropocentric." He makes his own proposal:

Now what we would venture to suggest -- with the Gospel in hand and at heart -- is the Father, Source, the Son, Being, the *Thou*; and the Spirit, Return to Being (or Ocean of Being), the *we*."

The Spirit is conceived as passing from Father to Son and Son to Father in *perichoresis* or *circumincessio*, in "the dynamic inner circularity of the Trinity."<sup>22</sup> The integral spirituality of

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 63-64.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 68.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 61.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the basis for our living together:

"The Trinity is, indeed, the real mystery of Unity, for true unity is trinitarian." *The Trinity and the Religious*

*Experience of Man* is evidence of the fruitfulness of his choice to reflect and write from within the situation of the encounter; inspired by his encounter with Advaita Vedânta, he recovers the significance of the Spirit in a trinitarian faith. As well, he suggests how a trinitarian faith can express a universal (not homogeneous) vision that respects the concrete distinctive dimensions of multireligious experience -- the apophatic spirituality of Buddhism, the personal spirituality of Christianity and the spirituality of the immanent Spirit of Advaita Vedânta.

#### Hindu Non-dualism through the Christian Trinity

A second instance of a trinitarian reflection employing Panikkar's diatopical interpretation by means of a dialogical dialogue is his account of an encounter in the 1960s with a follower of Advaita Vedânta. "Advaita and Bhakti: A Hindu-Christian Dialogue"<sup>11</sup> is based on a conversation that took

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 61.

<sup>12</sup>Panikkar, "Advaita and Bhakti" (1979), 277-289. Material for this chapter previously appeared as "Advaita and Bhakti. A Letter from Vrindaban," *Bhagawan Das Commemoration Volume* (Varanasi: Kashi-Vidyapeeth University, 1969); "Advaita and Bhakti. Love and Identity in a Hindu-Christian Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Temple University Press), Vol. VII, No. 2 (Spring 1970).

place with an *advaitan* in the town of Vrindāvan, the birth-place of Krishna and a centre for *bhakti* devotional practice.<sup>32</sup>

Panikkar introduces the ideas that were the fruit of the conversation with a number of general observations. The first consideration he puts forward is the realization that this particular dialogue must overcome the distance between quite distinct cultural spaces (*topoi*), and that, therefore, it is a situation calling for a "diatopical hermeneutics." He is aware that the dialogue between Hinduism and Christianity "very often gets stuck and cannot proceed further."<sup>33</sup> He highlights the potential that there is for misunderstanding based on prejudice and ignorance in the dialogue. Christians can be of the belief that Hindus do not allow for a personal God nor do they give charity first place in the duties of religion; *advaitic* Hindus can judge that Christians make God "other" and so do not allow for union with the Absolute. Especially for "the more 'realized' Hindu who mostly professes *advaita*," what is understood as the application by Christians of the concept of "person" to God amounts to a form of idolatry.<sup>34</sup>

Panikkar indicates that there is a basic hermeneutical principle that directs his approach to the dialogue. This dialogue is to be more than an external meeting with someone who

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<sup>32</sup>Panikkar, "Advaita and Bhakti" (1979), 279.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 278.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 278.

believes differently; thus it must not only be an interreligious but an "intrareligious" dialogue demanding that the problems being addressed also be issues within one's religious world, problematic within both religious worlds:

'Dialogue' is not just an external meeting with somebody who has other ideas than I have. Dialogue in the real sense arises precisely where I (or we) discover the same currents and problems within the religion of the 'other' as I (or we) find in my (or our) own religious world."

Another principle comes into play as well, that of mutual explication of the traditions. Panikkar recalls that in his earlier work, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (1973), he had explored how the nondualistic experience of the *advaitan* reflected in the Upanisads might lead to the discovery of new aspects pertinent to the Christian's doctrine and experience of the Trinity. The present essay, "Advaita and Bhakti," moves for the most part in another direction, that is, from the Christian notion that God is Love to explore possibilities for the *advaitan's* nondualism. However, as Panikkar explains, this is not exclusively a challenge to Hinduism coming from without:

This problem is primarily an internal matter for

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 278. This is the intrareligious dialogue about which Panikkar has written: "The real religious or theological task, if you will, begins when the two views meet head-on inside oneself, when dialogue prompts genuine religious pondering, and even a religious crisis, at the bottom of a Man's heart; when interpersonal dialogue turns into intrapersonal soliloquy." Panikkar, "Faith and Belief: A Multireligious Experience," in *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (1978), 10.



Hinduism, which in its main devotional trends is a religion of love (*bhakti*), and in its more contemplative and philosophical aspects a religion of knowledge (*jñāna*) (the latter claiming superiority over the former).<sup>36</sup>

Panikkar and his *advaitin* interlocutor immediately move beyond the traditional polemics of encounters between Christians and Hindus. Together they dismiss the standard position of *Advaita Vedānta* that *bhakti* is a lower form of practice on the way to the *advaitic* experience of *jñāna*.<sup>37</sup> Nor do they consider valid the argument that the *jñānin* performs devotional rituals only to satisfy the needs and demands of others, for this response does not address the kind of *advaitan* who experiences a "radical claim of love."<sup>38</sup>

The dialogue turns to a shared ground of experience for the dialogue partners, the experience of human love. The authenticity of the *advaitic* experience is put into question.

Every real love is not satisfied with a general love but,

... needs the other as *particular* other, personal and unrepeatable. Every real love is unique: Where then is the place for universality? Can *advaita* admit the particular? Has the love of a mother for her child, for instance, or that of a Man for his beloved, an ultimate value?<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Panikkar, "Advaita and Bhakti" (1979), 279.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 279.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 280.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 280-281.

In Panikkar's judgement, the "classic advaitic answer" that one does not love the other for his or her own sake but for the *atman* is a form of monism, not true *advaita*.<sup>100</sup> Panikkar's solution is to view *advaita* in the light of trinitarian thought --

... a 'source' that reproduces itself fully as an identical image, and that later emerges into Being as that which receives the source. The 'image' is the Being. The source of Being, because it is the source, is not Being -- but precisely its source.<sup>101</sup>

This is the flow of love known in the experience of love:

Only one who shares in this dynamism can witness the unceasing flow of divine Life: a Love that gives itself up fully and is rescued, as it were, by the total answer of the beloved, returning the love of the Beloved by responding with love.<sup>102</sup>

Panikkar approaches the encounter anticipating that a new understanding can emerge from praxis. Thus *Advaita Vedānta* is not caught in its historical formulations but continues to appeal in the present to the intuition of non-duality at its root. In Panikkar's view, this intuition of non-duality means that an adequate formulation must eschew both monism and dualism.

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<sup>100</sup>"The classic *advaita* answer is well known: One does not love someone -- say friend, wife or husband -- for his or her own sake but for the sake of *âtman*. Love is all there is; no lover or beloved -- all distinction between them is blotted out. I feel that there is in this a deep truth -- insofar as it answers the need to overcome dualism, but I am convinced that it is not the deepest truth of *advaita*, but rather a pitfall inherent in pure monism. I should think that *advaita* would oppose such pure monism as it opposes all dualism." *Ibid.*, 281.

<sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*, 282.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, 282.

Panikkar is concerned with the question whether there is place for love in the *advaitic* experience:

Now an *advaitin* is one who has realized the absolute nonduality of Being, Reality, the Ultimate, the Absolute -- whatever the name we choose to indicate the Ineffable. There is no place for dualism, but there is none for monism either. Dualism cannot be ultimate, because where there are two, there is a relation between them that stands above and is more final than both. Monism cannot be ultimate either because it denies the problem's very assumption; in a pure monism there is no room even for factors like illusion, falsehood, time, a lower level of truth and speech.<sup>123</sup>

For Panikkar the plenitude of the Absolute (the Trinity) sheds new light on *advaita*. *Brahman-atman* is not just one thing. To love the *atman* in the person is to respond to the love expressed in that person as unique and unrepeatable. This is a reading of the person as relatedness and not as an autonomous individual:

Person in the context of *advaita* is nothing but the concrete descent -- or revelation -- of (divine) love. The uniqueness of every person is based in this ever-different, and so unique, love-relation. *Advaitic* love does not love the individual, but the personal, not the 'property' of the beloved, but the divine gift bestowed upon her: that which the beloved does not possess, but is.<sup>124</sup>

Both Panikkar's image of lovers gazing in the same direction, not at one another, and his image of sparks and fire evoke a relatedness that is neither monist nor dualist. Human love has an orientation beyond but not separate from those who are in

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<sup>123</sup>Ibid., 282.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 285.

love:

Real human love does not consist in gazing at one another but in looking in the same direction, in worshiping together in a unitive adoration. It is not authentic and ultimate unless it is a sacrament -- a real symbol of the divine identity discovered in two pilgrim sparks fusing themselves in order to reach the single divine Fire.<sup>125</sup>

Panikkar points to the possibility of the mutual explication of Christian trinitarian theory and *advaitic* doctrine. In the explication of Christianity by *advaita*, the *advaitic* doctrine is supportive of Christian claims that trinitarian teaching is not disguised tritheism. Panikkar explains:

If God, the Father, is the ultimate I who calls -- generates -- the Son as His Thou, manifesting and reflecting Him, then the Spirit is not only the personified Love of the Father and the reciprocal self-gift of the Son, but the nonduality (*advaita*) of the Father and Son. In other words, *advaita* applied to the Trinity would mean that there are not three distinct beings (as if this would ever be possible ultimately!) but that the only I loves himself and discovers his nonduality (which is the Spirit) in the (him)self which is the Thou (the Son).<sup>126</sup>

In the explication of *advaita* by Christianity, trinitarian teaching gives some intimation of how an *advaitan* could envision the love relation to be consistent with the root intuition of *advaita*:

The Trinity, on the other hand, applied to *advaita*, would show that non-dualism can have room for Love -- understood precisely as the inner movement of this 'One

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<sup>125</sup>Ibid., 287.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid., 287.

without second' (*ekam eva advitīyam*).<sup>127</sup>

This reflection on an encounter that Panikkar had with an *advaitan* illustrates what is meant by a diatopical hermeneutic. The encounter is a fully existential one with a feeling of urgency to it. The fact of misunderstanding and prejudice between Christians and *advaitic* Hindus argues for an approach that goes in another direction than that of the traditional aggressive polemics. Yet the diatopical nature of the situation, the fact that it is an encounter between persons from traditions with distinct founding events and texts, raises the question of criteria for judging on disputed issues. The criteria are not external to the dialogue but generated from within the existential encounter. In this instance, the criterion is the shared appreciation of the intuition of non-dualism that is neither monism nor dualism.

The question addressed by Panikkar and his *advaitan* interlocutor concerns the status of love. Mutual fecundation of trinitarian teaching and *advaitic* doctrine helps to free the Christian and Hindu from their static and conflictual positions. Panikkar illustrates the transformative potential of a dialogical dialogue that moves to an intrareligious dialogue and returns to test new insights within the respective religious traditions.

#### Summary

Panikkar's familiarity with the West and its aggressive

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 287.

approaches to knowledge and penchant for universalizing have made him suspicious of the motivation of the West in its encounter with the other religious traditions. Christian "microdox" approaches to religious belief and practice have led to much misunderstanding. Against the background of colonial history, he finds the dialectical dialogue inadequate for the "diatopical" situation of radical cultural and religious difference. This situation, which begins with an apparent impasse in positions held by various traditions, calls for a distinctive diatopical hermeneutics which Panikkar begins to develop as the dialogical dialogue. Intrinsic to this dialogical dialogue is multireligious experience that moves from the exterior interreligious encounter to the interior meeting of traditions in the intrareligious dialogue and then returns again to transform the public positions of the respective traditions. Panikkar is present to the encounter not as a detached observer, but as a Catholic believer grounded in an open trinitarian vision that draws from the experience and insights of the world's religious traditions and contributes in turn to these traditions.

### THIRD PART: PANIKKAR'S CRITICS INTERPRETATION

#### Preface

The following two chapters address interpretations that have been made of Panikkar's account of pluralism. These chapters review dissenting and concurring views taken toward Panikkar's work. They prepare for a final chapter of evaluation of Panikkar's account of multireligious experience and the related pluralist attitude that he has identified and promotes. The exchange that goes on between Panikkar and his critics has the exploratory, tentative and, on occasion, over-stated style of a good conversation. In addition, understanding what the critics are about requires some sense of the background from which they develop their responses to Panikkar. This is the case for Paul F. Knitter who has stated that his own theology is rooted in his biography and that coming to understand the "thinking" of a theologian involves a study of the "living" of the theologian.

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Knitter writes: "to try to understand a theologian's 'thinking' without also looking at her 'living' is like a biologist attempting to understand an animal species without regard for its environmental niche." Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 2. In an earlier text, *No Other Name?: A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (American Society of Missiology Series, No. 7, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985), his "Preface" begins: "All theology, we are told, is rooted in biography. This book confirms that statement" (xiii). He has introduced his more recent tandem of books on a correlational and globally responsible theology with an autobiographical introduction. *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (1996) repeats the autobiographical account of

Following this principle, our presentation of what Knitter has said about Panikkar's proposals on religious pluralism interprets these statements in relation to stages in Knitter's intellectual biography. This principle that leads us to locate the thought of a theologian within the theologian's living has some application to our understanding of the other critic whom we consider at some length in Chapter Seven, Bernard Lonergan. Lonergan's references to Panikkar occur in articles written in the latter stages of Lonergan's intellectual career, in the period following the publication of his work, *Method in Theology* (1972).<sup>1</sup> They are geared to Lonergan's specific purposes in that period. His references to Panikkar indicate directions for those who would carry intentionality analysis<sup>2</sup> forward with respect to religious

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Knitter's theological journey given in its companion volume, *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995).

<sup>1</sup>Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (1972). Lonergan's citations of Panikkar include: Lonergan, "Prolegomena to the Study of the Emerging Religious Consciousness of Our Time" (1985), 67, 68, 70, 73; Bernard Lonergan, "Third Lecture: The Ongoing Genesis of Methods in A Third Collection, F.E. Crowe, Editor (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1985), 159, 165; Bernard Lonergan, "A Post-Hegelian Philosophy of Religion" in A Third Collection, F.E. Crowe, Editor (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1985), 217, 223; Bernard Lonergan, "Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon," *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 12 1994: 135. Pierrot Lambert, Charlotte Tansey, and Cathleen Going, ed, *Caring About Meaning: Patterns in the Life of Bernard Lonergan*, Thomas More Institute Papers /82, (Thomas More Institute: Montreal, 1982), 23-24.

<sup>2</sup>For an account of the implications of the shift from a faculty psychology to intentionality analysis see Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (1972), 340-343.



experience and reflection in the interreligious encounter.

In presenting the responses of critics of Panikkar's account of pluralism, this chapter and the following chapter begin an evaluation process. The reception of his thought with respect to the relation of Christians to other religious traditions has varied. However, Panikkar's reflections on multireligious experience and his proposals on pluralism are exploratory and could be appropriately evaluated in terms of their fertility as sources of theory and practice. In the reception of his thought one can begin to discern a "retroductive warrant" for his proposals.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CRITICS I: THE DISSENTING VIEWS OF PAUL KNITTER AND OTHERS

This chapter presents the views of critics who have expressed reservations about Panikkar's thoughts on pluralism. They question the implications of his thought for the praxis of dialogue, and raise concerns about the context in terms of which he has formulated his views. Having depicted Panikkar as proposing a theory of religious pluralism that views Being as

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<sup>1</sup>"A retroductive warrant is not so much an inductive confirmation as it is the theoretical and practical fruitfulness that flows from the imaginative construal of all the available evidence. A warrant is retroductive to the extent that it offers the most feasible and comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon, accounts for unexpected and unanticipated phenomena, and enables the scientific endeavour to move on in practice." Francis Shüssler Fiorenza, Editor, *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1992), 77.

allowing a plurality of contradictory truths, these critics have raised the spectre of relativism.<sup>5</sup> They have questioned whether Panikkar's account of pluralism is indifferent to the determination of truth and the resistance to evil. Such a relativist pluralism would not be true to the critical and challenging dimensions of Christianity and other religious traditions.<sup>6</sup> Among critics who make this kind of interpretation and have expressed in specific articles their dissent from Panikkar's pluralist attitude are John Milbank, Gerard Larson and Paul F. Knitter. After a summary account of what Milbank and Larson have to say, this chapter focuses on the American theologian of religions, Paul F. Knitter, and on a critique he has made of Panikkar's account of pluralism. The last section of this chapter will make note of recent developments in Knitter's views with respect to Panikkar's pluralism.

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<sup>5</sup>Relativism in one account is defined as, "The opinion that the truths man knows are valid only in the context of a particular finite system, that is the world of the individual's own sensibility, whereas there are other systems, equally sound, outside it." Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, "Relativism" in *Theological Dictionary*, C. Ernst O.P., Editor (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1965), 398-399.

<sup>6</sup>"If Christian theologians are not to sentimentalize the reality of the harsh, demanding, healing love disclosed in the portrait of Jesus of Nazareth confessed in the New Testament, love as real other-regard will not shrink from the necessary moments of confrontation, conflict, argument demanded by all serious conversation on the fundamental questions of existence in the situation and the fundamental responses in every religious tradition." David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 447.

Panikkar's Pluralism Interpreted as Theory

In 1986, Panikkar read a paper at a conference at Claremont in California, a conference intended to facilitate the move toward a theology of religions that would be genuinely pluralist. The presentations at that conference were gathered together in a collection entitled *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (1987). Panikkar's paper, "The Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges: Three Kairological Moments of Christic Self-Consciousness" was included as an article in that collection. John Milbank is one of a group of authors who reacted to the essays gathered together in that collection in another collection entitled *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*.

In his essay, "The End of Dialogue," Milbank, having praised Panikkar for his refusal to allow dialogue to be circumscribed by the norms of Western practical reason, goes on to criticize him for his residual "pluralist ontology." In a misreading of

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<sup>1</sup>Panikkar, "The Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges: Three Kairological Moments of Christic Self-Consciousness" (1978), 89-116.

<sup>2</sup>Gavin D'Costa, Editor, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990).

<sup>3</sup>"Panikkar offers an alternative to the praxis solution in rejecting all modes of universal mediation and instead espousing a plural account of ultimate reality itself. However, I shall argue that Panikkar's unwise desire to fuse neo-Vedantic pluralism with Christian Trinitarianism exhibits a residual wish to affirm such a pluralist ontology independently of any tradition or any time-bound vantage-point." John Milbank, "The End of Dialogue"

Panikkar's text, Milbank depicts what he terms Panikkar's "alternative to the praxis solution" as a proposal that

... reality itself is 'plural,' and that this circumstance is itself 'the primordial myth,' preserved in one fashion in the Christological and Trinitarian doctrines of Christianity, and in other fashions elsewhere.<sup>11</sup>

Strangely, Milbank's footnote reference (footnote 30) at the end of the above text cites a page (102) in Panikkar's article, "The Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges" (1986), that makes no mention of "reality," nor describes reality as "plural." In fact, nowhere in the article is reality described as plural, though a later section of Panikkar's article (page 109) holds that reality is "pluralistic -- that is, incommensurable with either unity or plurality."<sup>12</sup> On the basis of his reading of Panikkar's text as

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in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, G. D'Costa, Editor (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 175.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 188.

<sup>12</sup>More fully, Panikkar's statement reads: "Pluralism adopts a nondualistic, advaitic attitude that defends the pluralism of truth because reality itself is pluralistic -- that is, incommensurable with either unity or plurality" (109). Whereas Milbank depicts Panikkar taking the position that reality is "plural," what Panikkar writes is that "reality is pluralistic." Moreover, there is no reference by Panikkar in this text to the Trinitarian doctrine. It is possible that Milbank is recalling an earlier article of Panikkar, "The Myth of Pluralism," in which Panikkar has written: "The problem of pluralism arises, I would contend, because the very nature of reality is pluralistic. The underlying myths for the doctrines of the Trinity and nondualism and many other myths, might stand for this insight." We note that in this reference, as in the previous references, Panikkar has not written that reality is plural. Panikkar, "The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of Babel -- A Meditation on Non-Violence" (1979), 216.

positing that reality is "plural," Milbank interprets Panikkar as holding to a pluralism that leaves opposing systems locked in unresolvable agonistic struggle.<sup>12</sup> Milbank has taken Panikkar's account of pluralism to be a theory that reality comprises "plural" contradicting truths. In presenting his account of Panikkar's pluralism, Milbank not only misinterprets Panikkar but misquotes him.

Gerald James Larson, in a somewhat similar fashion to Milbank, has understood Panikkar's pluralism to be asserting "a plurality of exclusive 'truths'."<sup>13</sup> He questions this pluralism both in terms of its impact on public, reasoned discourse and with respect to its logical coherence. With a view to the relation between the intellectual life and action for social transformation, Larson expresses his opposition to an account of pluralism which

... by undercutting a common rational framework of serious intellectual reflection ... marginalizes the

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<sup>12</sup>On the basis of reading Panikkar to say that reality is "plural" Milbank writes that "the ontological pluralism proposed by Panikkar is in fact at once neo-Vedantic and Trinitarian" and finds the "nonviolent consensus" of Trinitarianism "incompatible with the 'agonistic' pluralism of neo-Hinduism (which is perhaps congruent with a nihilistic postmodernism)." Milbank, "The End of Dialogue" (1990), 188-189.

<sup>13</sup>Larson writes: "the Panikkarian pluralist position involves an equivocation. It wishes to continue to make assertions, namely, that there is a plurality of exclusive 'truths,' from the vantage point of three-valued (or multi-valued) logic in which assertion is no longer warranted." Gerald James Larson, "Contra Pluralism" in *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar*, J. Prabhu, Editor (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 86. Earlier, Gerald James Larson, "Contra Pluralism," *Soundings* 73.2-3 (Summer/Fall 1990), 303-326.

intellectual life in all of its forms and thereby eliminates any intellectual persuasive basis for changing or transforming the status quo beyond that of the contingencies of the will to power and the privileges of status and wealth in modern social reality.<sup>14</sup>

Larson interprets Panikkar as promoting a "theoretical pluralism," that is, claiming that pluralism is to be addressed at the "intellectual" level.<sup>15</sup> Larson thinks that Panikkar has illegitimately imported a two valued logic into a three valued logic, that is, Panikkar has claimed religions as true or false within a logic that does not admit that a position has to be true or false.<sup>16</sup> Having termed Panikkar's pluralism a "theoretical pluralism,"<sup>17</sup> Larson claims that there "is no such thing as a theoretical pluralist position."<sup>18</sup>

It seems that if Panikkar's account of pluralism is

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<sup>14</sup>Larson, "Contra Pluralism" (1996), 74.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 76.

<sup>16</sup>Larson recalls the "three laws of thought" and says that Panikkar's "theoretical pluralism" is consistent with the first two laws, the principle of identity [A=A] and the principle of non-contradiction [not both A and -A]. The difficulty is with the third law of thought, the principle of the excluded middle [A must be either B or -B]. Larsen affirms that Panikkar's formulation of the problem of pluralism is correct -- pluralism is not merely plurality -- but that since Panikkar's proposal violates the principle of the excluded middle, it is unintelligible in a two-valued (truth-falsehood) logic. For Larsen, "the notion of pluralism so formulated is as self-defeating as any formulation of relativism and as tripped up by the problem of self-referentiality as any formulation of universalism or absolutism." Ibid., 72.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 71.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 87.

understood as a theory then it is subject to the charge of equivocating between distinct logical frameworks. But Panikkar's repeated assertion is that he is proposing not a theory but an attitude.<sup>1</sup> He has agreed with Larson that if what he was presenting were a theory of pluralism then it would be vulnerable to Larson's argument that Panikkar has inappropriately attempted to make assertions of truth and falsity (two valued logic) within a three valued logic. Larson has understood correctly that Panikkar considers the problem of pluralism as more than simply the pragmatic acceptance of plurality. However, Panikkar does not accept that his proposals can be termed "theoretical pluralism." Larson's use of the qualifier "theoretical" signals for Panikkar the point at which Larson has misinterpreted his account of pluralism. Panikkar writes:

Larson calls my 'pluralism' 'theoretical pluralism' in order to stress that it is not merely pragmatic or practical pluralism. I reject that adjective and feel that emphasizing this epithet is what leads Larson to find fault with it. It all depends, of course, on what we understand by *theory*. Pluralism, as I understand it, puts today the strictest challenge to the monarchy of reason -- ultimately to monotheism.

I take pluralism to be not a metaphysical view of the universe (although it may entail one -- or many),

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<sup>1</sup>For example: Panikkar, "Prolegomena to the Problem of Universality of the Church" (1972), 160; Raimundo Panikkar, "Have 'Religions' the Monopoly on Religion?," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 11 1974: 516; Panikkar, "The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of Babel -- A Meditation on Non-Violence" (1979), 222; R. Panikkar, "Metatheology as Fundamental Theology" in *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics: Cross-cultural Studies* (1979), 331; Panikkar, "The Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges: Three Kairological Moments of Christic Self-Consciousness" (1987), 110; Panikkar, "A Self-Critical Dialogue" (1996), 249-250.

but a fundamental human attitude: *aptitudo*, that for which I am *aptus*, fit."

### Panikkar's Pluralism as the Embrace of Many Absolutes

Paul F. Knitter's reaction to Panikkar is articulated in an article first published in 1991.<sup>22</sup> He begins his critique with the recognition that Panikkar has distanced himself from the group of theologians seeking a pluralist paradigm.<sup>23</sup> Although Knitter framed the title of his article disjunctively as "Cosmic Confidence or Preferential Option?", he claimed that he did not wish to challenge the positive elements of Panikkar's proposals.

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<sup>22</sup>Panikkar, "A Self-Critical Dialogue" (1996), 249-250.

<sup>23</sup>We are drawing from Paul F. Knitter, "Cosmic Confidence or Preferential Option?" in *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar*, J. Prabhu, Editor (1996), 177-191. This article was originally published as Paul Knitter, "Cosmic Confidence or Preferential Option?" *Bangalore Theological Forum* XXIII(4) 1991: 1-24.

Knitter refers to Panikkar's letter "Reader's Response" to the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (1989) in response to a review critical of his contribution to *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*. Panikkar was described as one among those who "sacrifice the heart of biblical Christian faith to accommodate the spirit of the Age" [Carl F. Braaten, "The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 12(July) 1988: 136]. Panikkar protests that in his own work he is promoting "relativity" not "relativism" and in doing so distances himself from the pluralist project. He writes: "It seems that I am thrown into the same bag with all those who defend a certain eclecticism and undermine the centrality of the Christian mystery, as if I were espousing relativism, when -- in fact -- I am propounding relativity. The pluralism I defend is in no way a negation of the centrality of Christ when we speak Christian language, or when we think and write about the Christian economy of salvation. All that Christian orthodoxy affirms is right: Christ is divine. What Christianity denies may be wrong without impinging on orthodoxy." Knitter, "Cosmic Confidence or Preferential Option?" (1996), 178.



Rather, his stated goal was to "complement" Panikkar's cosmic confidence.<sup>23</sup> Yet Knitter's critique is forceful. In this particular critique Knitter understands Panikkar so to emphasize the incommensurability of traditions that he leaves the religious traditions isolated from mutual challenge. Panikkar's pluralism would be, as Knitter understands it, "the embrace of many absolutes."<sup>24</sup> As with Milbank and Larsen, Knitter, at least in this article, appears to be representing Panikkar as holding a theory of pluralism. If it is correct to represent Panikkar as proposing that various traditions constitute a pluralist situation of many absolute truths with no possibility of mutual judgement and evaluation, then his pluralism appears both as indifferentism and as relativism. If this is his view, one could be drawn to conclude that the pluralism he promotes cannot address the urgent conflictual issues that can mean life and death for the poor. However, the question arises whether Panikkar's thoughts on pluralism have been accurately depicted by

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<sup>23</sup>Evidently, Knitter's title parallels that of Panikkar's 1984 article which reads: "The Invisible Harmony: A Universal Theory of Religion or a Cosmic Confidence in Reality?" Concerning Panikkar and his "theory," Knitter writes: "And I am pointing not so much to what his theory contains and [sic] to what I think is *missing* in it. My proposals intend not to correct what is false but to complement what is incomplete." Ibid., 183.

<sup>24</sup>Knitter wrote concerning Panikkar's pluralism: "Panikkar is calling on Christians to recognize the absolute claims of other religions. Christianity, in its own self-understanding and in its attitudes toward other traditions is no longer the 'only absolute.' Pluralism means there are many absolutes, which are not simply to be stoically tolerated but happily embraced." Ibid., 181.

Knitter. Does he hold that "pluralism means there are many absolutes" and so "clothe pluralism with a kind of ontological ultimacy"? In 1996, Panikkar objects directly to Knitter's depiction (1991, 1996) of his account of pluralism. He writes:

For me, pluralism does not mean that 'there are many absolutes.' On the contrary, the pluralistic attitude recognizes the contradiction of such an affirmation.<sup>25</sup>

In this same article in which he has represented Panikkar's pluralism as "the embrace of many absolutes," Knitter holds that Panikkar's cosmic confidence would be likely to function as a means of maintaining the status quo. It would not address the needs of the suffering victims and the suffering earth. Knitter puts forward the counter-proposal that the commitment of the religious traditions to the preferential option for the poor would be the "shaky ground" on which the various religious traditions would begin to collaborate and be open to mutual correction and thus escape the charge of relativism.

Knitter also asks whether Panikkar's account of pluralism sufficiently allows for judgements about error and for resistance to evil. Knitter warns against an interreligious dialogue that, rising from the context of white middle-class male academy, monastery and ashram, emphasizes the incommensurability of religious traditions. Such encounter, Knitter believes, has the participants trying to understand (partially and inadequately) one another's worlds, but never seriously trying to change one

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<sup>25</sup>Panikkar, "A Self-Critical Dialogue" (1996), 277.

another's worlds.<sup>45</sup>

In developing his critique, however, Knitter reveals that he is not distinguishing between theory and attitude, the conceptual result and the performative dynamic. Thus, Knitter identifies the "pluralist *model*" as one "which recognizes a possible 'rough parity' and mutual validity of many religious paths."<sup>46</sup> It is in terms of this understanding of pluralism as "*model*" that he goes on to describe Panikkar as "a maverick or gadfly pluralist." He writes:

Taking his place with those who are seeking new and more pluralistic models for understanding the world of many religions, he warns his fellow-seekers that they are going about their search either in false directions or with a lack of sufficient resolve.<sup>47</sup>

In response to Knitter, Panikkar objects that he does not intend to take his place among those "who are seeking new and more pluralistic models." His proposals on pluralism are of another order altogether than that of "models."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Knitter, "Cosmic Confidence or Preferential Option?" (1996), 184.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 178. Knitter's language appears to be influenced by the Protestant theologian, Langdon Gilkey, who uses the phrase "rough parity" equivalently with "recognition of the co-validity and co-efficacy of other religions." Langdon Gilkey, "Plurality and Its Theological Implications" in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, J. Hick and P.F. Knitter, Editor (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1987), 37.

<sup>47</sup>Knitter, "Cosmic Confidence or Preferential Option?" (1996), 178.

<sup>48</sup>Panikkar writes in response to this framing of his account of pluralism by Knitter: "I would like to remark that I do not

Knitter questions whether Panikkar's pluralism will undermine the commitment of participants in dialogue both to truth and to responsible action. He writes of Panikkar's "notion of radical pluralism":

His notion of radical pluralism might lead participants in dialogue to simply delight in diversity without every really 'judging' the differences. To clothe pluralism with a kind of ontological ultimacy, as Panikkar does, can all too easily create the temptation, in David Tracy's opinion, 'to enjoy the pleasure of difference without ever committing oneself to any particular vision of resistance or hope.'

Panikkar, in Knitter's view, must say more than he does in order to demonstrate that his proposal fosters relatedness and not relativism:

More specifically, it does not seem that Panikkar has sufficiently laid out the criteria -- or the procedure -- by which he can confront and oppose what seem to be the *intolerables* that are present within our contemporary world. I, and many others, find ourselves morally constrained to declare intolerable such realities as needless starvation, oppression of some human beings by others, torture, and economic injustice that destroys both human and planetary life. Often such intolerables are promoted or condoned by religion.<sup>2</sup>

Knitter then makes a case for a foundation for dialogue that will be more specific and concrete than that of Panikkar's cosmic

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speak of 'a pluralist model' or of 'the validity of many religions.'" Panikkar, "A Self-Critical Dialogue" (1996), 277.

<sup>2</sup>Knitter is quoting David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 90. Knitter, "Cosmic Confidence or Preferential Option?" (1996), 185.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 185.

confidence.<sup>32</sup> He claims that without a more concrete foundation than that of cosmic confidence the dialogue remains that of the elites, the academic and ecclesial ivory towers:

But in recognizing the need for critical stances, he does not elaborate on how such stances are to be found, or what are the 'positive and concrete reasons' for determining 'evil' or intolerables. Here, I suggest, is one of the 'softest' areas of Panikkar's otherwise challenging vision of interreligious dialogue. His appeal to a 'cosmic confidence,' by itself, doesn't do the job of enabling one to take critical stances and enter the difficult arena of not only understanding but also of confronting and opposing each other.<sup>33</sup>

### Knitter's Soteriocentric Orientation

Knitter himself contributed an article entitled "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions"<sup>34</sup> to *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*. In his article, he cites Panikkar's plea to abandon the search for a universal theory or common essence or even one God in all the religious traditions:

Pluralism does not allow for a universal system. A pluralistic system would be a contradiction in terms. The incommensurability of ultimate systems is unbridgeable. This incompatibility is not a lesser evil ... but a

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<sup>32</sup>Knitter wants Panikkar's "cosmic confidence" to be "rooted in what Christians would call a preferential option for the suffering victims of this suffering earth." He writes that, "I will try to state how his position might be enhanced or clarified by grounding 'cosmic trust' in a preferential option for victims." Ibid., 177.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 185.

<sup>34</sup>Paul F. Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions" in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, J. Hick and P.F. Knitter, Editors (1987), 178-200.

revelation itself of the nature of reality.<sup>35</sup>

Knitter, in his present article, expresses dissatisfaction with the approach of Panikkar.<sup>36</sup> He judges that Panikkar has not met the conditions of his own critique. He claims to enter dialogue directly:

...trusting that, in the very praxis of communication, common ground or shared viewpoints will be discovered or created ... and yet [he seems] to be searching for something 'common' within religious experience or history.

Knitter writes:

Disavowing any universal theory for the religions, Panikkar still invokes one aspiration (in the literal sense of one breath) or one inspiration (as one spirit) for all religions.<sup>37</sup>

Knitter reaches the key point of his critique when he asks what criteria might evaluate among religious traditions without proving to be too easily susceptible to manipulation? In his view, doctrinal criteria are not adequate, nor are the criteria

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<sup>35</sup>Knitter quotes Panikkar -- "The Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges: Three Kairological Moments of Christic Self-Consciousness" (1987), 110 -- and makes reference to a similar plea for openness made by John Cobb in which Cobb writes: "The problem is the quest for what is common. Truly to accept pluralism is to abandon that quest. If our liberal theists really wish to be open, they should simply be open. The openness is inhibited by the need to state in advance what we have in common." Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions" (1987), 184.

<sup>36</sup>And John Cobb.

<sup>37</sup>Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions" (1987), 185.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 185.

of mystery:

Doctrinal criteria -- concerning the qualities of the Ultimate, or the activity of a universal Logos, or the presence of an anonymous Christ or Buddha -- prove too controversial and prone to ideology. Criteria from mystical experience -- Merton's 'communion before communication' or Panikkar's 'Pneuma before Logos' -- are helpful but often, in the end, hard to apply.<sup>39</sup>

The question that Knitter raises is how to "indicate," "discover," "work creatively with," what it is that "bonds the religions of the world"? His thought at this point puts him in tension with Panikkar's plea for an openness responsive to the Spirit as Knitter proposes that there should be a common "context" or "approach" in the preferential option for the poor:

This is where a liberation theology of religions may be of great help. If there is no preestablished common ground or common essence that we can invoke before dialogue, perhaps there is a common approach or a common context with which we can begin dialogue in order to create our shared 'shaky ground.' For liberation theologians this common context would be the *preferential option for the poor and the nonperson* -- that is, the option to work with and for the victims of this world.<sup>40</sup>

#### Knitter's Later Evaluation of Panikkar

It is of interest to note that the critique of Panikkar raised by Knitter (1991) appears to have been resolved in Knitter's recent books (1995, 1996) in favour of Panikkar's thoughts on pluralism and cosmic confidence. In these later writings, Knitter has not repeated his notion that Panikkar's pluralism is "the embrace of many absolutes." Nor has he raised

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 189.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 185.

the charge of relativism against Panikkar. Indeed, he has recognized the priority of cosmic confidence as a "basis" for the preferential option. Indeed, Knitter seems to have reasserted the priority of attitude over theory in his own work and his references to Panikkar.

In order to understand Knitter's reactions to Panikkar it is helpful to know that he is a long-time reader of Panikkar's works.<sup>42</sup> At least three broad stages can be noted in Knitter's career as a theologian: an early period of enthusiasm for ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, a subsequent period of intense engagement with liberation theology and commitment to the preferential option for the poor, and a recent period of efforts to relate in a nuanced fashion interreligious and liberation perspectives.

From the beginning of his theological education in the early 1960s, Knitter was involved in the rapidly shifting theological discussions concerning religious plurality. Coming from a Catholic background characterized by exclusivist attitudes, he opened up to other religious traditions under the influence of Vatican II and was inspired by the inclusivist approach of Karl Rahner, the Catholic theologian. After taking his licentiate in

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<sup>42</sup>Paul F. Knitter makes positive and copious reference to Panikkar in an early work: *No Other Name?: A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (1985). His references to Panikkar's work continue in Paul F. Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions" (1987), 178-200; also in *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility* (1995) and in its companion volume, *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (1996).



Rome, he moved to Münster to explore under Rahner the question of Catholic relations to other religious traditions. His search for a dissertation topic led him to transfer to that Protestant faculty at Marburg in order to study the views of Protestant theologians on the relation of Christianity to other religions. His doctoral dissertation was a critique of the exclusivist neo-Barthian positions of certain German Protestant theologians on the relation of Christianity to other religious traditions.<sup>12</sup>

Going on to university work in North America after the completion of his doctoral studies, Knitter's teaching responsibilities and his awareness of the growing diversity of religious traditions led him to focus on interreligious issues. He has noted the influence on him at that time of John Dunne's methodology of "passing over" and "coming back."<sup>13</sup> As well, he has acknowledged his indebtedness to Panikkar and Thomas Merton for their guidance during this stage of his journey. He has been appreciative both of Panikkar's penetrating reflections on dialogue and of his creativity in passing over to the Hindu

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<sup>12</sup>Paul F. Knitter, *Towards a protestant theology of religions: a case study of Paul Althaus and contemporary attitudes (mit deutscher Zusammenfassung)*, *Marburger theologische Studien*; 11. Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1974.

<sup>13</sup>Dunne, *The Way of All the Earth* (1972).

tradition."<sup>11</sup> At the point of writing his major review of Christian attitudes to the world religions, *No Other Name: A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (1987), Knitter did not appear to consider Panikkar's proposals as vulnerable to the charge of relativism.<sup>12</sup>

During this period, Knitter came to the view that the changes in Christian self-understanding stemming from contact with the situation of religious plurality called for a shift from traditional Catholic Christocentric inclusivism. In his doctoral dissertation and in his earliest writings Knitter had been critical of Protestant exclusivism allowing revelation but not salvation through other religious traditions and had made a case for the kind of inclusivism being proposed by Karl Rahner in his reflections on what Rahner termed "anonymous Christians." Subsequently, Knitter's encounters with people of other religious

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<sup>11</sup>In his autobiographical account of his exploration of religious pluralism, Knitter notes his indebtedness to Panikkar and Merton: "Among my most trustworthy yet bold guides in this exploration were Raimon Panikkar, both in his theoretical directives (*The Intra-Religious Dialogue*, 1978) and in the way he passed over to Hinduism (*The Vedic Experience*, 1977), and Thomas Merton, in the way he brought Zen Buddhism to life and meaning (*Zen and the Birds of Appetite*, 1968)." Knitter, *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility* (1995), 7.

<sup>12</sup>At this point Knitter characterizes Panikkar as promoting a dialogue that will entail risk of conversion on the part of those involved in the dialogue. Knitter draws on Panikkar's *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (1978) in order to distinguish the "relativity" of beliefs from "relativism" -- "the relativity of my beliefs (which does not mean their relativism)...." Knitter, *No Other Name: A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (1987), 213.

traditions and his awareness of the growing impact of interreligious experience on Christians, pushed him to question the inclusivist paradigm.<sup>46</sup> In collaboration with other scholars, Knitter began to explore the lines of a pluralist paradigm. In his book, *No Other Name: A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (1987), he addressed the question of the role of Jesus Christ in Christian theological models and made the case for a non-normative Christology and a theocentric approach. He anticipated that such an approach would encourage dialogue within the encounter among religious traditions. Christians would not claim superiority over others and Christians and the believers of the other religious traditions would share a common commitment to God.

During the early 1980s Knitter's personal journey had put him in contact with the suffering of the people of Central America and Asia. At the same time, he undertook to study more closely the writings of the Latin American and Asian liberation theologians. As a result, Knitter began to develop his theological positions. He felt it necessary to address the dire need of the many poor who were also the people of the many religions. He came to the view that the foundation for dialogue

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<sup>46</sup>Although not fully in agreement with Hans Kung's position on the "finality" of the Christ event, Knitter found that Kung's critique of Rahner's "anonymous Christianity" in *On Being a Christian* (New York: Doubleday, 1976) focused his own growing doubts about the inclusivist paradigm. Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission & Global Responsibility* (1996), 8-9.

among the religious traditions should be collaboration directed by a preferential option for the poor and that theology should be soteriocentric. It is from a liberation perspective that Knitter articulated a critique of Panikkar's emphasis on cosmic confidence in the encounter among religious traditions.

Consistent with his dialogical commitment, Knitter in his two recently published texts, *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility* (1995) and *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (1996), has revised positions that he held in earlier writings. His proposal for a non-normative Christology and a theocentric approach articulated in *No Other Name: A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (1987) came under close scrutiny by theological peers. Knitter subsequently agreed with his critics that a Christology should be considered "normative."<sup>47</sup> He called for a "multi-normed, soteriocentric" normativity that would take into account the views of all religious persons.<sup>48</sup> Knitter has also been criticised for a

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<sup>47</sup>In a revision of what he had held in *No Other Name: A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions*, Knitter writes: "Truth that is nonnormative cannot go anywhere, like a sailboat without wind. So the critics insist (and I have to agree with them) that any truth claim worth its salt must be normative." *Ibid.*, 55. He develops what he means by a "normative" Christology in Chapter Four of this same book, 61-83.

<sup>48</sup>Knitter, *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility* (1995), 17.

reductive account of what founds and legitimates interreligious dialogue.<sup>12</sup> Showing himself responsive to the criticism he has received, it seems that Knitter has moved some distance toward Panikkar's position that it is the indeterminate "urge" that is cosmic confidence that gives a sense of what could be meant by justice and peace and thus is a "basis" for the further specification that is the preferential option for the poor.<sup>13</sup> In *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility* (1995), Knitter makes only occasional use of the phrase "preferential option,"<sup>14</sup> a wording which he had employed in the article questioning Panikkar's notion of "cosmic confidence."<sup>15</sup> It seems that Knitter has taken to heart Panikkar's critique of the ties between the word "option" and the

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<sup>12</sup>In his "Foreword" to Knitter's *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility* (1995), Kung lists a number of points of disagreement with Knitter. After stating that he and Knitter agree in working to have the religions of the world collaborate for justice, peace and a sustainable ecosystem. Kung adds: "I try to do this, without holding up, as Knitter does, the reality of suffering as the exclusive foundation and legitimation for interreligious dialogue." Hans Kung, "Foreword" in Knitter, *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility* (1995), xi.

<sup>13</sup>Panikkar suggests that cosmic confidence is the "basis" (280) for the preferential option. Panikkar, "A Self-Critical Dialogue" (1996), 280.

<sup>14</sup>An instance of such occasional use is Knitter's reference to the Indian theologian S. Arokiasamy on the "critical option for the last and least" and the "hermeneutical privilege or priority" of the voice of suffering victims. Knitter, *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility* (1995), 92.

<sup>15</sup>Knitter, "Cosmic Confidence or Preferential Option?" (1996).

"primacy of will" typical of the spirit of the West during the last few centuries.<sup>53</sup> For Panikkar, action in response to victims and the poor should flow from purity of heart with a spontaneity that the word "option" did not communicate.<sup>54</sup> What takes over for "preferential option" in Knitter's writing is the expression "globally responsible." Knitter writes:

A globally responsible dialogue is one that is aware that any interfaith encounter is incomplete, perhaps even dangerous, if it does not include, somehow, a concern for and an attempt to resolve the human and ecological suffering prevalent throughout the world.

Knitter continues to plead for the criteriological importance of commitment to victims. In his 1995 text, *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility*, he refers to Panikkar's image of Pneuma or Spirit and holds that a "soteriocentric global responsibility" can give "clarity and power" to the image of the Spirit. Hearing the voice of the Spirit in the cries of the victims means that "I know in whom I trust" (2 Timothy 1:12).<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Panikkar, "A Self-critical Dialogue" (1996), 282.

<sup>54</sup>Panikkar writes in paradoxical fashion concerning the word "option": "I feel I have no option but to strive for justice. I have no option but to speak the truth. I have no alternative other than to set my life at stake for the sake of peace.... We may certainly say no, but the yes is not the result of an option. It is the only possible way to live in freedom and joy, to be myself." Ibid., 283.

<sup>55</sup>Knitter, *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility* (1995), 15.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 81.

Moreover, Knitter takes up Panikkar's language and goes so far as to refer to a "'cosmotheandric' solidarity," a trust in the Spirit that encourages concern for the other. He seems very much of Panikkar's view when he writes of "trust in a universal Spirit" not as a bearer of "universal truths" or a "foundation" but as "process" or "interrelatedness":

Such a solidarity can be affirmed only on the basis of some kind of a belief or trust in a universal Spirit, or in something that establishes our identity, yet connects us in unity, and calls us to care for each other. The Spirit then is not a foundation but an interrelatedness that fosters unity through particularity, in shared compassion.

Knitter does not separate the promotion of the well-being of humans and the planet from the experience of the Mystery. He follows Panikkar in claiming that the cosmic and the human are in a non-dual relationship with the divine:

The religions aim to bring about some kind of an enlightenment, transformation, or linkage by which humans and the world discover a vision and a power that they did not experience beforehand. In Panikkar's language, religions remind us that reality is *theanthropocosmic* -- a unity in distinction between the divine, the human, and the cosmic. To realize and promote this reality is to enhance the well-being of all -- and that is salvation or *soteria*. *Soteria*, therefore, is the well-being of humans and planet that results from feeling and living the immanent-transcendent Mystery.<sup>52</sup>

In the second text, *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (1996), Knitter refers to the

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 99.

"cosmological faith" that motivates one to care for others and for the cosmos. Interestingly enough, this cosmological faith, which Knitter connects directly to Panikkar's "'theanthropocosmic' Mystery," becomes "our fundamental commitment," "functions as a *basic criterion* for religion in general." Knitter writes:

Such a cosmological faith is foundational to the correlational, globally responsible approach to dialogue and theology ....

### Summary

The critics who have expressed their dissent with Panikkar's account of pluralism appear to interpret his pluralism in a similar fashion. They represent him as claiming a position in which contradictory truths can be held. Thus pluralism is the plurality of truths, a theoretical pluralism, the embrace of many absolutes. What seems to be the case is that the dissenting critics insist on a dialectical and conceptual emphasis. Panikkar, on the other hand, takes an existential stance and insists that he is not proposing a theory of pluralism but a pluralistic attitude. This is a position that insists that the basis of dialogue is an openness and interrelatedness and not any *a priori* conceptualization in terms of which the dialogue must be carried forward.

At one stage of his thought, Paul Knitter is particularly

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<sup>53</sup>Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (1996), 36.



concerned that Panikkar's cosmic confidence is inadequate to the challenge of the urgent needs of the poor (suffering victims and suffering earth). He had interpreted Panikkar's pluralism to mean the embrace of many absolutes.<sup>50</sup> Knitter thought that Panikkar's pluralism (in this interpretation) would radically incapacitate the traditions from engaging one another on matters of truth and ethical action. However, in an area of theology that values an attitude of exploration, Knitter is self-reflective and aware of the shifts of his own moving standpoint. He attempts to promote collaboration of the religious traditions in meeting the urgent needs of the poor. Having initially argued for the preferential option as the basis for collaboration among religious traditions, he comes to affirm the role that cosmic confidence has in motivating an adequate response to the poor. It is the case that Knitter can admit indebtedness to Panikkar for helping him appreciate at one stage the religious other, and then, in view of a development in his theological horizon, raise the concern that Panikkar's account of pluralism does not attend adequately to the suffering other. At a further stage in his thought, Knitter can recognize that Panikkar's notion of cosmic confidence points up the root dynamic of the concern for the religious and suffering other. Knitter's later interpretations (1995, 1996) do not raise the issue of relativism with Panikkar's pluralism. In fact, Knitter incorporates Panikkar's thought on

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<sup>50</sup>Knitter, "Cosmic Confidence or Preferential Option?" (1991, 1996).

the priority of cosmic confidence and its role in the encounter and collaboration among religious traditions.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (1996), 36.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CRITICS II: THE CONCURRING VIEWS OF BERNARD LONERGAN AND OTHERS

This chapter presents the views of critics who resonate with Panikkar's account of multireligious experience and pluralism. The chapter begins with a reflection on the historical context of Catholic theologians and those influenced by earlier neo-Scholastic Catholic theology. Then, proposals Panikkar has made on a multireligious and collaborative foundations for theology are set out. This is followed by a summary account of the positive response of Rowan Williams, Scott Eastham, John Cobb and Jacques Dupuis to Panikkar's work. The chapter then reviews the significant positive response of Bernard Lonergan to Panikkar's proposals on a collaborative foundations for theology and makes a concluding summary comment.

#### Revelation, Culture and Theology

Catholic theology in the period 1850-1950 was dominated by neo-Scholastic modes of thought. Revelation was understood to be knowledge transmitted in the form of concepts or words accepted on the authority of God. It was the charism of the hierarchical magisterium to determine from Scripture and Tradition what was true teaching. Church dogmas became the starting point for theological reflection. In an era dominated by a polemical apologetics and the agenda of seminary training for priests, theology came to be conceived as a deductive style of application of dogma to particular pastoral questions and situations. This doctrinal understanding of revelation did not serve the needs of

dialogue. Avery Dulles comments on theologians formed with the neo-Scholastic understanding of revelation:

Convinced of possessing the pure and complete deposit, the theologian looks on members of other groups as heretics or infidels. Non-Christians, insofar as their doctrines cannot be traced to sources that Christians recognize as divinely authoritative, are presumed to be deprived of revelation. If Christians are made to feel complacently superior to all others, they can hardly enter into constructive and respectful dialogue with other faiths.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding a certain faithfulness to tradition, internal coherence and practicality, the neo-Scholastic model proved vulnerable to more adequate accounts of human knowing and to historical-critical studies of the Biblical texts and Tradition.<sup>3</sup>

Since the 1950's, theologians formed in the Catholic tradition have worked to re-orient Catholic theology to a new era of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. The previous "classicist" era held that there was one "normative" culture. Within that culture theology was a "permanent achievement," the "nature" of which could be studied. A contemporary "empirical" notion of culture as "a set of meanings and values that inform a way of life" recognizes that cultures change over time. Theology mediates between changing cultures and the role of religion in these cultures. In this empirical notion of culture theology is a "process" with a "method."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Avery Dulles S.J., *Models of Revelation* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1983), 51-52.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 41 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (1972), xi.

Fundamental theology in a neo-Scholastic mode was a starting point for theology and a set of doctrines. In the theology of today, "foundations" differs from the older fundamental theology in that it is a functional specialty preceded by other specialties.<sup>4</sup> It is not a set of doctrines but the horizon within which doctrines can be apprehended.<sup>5</sup> Thus, Bernard Lonergan conceives "foundations" in terms of religious experience, that is, as religious conversion. Religious conversion is the dynamic state of being in love in an unconditioned and unrestricted fashion.<sup>6</sup> "Foundations" objectifies and makes thematic religious conversion. Reflection draws on the dynamic state of being in love as the source of special theological categories. In other words, reflection,

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<sup>4</sup>The functional specialties that precede foundations are research, interpretation, history and dialectic. Ibid., 131.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 131.

<sup>6</sup>Robert Doran cites Lonergan's repeated reference to the Christian text of Rom. 5:5 "The love of God flooding our hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit" to specify what is meant by religious conversion. Doran directs those students of Lonergan who might prefer to understand "religious conversion" in a generic sense, "one that barely mentions a revelation" (71), to consider the following sentence from Lonergan's *Method in Theology*: "The conversion, formulated as horizon in foundations, will possess not only personal but also social and doctrinal dimensions" (142). Robert M. Doran S.J., "Lonergan and Balthasar: Methodological Considerations," *Theological Studies* 58(1) 1997: 70-71 and ft.nt.23, p.70. Panikkar, speaking from his Christian stance, manifests a consistent trinitarian perspective on "relatedness" and identifies homeomorphic (existential functional) equivalents in the other traditions including the secular traditions. There is reason to contend that Panikkar's notion of religious experience has "doctrinal dimensions."

insofar as it is specifically theological, is grounded in religious experience, or what might be termed spirituality. The establishment of "foundations" in religious experience is a potential shared ground for the encounter of Christians with people of Eastern religious traditions, such as Hindus and Buddhists, who give priority to religious practice over theory, to spirituality over doctrinal propositions.

#### Panikkar's Collaborative Foundations for Theology

Like the thought of Lonergan and other contemporary theologians, Panikkar's reflections on theology and theological method move in search of a shared ground for a foundations for theology. Addressing the new situation of interreligious encounter in his article, "Christianity and World Religions" (1969), Panikkar proposes a collaborative enterprise of reflection among theologians of the religious traditions. He states that he has a dual responsibility; as well as speaking as

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One student of Lonergan's work concludes: "The traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism, however diverse the forms, emphasize religious existence over theory, spirituality over doctrine. For the theologian to experience and understand spirituality as foundational for Christianity and its theology is already for him to discover himself in dialogue with these major religions which are and understand themselves to be spiritualities." Vernon Gregson, *Lonergan, Spirituality, and the Meeting of Religions* (College Theology Society studies in religion, Lanham/New York/London: University Press of America, 1985), 16.

This is a chapter in a book published in 1969 by Punjab University to celebrate the quincentenary of the first Sikh guru, Guru Nanak. The book, entitled simply *Christianity*, is one in a series on "the five principal religions -- Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism" (vii) intended to give the "fundamentals" of these religions. Panikkar, "Christianity and World Religions" (1969), 78-127.

a representative of the Christian position, he is to communicate meaningfully to an audience that includes both Christians and non-Christians.<sup>3</sup> He asserts a rationale for collaboration among the members of the various religious traditions with his thesis on the universal presence and efficacy in the religious traditions of the Lord who has been made manifest in Christ.<sup>4</sup> For Panikkar, Jesus is Christ and the Lord is "in Jesus" and so in this same article he restates his thesis:

Similarly, when I am saying, that the Lord, who is in Jesus, is also present, effective, hidden and unknown in any religion, I am not assuming that 'atoms' or 'flesh' or thoughts of Jesus are present elsewhere. I am assuming that what makes Jesus, Jesus, is not absent in those religions, or that those religions could equally discover one day in Jesus that there is something which since the beginning, has belonged to them.<sup>5</sup>

On the assumption that the "Lord," "what makes Jesus, Jesus," is universally "present," Panikkar views it as evident that the theological task of the Christian today calls for collaboration with "theologians" of other religions:

The Lord is present. The theological task of the Christian is to detect this presence and to revere and love him there also where he finds him. In this work

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"I try to be, along with this paper, a truthful chronicler of the Christian position, stating not my personal views -- which may eventually transcend what is said here -- but interpreting the Christian position in a way which makes sense to our contemporaries whether or not they belong to the Christian tradition." Ibid., 79.

"He writes that, "the Lord, who has manifested in Christ, is present, effective, though hidden and unknown, in the religions of the world." Ibid., 114.

"Ibid., 115.

the collaboration of the theologians of every religion is obviously required.<sup>22</sup>

In an article initially published that same year, "Metatheology or Diacritical Theology as Fundamental Theology" (1969),<sup>23</sup> Panikkar finds further rationale for Christian theologians to collaborate with those of other religious traditions in the challenge the religious traditions present to Christianity. He considers that Christianity and its theological enterprise are in a crisis of self-understanding. Christianity views itself as 'catholic,' a universal religion with a message for all peoples. Yet the encounter with other cultures and religions has revealed that Christianity is working with a set of "presuppositions"<sup>24</sup> that are not universal. Panikkar cites significant differences that highlight presuppositions distinctive of Western theology. These have to do with basic views of history, God and the human person:

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 115.

<sup>23</sup>Panikkar, "Metatheology or Diacritical Theology as Fundamental Theology" (1969), 43-55. A revised version of this article was published as R. Panikkar, "Metatheology as Fundamental Theology" in *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics: Cross-cultural Studies* (1979), 322-334.

<sup>24</sup>Panikkar distinguishes "presuppositions" from "assumptions." "Assumptions" are the first principles of which people are explicitly aware and from which positions are developed. A "presupposition" "is something which I uncritically and unreflectively take for granted. It belongs to the myth from which I proceed and out of which I draw the raw material to feed my thought. The moment a presupposition is known to be the basis of thought or the starting point of a process, it ceases to be a pre-supposition." Panikkar, "Metatheology or Diacritical Theology as Fundamental Theology" (1969), 44-45.



Today two-thirds of the world's population live in a non-historical dimension; half of mankind does not have the theistic conception of God as the children of Abraham have; one-third of humanity lacks a consciousness of separated individuality.<sup>15</sup>

In Panikkar's view, the challenge set Christianity,

... is that of searching for the foundations of Christian theology on a basis which at least makes sense for peoples living beyond the cultural area of which fundamental theology has traditionally grown.<sup>16</sup>

Christianity must search for more universal foundations or abandon the notion that it is bringing Good News for the whole world. Thus, Panikkar calls for a fundamental theology capable of working from within all worldviews. He recalls that fundamental theology has been viewed commonly as a "pretheological or philosophical reflection on the foundations of theology."<sup>17</sup> "This reflection is directed either to justifying the assertions of Christian doctrine" or it is an explication of the "sources and foundations of theology." Panikkar states that he will address only this latter meaning which "claims to be a disclosure of the very basis of theological self-understanding."<sup>18</sup> He critiques the assumption that the foundations of theology, in dualist fashion, must be separate

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 47.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 43-44.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 44.

from theology.<sup>22</sup> His thesis is a proposal to unite theology and fundamental theology:

Accordingly, fundamental theology is considered to be that theological activity (for which so often there is no room in certain theologies) which critically examines its assumptions and always ready to question its own presuppositions. However, it does so not as a separated platform on which in a second moment faith builds up another construction of its own, but rather as that effort at intelligibility of the actual theological situation in any given context.<sup>23</sup>

This metatheology would be a "religious endeavour" in itself, the foundations for a theology that would acknowledge "human primordial relatedness":

Metatheology could also be described as the human religious endeavor to become aware of, to analyze and or [sic] to understand the human primordial relatedness which occurs when dealing with the ultimate problems -- an endeavour resulting not out of a particular concept of human nature, but as a fruit of pluri-theological investigation.<sup>24</sup>

Panikkar holds that contemporary religious and cultural pluralism challenges the nature of Christian theology in both its method and contents. Since the Mystery cannot be restricted to

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<sup>22</sup>Panikkar points to the theology of the First Vatican Council as assuming that there must be *preambula* separate from theology. He writes: "Central to this manner of thinking is a dualistic conception of reality: God and the world, increate and created, the ground and the erection above it. In this two-story building of nature and supernature, grace is based on nature, faith on reason, theology on philosophy and the like. To be sure, the foundations are called *preambula* and not *fundamenta* -- in order to maintain the freedom and 'gratuity' of the upper story -- but they amount to the same thing. If, for instance, you do not admit that there is a God and a soul, how can Christian teaching make sense to you?" Ibid., 44.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 52.

Christians, the method must include the intentional commitment to seek knowledge of other contexts. Christian theology has developed in the context of one particular human phylum with specific presuppositions. With the contemporary heightened awareness of the religious traditions of the East, it becomes evident that notions of "God" and "History" are concepts specific to determinate cultural contexts.<sup>22</sup> Panikkar proposes that Christian theology explore the possibility of theology beginning from within other cultural contexts than that of its Western development, indeed, beginning from whatever cultural *preambula* that might in fact be given.<sup>23</sup> However, without the encounter with others, Christians would not be aware of their own presuppositions. A fundamental theology adequate to Christian universalist aspirations would be a reflection carried forward in collaboration with people of other beliefs:

If the aim of fundamental theology is to elaborate the assumptions on which any possible theology is based, it necessarily requires dialogue on equal footing, with the collaboration and the positive contribution of the 'others'. Only others can help me to find out my presuppositions and the underlying principles of my science. Stated simply, 'das Ungedachte', the unthought, can be disclosed only by him who does not

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<sup>22</sup>Raimon Panikkar, "The Christian Challenge for the Third Millenium" in *Christian Mission and Interreligious Dialogue*, P. Mojzes and L. Swidler, Editor (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 116.

<sup>23</sup>In a reference to his article, "Metatheology or Diacritical Theology as Fundamental Theology" (1969), he makes the comment: "Cf. my assertion that Fundamental Theology should not assume fixed *preambula fidei*, but study the possibility of using any cultural *preambula* as a basis for an incarnated theology . . . ." Ibid., ft.nt. 3, p. 313.

'think' like me; he helps me to discover the unthought magma out of which my thinking crystallizes, and I, on my part, can do him the same service.<sup>24</sup>

For Panikkar, theological reflection and dialogue should involve, not just the theologians of the other religions, but all those who manifest an interest in the dialogue, even those who are not explicitly religious:

It cannot be the work of Christians alone or of 'religious' people exclusively, but has to result from the common effort of all those interested (or 'condemned', as Fichte would have put it, although I should prefer to say 'called upon') in performing this major work of dialogue, communication and communion, even in spite of and through the conflicts that may arise.<sup>25</sup>

In fact, Panikkar involved himself in such inclusive dialogue among religious people, Marxists and humanists. This took place in the Research Group on 'Philosophy and the Study of Religion' at the World Congress of Philosophy held in Varna, Bulgaria in September, 1973. In his article, "Have 'Religions' the Monopoly on Religion?",<sup>26</sup> Panikkar lists the seven points that were received with unanimous approval by the whole assembly "without the ritual of a formal vote which would have appeared artificial and out of place in the context."<sup>27</sup> These points of consensus include a view of the human as open to development; of

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<sup>24</sup>Panikkar, "Metatheology or Diacritical Theology as Fundamental Theology" (1969), 54-55.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 53-54.

<sup>26</sup>Panikkar, "Have 'Religions' the Monopoly on Religion?" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 11 1974: 515-517.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 515.

religion as capable of an inclusive functional definition; of language as flexible and responsive to changed horizons; of context as varied; of pluralism as an attitude of confidence; of dialogue as an imperative in our time; of a universal motivation to fulfillment however defined.<sup>27</sup>

In the movement of these people of "radically different opinions" toward a consensus statement, one can identify the creative input of Panikkar as a dialogue theologian. His reflection begins not from a set of systematic points but from the challenge set by a pluralistic attitude which he terms "an almost mythical confidence that other perspectives may be plausible."<sup>28</sup> The consensus statement was the expression of a process of mutually respectful and academic discussion. What appears as a clue to be explored is what Panikkar describes as "our success in creating an atmosphere conducive to the friendly unwrapping of radically different opinions."<sup>29</sup>

In addition, a reflection on what went into making this encounter a "success" should attend to the effort made "to speak a commonly understandable language."<sup>30</sup> For example, the definition of "religion" agreed upon at this event is sufficiently formal to allow for a broad range of content. It is a functional definition that relates to the shared recognition of

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 515-516.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 516.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 515.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 516.

the unfulfilled nature of the human project. Allowance is made for the reluctance of some to associate their stance with the word "religion" and an alternative is proposed that proves acceptable to those present -- rather than "religion," there is the more inclusive word, "belief". The conference discussions are characterized by a flexibility that is grounded in the clear acknowledgement of the limits of any concrete horizon of human experience:

No religion, ideology, culture or tradition can reasonably claim to exhaust the universal range of human experience.<sup>32</sup>

Panikkar reaches a conclusion in this article that is suggestive of the interplay between the ecumenical movement and interreligious initiatives. He recognizes the indebtedness of contemporary interreligious encounter to the principles of Christian ecumenism:

Christian ecumenism tries to reach a unity without harming diversity. It does not tally victors and defeated, but reaches a new point of agreement in deeper loyalty to a principle transcendent to the different Christian confessions. Ecumenical ecumenism attempts to reach a mutual fecundation and to allow a corrective criticism among the religious traditions of the world without diluting the unique contribution of each tradition.<sup>33</sup>

Recognizing the relation between "ecumenism" and "ecumenical ecumenism," Panikkar wants to move a step further, that is,

... to call the different 'beliefs' of modern women and men to the arena of a new *dialogical dialogue*, even if

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 516.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 517.

they, for comprehensible reasons, shun the label of 'religion.'<sup>34</sup>

Panikkar's diatopical interpretation undertaken in the encounter between a Christian and a follower of *Advaita Vedānta* detailed in Chapter Five of this dissertation has given an indication of the theological and practical fruitfulness of the dialogical dialogue. The methodology fosters what we have termed multireligious experience. The encounter between an *advaitic* Hindu and a trinitarian Christian has stimulated mutual explication and fructification of the Hindu and Christian traditions. The dialogical dialogue focused on the expansion of mutual understanding by supporting an encounter of fuller dimensions. Not only reason (*logos*), considered as logical and deductive, but all that is included in the taken for granted horizon (*mythos*), was in play in this encounter.<sup>35</sup>

In addition, the dialogical approach does not shy away from the actual situation of the relations of collaboration and conflict that exist between people of the various traditions. In a world rife with mistrust and conflict, there appears practical warrant for the methodology that Panikkar espouses. This methodology has potential both for promoting the latent resources of meaning of the various traditions and for fostering mutual

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 517.

<sup>35</sup>"The dialogue is not a 'duologue,' but a going through the *logos, dia ton logon*, ..., beyond the *logos* structure of reality. It pierces the *logos* and uncovers the respective myths of the partners." Panikkar, "The Dialogical Dialogue" (1986), 218.

trust, appreciation and collaboration among the people of the diverse religions and ideologies. However, the dialogical dialogue is not undertaken in view of anticipated benefits. Nor does the dialogical dialogue find its root source in either the ethical principle of morality or the epistemological principle of intelligence. Rather, the dialogical dialogue is an act of trust grounded in the relational I-thou experience:

In the dialogical dialogue, I trust the other not out of an ethical principle (because it is good) or an epistemological one (because I recognize it is intelligent to do so), but because I have discovered (experience) the *thou* as the counterpart of the I, as belonging to the I (and not as not-I).<sup>16</sup>

Christian ecumenism has inspired Panikkar and others to recognize possible ways forward in the face of apparent impasses in belief. The struggle to articulate a commonly understandable language, the growth of consensus on the nature of the human being and the identification of elements of a shared human project are the fruits of attending to what transcends any particular perspective. The encounter among religious traditions and belief systems may remind a faltering Christian ecumenism that not only is dialogue possible but there continues to be strong motivation for such dialogue in the shared task. This task Panikkar articulates in the final words of "Have 'Religions'

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 219.



the Monopoly on *Religion*?" (1974) as "the rescue of humanity from the danger of perishing."<sup>17</sup>

#### Positive Responses to Panikkar's Pluralism

Rowan Williams states that Panikkar's pluralism is the opposite of relativism. He says that, for Panikkar, there is no neutral position outside of the historical context from which the claim could be made that all positions are equally valid or equally invalid. For Panikkar, this would be unacceptable since such a view employs the notion of contextuality to claim a standpoint that is outside and superior to any historical context at all. As Williams understands him, Panikkar reflects from within the context of his trinitarian belief and takes the position that "*differences matter*." Panikkar's pluralism means that from the standpoint of history in all its variety one cannot articulate a theory or pattern of history.<sup>18</sup> Pluralism is neither an all-encompassing theory, nor is it a tolerance based on the notion that all religious traditions are basically equivalent; rather, Panikkar's pluralism is an "interactive pluralism."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Panikkar, "Have 'Religions' the Monopoly on *Religion*?" (1974), 517.

<sup>18</sup>Williams, "Trinity and Pluralism" (1990), 4.

<sup>19</sup>"With regard to the interfaith encounter, as Panikkar understands it, we might have either an imperialistic Christian claim to theoretical finality, providing an unchallengeable set of explanations, locating every phenomenon on a single map, or else a merely tolerant pluralism, with different traditions drifting in and out of cooperation on the basis of a vague

Scott Eastham highlights Panikkar's claim to multireligious experience. He holds that Panikkar has demonstrated that genuine pluralism is a "lived experience," that not only is multireligious experience possible, but that it will transform cultures and religions. For Eastham, neither the imposition of the unity of classical Western culture nor a commitment to pluralism characterized by "ideological vehemence" is desirable. He considers that Panikkar himself is an answer to the question of whether it is possible for one human being "to penetrate to the core, the soul, the religion, the deepest values of more than a single culture?"<sup>43</sup> Panikkar's multireligious experience is evidence that it is in interrelatedness with the other that one discovers the core of one's own tradition:

The case of Raimon Panikkar illustrates that genuine multicultural, multireligious experience is only possible if you are capable of deepening your understanding of your own 'stand' or tradition, while

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conviction that all were, more or less, about the same thing. Panikkar's idea of a genuinely interactive pluralism is the product of a particular option concerning God, which rules out these alternatives." Ibid., 8-9.

<sup>43</sup>For Eastham, if multireligious experience were not possible, "we would have to stay locked up in our little houses of language, religion, skin color, gender and so forth. We would find ourselves stuck in either the monolithic structures (and strictures) of Western culture alone, or in the fissiparous partisanship today doing business as 'politically correct' multiculturalism. Once we concede that Asian or African religion is only for Asians or Africans, or that women's experience is totally incompatible with that of men, we have begun to parcel off the human heritage, to hoard and therefore squander what little wisdom we humans have been able to garner down the millenia." Eastham, "Introduction" in Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness* (1993), vi.

at the same time reaching to 'stand under' another horizon, another tradition of understanding. Indeed, the two movements are complementary. Only the 'other' can show you what you take for granted about your 'own' culture, and only by getting to the roots -- that is, the religious core, the very soul -- of your own tradition will you ever be able to meet and embrace the others on their own grounds and for themselves.<sup>11</sup>

John Cobb expresses his basic agreement with Panikkar's approach to pluralism. He does this by defending process theology against Panikkar's critique of it. Panikkar, in "The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of Babel -- A Meditation on Non-Violence" (1979), had represented process theology as claiming universal applicability without realizing that it was doing so from within one limited perspective -- wanting "to be universal from a perspective which is seen as universal only from within the system."<sup>12</sup> Cobb denies that process theology in its leading proponents (for example, Alfred North Whitehead) claims to be a universal system. When faced with diverse religious and cultural ways with their conflicting truth claims, Cobb claims that he agrees with Panikkar in being critical of approaches that would posit a normative metaphysical position underlying that

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., vi-vii.

<sup>12</sup>Panikkar, "The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of Babel -- A Meditation on Non-Violence" (1979), 205.

diversity.<sup>43</sup> Cobb, with Panikkar, would opt for a cosmic trust in the position of the other person. He writes of Panikkar:

... I appreciate and share his sense of the appropriate practical response: to continue dialogue with one another in mutual respect and cosmic trust without knowing where this will lead. I admire the consistency with which he holds to this position even when others seem evil in his eyes.<sup>44</sup>

Among those who have articulated positive responses to elements of Panikkar's proposals on multireligious experience and religious pluralism is Jacques Dupuis. Dupuis agrees with Panikkar on the possibility of authentic religious experience in the context of another religious tradition. For Dupuis, the interreligious encounter asks for a comprehension that can go beyond or through the concepts of the various traditions to a sense of the experience of the other tradition. He agrees with Panikkar that this "intra-religious dialogue," this "effort of 'com-prehension' and interior 'sym-pathy' -- or 'em-pathy'" is an indispensable condition for dialogue.<sup>45</sup> Dupuis asks the question that has engaged Panikkar concerning his identity as Christian, Hindu, Buddhist and Secular person:

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<sup>43</sup>"The philosophical situation is as pluralistic as the religious one. One cannot solve the pluralism of religions by claiming universality for one's own metaphysics." John B. Cobb Jr., "Metaphysical Pluralism" in *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar*, J. Prabhu, Editor (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 47.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 47.

<sup>45</sup>Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (1997), 380.

... we must ask ourselves whether it is possible, and up to what point, to share two different religious faiths, making each of them one's own and living both at once in one's own religious life.<sup>46</sup>

Dupuis answers that what appears impossible from an "absolute viewpoint" is proven possible from the experience of those who call themselves Hindu-Christian or Buddhist-Christian. His own study of the claims of Henri Le Saux (Abhishiktānanda) move him to this conclusion.<sup>47</sup>

#### Loneragan's Positive Response to Panikkar

Bernard Lonergan, reacting to Panikkar's articles that we have reviewed above, was attracted by Panikkar's proposal for an interreligious collaborative foundations for theology, by his reflections on the phenomenon of relatedness among the mystics of the various religious traditions, and by his witness to an emerging religious consciousness evidenced in a specific consensus.<sup>48</sup> Lonergan wrote *Method in Theology* (1972) as a Roman

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 280.

<sup>47</sup> Henri Le Saux (1910-1973) arrived in India in 1948 and took on the name of Abhishiktānanda. Dupuis recounts that Abhishiktānanda went beyond the external adaptations of language and liturgy to open himself to the shock of the experience of Advaita. It was his hope that through a Hindu-Christian monasticism that plumbed the depths of religious experience in both traditions that a new possibility would emerge. Jacques Dupuis S.J., *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions* (Faith Meets Faith Series, ed. P.F. Knitter. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 67-90.

<sup>48</sup> Concerning these topics, Lonergan makes reference on a number of occasions to Raymond Panikkar, "Metatheology or Diacritical Theology as Fundamental Theology" in *The Development of Fundamental Theology*, J.B. Metz, Editor (New York, N.Y.: Paulist Press, 1969), 43-55. For these references see Chapter Six, footnote 2.

Catholic methodologist of theology but anticipated that his method would have a broader relevance.<sup>43</sup> In this work, he identified bases respectively in moral, religious and Christian principles for a universal dialogue, for interreligious dialogue and for Christian ecumenical dialogue.<sup>44</sup> Lonergan continued to elaborate the universalist direction of his thought in his post-*Method* writings. In his article, "Prolegomena to the Study of the Emerging Religious Consciousness of Our Time" (1985),<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>"The method I indicate is, I think, relevant to more than Roman Catholic theologians. But I must leave it to members of other communions to decide upon the extent to which they may employ the present method." Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (1972), xii.

<sup>44</sup>"The ideal basis of society is community, and the community may take its stand on a moral, a religious, or a Christian principle. The moral principle is that men individually are responsible for what they make of themselves, but collectively they are responsible for the world in which they live. Such is the basis of universal dialogue. The religious principle is God's gift of his love, and it forms the basis of dialogue between all representatives of religion. The Christian principle conjoins the inner gift of God's love with its outer manifestation in Christ Jesus and in those that follow him. Such is the basis of Christian ecumenism." *Ibid.*, 360.

<sup>45</sup>This article originated as a "Paper presented at the Second International Symposium on Belief, Baden/Vienna, January 1975". Lonergan, "Prolegomena to the Study of the Emerging Religious Consciousness of Our Time" (1985), 71. Panikkar informs us concerning his 1993 publication, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, that the "main thrust of the second and third chapters was developed in my contribution to the Second International Symposium on Belief, 'The Emerging Dimensions of Religious Consciousness in our Times,' held in Vienna in January 1975." Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience* (1993), ft.nt. 9, p. 4. Lonergan has spoken of meeting Panikkar at the time of the symposium. Pierrot, Charlotte Tansey, and Cathleen Going, ed. *Caring About Meaning: Patterns in the Life of Bernard Lonergan* (1982), 23-24.

Lonergan gathers evidence for such emerging religious consciousness. He points out that this is not just human community as a theoretical ideal; rather, it is the existential community of those who have begun to experience and to identify the reality of a newly emerging human unity. As an instance of such emerging human unity, Lonergan makes reference to a "remarkable consensus" achieved by a meeting of the members of various world religions, Marxists and humanists at the World Congress of Philosophy held in Varna, Bulgaria in September 1973. He notes that Panikkar was responsible for articulating in a seven point summary the conclusions of that meeting which then received "unanimous approval."<sup>12</sup>

In this same article, Lonergan expresses sympathy for a collaborative enterprise of theological reflection among the world's religious traditions. In illustrating what he means, he points to Panikkar's "metatheological" proposal for restructuring fundamental theology. Lonergan understands Panikkar's starting point for a "metatheology or diacritical theology as fundamental theology" to be the experience of "relatedness" when faced with ultimate problems. He writes that Panikkar

... holds that there exists "... that human primordial relatedness which occurs when dealing with ultimate problems." He [Panikkar] stresses that he is not assuming "... that there must be a kind of objectifiable common ground or certain universally formulable common statements." He [Panikkar] continues: "I am only pleading for a really open dialogue -- one in which the meeting ground may have

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<sup>12</sup>Lonergan, "Prolegomena to the Study of the Emerging Religious Consciousness of Our Time" (1985), 67.

itself first to be created -- where in the very intermingling of religious currents, ideas and beliefs, a more powerful stream of light, service, and better understanding will emerge.<sup>53</sup>

In this article, Lonergan is clear that the world's religious traditions at present "do not share some common theology or style of religious thinking."<sup>54</sup> Thus, while seeing that over the long-term Panikkar's diacritical theology could contribute to the initiation of such a project, Lonergan expects that the discussion of emerging religious consciousness would have to employ the formulation of the group carrying on the discussion. If this group were Christian, then the language employed would characterize religious experience as being in love.<sup>55</sup>

Lonergan's further development of this theme of collaborative "foundations" can be found in a posthumously published essay, "Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon."<sup>56</sup> He notes a first way of proceeding to a universalist position on the other religions that is based on "specifically Christian premises."<sup>57</sup> He indicates that these Christian premises are the rule that "by their fruits you shall know them" (Matthew 7:16), the scripture text on God's will to save (1 Timothy 2:4) and the

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 68.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 70.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 71.

<sup>56</sup>Bernard Lonergan, "Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 12 (1994), 125-143.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 135.



charity (1 Cor 13) given to those who do not have explicit knowledge of Christ.<sup>52</sup> In what appears as an indication of a further development in his universalist vision, Lonergan then proposes a second manner of proceeding to a universalist position that supports a collaborative practise. This second manner of proceeding does not move from "specifically Christian premises" but from the encounter among mystics of the religious traditions and from the empirical study of religion:

The second manner of proceeding towards a universalist view of religion may begin with Raymond Panikkar's conception of fundamental theology that takes its stand on lived religion or mystical faith that is prior to any formulation and perhaps beyond formulation. Again it may take its rise from empirical study of religious phenomena that come to discern a convergence of religions. Finally, it may seek to bring these two standpoints together to seek an integrated view.

In his article, "A Post-Hegelian Philosophy of Religion" (1980), Lonergan suggests that his own account of "foundations" is open to collaboration among all the religiously converted. He

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 135.

<sup>53</sup>Lonergan makes reference here to Panikkar, "Metatheology or Diacritical Theology as Fundamental Theology" (1969), 54.

<sup>54</sup>Here Lonergan refers to William Cenkner, "The Convergence of Religions" *Cross Currents* 22 (Winter 1972 through Winter 1973), 429-437; also to Whitson, *The Coming Convergence of World Religions* (1971).

<sup>55</sup>Lonergan, "Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon" (1994), 135.

positions this statement as the conclusion of his restatement of Panikkar's proposal for a metatheological form of fundamental theology:

If we wish a theology, he [Panikkar] wrote, that has its ground free from the influence of particular places and times, particular cultures and viewpoints, we have to have recourse to the wordless prayer of the mystics representing the world religions. We have to ask them to dialogue, not to clarify their differences from one another, but to let shine forth the interrelatedness constituted by the peace they experience as distinct from any words they may silently or vocally utter.

In somewhat similar fashion the foundations envisaged in my own *Method in Theology* are simply religious conversion in the sense of a total commitment to religious self-transcendence.<sup>42</sup>

Lonergan, like Williams, Eastman, Cobb and Dupuis, appears to be in agreement with Panikkar's emphasis on transcendence, a dynamic openness constitutive of the human being. It might be claimed that their core agreement concerns what Panikkar has termed "cosmic confidence." As Panikkar has explained, by "cosmic confidence" he means not the trust a person has in the cosmos but the "confidence of the cosmos" itself as it works in human beings.<sup>43</sup> Cosmic confidence is a dynamic thrust, not a

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<sup>42</sup>Lonergan, "A Post-Hegelian Philosophy of Religion" (1985), 217-218.

<sup>43</sup>"I may be allowed to insist because I have been sometimes misunderstood. Cosmic confidence is not trust in the world, confidence in the cosmos. It is the confidence of the cosmos itself, of which we form a part inasmuch as we simply are. It is a subjective genitive: the confidence itself is a cosmic fact of which we are more or less aware, and which we presuppose all the time." Panikkar, "A Self-Critical Dialogue" (1996), 281.

concept or a principle but an "urge."<sup>44</sup> Panikkar has written in other contexts of openness to the Transcendent, a constitutive dimension of the human, faith.<sup>45</sup> Cosmic confidence, then, is the ground and source of the interrelatedness that can be found among human beings, an interrelatedness that is not dependent on cultural similarities.

### Summary

Panikkar has stated his position that Christian belief in Christ gives rationale for Christians to seek collaboration among theologians of all religions. The explicit motivation of the Christian can be that Christ is to be more fully encountered and known in this collaboration. As well, Panikkar has pointed to the crisis for Christians provoked by the encounter with those of other religious traditions and belief systems. Christians have begun to recognize that their universalist aspirations are

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<sup>44</sup>Contrasting universality with generality, Panikkar explains: "The latter is an abstraction. The former is an urge of the human soul. But urge for universality belongs to the order of the *mythos*, not of the *logos*. It is unfolded and often unspoken. It cannot be verbalized in concepts. Everybody wants to know, to quote Aristotle, or to be happy, to cite Thomas Aquinas, but the notion and the contents of such knowledge or happiness vary, and therefore the means to reach them or the places to find them." Panikkar, "The Christian Challenge for the Third Millenium" (1990), 119.

<sup>45</sup>"We could describe faith as ... *existential openness toward transcendence* or, if this seems too loaded, more simply as *existential openness*. This openness implies a bottomless capacity to be filled without closing. Were it to close, it would cease to be faith. The openness is always to a *plus ultra*, to an ever farther, which we may call transcendence and in a certain sense transcendental." Panikkar, "Faith as a Constitutive Human Dimension" (1979), 208.

thwarted by their unreflective and uncritical attachment to culturally specific presuppositions. Collaborative reflection becomes a condition for identification of presuppositions and fostering of a capacity to communicate the Good News on the basis of various cultural preambula.

Panikkar's proposal that theology be grounded in the existential praxis of collaboration among religious people finds an appreciative reception from various critics (including Paul Knitter). Lonergan's position that the dynamic state of being in love, "a total commitment to religious self-transcendence,"<sup>46</sup> is the proper foundations for theology is coherent with the multireligious experience and pluralist attitude of Raimon Panikkar, an approach that strives not to restrict the religious experience of one tradition within the cultural and religious imperatives of another. While such a position does not deny the existence of a doctrinal context for each of those who collaborate, it points to the "interrelatedness" that transcends and sets a context for the doctrinal positions of those involved. In the encounter and collaboration, with their source in "the wordless prayer of the mystics representing the world religions,"<sup>47</sup> a proper foundations for theological reflection is established from within the encounter.

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<sup>46</sup>Lonergan, "A Post-Hegelian Philosophy of Religion" (1985), 218.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 217-218.

The positive reception of Panikkar's metatheological (or diacritical) fundamental theology can function as a "retroductive" warrant for his proposals. He undertakes a creative task that might enable the Christian community to link its tradition with the challenges of the present, in particular, the challenge of encounter with the other religious traditions. This creative and exploratory theology works from the encounter to identify resources within the Christian tradition with implications for theological reflection. The fruitfulness of Panikkar's proposals are warrant for his methodology of existential risk seeking intelligible expression. Having given himself to the risk entailed in multireligious experience, Panikkar's theological reflection and proposals have expanded the potential horizon of Christian theological practice, identifying an "urge" or "relatedness" that invites Christians and others to a broader collaboration with those who are facing ultimate issues.

## EVALUATION

### CHAPTER EIGHT

#### CONCLUSION: AN ASSESSMENT OF PANIKKAR'S PLURALIST ATTITUDE

We began in Chapter One by calling attention to the phenomenon of multireligious experience as it is experienced in societies with religious traditions in close interaction. For Christians (and others) living in these societies, multireligious experience, the fact that they participate in other religious traditions and claim authentic religious experience related to that participation, raises in intense fashion the question of the intelligibility<sup>1</sup> of such claims. Through his existential risk and reflection on multireligious experience Raimon Panikkar has explored this problematic. He has asked the question whether it is possible to live the depth and plenitude of the Christian message and at the same time relate to other religious traditions in a manner that does not diminish the other traditions.<sup>2</sup> In exploring a response to this question through reflection on multireligious experience, Panikkar has identified and fostered an emerging religious consciousness, what he has termed a "pluralistic attitude."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter Three, footnote 6.

<sup>2</sup>Panikkar, "In Christ There is Neither Hindu nor Christian: Perspectives on Hindu-Christian Dialogue" (1989), 475. See Chapter One, page 41 and footnote 96.

<sup>3</sup>Panikkar, "The Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges: Three Kairological Moments of Christic Self-Consciousness" (1987), 109.

We put forward an assessment of Panikkar's multireligious experience and pluralist attitude in the present chapter. After a reflection on Panikkar's life contexts for pluralism and his holistic involvement in interreligious dialogue, we address two questions. First, to what extent is the context of his dialogue with others that of a commitment to justice for the poor? Second, is his account of pluralism relativist so much so that it does not allow for judgement of what is true and what is good?

The answers we give to these questions can be stated immediately in summary fashion. First, Panikkar's context for dialogue is primarily the world of religious plurality and secularization; nonetheless, his thought and his praxis is inclusive of various classes of people and a manifestation of concern for the poor. Second, Panikkar's account of pluralism is not relativist but relationist and does allow for judgement of truth and discernment between what is good and evil. The evaluation given here of Panikkar's account of multireligious experience and the pluralist attitude is, in sum, a positive one. However, we suggest that Panikkar's cosmic confidence would benefit from the specific complement and clarification offered by the intentionality analysis<sup>4</sup> of Bernard Lonergan.

#### Contexts for Panikkar's Response to Pluralism

Panikkar's multireligious experience and his pluralist

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<sup>4</sup>See Lonergan's proposal for a critical metaphysics resulting from basic terms and relations as psychological and derived terms and relations as metaphysical. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (1972), 340-344.

attitude have been influenced by the various different contexts of his life. The basic fact of his being born of a Hindu father and Catholic mother, though not a sufficient condition to motivate his passing over between religious traditions, provided him with a motivation and an opportunity. Through an education that supplied him with some of the basic tools for the exploration of the Hindu tradition -- for example, his knowledge of Sanskrit -- he was prepared for aspects of his later life-work. At the same time, he was immersed in the Catholic tradition in Spain through extensive studies, involvement as a priest and spiritual director, and through his responsibilities in teaching and editorial work.

His transfer to India at a point when his energies could have been dedicated more exclusively to European issues appears to have been a significant turning point. Panikkar's early years in India were productive. Among other books and articles,<sup>5</sup> it is at this point that he wrote his text, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (written in 1957, but published in 1964) which, as we have noted, had an impact in the Catholic community shaped by Vatican II and among Christians who were in the process of

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<sup>5</sup>For example: R. Paniker, *Indian Culture and the Fulness of Christ* (Madras: 1956); R. Panikkar, "The Integration of Indian Philosophical and Religious Thought," *The Clergy Monthly Supplement IV* 1958: 64-67; R. Panikkar, "Common Grounds for Christian-non-Christian Collaboration," *Religion and Society* 5 (March) 1958: 29-36; Raymond Panikkar, "Contemporary Hindu Spirituality," *Philosophy Today III* (Number 2/4) 1959: 112-127; Panikkar, *La India, Gente, Cultura, Creencias* (1960).



reflecting on their relations to the world's religious traditions.<sup>3</sup> It is also during this early period in India that Panikkar began to live out his methodology of existential risk seeking intelligible expression. During this early India period the basic lines of the pluralist attitude began to take shape. The pluralist attitude, as Panikkar has described it at the beginning of the 1970s, is a conviction concerning the limits of one's knowing and one's horizon, and can mean trusting what one may not yet understand, and indeed may never understand.

Not only was Panikkar's pluralist attitude being shaped at this time by his multireligious experience, but it was that pluralist attitude, at least in its preliminary form, that promoted Panikkar's multireligious experience. The pluralist attitude with its emphasis on trusting is congruous with his

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<sup>3</sup>See Chapter Three, footnote 63.

As we have seen, for Panikkar, pluralism is not a worldview or a system. Rather, pluralism is a spiritual attitude: "Pluralism means that we accept the non-recognition of the equivalence of the various world views, religions, . . . systems. Pluralism cannot be manipulated by those who recognise it over against the 'sectarians' who are not pluralistic. Pluralism means the existential acceptance of the 'other' as other i.e. without being able to understand or co-opt him. Pluralism is humble and only knows that I or 'we' may not possess the whole truth without passing a judgement as to whether the other may also be right or, as it may turn out, wrong. . . . Pluralism belongs to the order of confidence -- that the other may be right also -- of hope -- that we may reach a higher and more comprehensive understanding -- of love -- that embraces, makes room and accepts what it does not know or understand. Pluralism is a modern word for the old and perhaps abused terms [sic] of *mysterion*." Panikkar, "Prolegomena to the Problem of Universality of the Church" in *Unique and Universal: Fundamental Problems of an Indian Theology*, (1972), 160.

methodological position that religious traditions are only properly known from within those traditions, through an "imparative" rather than a "comparative" method.<sup>1</sup> The pluralist attitude allows for a learning process and enables the passing over to radically distinctive contexts. For Panikkar, the shift from India with its religious traditions functioning separated from one another to North America and its pattern of high interaction among people of various religious traditions was a stimulus to his thought on pluralism. Not only did his context shift but, on the North American scene at least, the publics he addressed changed. During his time in Spain and in India, for the most part he had been relating to communities with Catholic or Hindu or Buddhist identities. In North America, the audiences he addressed were often explicitly secular or intentionally searching for a sacred identity outside of the institutional framework of religious traditions into which they had been born. As well, Panikkar in this later period was often called on to speak, not as a Catholic Christian and priest, but as a scholar of philosophy and religious studies and a religious figure

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<sup>1</sup>"Once internal dialogue has begun, once we are engaged in a genuine intrareligious scrutiny, we are ready for what I call the *imparative* method -- that is, the effort at learning from the other and the attitude of allowing our own convictions to be fecundated by the insights of the other. I argue that, strictly speaking, comparative religion, on its ultimate level, is not possible, because we do not have any neutral platform outside every tradition whence comparisons may be drawn." Panikkar, "The Invisible Harmony: A Universal Theory of Religion or a Cosmic Confidence in Reality?" (1987), 140-141.

addressing the academy and the broader public.<sup>11</sup> Through the 1970s and 1980s, Panikkar began to write more concerning the pluralist attitude that not only enabled his passing over to other religious traditions but also allowed his entry into a form of secularity that was not a rejection of the sacred but an appropriation of that dimension.<sup>12</sup>

With Panikkar's transitions among distinct contexts in mind, we locate his transformations in attitude toward other religious traditions in the threefold schema of Christendom, Christianity, and Christianness that he himself has articulated.<sup>13</sup> He has related this threefold division to a division between Christianity, Church and Christ, "referring respectively to the social aspect of religion, its sacramental dimension, and its mystical core."<sup>14</sup> It is the "mystical" commitment to Christ that he refers to as the "christic principle" and "Christianness."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup>His designation at Santa Barbara, University of California was as Professor of Comparative Philosophy of Religion and History of Religions. Veliath, *Theological Approach and Understanding of Religions* (1988?), 82.

<sup>12</sup>Panikkar has been preparing for publication a book with the proposed title -- *Sacred Secularity*. Prabhu, "Introduction - Lost in Translation: Panikkar's Intercultural Odyssey" (1996), 2.

<sup>13</sup>Panikkar, "The Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges: Three Kairological Moments of Christic Self-Consciousness" (1987), 104-106.

<sup>14</sup>He refers to the 1968 article "Christianity World Religions." Ibid., ft.nt. 21, p. 105.

<sup>15</sup>"To be Christian can also be understood as confessing a personal faith, adopting a Christlike attitude inasmuch as Christ represents the central symbol of one's own life. I call this Christianness." Ibid., 105.

The attitudes more typical of Christendom, Christianity and Christianness have predominated variously in the contexts of Panikkar's life experience. His location at the centre of integrist communities acquainted him with the nostalgia for *Christendom* endemic to Franco's Spain. From this experience of post-War Spain he became intimately familiar with homogeneous religious cultures and what he has characterized as totalitarian attitudes. As a Catholic priest in India, Panikkar participated in the institutional form *Christianity* took in that country and, in his scholarly work and efforts to dialogue with Hindus, he worked to resist pressures promoting the encapsulation of Christianity. Identification with the institution of Christianity was consistent with attitudes ranging on an exclusivist/inclusivist continuum. However, in his attitude toward other religious traditions he sought to escape both totalitarian attitudes and the dilemma set by the exclusivist/inclusivist paradigm. Both in India and in North America, he espoused a *Christianness* through a personal spirituality and commitment to Christ "overcoming, not rejecting, Christendom and Christianity."<sup>14</sup> *Christianness* was in tune with Panikkar's distinctive pluralist attitude which roots itself in

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 106.

the mystical dimension of reality and claims not to diminish the contributions of individual religious traditions.<sup>12</sup>

Panikkar and the Roman Catholic Experience of Dialogue

In evaluating fairly Panikkar's pluralist attitude, it is helpful to recall the range of Panikkar's involvement in interreligious dialogue. In the field of interreligious encounter, the judgement on what constitutes a holistic, committed approach to interreligious dialogue properly follows from a reflection on the experience of dialogue. The process of reaching such a judgement puts the accent on an inductive method.<sup>13</sup> Roman Catholic reflection on interreligious encounter since Vatican II has identified dialogue among theologians and mystics of the traditions as well as dialogue that goes on among a broader public, a dialogue that occurs in formal and informal manners, a dialogue that includes the various levels of human expression -- practical, theoretical and religious. One summary of this reflection on the experience of interreligious encounter that has gained some currency in Roman Catholic circles divides the phenomenon of dialogue in a fourfold fashion:

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<sup>12</sup>He writes: "the increasing awareness of Christianness offers a platform from which the dilemma of exclusivism or inclusivism may be solved in favor of a healthy pluralism of religions that in no way dilutes the particular contribution of each human tradition." Ibid., 107.

<sup>13</sup>Without neglecting a deductive approach allowing proper attention not only to situation but to Christian Tradition. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (1997), 14-17.

a. The *dialogue of life*, where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations b. The *dialogue of action*, in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people c. The *dialogue of religious experience*, where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance, with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute d. The *dialogue of theological exchange*, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other's spiritual values.<sup>17</sup>

With this fourfold division in mind, a review of what can be known of Panikkar's life and work gives an impression of the holistic and committed nature of his involvement with interreligious dialogue. That is to say, he has been involved in a variety of kinds of dialogue which implies openness to various classes of people and a commitment to collaborative action. As is clear from the narrative of his life, through family history and career opportunity, he has been engaged in the *dialogue of life*.<sup>18</sup> Through his ministry as a priest and giver of spiritual conferences, and consistent with his understanding as a scholar of the demands of a methodology of religious studies, he has participated in the *dialogue of religious experience*. The priority he gives to religious experience is seen seminally in

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<sup>17</sup>To cite one church document in which this fourfold division appears: "Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue," *Documents of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus*, (The Institute of Jesuit Sources: Saint Louis, 1995), point 4.

<sup>18</sup>See Chapter Two and Chapter Three.

his meditation on the Trinity<sup>13</sup> and is reflected on in terms of methodological principles in *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (1978), among other texts. Besides his identification with the Christian tradition, this has meant a serious commitment to participation in the Hindu and Buddhist and Secular traditions.<sup>14</sup> The dialogue of religious experience grounds Panikkar's substantial contribution to *dialogue at the level of theological exchange*. For Panikkar, "fundamental theology" has a cross-cultural role.<sup>15</sup> This notion of fundamental theology has an impact on numerous articles such as "Advaita and Bhakti: A Hindu-Christian Dialogue"<sup>16</sup>; most notably in his book, *The Unknown Christ of*

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<sup>13</sup>Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (1973).

<sup>14</sup>He fosters a participation in Vedic spirituality in *The Vedic Experience: Mantramañjarī* (1977). Panikkar makes a comment that helps locate this latter text: "If I am a hindu it is not, of course, a matter of sheer choice, or mere will, sympathy and/or intellectual agreement -- as if it all were an individualistic affair. It is simply an existential reality which I freely accept, having broken christian prejudices of exclusivisms and inclusivisms. This implies, of course, a personal experience and a constant preoccupation with acquiring the wisdom of the tradition one comes from. Many hindu intellectuals have said that only a 'reincarnated' rishi could have written the *Mantramañjarī*." Panikkar, "A Self-Critical Dialogue" (1996), 265.

<sup>15</sup>"The role of fundamental theology is therefore to make theological affirmations also intelligible outside the culture and even the religion where they had until then grown and prospered." Panikkar, "The Sacred History of Sunahsepa" (1979), 330.

<sup>16</sup>In Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (1979), 277-289.

*Hinduism* (1964, 1968); and the revised and expanded version<sup>23</sup>; and more recently in an essay included in a collection from a seminar bringing together Shaivites and Christians.<sup>24</sup>

Notwithstanding the demands of his career as a publishing scholar and professor, he has not neglected *the dialogue of action* responsive to the pluralist crisis of the present situation. In summarizing what he has been doing and saying on being a Christian today, Panikkar writes:

I would like to emphasize that, although I have written extensively on these subjects, practice (in form of dialogues, get-togethers, projects, activities) has always been right by my side. In fact, that which I have said and done in practice may be more important than what I have written and published.<sup>25</sup>

#### Is Panikkar's Context that of Commitment to the Poor?

Along with critics like Paul F. Knitter, we have asked to what extent the context of Panikkar's dialogue with others is that of a commitment to justice for the poor. In his response to Knitter's article, "Cosmic Confidence or Preferential Option?,"<sup>26</sup> Panikkar stresses his agreement with Knitter in his desire to collaborate in rallying the various religious traditions to work

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<sup>23</sup>Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany* (1981).

<sup>24</sup>Raimon Panikkar, "The Mysticism of Jesus the Christ" in *Mysticism in Shaivism and Christianity*, B. Bäumer, Editor (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd., 1997), 74-178.

<sup>25</sup>Panikkar, *A Dwelling Place for Wisdom* (1993), "Notes, Chapter 4," ft.nt. 2, p. 169.

<sup>26</sup>Knitter, "Cosmic Confidence or Preferential Option?" (1996), 177-191.



for justice; although he considers that Knitter has misunderstood what he means by pluralism, he admits his own failure in not making clear the context of his dialogue with others is a concern for the poor and for justice:

I stress my agreement because I feel that, if he has misunderstood some of my thoughts, I am to blame for not stating clearly enough that the context in which he situates my dialogue with others is hardly my personal milieu.<sup>17</sup>

There is evidence to support Panikkar's claim that his personal milieu has not been limited to the academy or the high ecclesial encounter. Over the years he has addressed diverse audiences in academic and popular venues.<sup>18</sup> He writes:

For half a century I have been saying that the 'Sitz im Leben' of the interreligious dialogue is not the comfortable chair of the academic, the position of power of the churchman or the luxury of the westerner....<sup>19</sup>

Panikkar, since the first period of his writing, has emphasized responsible practise.<sup>20</sup> He has claimed to be identifying and fostering attitudes that would respond to the *kairos* of the present time. He denies the adequacy of a philosophy that is not also a commitment integrated with the broad scope of life, feelings and praxis:

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<sup>17</sup>Panikkar, "A Self-Critical Dialogue" (1996), 277.

<sup>18</sup>Beginning from his priestly ministry during his early years in Spain. See Chapter Two, pages 51-52 and footnote 14.

<sup>19</sup>Panikkar, "A Self-Critical Dialogue" (1996), 278.

<sup>20</sup>Note the section of Chapter Two "Openness and Honesty in Life and Reflection," 60 ff.

For me a Philosophy which deals only with structures, theories, ideas, and shuns life, avoids praxis and represses feelings is not only one-sided, since it leaves untouched other aspects of reality, but in addition is bad Philosophy. Reality cannot be apprehended, understood, realized with a single organ or in only one of its dimensions.<sup>11</sup>

Panikkar's life in India has involved work among the poor in collaboration with Hindus.<sup>12</sup> He admits only one crosscultural universal and that is the poor.<sup>13</sup> He appears intensely conscious of the tension between his scholarly vocation and the call to respond to the immediate needs of people. Yet there is no final dilemma for him in this:

In a word, reality is not a matter of either-or, spirit or matter, contemplation or action, written message or living people, East or West, theory or praxis or, for that matter, the divine or the human.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Panikkar, "Philosophy As Life-Style" (1978), 197-198.

<sup>12</sup>Panikkar makes reference to his experience in the 1950s of having been "engaged in social action with some monks of the Sri Râmakrishna Mission" and being exhorted by them to take seriously the principles of *karma* and *maya* in his work to influence the situation of Calcutta. Panikkar, "A Self-Critical Dialogue" (1996), 278.

<sup>13</sup>He writes: "This interest in the poor, paradoxically enough, justifies the crosscultural value of Christian theology. The poor are precisely those who have not 'made it' in any culture; they remain at the bottom-line. They are undifferentiated, not culturally specialized. They are crosscultural, for they are found in all cultures. Concern for brahmins or rabbis, scientists or saints, white people or only free citizens requires certain cultural options, but concern for the poor demands a crosscultural attitude. The poor are always with us, in every culture." Panikkar, "Can Theology be Transcultural" (1991), 12.

<sup>14</sup>Panikkar, et al., *The Vedic Experience: Mantramañjarî* (1977), xxxvi.

It is difficult to make a case against Panikkar on the matter of his commitment to the poor and to justice. This does not invalidate Knitter's contention that Panikkar's account of pluralism needs a "complement."<sup>35</sup> However, it may be asked whether Knitter, at least in "Cosmic Confidence or Preferential Option?" (1991, 1996), has been sufficiently precise in his critique. The "preferential option" for the poor is not in a radical sense a "complement" to cosmic confidence. As Panikkar has stated, cosmic confidence is to be understood first as the "confidence of the cosmos," not confidence in the cosmos.<sup>36</sup> Implicit in cosmic confidence is the longing for and anticipation of a just and compassionate world. Thus, the option for the poor is not so much a complement to cosmic confidence as a living out of the implications of cosmic confidence. The option for the poor is making culturally concrete the moral dimension of self-transcendence. Since the "preferential option" is culturally specific -- in fact, is distinctly Western and Christian -- it is not the adequate intercultural ground or even "shaky ground" for interreligious encounter. Panikkar accepts Knitter's contention that that "preferential option may help my position and purify it from its dangers." He points out, however, that this does not make the preferential option the "basis" of cosmic confidence.

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<sup>35</sup>Knitter, "Cosmic Confidence or Preferential Option?" (1996), 183.

<sup>36</sup>Panikkar, "A Self-Critical Dialogue" (1996), 281.

It is more accurate to recognize that cosmic confidence is the "basis" for the preferential option:

The concern for the poor presupposes precisely a cosmic confidence. In fact, why do we get so indignant at injustice, premature deaths, and sufferings if not because we assume a cosmic confidence in reality, in which somehow we trust and believe that life cannot be so senseless, unjust and cruel as to justify such manmade oppressions? It is that cosmic confidence which triggers the healthy decision of the 'option.' But his injustice is only detected because of our presupposition that there is a cosmic order which the injustice has precisely violated.

#### The Complement to Cosmic Confidence

It is our view that what would "complement" (complete or perfect) Panikkar's cosmic confidence would be an explicit identification of the location and role of cosmic confidence within an analysis of the structure and dynamics of human intentionality. Viewing Panikkar's cosmic confidence as referring primarily, if not exclusively, to what Lonergan would term religious conversion, we could then identify "the preferential option" as a culturally specific expression of moral conversion. As Lonergan points out, religious conversion, though subsuming the moral and intellectual, has a causal priority in relation to moral and intellectual conversion:

Though religious conversion sublates moral, and moral conversion sublates intellectual, one is not to infer that intellectual comes first and then moral and finally religious. On the contrary, from a causal viewpoint, one would say that first there is God's gift of his love. Next, the eye of this love reveals values in their splendour, while the strength of this love brings about their realization, and that is moral conversion. Finally, among the values discerned by the

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 280.

eye of love is the value of believing the truths taught by the religious tradition, and in such tradition and belief are the seeds of intellectual conversion.<sup>36</sup>

Lonergan's account of the interrelation of the religious and the moral and the intellectual supports Panikkar's notion that cosmic confidence, which refers to the spontaneity (giftedness) of that state of being in love, is basic. The basis for communion among religious traditions cannot be reduced to the "preferential option." The ultimate ground is religious self-transcendence, cosmic confidence, the "yes" to life, what Lonergan has termed a being in love in an unrestricted fashion.<sup>37</sup> Yet this cosmic confidence is not the sufficient or complete elaboration of the self-transcending dynamic.

From his early writings, Panikkar has shown that he is aware of this self-transcending dynamic as it is operative at various levels of human intentional consciousness. The full operation of this dynamic at the various levels of human consciousness is presupposed for an adequate interreligious dialogue. He writes concerning the presuppositions of dialogue:

We here presuppose a deep human honesty in searching for truth whenever it can be found, an intellectual openness in this search without bias or prejudice, and also a profound loyalty towards one's own religion.<sup>38</sup>

Though Panikkar shies away from a thorough analysis of intentional consciousness, he does, in a somewhat sporadic

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<sup>36</sup>Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 243.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 105-106.

<sup>38</sup>Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (1964, 1968), 3.

fashion, turn his attention to the functions of reason.<sup>12</sup> One could say that, like Lonergan, Panikkar begins from experience and that he sees the human person as self-transcending. However, for whatever reason, Panikkar has not gone beyond an initial, rather curt indication that he is aware of the operation of the self-transcending dynamic at various levels of human consciousness.<sup>14</sup>

What differentiates the concurring critics from the dissenting critics (Knitter is both!) is their interpretation of Panikkar's pluralist attitude as referring primarily to a "relatedness," to a self-transcending dynamic and not to a conceptualization. Notwithstanding ambiguities in Panikkar's account of the pluralist attitude, when it is presented as the "confidence of the cosmos," it appears that he is referring to the performative source of cultural and religious traditions.

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<sup>12</sup>At times Panikkar seems restricted to a narrow understanding of "reason." He writes: "The function of reason is not to discover, but to check, to control, to accept, to prove. And that is important enough. Reason offers the negative criterion for truth: something which does not pass the sieve of reason or contradicts the principle of non-contradiction, cannot be true. But reason is not that which reveals, or discovers, or puts us in immediate contact with reality. It only checks, controls, gives us certain proofs and, when successful [sic], formulates." Panikkar, "Athens or Jerusalem? Philosophy or Religion?" (1984), 37.

<sup>14</sup>In a review of Panikkar's *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics: Crosscultural Studies* (1979), Joseph Ramisch comments: "... it is unfortunate that in places (pp. 292ff., 302ff.) Panikkar seems to deny the validity of the kind of intentionality analysis and levels of consciousness Lonergan has so ably described. His discussion of experience is impoverished to the extent it seems to exclude the data of consciousness from consideration." Joseph G. Ramisch, "Review Symposium," *Horizons* 8 1981: 130.

When Panikkar identifies and promotes a pluralist attitude, he is pointing to the priority of the self-transcending dynamic or the "urge" over its categorial determinations. This distinction between the conceptual expression and its performative source is not fully appreciated by his dissenting critics.

The positive reception of elements of Panikkar's proposals by Lonergan is consistent with the interpretation we are making here. Lonergan worked in various ways to shift Catholic philosophy and theology out of its conceptualist stasis toward the reappropriation of its dynamic, intellectualist roots.<sup>43</sup> The extension of that project into a method in theology led to Lonergan's emphasis on religious conversion as foundational for theology. The emphasis on religious conversion, a conversion that is a dynamic source within a methodical theology helps make comprehensible Lonergan's citation of Panikkar's thoughts on a foundations for a shared practise of reflection that would include the mystics (and theologians) of other traditions.<sup>44</sup> Lonergan has appreciated that Panikkar recognizes the priority of the dynamic operation of self-transcending consciousness over categorial determinations. In Panikkar's terms, what is basic is an attitude not a theory, and in Panikkar's dialogue with Knitter, cosmic confidence is the dynamic source of the more

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<sup>43</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas* (ed. D. Burrell. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), 210-213.

<sup>44</sup>See Chapter Six, footnote 2.

culturally specific criterion of the preferential option.<sup>13</sup> The imposition of a universal theory and the resignation to relativist fragmentation are not the sole options available. There is a recurrent dynamic operative existentially on various levels of consciousness as a performative foundation. Lonergan has made thematic the structure and dynamics of the intentional consciousness of the human person. Panikkar has focused across religious traditions on the level of consciousness that is characterized by religious or "mystical" experience.

#### Is Panikkar's Pluralism a Relativism?

With Paul Knitter and other critics we have raised the question whether Panikkar's proposals on pluralism escape the charge of relativism. Does his pluralist attitude shy away from the conflictual issues that arise among the religious traditions and that can have implications of life and death for the poor, for suffering victims and for our environmentally threatened world? If relativism would isolate traditions from mutual fecundation, a relational approach would foster contact and challenge among cultural and religious traditions. Robert J. Schreiter has reflected on the relational approach and has listed some conditions for a transcultural theology. Among the conditions necessary for such a theology, Schreiter would want to include: 1. receiver-oriented communication, 2. attention to the

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<sup>13</sup>Though the poor are crosscultural, the "option" is not. Evidently, Panikkar's reservations about the universalizing dynamic of Western culture and religion would apply to the "preferential option."



categories of difference and otherness, 3. a methodology characterized by dialogical intentionality, and 4. a multivalent criteriology.<sup>46</sup> In proposing these conditions for a transcultural theology Schreiter is responding to an address by Panikkar entitled "Can Theology be Transcultural?".<sup>47</sup> In his response to Panikkar, Schreiter builds on a basic agreement he has with Panikkar concerning the relation between Christianity and culture. He supports what Panikkar has termed the "crosscultural" view of the relation between Christianity and culture. Panikkar has made the distinction between three understandings of Christianity in relation to culture -- Christianity as supracultural, supercultural and crosscultural. Since theology is *logos* it is not an essence above culture (supracultural), and since theology is *theos* it is not limited to one superior culture (supercultural). Christian theology is crosscultural in that it is always communicated through culture but never restricted to a single culture.

In an affirmation of Panikkar's view of the nature of dialogue, Paul F. Knitter (1996) has responded in similar positive fashion to this same schema. Knitter informs his reader that Panikkar does not believe that there is a kernel of

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<sup>46</sup>Robert J. Schreiter, "Some Conditions for a Transcultural Theology: Response to Raimon Panikkar" in *Pluralism and Oppression: Theology in World Perspective*, P.F. Knitter, Editor (Lanham, Maryland: College Theology Society & University Press of America, 1991), 25-27.

<sup>47</sup>Panikkar, "Can Theology be Transcultural?" (1991), 13.

Christianity that can then be planted in the soil of any cultural context whatsoever (supracultural). Nor does Panikkar hold with the model that maintains that Christianity can only be communicated at a certain superior cultural level of civilization (supercultural). For Panikkar, though religion and culture cannot be separated, they should be conceived as distinct but in relation. Knitter underlines the centrality of this notion to Panikkar's work:

Panikkar believes that something like a crosscultural understanding of gospel and culture is the most promising. In this approach, one affirms and works with the distinction and the bi-polar unity between body and spirit, between culture and religious experience. The gospel, therefore, is to be distinguished from culture, but it can never be found separated from it in a kind of disembodied state.<sup>13</sup>

The determination of what is of the essence or core of the gospel must be rediscovered in each new encounter. Unlike the supracultural (Platonic ideal form) understanding and the supercultural (from the higher view of a superior culture) understanding, the crosscultural posits no criteria in advance. A dialogical method is intrinsic to this approach. What is of the core of the gospel and what is its Western form must be determined in each instance.

What we are contending is that Panikkar's pluralism is not a relativism but that it moves in the direction of a transcultural or what Panikkar prefers to term a "crosscultural" theology.

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<sup>13</sup>Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (1996), 152.

Schreiter's four conditions for a transcultural theology provide a guide to a review of Panikkar's pluralism and help assemble data to support our contention that Panikkar's pluralism is not relativist.

Is Panikkar's account of pluralism receiver-oriented? The pertinent contrast Schreiter is making is between speaker and hearer oriented communication. When the maintenance of the full content is a priority, then speaker oriented communication dominates. When the priority is the ability of the hearer to relate what is received to the immediate context, then the receiver oriented theology has precedence.<sup>41</sup> Panikkar's notion of the role of fundamental theology today is evidently hearer or receiver-oriented. His primary concern is for the intelligibility of the theology in the culture in which it is received.<sup>42</sup> Panikkar admits that any authentic theology "formulates at the same time something of the human condition that transcends local boundaries."<sup>43</sup> However, for Panikkar, history and present-day observation make evident the dark side of the universalistic impulse with its temptation to totalitarian

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<sup>41</sup>For an explanation of what is meant by receiver-oriented methodologies, see Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (1985), 59-61.

<sup>42</sup>We recall Panikkar's comment on fundamental theology: "The role of fundamental theology, therefore, is to also work out the intelligibility of theology outside the culture and even religion where that theology until now grew and prospered." Panikkar, "Metatheology as Fundamental Theology" (1969), 51.

<sup>43</sup>Panikkar, "Can Theology be Transcultural?" (1991), 13.

expression. By means of what he terms his "theologoumena," Panikkar resists the impulse that wills to impose cultural and religious forms. These theologoumena include his account of pluralism that resists both "rigid uniformity" and "sheer plurality."<sup>52</sup>

Perhaps what makes most clear Panikkar's commitment to a receiver-oriented methodology is his acute awareness of what "translation" costs for the theologian. There is not only the risk but also the imperative of conversion when communication across cultures and religious traditions is adequately undertaken. Christian theology is the work of the Christian theologian, and the theologian who wishes to address another cultural or religious tradition makes a commitment and takes a risk:

Christian theology is translatable only in as much as Christian theologians succeed in making those translations. It is not universally translatable in principle. The drive to translate belongs to the dynamism of history. Translation is not a neutral or easy human activity. If in times past translations were made in order to convert others, the irony of history shows now that good translations demand just the opposite: the conversion of the translator. You cannot immerse yourself in the universe of discourse of the other if you do not sincerely live in the universe of life of the other culture -- i.e., if you do not make the foreign culture your own. I do not need to stress that I speak of real translations and not of transliterations.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>"My own theologoumena [sic] ... my defense of pluralism up to the very pluralism of truth against sheer plurality and rigid uniformity." Ibid., ft.nt. 17, p. 20.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 17.

Panikkar is attentive to the categories of difference and otherness, not just in an ad hoc fashion but on a methodological basis. This is evident in his insistence on a diatopical hermeneutics which does not assume that all cultures are "governed by the same code."<sup>14</sup> Panikkar's categories of relationship with the other are nuanced by his personalist vision. To know the other (whether person or religious tradition or belief system) demands a knowledge as conversion and what he terms the dialogical dialogue.<sup>15</sup> In the dialogical dialogue, the other becomes the *thou*. Panikkar describes the partner in the dialogical dialogue:

In the dialogical dialogue my partner is not the *other* (it is not he/she, and much less it), but the *thou*. The *thou* is neither the other nor the non-ego. The

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<sup>14</sup>"There are many different families of human cultures and subcultures and, despite all their similarities, we cannot assume a priori that they are all governed by the same code. This is what has led me to suggest a new hermeneutics, which I have called *diatopical* -- to distinguish it from morphological and diachronical -- *hermeneutics* that attempts thematically to study cultures and traditions that have not known a common cultural source. That is, human spaces (*topoi*), and only human time (*chronos*) or forms (*morphoi*), are different." Panikkar, "In Christ There is Neither Hindu nor Christian: Perspectives on Hindu-Christian Dialogue" (1989), 485.

<sup>15</sup>Christians often lack the intellectual tools with which to address the relation of Christianity to other religious traditions: "This cannot be otherwise, because it is only the mutual dialogical dialogue with and the knowledge-conversion to other religions that can offer adequate tools with which to deal with the problem." *Ibid.*, 485.

thou is the very thou of the I in the sense of the subjective genitive.<sup>52</sup>

The implication is that encounter with another religious tradition or belief system is better understood as entrance into a more full identity through the encounter with persons of another tradition. The basis is set for a relationship that does not reduce or make an object of ultimate or religious experience in another tradition. The issue is not solely doctrinal differences but "existential attitudes." As we cannot know the person of another by objectifying them or defining them in negative fashion, we cannot appreciate the ultimate or religious experience of another person unless we encounter the tradition in existential fullness. The implications for our way forward are significant and, in Panikkar's view urgent:

It is the cross-cultural challenge of our times that unless the barbarian, the mleccha, goy, infidel, nigger, kafir, the foreigner and stranger are invited to be my thou, beyond those of my own clan, tribe,

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<sup>52</sup>Panikkar, "The Dialogical Dialogue" (1986), 219. The personalist theme is evident in Panikkar's central essays on pluralism. He writes in the text of his address to the 1977 Panikkar Symposium at Santa Barbara: "To have treated the other as otherness instead of an *alius*, to have reified the other and not to have allowed him a place in my-self, is one of the greatest confusions the human being can fall into." He continues: "The awareness of the other as other (*alius*) and not just as otherness makes of him a fellow, a companion, a subject (and not an object), a source of knowledge, a principle of initiative as I myself am. This alone allows me to listen to the other, to be known by him and not just to know him. There can be no true pluralism until the other is discovered." Panikkar, "The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of Babel -- A Meditation on Non-Violence" (1979), 218.

race, church, or ideology, there is not much hope for the planet.<sup>57</sup>

Schreiter defines **dialogical intentionality** as:

... a sincere and sustained effort to learn as much as to teach, to be willing to change as much as to challenge.<sup>58</sup>

Panikkar has spoken of the dialogical dialogue as being characterized by "dialogical intentionality,"<sup>59</sup> the sincere will to dialogue. This is the crucial point of contrast between the dialogical and dialectical dialogue; the dialectical dialogue can be an expression of the will to power but it is fundamental to the dialogical dialogue that it not be so.<sup>60</sup> As Panikkar sees it, since the will to power and dialectical ways of thinking are so deeply set in the Western character, it is a first priority in the Western approach to the encounter to identify and foster a pluralist attitude, a realization of "individual insufficiency" and "constitutive relatedness," a trust (cosmic confidence) and a vulnerability that will counteract that aggressive style.<sup>61</sup>

From his earliest works Panikkar has asserted honesty in the search for truth as a basic condition for dialogue. It is in the encounter with the other that our own "myth" or horizon is

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<sup>57</sup>Panikkar, "The Dialogical Dialogue" (1986), 219-220.

<sup>58</sup>Schreiter, "Some Conditions for a Transcultural Theology: Response to Raimon Panikkar" (1991), 26.

<sup>59</sup>Panikkar, "The Dialogical Dialogue" (1986), 209.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 210.

<sup>61</sup>See Chapter Five: "The Diatopical Hermeneutic in the Hindu-Christian Encounter."

uncovered, that the truth about our own cultural or religious tradition can be discovered. The truth about ourselves can be liberating, but it can also be unsettling. Even a defensive assertion of the will to dominate, manipulate or coerce another would change the dialogue into a form of colonialism. Panikkar is emphatic that the Christian dynamic is a missionary one, and it is central to Christian self-identity to move out to engage other cultures and religious traditions. Christians and the Catholic Church have seen themselves as teachers, but the accent must be put on learning for an authentically dialogical approach. This is not a learning merely of information but a *communicatio in sacris*, a communion at the level of the sacred. Panikkar emphasizes that one can only understand what one loves, what one is ready to become, in a kind of becoming that "creates communion with reality."<sup>62</sup> Indeed, in Panikkar's view, those involved in an encounter go beyond learning from their dialogue partners. They open themselves to being "convinced" and to desiring "to engage in a common search for truth."<sup>63</sup> At the core of what Panikkar is about in taking the existential risk of multireligious experience is dialogical intentionality.

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<sup>62</sup>Panikkar, "Preparing a Dwelling Place for Wisdom" (1993), 11. See also: Panikkar, "La mística del diálogo: Entrevista de Raúl Fornet-Betancourt con Raimon Panikkar" (1993), 30.

<sup>63</sup>"The password today is *dialogue*. And dialogue implies not only an open position ready to listen to the other as also to learn from him, but also an attitude, ready to be convinced and to engage in a common search for truth." Panikkar, "Christianity and World Religions" (1969), 95.



Schreiter explains the rationale for a "multivalent criteriology" in the context of a plurality of cultures and religions:

If we live in many worlds, as Professor Panikkar has reminded us, then we should not be surprised that such complexity demands more than the utilization of one such criterion. We need rather an interconnecting battery of criteria if we are to be really faithful to the Gospel. Experience shows that we can err in many ways here. On a more conservative side, it is possible to think that linguistic formulations of one age can rise above any culture and serve as eternal criteria. On a more progressive side necessary and sufficient conditions get confused, as though there were one criterion that makes all others unneeded (as in the formula, 'if it doesn't liberate, it is not Christian').<sup>24</sup>

Schreiter is suggesting a multivalent criteriology when speaking of fidelity to the Christian tradition. An additional consideration would be that a multivalent criteriology is appropriate to a person of multireligious experience who is being faithful, in some sense, to authentic religious experience in more than one tradition, and so must ask what are criteria of fidelity in those traditions as well as in the Christian tradition. Single criterion approaches would do well to heed the need for a multivalent criteriology corresponding to the many worlds in which some people live today. Yet, Panikkar, particularly in his study of the Trinity, has alerted us to the potential openness of the Christian trinitarian tradition to a

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<sup>24</sup>Schreiter, "Some Conditions for a Transcultural Theology: Response to Raimon Panikkar" (1991), 26.

range of spiritualities, including Buddhist apophatic spirituality and Hindu *advaitic* awareness of the Spirit.

We have seen that Panikkar's contributions respond well to Schreier's conditions for a transcultural theology, a theology that would escape the charge of relativism. We would add one further consideration on the situation in which Panikkar reflects on the possibility of relating to other traditions. The problematic of a Christian attitude to other religious traditions in a religiously plural and interactive culture presents a specific context in which questions to Panikkar's pluralism are addressed. If a homogeneous context could ensure that the data relevant to judgements of truth and response to evil are more or less readily available, the context of interactive religious plurality does not offer that assurance. Panikkar has drawn the lesson from his life opportunities in moving among geographical, cultural, and religious contexts (*topoi* or spaces) to assert that a specific hermeneutic is necessary to make such judgements adequately. It is his familiarity with a range of cultures, particularly those of Spain, India, and North America and his immersion in a number of religious traditions (and ideologies), including Hindu, Buddhist and Secular, that helps make credible his identification of what is to be overcome in moving among cultures and religious traditions. That he has worked at developing a diatopical hermeneutic and a dialogical dialogue is indication of the extent to which he has taken seriously the challenge of cultural and religious plurality. Panikkar not only

points out the distance between cultures and religions but manifests confidence that this distance can be overcome. The tension set up by his perception of gaps between religious traditions and his confidence in the possibility of overcoming such gaps is a significant indication that he is not proposing a relativist position. He does not propose that each tradition is so different that it is immune from challenge and influence by the other; nor does he propose that all traditions are finally the same. Panikkar is opposed to universalist strategies that might function as means for the imposition of extrinsic cultural norms on the marginalized peoples. His proposal, as we understand it, is that judgement of truth and goodness should be made when there is adequate understanding based on an openness to learn from the other. This is an openness that does not leave the other as other but through the dialogical dialogue comes to view the other as one's Self.

#### Postscript: Implications for Multireligious Canada

The issues raised around the problematic of multireligious experience relate directly to the concerns of the culturally and religiously plural societies of our time. We follow Panikkar's position that there can be no common social identity in a social unity (like India or Canada) without a sharing in one another's sacred traditions.<sup>65</sup> For this to happen a real 'mutation' in consciousness is needed that has implications both for theology

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<sup>65</sup>Panikkar, *Worship and Secular Man* (1973), 65 ff.

and for practise.<sup>42</sup> The challenge is put to the religious traditions (and secular belief traditions) of the world to move to a way of relating that will enable a more adequate response to the threat presented by the complex mix of environmental breakdown and social disparities. In agreement with themes developed by Panikkar, Michael von Brück argues for a new awareness and wider participation of religious groups in bringing the resources of the traditions to bear on the issues of the present situation:

... unless the urgency, danger, and fragility of the human situation is felt by major portions of the various religious groups, any sharing in the well-springs of other religions can take place only among a few selected and mostly intellectual participants engaged in dialogue in artificial situations.

In our introduction to this work we indicated something of the parameters of our Toronto and Canadian context. We are not

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<sup>42</sup>Panikkar asserts: "My contention is that the traditional interdict of sharing worship, so common in many religions, is a coherent and justified position under a set of assumptions like caste, pure-impure, chosenness, etc. These assumptions are being challenged or substantially modified today under the general banner of a universal un-hierarchical human dignity." He continues: "Let us phrase the question in all its pungency for the Christian case. Ecumenical ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue, authentic tolerance and recognition of the other are empty, if not hypocritical words, unless we face squarely this mutation in self-understanding." Panikkar, "Chosenness and Universality: Can Christians Claim Both?," *Cross Currents* (Fall) 1988: 310.

<sup>43</sup>Michael von Brück, "Sharing Religious Experience in Hindu-Christian Encounter" in *On Sharing Religious Experience: Possibilities of Interfaith Mutuality*, J.D. Gort, et al., Editor (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 149.

only a multicultural but are also a multilinguistic and multireligious reality. Canada was founded as a collaboration and interaction among peoples -- native, French and English -- of diverse language, culture and religion. Notwithstanding efforts to exclude the indigenous peoples of Canada, and the repeated abortive attempts to make Anglophone culture normative and dominant, the Canadian nation has not taken the form of a monolithic nation-state. Rather it has creatively managed relations among peoples in pragmatic response to the reality of its complexity.<sup>44</sup> The challenge presented by complexity has only increased, among other reasons due to the high levels of immigration which since the late 1960s have been drawn more and more from Asia and Africa.<sup>45</sup>

Canada's historical experiment with a complex society has a relevance for other societies. Globalization, with the compression of space and time by means of developments in communication and travel technologies, has increased mobility and interdependence, and stimulated interaction among people of diverse language, culture and religion. Globalized forms of

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<sup>44</sup>"The essential characteristic of the Canadian public mythology is its complexity. To the extent that it denies the illusion of simplicity, it is a reasonable facsimile of reality. That makes it a revolutionary reversal of the standard nation-state myth. To accept our reality -- the myth of complexity -- is to live out of step with most other nations. It is an act of non-conformity." John Ralston Saul, *Reflections of a Siamese Twin: Canada at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Viking, 1997), 9.

<sup>45</sup>L. Sarick, "Visible Minorities Flock to the City," in *The Globe and Mail*. 1998, Toronto, A8.

culture (McDonald's, Coca Cola etc.) have threatened fragile local cultures. As recent events in the former Yugoslavia and former Soviet Union have shown, increased interaction can have a number of outcomes including those of fear of assimilation and domination and the subsequent conflictive fragmentation and distancing of one group from another. A society that can give witness to the possibility of maintaining a dynamic unity in diversity, that can demonstrate the social and economic rewards of mutual fecundation, is a beacon of hope for those who desire a positive response to the current situation. The rewards are not limited to the social and economic dimensions of life. Our projection is that there is also a significant enrichment of the religious dimension to be anticipated from interreligious encounter.

The vision that Panikkar promotes is one in which he has contended that both fidelity and openness are possible. His multireligious experience demonstrates confidence in the sharing of religious experience. The pluralist attitude which he espouses intends to maintain the committed nature of religious belief. His pluralist attitude eschews relativism for relatedness. It can be asked whether Panikkar's pluralist vision can contribute to the challenge of living together that Canadians, particularly those of our major immigrant receiving centres, have to face.

The history of Canada speaks of people pushed by geography, climate, small population and diversity in language, culture and

religion to a collaboration for mutual benefit and survival. The pluralist attitude that Panikkar promotes is not foreign to what has developed as characteristic of Canadian attitudes to plurality. In its basic expression, this could be expressed as an appreciation for a conjunctive or both/and way of thinking. There is a way of thinking that says Canadians can be both citizens of this country and citizens of the world, loyal to the cultural background of their ancestors and participants in an emerging Canadian culture. This characteristic way of thinking is under challenge in Canada on various fronts. Political movements in Canada -- the separatist movement in Quebec, the positions taken by the Reform party in the West -- are promoting a disjunctive or either/or way of thinking. It is not only at the political level that contrasting ways of thinking are an issue. Religious difference has been a significant factor in the Canadian mix, and it is not less so today. Notwithstanding processes of secularization, the voices of people with religious concerns are raised. Secularism, whether articulated as an ideology or expressed in practical attitudes that simply deny the religious dimension, is called into question as one more totalizing world-view. With the influx of new Canadians with active commitment to various religious traditions, it seems unlikely that in future any one religious tradition will dominate the Canadian scene.

The phenomenon of multireligious experience signals a willingness on the part of some to enter into a more profound

appreciation of other religious traditions. What is a rare occurrence at the present moment is rapidly becoming more common in a world of mixing of peoples. This study of Raimon Panikkar's multireligious experience and pluralist attitude has demonstrated the potential of his methodology of existential risk leading to multireligious experience. What appears possible for a Christian is a way of relating to the religious experience of other traditions that does not reduce this religious experience to another form of Christian religious experience. The engagement with the other religious tradition should display an engagement of the whole person, not just a cognitive apprehending of information, but a communion of body and mind and heart and spirit. For the Christian, without such engagement there is no basis for true and full knowledge of the other religious tradition, but only for an exercise in reduction of that other tradition to the presuppositions, beliefs and practices of a Christian or Catholic world view. The Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor, speaks of the contemporary reponse of intellectuals to pluralism, making a warning against superficial engagement with other cultures:

Moreover, even if one could demand it of them, the last thing one wants at this stage from Eurocentered intellectuals is positive judgments of the worth of cultures that they have not intensively studied. For real judgements of worth suppose a fused horizon of standards, as we have seen; they suppose that we have been transformed by the study of the other, so that we are not simply judging by our original familiar standards. A favorable judgment made prematurely would



be not only condescending but ethnocentric. It would praise the other for being like us.<sup>70</sup>

The evidence from Panikkar's multireligious experience is that such passing over to other cultures and religious traditions is arduous and demands one be vulnerable, at risk of conversion. Yet such passing over is possible for those who distinguish faith and belief, transcendence and theory. It is also rewarded by a coming back that can be for Christians a deeper appreciation of the Christian trinitarian vision of diversity constitutive of unity.

We return to where we began. Catholic Michael found that he could take the existential risk of participation in the religious experience of the Hindu tradition. The story of the encounter of people of diverse religious traditions is ongoing. From the experience of Raimon Panikkar and Michael, through the experience of many Catholics and Hindus and others, there is a history of encounter being shaped. We make a plea for a continuing reflection on the data of this multireligious experience whether it be in the life of a philosopher and theologian like Panikkar or in the life of a fervent Catholic Christian like Michael. The detailed response to Panikkar's question whether one can relate deeply to the religious experience of another tradition without diminishing its own vital difference will continue in the creative living out of such a possibility.

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<sup>70</sup>Taylor, *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"* (1992), 70-71.

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