Identity and Christ: The Ecclesiological and Soteriological Implications of Raimon Panikkar's Cosmotheandric Theology

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IDENTITY AND CHRIST: THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL AND SOTERIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF RAIMON PANIKKAR’S COSMOTHEANDRIC THEOLOGY

A Dissertation
Submitted to the McAnulty Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Michael J. Martocchio

May 2012
IDENTITY AND CHRIST: THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL AND SOTERIOLOGICAL
IMPLICATIONS OF RAIMON PANIKKAR’S COSMOTHEANDRIC THEOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

IDENTITY AND CHRIST: THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL AND SOTERIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF RAIMON PANIKKAR’S COSMOTHEANDRIC THEOLOGY

By

Michael J. Martocchio

May 2012

Dissertation supervised by Gerald Boodoo, Ph.D.

One of the most influential figures in recent theological reflection upon interreligious dialogue is Raimon Panikkar. Panikkar was an ordained Catholic priest who also practiced the Hindu and Buddhist faiths. Panikkar lived a life of mystical faith in which his identity was simultaneously Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist, a phenomenon often called ‘multiple belonging’. However, this mystical unity is not merely an element of Panikkar’s faith life, but it also essential to his theology. In fact, it is mystical unity that underlies the very concept of identity in Panikkar’s thought. Identity is found through union. It is in the realization of this unity that the concept of ‘Christ’ comes into play. Christ is the principle of this identifying unity, which is found throughout all of Reality. Panikkar’s overall theological vision can best be described by his own term: ‘cosmotheandric’, which describes this unity of all of reality in its three poles: the world (cosmos), God (Theos), and Human (Aner). In this way, the very nature of Reality itself
is Trinitarian. With this in mind, this dissertation seeks to deduce the ecclesiological and soteriological implications of this theological vision. The key to understanding Panikkar’s ecclesiology and soteriology is the interrelation of the concepts of ‘Christ’ and ‘identity’.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Dr. Gerald Boodoo for his wisdom and guidance in the formation and completion of this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Aimee Light and Dr. Sebastian Madathummuriyil for their insightful comments and advice. Special thanks and gratitude are also due to Dr. George Worgul, the chair of the Theology Department and the entire Duquesne faculty, past and present. Each of my teachers at Duquesne has, in a unique way, helped to form my theological understanding and inspired me through the years. I would also like to thank all of my fellow graduate student and part time faculty colleagues who have enhanced my experiences over the years at Duquesne.

I would also like to thank my wife Kristen, who has constantly been my source of strength and endurance. I would also like to thank my daughter Francesca, who has brought so much joy to my life. Thank you, as well, to my parents, my siblings and their families, and all of my friends and family who have given me their love and support. Finally, I would ultimately like to thank God and all of God’s family who provided me with the opportunity to encounter the Divine in diverse ways that transcend my calculations.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgment</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Cosmotheandrism</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Advaita and Trinity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Reality and Trinity (Reality as Trinity)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Panikkar’s Appropriation of Augustine</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Panikkar on the Transcendence of the Father (Brahman)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 The Son: The Ontological Expression of the Father</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 The Spirit: The Unity of Silence and Expression</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Jacques Dupuis: An Alternative Approach to the Advaita-Trinity Relationship</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 Dupuis and Panikkar: A Contrast</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8.1 Panikkar’s encounter between traditions is more radical and ‘risky’ than that of</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dupuis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8.2 Panikkar allows those religious traditions to encounter one another on a level plane</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 Conclusion</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Christ</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 The Evolving Worldview of Raimon Panikkar and the Resulting Christology</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Christophany: Christ and the <em>Humanum</em></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 The Question of the Uniqueness of Christ: A First Glance</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Universality, Concreteness, and Christ</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Christ the Tempiternal</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Christ Enables Participation in the Divine, Trinitarian Life</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 S. Mark Heim on the Incarnation</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 Jacques Dupuis: A Helpful Dialogue Partner on Speaking of Christ Outside of Jesus</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9 Panikkar Accounts for the Connection between Christ and Jesus of Nazareth</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10 Conclusion</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 3: Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 East and West on Identity</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Identity and Identification</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 The <em>Humanum</em>: One’s Identity as a Human</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 <em>Mythos</em> and <em>Logos</em></td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Myth and the Anthropological Level of Faith</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 A Philosophical Approach to Identity: Paul Ricoeur</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Postcolonialism and Identity: Homi K. Bhabha</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 Conclusion</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 4: The Identity of Christ and Christian Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 The Identity of Christ</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1 The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.2 The Identity that the ‘Christophany’ Reveals.........................165

4.2 Christian Identity...............................................................167

4.2.1 Christian Identity as Human Identity.................................167

4.2.2 Panikkar’s Ontology of Perspectivism.................................171

4.2.3 Christian Worship Mediates Christian Identity....................175

4.2.4 A Universal Religious Experience?....................................178

4.2.5 The Impossibility of Religious Epoché: Christian Identity

    Cannot Be Denied.............................................................182

4.2.6 Intrareligious Dialogue.....................................................188

4.2.7 The Type of Pluralism that Christian Identity Must Embrace.....194

4.2.8 Critical Evaluation: Parallelism........................................197

4.2.9 A Unique Brand of Pluralism............................................199

4.2.10 Critique: Is Such a Pluralistic Outlook Possible?..................207

4.2.11 Dialogue Fosters Growth.................................................219

4.2.12 Unity is at the Root of Christian Identity...........................225

4.3 True Christian Identity is Established Mystically.....................228

4.4 Conclusion..............................................................................248

Chapter 5: Ecclesiological and Soteriological Implications..................250

5.1 Ecclesiology...........................................................................250

5.2 Critical Evaluation: A Cosmic Christology Demands a Cosmic

    Ecclesiology.......................................................................253

5.3 Soteriology.............................................................................259

5.4 Critical Evaluation: The Freedom of Salvation and its Institutional

 ix
Implications……………………………………………………………………275

5.5 Realizing Salvific Identity……………………………………………………279

5.6 S. Mark Heim on Salvation and the Possibility of Multiple
Religious Ends…………………………………………………………………281

5.7 Critical Evaluation: Multiple Religious Ends or Multiple Human
Conditions? ………………………………………………………………………288

5.8 Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus………………………………………………297

5.9 Synthesis: Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Identity………………………304

5.10 Conclusion……………………………………………………………………307

Conclusion………………………………………………………………………..310

Bibliography………………………………………………………………………315
Introduction

In Catholic theology since the latter half of the twentieth century, increasingly greater attention has been given to interreligious dialogue. One of the great catalysts in this regard was the Second Vatican Council. The attitude of openness that built up prior to the council, and which the council channeled marked a decisive shift in tone from the previous more ‘exclusivist’ attitude that can even be found in Pius XII’s inspirational *Mystici Corporis Christi*. The Second Vatican Council thus sanctioned the dialogical work that many theologians, including our object of study, Raimon Panikkar, had already begun, and marked a significant turn in Catholic theology in general.

This positive turn toward other traditions was doubtlessly inspired by the phenomenon of ‘globalization’. *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, notes that “One of the salient features of the modern world is the growing interdependence of men one on the other, a development promoted chiefly by modern technical advances.”¹ This increasing encounter and mutual reliance between peoples of various geographical and religious backgrounds has multiplied exponentially since the council, no doubt influenced this positive turn. However, it is not simply the novelty of the milieu that lies at the root of this openness. It is also the rediscovery of the historical roots of Christianity in both its Judaic and patristic forms that allowed the bishops gathered at the Second Vatican Council to find reason to reject the isolationism that has periodically plagued the Church throughout its history.

The clearest articulation of this attitude of the council can be found in 1965’s *Nostra Aetate*, the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions.

¹ *Gaudium et Spes*, 23.
*Nostra Aetate* envisions the existence of some kind of universal religious experience that cuts across the many geographical, cultural, and religious boundaries that humanity has established. In it, the Bishops state, “From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father.”

They continue:

Religions, however, that are bound up with an advanced culture have struggled to answer the same questions by means of more refined concepts and a more developed language.

Thus in Hinduism, men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an inexhaustible abundance of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry. They seek freedom from the anguish of our human condition either through ascetical practices or profound meditation or a flight to God with love and trust. Again, Buddhism, in its various forms, realizes the radical insufficiency of this changeable world; it teaches a way by which men, in a devout and confident spirit, may be able either to acquire the state of perfect liberation, or attain, by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination.

Thus, while *Nostra Aetate* places particular stress on relations with Judaism and even Islam because of the Abrahamic roots they share with Christianity, it also sees both Hinduism and Buddhism as striving for knowledge of the same ‘divine mystery’ that Christians seek. Thus, the Bishops declare that the “Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions.” Furthermore, they “often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men.”

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2 *Nostra Aetate*, 2.
However, openness to the presence of such a ‘ray of truth’ in other religious traditions is only a starting point for interreligious dialogue. The questions that follow from this starting point revolve around the precise nature of this relationship between Christianity and other religious traditions, as well as the relationship between the truth claims that each posit. It is to these types of questions that a great amount of theological thought in the area of interreligious dialogue has been devoted before, during, and after the Council.

It is against this backdrop that Raimon Panikkar has developed his cosmotheandric theological vision. Panikkar was born on November 3, 1918 in Barcelona. He was ordained a Catholic priest in 1946. Panikkar held three doctorates. His first doctorate, from Madrid University in 1946 was in philosophy. He was ordained a Catholic priest in the same year. His second doctorate was in chemistry also from Madrid University in 1958. His third doctorate was in theology from Lateran University in Rome in 1961. He later served on the liturgical commission for the Second Vatican Council and attended the first Roman Synod under John XXIII.

The first edition of his groundbreaking *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, which developed from his theology dissertation, was also released during the Council (1964).

Even with a cursory glance at his work, it is plain to see that Panikkar’s theological vision is quite peculiar. In one sense, he holds to the pluralist notion that there are many religious traditions that have valid, salvific significance in their own right,


not simply as ‘stepping stones’ to Christianity. On the other hand, unlike many other pluralists, Panikkar does not dilute the notion of truth in order to acknowledge its presence in other traditions. Rather, he defines the truth of these religious traditions in a manner that Christians (maybe with some effort) can recognize. As we shall see, the central truth that authentic religions reveal, according to Panikkar, is communion. Panikkar discusses communion in terms of ‘cosmotheandism’, a term we shall examine in our first chapter.

‘Cosmotheandism’, the union between God, humanity, and the world, is rooted in the Christian concept of Trinity. The Trinity for Panikkar, however, is not merely a term used to describe God. Rather, the unity that is present in the Godhead radiates and enlivens all of reality. Thus, everything, including the transcendent God, is bound up in a relationship of communion. As we shall see, this is the foundation of Panikkar’s dialogue with traditions other than Christianity. The most important interlocutor in this respect is the school of Advaita Vedanta within Hinduism. The Advaitic tradition, according to Panikkar, recognizes in all of reality the same communion that Christians find in the Triune God and in which they seek to participate in eschatological hope.

Much like the concept of Trinity, the term ‘Christ’ receives significant extension in Panikkar’s thought. For Panikkar, the activity of ‘Christ’ extends outside of the incarnation to the extent that there can be, to borrow the title from his most famous work, an ‘unknown Christ of Hinduism’. In our second chapter we shall examine Panikkar’s Christology, to which he gives the appellation ‘christophany’. We shall find that what is essential for Panikkar is that ‘Christ’ is revelatory and can be found wherever
cosmotheandric union is manifested and revealed. ‘Christ’, then is not the sole property of Christianity.

This brings us to the concept of ‘identity’, which, as we shall see in our third chapter, is a concept that Panikkar analyzes in multiple ways, both directly and indirectly. We argue in what follows that identity is a central category in Panikkar’s thought. For Panikkar, identity results from the interplay between self-designation and communal acceptance. It is also best understood through unity and not differentiation. It is only through understanding identity as Panikkar envisions it that we can begin to sketch the soteriology and ecclesiology for which Panikkar lays the foundation, and to which he frequently points. Ecclesiology and soteriology are both bound up with the realization of one’s identity.

It is with this in mind that we proceed to our fourth chapter, in which we see where the terms ‘Christ’ and ‘identity’ converge in Panikkar’s thought. In this chapter, we examine both the identity of Christ and, in a broader sense, Christian identity. For Panikkar, however, these terms are intimately related. ‘Christ’ extends beyond the boundaries of the Incarnation and is, ultimately, the principle of human identity. The Christian, then, is one who is united with and, consequently, manifests Christ. The Christian is a ‘christophany’.

Based upon these reflections, we proceed to our fifth and final chapter, in which we examine Panikkar’s soteriological and ecclesiological statements and attempt to construct a more or less systematized synthesis thereof and follow these elements of Panikkar’s theology further down the logical course that Panikkar has begun. It is here that we betray our Christian inclination and perspective. Our concern is with the
implications that Panikkar’s thought have for Christianity and the identification of what we can learn from his *intra*religious dialogue. We should note that Panikkar himself does not develop these themes because they are distinctly Christian concerns. But, from a Christian perspective, they are important themes and must be addressed in any complete theological system.
Chapter 1

Cosmotheandrism

Raimon Panikkar’s Trinitarian theology is the centerpiece of his entire theological project. As we shall see, however, this Trinitarian worldview has undergone some evolution. In Panikkar’s thought, there has been an evolution from a focus on the Trinity as a characteristic of God to one on Trinity as a characteristic of all reality, which in Panikkar’s terminology is called ‘cosmotheandrism’. This represents the full maturation of Panikkar’s thought. In the exposition below, we shall examine both his earlier thought and his later thought, often bridging the two. As we shall see, Panikkar’s cosmotheandric worldview cannot be understood without his earlier work on Trinity ‘qua God’. It is consequently the background against which all elements of his thought are to be analyzed. Thus, before we proceed to discuss Panikkar’s usage of terms such as ‘Christ’ and ‘identity’, we must locate these concepts within Panikkar’s overall project. Therefore, let us begin with a discussion of Trinity.

1.1 Advaita and Trinity

For Panikkar, Trinitarian thought is an important locus of overlap between Christian thought and other great religious traditions of the world. The most important of these is the Hindu Advaitic tradition. The thought behind this dialogue of traditions, and which underlies Panikkar’s theological project, is based on Panikkar’s effort to wrestle with the problem of separating Christianity from Western culture. Panikkar holds out hope that this can be done: “I have been hoping for many years for a Second Council of
Jerusalem (whatever this might be) that would bring together not only Christians but exponents of the world’s other human traditions.”

At the root of this Trinitarian dialogue for Panikkar is his conviction that God in general, and a Trinitarian view of God in particular, is not the sole property of Western Christianity or even Christianity in general. As Velti-Matti Kärkkäinen points out, “a key insight for Panikkar is that Trinity, while a distinctively Christian way of speaking of cosmotheandrism, is not an exclusively Christian reality.” Rather, Trinity is “a concept that can be found in all religions, though taking various forms.” Thus Trinity is an insight shared by several of the great traditions of the world. For Panikkar, the Trinity is especially advantageous in the dialogue between religions because it is open to unity in difference. The concept of the Trinity, then, may embrace the same mystery that is expressed in varying ways in other religious traditions. “The Trinity, then, may be considered as a junction where the authentic spiritual dimensions of all religions meet.”

Thanks in part to Panikkar’s influence, this view is not uncommon in contemporary theology. Several theologians who grapple with the relationship between Christianity and other world religions take a similar approach. Many of these theologians are inspired directly by Panikkar’s project. For instance, Gavin D’Costa, who criticizes the pluralism of theologians like John Hick and Paul Knitter, also sees Trinitarian theology as having the ability to cross traditional borders. He dislikes the theologies of

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3 Ibid., 339.
5 Ibid., 42.
Hick and Knitter because they, in the final analysis, become just as rigid as the so-called exclusivists they criticize because they begin with their own exclusionary starting point, which D’Costa identifies as modernity. According to D’Costa, “logically speaking, if those who claim that theirs is the only true religious tradition should be naturally described as exclusivist, it is not clear to me why ‘pluralists’ who also believe that theirs is the only true tradition should not equally be naturally described as exclusivists.”6 D’Costa’s thesis is that "Trinitarian exclusivism can acknowledge God's action within other traditions, without domesticating or obliterating their alterity, such that real conversation and engagement might occur."7

Another theologian influenced by this aspect of Panikkar’s thought is S. Mark Heim, who exhibits what he terms a theology of ‘multiple religious ends’. According to Heim, “Christians can find validity in other religions because of the conviction that the Trinity represents a universal truth about the way the world and God actually are.”8 Like D’Costa, Heim sees the Trinity as a theological view that not only tolerates, but also anticipates religious diversity. Heim, however, has in mind the diversity of religious goals, or ends. He explains that “from within a trinitarian perspective, specific differences need not be condemned, but alternative ways of integrating difference are regarded as penultimate at best in comparison with the trinitarian option.”9

The form that this Trinitarian approach to the diversity of religions in the world takes in Panikkar’s thought is set forth in his The Trinity and World Religions: Icon—

7 Ibid., 47.
9 Ibid., 128.
Person—Mystery. In this small book, Panikkar sets forth his conviction that “dualism and monism are equally false.” This conviction is based on his appropriation of the advaitic tradition of Hinduism. This advaitic tradition finds its roots in the 8th century CE Hindu thinker Shankara. According to this tradition, the Upanishads reveal the advaita, “the non-dual character of the Real, the impossibility of putting in dvanva, in a pair, God and the world.” However, the two cannot be strictly identified either. Thus, “God and the world are neither one nor two.” This nondualist insight then, for Panikkar, is something akin to the Christian Trinitarian insight, which is based on the

10 See Raymond (Raimon) Panikkar, The Trinity and World Religions: Icon—Person—Mystery, (Bangalore, India: The Christian Literature Society, 1970). This work was published in the United States three years later as The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man: Icon—Person—Mystery. See Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man: Icon—Person—Mystery, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973). We will follow the pagination of the latter in the references that follow.

11 Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man: Icon—Person—Mystery, 36.


13 Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man: Icon—Person—Mystery, 36.

14 Ibid. While it is not our concern here, we should note that it can be questioned whether Panikkar is selectively interpreting the advaita Vedanta to fit his (Christian) theological agenda. See, for instance, Jacques Dupuis, Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 273-274. Dupuis does not agree that advaitic nondualism avoids monism. Thus, he distinguishes more clearly than Panikkar between Trinitarian and advaitic thought. See Michael Comans, The Method of Early Advaita Vedanta: A Study of Gaudapada, Sankara, Suresvara, and Padmapada, (Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000), 223-224. Michael Comans points out that Shankara maintains distinctions, but they are secondary to the absolute oneness of all reality. Thus, Shankara’s Advaita is not simply a ‘monistic theism’. Nonetheless, Shankara certainly places unity above distinctions. In other words the Absolute unity precedes and grounds the creativity of Brahman (Ishvara) and is ultimately overcome when the self sees the world as Brahman (See Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.5.15). Only unity is ultimate. See also Ibid., 217-218. Toward this end, Shankara distinguishes between the absolute Brahman and the saguna Brahman (Brahman with attributes). This latter term is connected to the Creator Lord, Ishvara. However, the two are not exact equivalents (See Shankara’s commentary on BrahmaSūtra 1.2.2). However, it should be noted that Panikkar’s cosmotheandrisrn emphasizes union, not division. It is not intended to compartmentalize reality, but to emphasize the unity of all that is. See Raimon Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness, 61. Panikkar states, “The cosmotheandric intuition is not a tripartite division among beings, but an insight into the threefold core of all that is, insofar as it is.” See Velti-Matti Kärkkäinen, The Trinity: Global Perspectives, 146. While critiquing S. Mark Heim, Kärkkäinen points out that the intention behind the development of the doctrine of the Trinity was to emphasize unity. Nonetheless, the doctrine of the Trinity still affirms diversity; distinctions do not ‘disappear’.
Nicene conviction that the relationship between Father and Son is neither one of monism, nor one of dualism.\textsuperscript{15} Thus, the Hindu tradition shares, in its own unique way, a Trinitarian worldview with Christianity. So, there is common ground between both traditions.

It should be noted, however, that not all those who read his work believe that Panikkar’s interpretation is completely faithful to the advaitic tradition. Jyri Komulainen, for instance, expresses some doubts on Panikkar’s definition of advaita, insisting that “he interprets this crucial concept of Hindu philosophy in quite an idiosyncratic way, claiming that Advaitic intuition alludes to something that overcomes both monism and dualism.”\textsuperscript{16} He continues: “It could even be said that his conception has a certain bias that springs from his Christian background.”\textsuperscript{17} Thus, Panikkar uses Advaita in a way that may not be recognizable to most vedantic thinkers. From a Christian perspective, of course, this is not a serious problem, but if one is claiming (as Panikkar does) to do justice to the Hindu tradition as well, he/she must acknowledge any interpretive license that has been taken. We shall see an alternative inculcation of Advaita Vedanta below as we look at Jacques Dupuis’ theology of religious pluralism.\textsuperscript{18}

He notes that Panikkar has the tendency to ‘mystify’ his theology, saying that “it is rather clear that what Panikkar does with his ‘non-dualistic’ is to shift his point of view

\textsuperscript{15} Raimon Panikkar, \textit{The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany, Revised and Enlarged Edition}, 148-163.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} See, for instance Jacques Dupuis, \textit{Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism}, 273-274. Dupuis is much more guarded in his usurpation of the concept of nondualism. He is concerned that the nondualism found in the Advaita Vedanta leaves very little room for distinction; it is, in essence monism. Consequently, he speaks of the trinitarian insight as distinct from the advaitic insight because it accounts for both diversity and unity.
to another level, and thus, in a sense, to evade criticism.”\(^{19}\) This, of course, is always a danger when one deals with the logic of transcendence. Nonetheless, Komulainen calls the approach of *Trinity and World Religions* an “example of creative Trinitarian thinking.”\(^{20}\) He also points out that “although Panikkar did not develop the line of Trinitarian thought presented in TWR [*Trinity and World Religions*], some fundamental theological decisions made in it could be seen in his Christology.”\(^{21}\) We shall see this influence in greater detail as we delve deeper into Panikkar’s Christology in Chapter 2.

### 1.2 Reality and Trinity (Reality as Trinity)

The most significant point of influence that the advaitic tradition bears on Panikkar’s thought can be seen in his insistence that Trinity is not something that exclusively refers to God. Rather, it describes the relationship of all of reality, in its three poles: the World (*Cosmos*), God (*Theos*), and Man (*Aner*).\(^{22}\) Hence, to describe this

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19 Ibid., 102. See also Velti-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives*, 344. Here, Kärkkäinen also criticizes Panikkar for what he calls Panikkar’s “quite uncritical use of the advaitic principle.” It seems, however, that Kärkkäinen’s dispute with Panikkar here is not the result of a criticism from a Hindu perspective, but rather, it is a criticism from a logical perspective. Kärkkäinen says, “It seems to me that an advaitic principle is called forth whenever serious logical or other intellectual problems are encountered. Resorting to either the advaitic or mystical principle can become an exercise in avoiding the core problem.” Thus, whenever he finds himself in a logical ‘corner’, Panikkar draws an exit by appealing to ‘mystery’. This critique is quite valid. It must be admitted that this is a frequent temptation in all of Trinitarian theology. There is a ‘fine line’ that one walks whenever one deals with transcendence. However, if one is to really follow the ‘logic’ of transcendence, one must be willing to carefully tread that path. One must even be willing to err on the side of saying ‘too little’ rather than destroying the transcendent by saying ‘too much’.

20 Ibid., 35.

21 Ibid., 36.

22 In what follows, we use the term human rather than ‘Man’ as Panikkar does. However, Panikkar’s usage of the term ‘Man’ ought not to be interpreted in a gender exclusive manner. See Raimon Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness*, ed. Scott Eastham (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 54-55. Here, Panikkar explains his terminological preference. He notes, “In describing this intuition, the expression *theanthropocosmic* might sound more accurate, because *anthrōpos* refers to Man as a human being, i.e., as distinct from the Gods, while *anēr* tends to connote the male.” But, *theandric* connotes “union of the human and the divine without confusion.” He also chooses ‘cosmotheandridsm’ for more aesthetic reasons: “Besides, the expression *cosmotheandric* is rather more euphonic than *theanthropocosmic*.” Nonetheless, he still uses the term uses “theanthropocosmic” in the same work. See Ibid., 127.
advaitic-trinitarian approach to reality, Panikkar coins a new term (something he does with some frequency): cosmotheandristism.

In one of his most mature works, Christophany, Panikkar defines his own project as characterized by the desire to “transcend abrahamic monotheism without damaging the legitimacy and validity of monotheistic religions.”\(^{23}\) He sees cosmotheandristism as the solution. He points out that, contrary to popular sentiments, Trinitarian thought is not monotheism. If it were, it would result in Docetism. Furthermore, along these lines, in a Trinitarian approach, God is not properly referred to as a substance. This would result in tritheism.\(^{24}\) Rather, “God is transcendent mystery immanent in us.”\(^{25}\) So, Panikkar sees his thought as the logical outcome of Trinitarianism. When this insight is extended beyond mere reference to God, it can be seen everywhere:

It is worth recalling that the cosmotheandric vision of reality is an almost universal cultural invariant. I know of no culture where heaven-earth-hell, past-present-future, Gods-Men-World, and pronouns I-you-it, and even the intellectual triad of yes, no and their embrace, are not found in one form or another.\(^{26}\)

Panikkar’s use of the term ‘cosmotheandric’ marks this extension. The relationship that Christians traditionally ascribe to the Trinitarian hypostases is at the foundation of all reality:

In other words, in Panikkar’s vision the Cosmotheandric principle expresses the fundamental structure of reality in terms of the intimate interaction of God, humankind,

\(^{23}\) Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany: The Fullness of Man*, xx.
and the world or cosmos. There is no hierarchy, no dualism; one of the three does not dominate or take precedence. 27

While considering Panikkar’s new term, Varghese Manimala points out:

The coinage of the term and making use of it practically in all his recent writings shows the fact that he has been reflecting on this triple aspect for many years. He has studied at length the ‘trinitarian’ aspect of reality, and this aspect is close to his heart that we find a glimpse of this practically in all his writings. 28

Perhaps this influence is seen even in those works that were written before he coined the term, in which Trinitarian thought is frequently central. Nonetheless, as we shall see below, this Trinitarian thought has undergone evolution from a ‘more traditional’ emphasis on the interrelations of the hypostases of the Godhead to an emphasis on Trinity as a pattern or structure comprising all of reality. Thus, as Kärkkäinen notes, Panikkar’s Trinitarianism has a great deal of concrete application because “for him Trinitarianism is not only a doctrine but also an underlying structure of all reality, including religions.” 29 This enables the above-mentioned openness to finding Trinitarian elements in religious traditions other than Christianity. According to Kärkkäinen, “The reason Trinitarian—cosmotheandric—language is appropriate even in a nonexclusive theology of religions is that it genuinely reflects the structure of reality.” 30

He sees this as Panikkar’s major accomplishment. Kärkkäinen tells us: “In my understanding, the main contribution is elevating the doctrine of the Trinity to a central

27 Velti-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives*, 337. See, for instance, Raimon Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness*, ed. Scott Eastham (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 60. Here, Panikkar states, “The cosmotheandric principle could be formulated by saying that the divine, the human and the earthly—however we may prefer to call them—are the three irreducible dimensions which constitute the real, i.e., and reality inasmuch as it is real.”


30 Ibid., 339.
place not only in Christian theology in general but in the theology of religions in particular.”31 This is due to the fact that by making the Trinity central, Panikkar “genuinely wrestles with the ancient problem of one-and-many.”32 Because he is dealing with an essential human problem, that is reconciling unity and diversity, Panikkar touches on something that is deeper than and at the root of any authentic religious tradition.

So, as Manimala states, Panikkar “holds that reality has a threefold structure; this triadic unity exists in all levels of the consciousness and reality.”33 But as Manimala points out, “one important aspect of this threefold reality is that they are no watertight compartments, but they interpenetrate and are interdependent.”34 So, this structure of reality is characterized by perichoresis, circumincessio, or mutual indwelling, in the language of Christian theology35 and advaita, or nondualism, in the language of the Vedic tradition. Thus, it is these two traditions that most greatly influence Panikkar’s cosmotheandrisim:

The cosmotheandric vision has its most visible roots in Christianity and Hinduism. In the former there is the theandrisism, especially influential in the Orthodox Church, and according to which the divine and human wouldn’t exist without each other.36

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31 Ibid., 341.
32 Ibid., 342.
34 Ibid., 53.
35 Another Christian term that Panikkar does not frequently use, but which will be important for our purposes is koinonia (communio, or communion).
36 Varghese J. Manimala, Toward Mutual Fecundation and Fulfilment of Religions: An Invitation to Transcendence and Dialogue with a Cosmotheandric Vision, 58. Panikkar adds the cosmic dimension to ‘theandrism’ to highlight the dignity of all of creation along with that of humanity. See Raimon Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness, 148. Panikkar traces this dignity to both the Judeo-Christian and Hindu traditions, noting, “The book of Deuteronomy, as the Vedas also do, speaks of your wife, your ox, your field and your slave all in the same breath. We can read this either as degrading your slave to the level of your field, or as enhancing your ox to the level of your wife: everything is a hierogamy!—patriarchy notwithstanding.”
And “the other root comes from the Indian soil: the Hindu notion of *saccidānanda* (*sat-cit-ānanda)*.”\(^{37}\) This notion refers to the state of nonduality that is sought in the advaitic tradition. While Panikkar relies on these two traditions to express his cosmotheandric vision, as we shall see below, cosmotheandrisn extends far beyond them. Some commentators see the influence of Buddhism in Panikkar’s cosmotheandric vision as well. This should come as no surprise, given the closeness of Hindu and Buddhist traditions, as well as Panikkar’s own interest in Buddhism.

One such commentator is Jyri Komulainen. Komulainen describes Panikkar’s cosmotheandrisn as his ‘ontology’. In articulating this ontology, Panikkar begins with the Christian concept of Trinity, which, as we have mentioned, is not limited to Christianity:

Panikkar understands the Trinitarian character of his metaphysics to be a legitimate expansion of classical Trinitarian theology. The Trinity cannot be monopolized by Christianity nor by Divinity for, according to the cosmotheandric vision, reality, as such, is Trinitarian.\(^{38}\)

According to Komulainen, the key to Panikkar’s understanding of trinitarianism is ‘relationality’.\(^{39}\) It is Panikkar’s “relational ontology” that “patently reveals the influence of Buddhism in his thinking.”\(^{40}\) Komulainen points out that this relationality is connected to the Buddhist idea of *pratītyasamutpāda* or “dependent origination,” the idea that all

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\(^{37}\) Varghese J. Manimala, *Toward Mutual Fecundation and Fulfilment of Religions: An Invitation to Transcendence and Dialogue with a Cosmotheandric Vision*, 58. *Saccidānanda* is a compound word referring to being-consciousness-bliss.


\(^{40}\) *Ibid.*, 184.
reality is interrelated and interdependent. In this way, Panikkar’s thought represents a move away from monotheism. “In fact,” Komulainen tells us, “he understands that it is the Trinitarian doctrine that has forced dispensation with the monotheistic understanding of God.” As we have seen above, Panikkar insists that his new cosmotheandric metaphysic is the logical outcome of Trinitarian theology.

S. Mark Heim points out that Panikkar’s project is an attempt to merge three distinct spiritualities: ‘iconolatry’, personalism, and mysticism. Iconolatry is distinct from idolatry:

Idolatry, understood as the transference to a creature of the adoration due to God alone, i.e. an adoration which stops short at the object, without going beyond it in an ongoing movement towards the Creator, the Transcendent, is without doubt the gravest of sins. But iconolatry which starts by adoring some object upon which has descended the glory of the Lord, and takes this object as a point of departure for a slow and arduous ascent towards God, cannot be condemned and rejected so easily.

Thus, Iconolatry is the process by which God is worshiped through the starting point of some tangible object. In personalism, however, God is worshiped in an interpersonal way, characterized by “mutual giving.” It involves relating to God in a way similar to how we relate to other humans. Therefore, “we call God a personal being because we ourselves are persons. We consider God a Being because we ourselves are

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41 Ibid., 185. See Raimon Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness, 60. Panikkar states, “I am not only saying that everything is directly or indirectly related to everything else: the radical relativity or pratītyasamutpāda of the buddhist tradition. I am also stressing that this relationship is not only constitutive of the whole, but that it flashes forth, ever new and vital, in every spark of the real.”

42 Jyri Komulainen, An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions, 186.


44 Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man: Icon—Person—Mystery, 16.

beings.”  However, we soon find that “if God is a person he corresponds very poorly to man’s own ideal of a person.” This leads to the spirituality of mysticism, which is enamored with God’s transcendence. However, Panikkar cautions against a narrow conception of transcendence as something opposed to immanence, in which transcendence is envisioned as something exterior and immanence as something interior. Rather:

Divine immanence, truly speaking, does not refer to a God who is, as it were, enclosed in our inner being, while at the same time irrevocably separated from us just like God in his transcendent or exterior aspect. Nor can divine transcendence be reduced to the aspect of exteriority or even the ‘otherness’ of God. The authentic notion of transcendence surmounts all human barriers and situates God in the light inaccessible of which St Paul speaks, in the deep shadows of the Dionysian mystery-cult, on the other shore of the river, to use a phrase from the Upaniṣads or from the Buddha—in a word, beyond any ‘real relationship’. Transcendence implies heterogeneity between God and man, and rejects any relatedness which is at the root of all religious anthropomorphism whether iconolatrous or personalist. True divine transcendence does not stem from the so-called natural and rational order; wherefore, if one is not willing to go beyond that order, one is unable, speaking absolutely, either to say or think anything about the Absolute.

Thus, the relationship with the transcendent is ultimately a relationship of silence. Apophatic mysticism testifies to this silence. Nonetheless, all three of these experiences (iconolatry, personalism, and mysticism) are part of authentically human spirituality. They are different moments in a single, ongoing relationship. As Heim points out, “Panikkar claims that only a Trinitarian concept of reality permits a synthesis of the three

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46 Ibid.
47 Ibid., 27.
48 Ibid., 31-32.
spiritualities, a reconciliation of their apparently irreducible concepts of the Absolute.”

Thus, the cosmotheandric vision can reconcile not only various religious traditions, but also various spiritualities.

This cosmotheandric relationship of nonduality is not without consequences. For instance, Varghese Manimala insists that this means that “life is a solidarity, we are all involved in the happenings of the universe, every action has universal repercussions as established by the theory of karma.” This yields a new problematic for the ecologically minded. As Manimala points out, “the cosmos is falling apart, Man cannot solve the problems human ingenuity has created, and even God seems unable to stand up to his own claims.” Furthermore, “we are coming to the realization that the being of the earth is finite.”

However, Panikkar gives an interesting warning that if ecology is seen merely as a scientific enterprise it is not a solution, but a continuation of the attitude of dominance and disregard that has caused the problem in the first place. It is just a milder form of exploitation of the cosmos because “the oikos is still dominated by the human logos. In so many words, a new science, ecology, has appeared and has all the earmarks of becoming yet another tool for human mastery of the Earth.” Thus, there is the same arrogance in the ecological problem-solving as there was in the problem-creation. This is marked by the quest to dominate all by reason. Only an attitude of mystery and wonder

53 Raimon Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness*, 43. Panikkar is here playing on the etymology of ecology: *oikos* (home) and *logos* (reason).
can yield the kind of respect for the cosmos that is necessary to overcome the ecological crisis in which we find ourselves. This attitude is cosmotheandristm.

1.3 Panikkar’s Appropriation of Augustine

There are several Augustinian themes embedded in much of Panikkar’s theology, particularly within his view of the Trinity. Most important among these is the interiority of the Trinity to each individual. One of the concepts that is most frequently ascribed to Augustine is the idea that throughout creation, there are ‘traces of Trinity’, or *vestigia trinitatis*. According to Panikkar’s theological outlook, in our cosmotheandric intuition, we see a *vestigium trinitatis* in each of us.\(^5^4\) Both Augustine and Panikkar find these traces all over creation, but most notably in the mind of humans.

Augustine, for instance, sees a *vestigium trinitatis* in the tripartite division of the memory, understanding, and will of one person:

Since, then, these three, memory, understanding, will, are not three lives, but one life; nor three minds, but one mind; it follows certainly that neither are they three substances, but one substance. Since memory, which is called life, and mind, and substance, is so called in respect to itself; but it is called memory, relatively to something. And I should say the same also of understanding and of will, since they are called understanding and will relatively to something; but each in respect to itself is life, and mind, and essence. And hence these three are one, in that they are one life, one mind, one essence; and whatever else they are severally called in respect to themselves, they are called also together, not plurally, but in the singular number. But they are three, in that wherein they are mutually referred to each other; and if they were not equal, and this not only each to each, but also

\(^{54}\) *Ibid.*, 147.
each to all, they certainly could not mutually contain each other; for not only is each
contained by each, but also all by each.\textsuperscript{55}

Varghese Manimala highlights this theme in Panikkar’s writing. On Panikkar’s
insistence that all of reality is Trinitarian (which we have called Panikkar’s
cosmotheandrisan), Manimala also uses classic anthropology as an example of this
Trinitarian permeation:

The classic tripartite division of Man as body, soul and spirit (\textit{corpus, anima, spiritus})
could be understood as another formulation of the same intuition. But none of these
three dimensions is to be individualized or particularized.\textsuperscript{56}

Manimala also points out that Panikkar’s “earliest writings” refer to Trinity
“although this is not yet the ‘radical Trinity’ of Panikkar’s mature years.”\textsuperscript{57} However,
even in this early work, this Augustinian theme is latent. For instance, in his philosophy
dissertation, Panikkar insists that there is a “vestige of the Trinity” in all creatures.\textsuperscript{58} In
these early writings, Panikkar is much closer to Augustine’s view, in which the \textit{cosmos}
bears the mark of its creator. As Manimala indicates, “this universe participates in the
divine Trinity, but it is not Trinitarian in itself: the Trinity is the model and is primordial;
the universe is the reflection that derives from it.”\textsuperscript{59} In this way, the Western “schism
between God and the world” that “lies at the very basis of Western religious awareness”
limits the connection between Trinity and creation.\textsuperscript{60} However, we ought to point out
that, in the general Christian theological outlook, it is the role of Christ to bridge this

\textsuperscript{55} Augustine of Hippo, \textit{De Trinitate (On the Trinity)}, transl. Arthur West Haddan, In \textit{A Select Library of
\textsuperscript{56} Varghese J. Manimala, \textit{Toward Mutual Fecundation and Fulfilment of Religions: An Invitation to
Transcendence and Dialogue with a Cosmotheandric Vision}, 53.
\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Ibid.}, 62.
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Ibid.}
abyss. As we shall see, it is from this starting point that Panikkar sets out and differentiates himself from the classical tradition that he treasures. Thus, Panikkar’s “more recent writings” (from 1970’s *The Trinity and World Religions* onwards) say all of reality is Trinitarian in nature.\(^{61}\)

To conclude his work, *Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype*, in which he discusses the ‘blessed simplicity’ that is the centeredness of the mind of the monk as an intrinsic part of all human spirituality, Panikkar insists that true ‘blessed simplicity’ must also be a ‘harmonious complexity’.\(^{62}\) In other words, the simple and the complex, the one and the many, are not, after all, incompatible:

> In the final analysis, *simplicity and complexity are not dialectically opposed*, because the ultimate structure of the universe does not need to be conceived as dialectical. Their relation is dialogical. They have meaning not in opposing and contradicting each other so as to generate some “higher” synthetic amalgam, but as a mutually constitutive relation, so that the one does not make sense without the other and each mutually supports the other.\(^{63}\)

He continues, “Simplicity is more than the absence of complexity. It is merely ‘monoplexity,’ I would say, if the word were allowed.”\(^{64}\) Thus, simplicity is not the reduction of all to a monolithic unity. Rather, it is harmony and unity, or oneness. Panikkar insists that “this oneness is not plurality, but it certainly is pluralistic.”\(^ {65}\) This form of monastic simplicity is the same as Trinitarian simplicity because “the Trinity is neither one nor three, i.e., neither simplicity nor complexity.”\(^ {66}\)

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\(^{63}\) *Ibid.*, 127. Emphasis in the original.

\(^{64}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{65}\) *Ibid.*

outlook of all of reality that enables Panikkar to reconcile the seemingly disparate positions of various religious traditions, or even, in Blessed Simplicity, to reconcile classic monasticism with contemporary monasticism. Toward this end, Panikkar makes reference to the concept of *vestigia trinitatis*:

> Every bit of reality has this Trinitarian imprint. And thus human perfection does not consist in becoming one with the Son, or with the Father, or with the Spirit, but in fully entering into the life of that very Trinity without eliminating any of its constituents.  

So, human perfection is Trinitarian relation. Panikkar, naturally, connects this insight to the nondualism of the advaitic tradition:

> In advaitic parlance I would say that reality is neither one nor two, and so neither we nor the world can be brought under the total sway of the one or the two. God and the world are, likewise, neither one (it goes against common sense) nor two (two what?—it would contradict the very conception of God). Advaita—nondualism—is not monism.

Of course, as we have already mentioned “it is not dualism either.” Rather, “complexity and simplicity embrace in advaita, as well as in the Trinity.” Thus, human spirituality finds its perfection in communion. The Trinitarian ‘traces’ in all of us lead us to Trinitarian life.

Like Augustine’s theological outlook (and the entire Western theistic tradition) the divine is “the constitutive principle of all things” in Panikkar’s cosmotheandric schema. This, of course is not without consequence. For instance, “God is more immanent to any creature than the creature’s own identity, so that if we were to subtract

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67 Ibid.
68 Ibid. 129.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
God from that creature, the latter would collapse into nothingness.”72 Thus, Panikkar seeks to take Augustine’s *interior intimo meo et superior summo meo* with the utmost seriousness.73 Manimala points out that we can think of God existing without creatures even though this God does not in fact exist. Therefore, the fact “that God ‘can be’ (without creatures) is a phenomenological feature of God, not an ontological statement about him.”74 Thus, God is in relation to human beings. When we look at ourselves in self-reflection, we find an element of transcendence. Each person “discovers and senses an inbuilt *more* in his own being which at once belongs to and transcends his own private being.”75 Manimala tells us that, for Panikkar, “this ever more stands for the divine dimension.” In other words, this is where God is encountered. It should also be noted that in a similar way, for Panikkar, the cosmos is also constitutive with regard to humanity because “there is no Man without God or without World.”76

Additionally, as we shall see as we examine the Trinitarian relations in Panikkar’s thought below, Augustine’s influence can also be seen in Panikkar’s assessment of the immanent Trinity. Panikkar acknowledges this debt:

> The Nicene Creed, as also the Greek Fathers and even Tertullian, affirms that the ‘substratum’ of the Divinity resides in the Father. It is only with Augustine that the Divinity as the substratum which imparts unity to the Trinity begins to be considered common to the three persons.77

S. Mark Heim, among others, discusses this as at the root of the division between the Christian West and the Christian East:

It became common in the West to locate the principle of unity in a single divine substance or essence. But in Eastern Christianity the principle of unity was associated with the first person, the Father.\textsuperscript{78}

Heim points out that this disagreement over the ‘locus’ of divine unity is part of the theological struggle behind the ‘filioque’ controversy.\textsuperscript{79} Ironically, for Panikkar, the discussion of something commonly shared between the three persons of the Trinity can help to serve as a \textit{bridge} between East and West. However, he does not have the Christian East in mind. Rather, he sees a theological outlook of communion as a bridge between the Christian West and the Hindu and Buddhist East.

It is perhaps most fitting that Augustine, who is often considered the father of Western Christianity, has such a central place in Panikkar’s thought, which is an exercise in the dialogue of East and West. This can be seen in Panikkar’s most famous work, \textit{The Unknown Christ of Hinduism}. While bringing his book to a close, Panikkar cites another Augustinian axiom, which probably best characterizes his Trinitarian theological outlook: \textit{Trinitas reducit dualitatem ad unitatem}.\textsuperscript{80} In reflection upon this axiom, Panikkar elaborates on this Trinitarian unity: “Ultimately, we have but one comment to make: \textit{that from which the World comes forth and to which it returns and by which it is sustained, that is Īśvara, the Christ}.”\textsuperscript{81} Thus, as we have already said, Panikkar sees the Trinity as a constitutive element of all reality. As we shall see in Chapter 2, this principle of unity in all of reality is identified with Christ, which he here identifies with the Hindu personification of the divine, Īśvara. However, we should note that he also reminds us

\textsuperscript{78} S. Mark Heim, \textit{The Depth of Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends}, 172.
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Ibid.}, 173.
\textsuperscript{80} Raimon Panikkar, \textit{The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany}, Revised and Enlarged Edition, 162. See Augustine, \textit{In Epist. ad Parthos} PL XXXV, 2055.
\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Ibid.} Emphasis in the original.
that “it is also an incontrovertible fact that the Christ in whom Christians believe cannot be simply equated with the Īśvara of the Vedānta.”\textsuperscript{82} Nonetheless, it is Christ that unites all reality.

1.4 Panikkar on the Transcendence of the Father (Brahman)

An important part of Panikkar’s dialogue between Christianity and other religious traditions is his discussion of the immanent Trinity and the relations between the Trinitarian \textit{hypostases}. As with most Trinitarian discussions, Panikkar’s schema begins with that relation that Christians call ‘the Father’. The Father is purely transcendent. The Father is properly understood as that relation of which we cannot speak. This silence is due to the fact that “in the Father the apophatism (the \textit{kenosis} or emptying) of Being is real and total.”\textsuperscript{83} Thus, we cannot say anything about the Father “in himself”, that is about the Father’s “self.”\textsuperscript{84} So, the only appropriate way to speak of the Father is to not speak at all.\textsuperscript{85}

In the interest of demonstrating the universal relevance of Trinitarian theology, Panikkar connects the Father to the Advaitic approach to Brahman. When comparing the usage of the terms ‘Brahman’ and ‘God’ in the Eastern and Western traditions respectively, Panikkar brings forth this connection. He insists that “both names stand for the same ultimacy, yet they seem to connote distinct functions.”\textsuperscript{86} For, instance, he sees ‘Brahman’ as the end of philosophical-theological inquiry. This connotes some ‘reality’

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 164.
\textsuperscript{83} Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, \textit{The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man: Icon—Person—Mystery}, 46.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{85} For more on divine transcendence, see Raimon Panikkar, \textit{The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness}, 39. Panikkar states, “An exclusively and absolutely transcendent God transcends not only Man’s thinking orbit, but also escapes the galaxy of Being. He ceases to be thinkable. He ceases to be, \textit{tout court}.”
\textsuperscript{86} Raimon Panikkar, \textit{The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany, Revised and Enlarged Edition}, 136.
at the limits of the intellect. The term ‘God’, while of course referring to the same ‘thing’, implies the end that is loved and adored. Thus, the term ‘God’ has a relational connotation, while the term ‘Brahman’ has a more conceptual connotation. This relationality of the term ‘God’ can be seen in the Western use of terms like ‘Father’ as substitutes for the term ‘God’. Thus, Panikkar’s treatment of ‘Father’ is in close relation to his treatment of ‘Brahman’. Both are ways to name the unnamable. Kärkkäinen describes Panikkar’s approach, saying, “For Panikkar, the Father is ‘Nothing’. What can be said about the Father is ‘nothing’; this is the apophatic way, the way to approach the Absolute without name.”

By ‘Nothing’, Kärkkäinen here is referring to the fact that the Father, or Brahman, is ‘not-a-thing’. Hence, words are inadequate to express the fullness of the Divine. In the interest of tying Trinitarian thought to a variety of religions, Panikkar also recognizes this reference to the transcendent in his treatment of Buddhism. He insists that in the 6th century BCE, Buddhism made the “fundamental option” to favor the Spirit over the Word. The opposite is the case in the West, where the Word was favored and expression and ‘saying’ was favored over silence and ‘unsaying’. Unlike their European counterparts, the reformers behind Jainism and Buddhism “claimed to establish an entire way of life with no reference to God.”

This way of life is appropriate because “God does not have a name because ‘he’ is not.” In other words, it is most appropriate not to speak of God because words can only express that which they can comprehend. Human concepts cannot grasp the Divine

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87 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid., 260.
completely. Therefore, since ‘existence’ is a human concept, it is not an adequate way of speaking about God. Hence God ‘is’ not. Panikkar notes that this is a step further than the biblical command to not take YHWH’s name in vain.\(^9\) However, perhaps he exaggerates the difference between East and West here to make the point that the West has much to learn from the East. In the interest of fairness, it should be noted that this is not a purely ‘Eastern’ way of discussing the Divine. The West has many fine examples of apophatic mystics who center themselves on this insight into transcendence. These include John of the Cross, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, and the anonymous author of the *The Cloud of Unknowing*, to name a few. Nonetheless, Panikkar’s insight into the Divine remains valid:

To ask the name of God means to ask his identity, to enclose him in our categories, even if one says his name is secret and unknowable. According to the Buddha God has no name because there *is* nothing that *has* this name. There is not even any meaning in saying that God is identical to himself: Because he has no identity, he cannot be identified by a name. The principle of identity would destroy him. There can be no God identical to God—to himself.\(^9\)

Panikkar sees the Buddha as providing the key to understanding the silence that is appropriate to discourse on Divine existence:

The Buddha does not answer by silence: He does not answer. He remains silent and gives no hermeneutic of his silence but only of his refusal to answer.\(^9\)

He continues:

What the Buddha does is to silence the question, to pacify the questioner by showing him that his question has no meaning.\(^9\)

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Thus, for Panikkar, “the Buddhist apophasis is at once ontic and ontological. Silence is taken seriously, not as another form of expression or speech.” This apophatic silence says nothing because there is nothing to say. Only such a radical silence can approach Divine transcendence.

An important aspect of this discussion is Panikkar’s insistence on homological concept in various religious traditions. Homology is not same as analogy, which claims two things have a third thing in common, which allows one to use the two with some degree of interchangability. Homology, rather, is found where two things share the same function in different contexts. It is “a kind of existential-functional analogy.” For example, ‘Brahman’ and ‘YHWH’ are homologous concepts that refer to the same ‘thing’. They are both ways to name the Divine in varying contexts. We can also say that Brahman and the Father are also homologous concepts, because, by referring to the ‘same ultimacy’, they serve the same function in their respective traditions. The commonality is not in the symbols themselves, but, rather, in that reality which they indicate and embody. So, the ‘Ultimate’ has many valid names, such as God, Brahman, Nothingness, etc. However, homology is not just a function of the Divine (or even the ‘religious’ for that matter). For instance, Panikkar points out that the ‘gate to the Ultimate’ also has many valid names, such as Death, Justification, Innocence, etc. So, ironically, there are many names for the unnamable!

95 Ibid.
96 Ibid., 265.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
100 Raimon Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype, 88-89.
How is this possible? This is only possible because of the second person of the Trinity. S. Mark Heim points out regarding the relation of the first and second persons of the Trinity in Panikkar’s thought that “as the uncreated, unoriginated source, the first person of the Trinity is defined by a relation to the second person, and this relation is one of kenosis.” In this way, “The Father ‘is not,’” for even the being of the Father has been transmitted to the Son as gift.”

Therefore, “nothing, literally, can be said of the Father ‘in himself,’ for in begetting the Son the Father gives up everything, ‘even the possibility of being expressed in a name that names him alone.’” Heim’s assessment of Panikkar’s Trinitarian thought is need of some elaboration. As we shall see in our next section, there is mutuality in this relationship of Father and Son. For Panikkar, the Father does not have ‘being’ without the Son. There is a mutual kenosis in that the Son also gives ‘being’ to Father. It is with the second person of the Trinity that Divine expression is enabled and we can speak, for instance, of God’s existence. An example of this can be seen in The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, where Panikkar equates the term ‘God’ with the Hindu term ‘Īśvara’, which elsewhere in the same work, he identifies with Christ. So, for Panikkar, ‘God’ is properly a term for the second person of the Trinity, who brings the transcendent within the reach of the mind, that is, into human concepts. So let us now turn to examine what Panikkar has to say about the second person of the Trinity.

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102 Ibid.
103 Ibid. See Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man: Icon—Person—Mystery, 46.
1.5 The Son: The Ontological Expression of the Father

For Panikkar, the Son is the ‘being’ of the Father. It is only with the Word that the unspeakable Father has ontological weight. In Panikkar’s words, “the Father has no being the Son is his being. The source of being is not being.”\(^\text{105}\) He continues: “It is the Son who acts, who creates. Through him everything was made. In him everything exists.”\(^\text{106}\) Thus, we can only have a relationship with God in the Son; the Logos.\(^\text{107}\) The Father, Brahman, remains inaccessible without the Son.

Thus for Panikkar, properly speaking, only the Son can be called ‘God’ because only the Son can be called.\(^\text{108}\) In a way, as Panikkar himself points out, this contrasts with early Christian Trinitarian formulas, in which only the Father is properly called God.\(^\text{109}\) As S. Mark Heim shows, “Panikkar strikes a new note by affirming that whenever we speak of the Father we are actually talking about the Son.”\(^\text{110}\) In response to this, he raises what is perhaps a valid critique of Panikkar’s thought in this regard:

Panikkar supports his argument by appeal to much traditional language about the incarnation of the divine Word making visible the invisible God. On the other hand, Panikkar’s thesis would seem to imply that the incarnate Son’s talk about God was in fact simply self-reference, which appears to be something of a Trinitarian short circuit.\(^\text{111}\)

Heim continues:

Panikkar says humans can have a personal relation only with the Son, and that therefore in fact the God of theism is the Son. It seems Panikkar is saying that the Father is God “without qualities” and the Son is God “with qualities,” and it is the Son who is manifest


\(^{106}\) Ibid., 51.

\(^{107}\) Ibid., 52.

\(^{108}\) See Ibid., 58.

\(^{109}\) Ibid., 45.


\(^{111}\) Ibid.
in Christ. However, “Christ” fundamentally means the link, the mediator between created and uncreated.\textsuperscript{112}

So, as we shall see, Heim’s explanation Panikkar’s use of the term ‘Christ’ is correct. ‘Christ’ can be considered the ‘mediatorial link’ between the God and world.\textsuperscript{113}

And, as we shall see in our later chapters, one of the difficulties in Panikkar’s Christology is defining the character of the relationship between the historical Jesus of Nazareth, what he calls ‘Christ’, and even, as Heim points out, the second person of the Trinity. But, we shall examine this problem in a little more detail in our next chapter.

For Panikkar, the Son, then, may go under other names, such as Isvara, Tathagata, Allah, and Yahweh.\textsuperscript{114} Heim gives us a helpful way to think of Panikkar’s connection between Father and Son. The Father is like Kant’s \textit{ding an sich} (thing in itself). We do not directly relate to it.\textsuperscript{115} In other Kantian terms, the Father is like noumenon of the Divine and the Son is like the phenomenon of the divine. Thus, Panikkar takes seriously the title of \textit{Logos} for the Son. The ‘Word’ of the Father makes the Father palpable, visible, and, perhaps most importantly, understandable. As Heim mentions in the citation above, this logic is seen in the Incarnation. Heim describes the Son here as the meeting of Divine transcendence (Father) and Divine immanence (Spirit):

The mediator (the Son, the Logos, God with qualities) connects these two: the divine transcendence we can “know” only as emptiness and the divine immanence we can know only by identity. Since we can know the mediator by direct devotion, by relation or perception, this offers a third way to know the one divine reality.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Ibid.}, 151-152.
\textsuperscript{113} However, it seems more accurate to describe Panikkar’s use of the term as a reference to a manifestation of cosmotheandric unity. This, however, will be discussed in Chapter 2.
\textsuperscript{114} S. Mark Heim, \textit{The Depth of Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends}, 152.
\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Ibid.}
Velti-Matti Kärkkäinen concurs with Heim’s assessment and describes the relationship between Father and Son as one of *kenōsis*: “In the incarnation, *kenōsis*, the Father gives himself totally to the Son.”\(^{117}\) Thus, as we have already mentioned, there ‘is’ no ‘Father’ in himself; his being is the Son.\(^{118}\) This understanding makes apophatic language clearer for the reader:

That qualified sense makes it understandable when Panikkar says that there is in fact “no God” in Christian theology in the generic sense of the term. There is only “the God of Jesus Christ”; thus, the God of theism is always the “Son,” the only one with whom human beings can establish a relationship.\(^{119}\)

However, it should be pointed out in response to the analysis of Heim and Kärkkäinen that this *kenōsis* is not only found in the Incarnation. Rather, it is an essential characteristic of the relationship between Father and Son. Nonetheless, the Incarnation manifests this relationship with the utmost clarity. Despite this relationship, in which the Son gives expression and ‘being’ to the Father, precision is always a problem when discussing the Divine. Many of the criticisms that can be levied on Panikkar’s thought stem from this problem.

For instance, Kärkkäinen has a minor criticism of Panikkar’s Trinitarian theology based on his use of the term ‘person’. Kärkkäinen points out that, following Panikkar’s logic, the Son is really the only “person” of the Trinity. The problem is that when we use the term “person” in Trinity, it is “an equivocal term that has different meanings in each case.”\(^{120}\) So, Kärkkäinen insists that it is not advisable to use the term ‘person’

\(^{118}\) *Ibid*.
\(^{120}\) *Ibid.*, 339.
when discussing the Trinity. However, we consider this a ‘minor’ criticism because, while Kärkkäinen is correct, it does not seem that one will ever escape this problem when discussing the Divine. Kärkkäinen’s more serious criticism comes with regard to Panikkar’s reading of John 14:6:

Jesus said to him [Thomas], ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him (Jn 14:6-7).’

Kärkkäinen’s assesses Panikkar’s take on this passage:

He reads this verse as meaning that only the Son exists. In contrast to his interpretation, Christian theology has understood from this saying not that the Father does not exist, but that the only way to know the Father is through the Son sent by his Father.122

What Kärkkäinen and Heim seem to miss here in their criticism of Panikkar is that by categorizing something as ‘existing’ (or even ‘not existing’), we are necessarily subsuming that ‘thing’ under a concept, a product of human language. Ontology (the logos of ontos) and any –ology (the logos of anything) is the result of human cognitive grappling and reduction of the ‘thing’ to a concept (including the term ‘thing’ itself). It is this that Panikkar has in mind when discussing the Father’s lack of existence and the Son’s presentation of the Father’s ‘being’. There is an intrinsic limitation to human logos, reason. Thus, Panikkar is here saying less about God and more about the scope of human cognition. It is because of this limitation of language that Panikkar prioritizes mythos over logos, as we shall see in more detail in chapter 3.

In Blessed Simplicity, based upon this insistence on the priority of mythos over logos, Panikkar discusses the importance of apophatic silence in the life of contemplation

121 Ibid., 340.
122 Ibid., 343.
of the monk. In other words, this silence is supremely appropriate due to the limitation of human language and the refusal of the Divine to the chains of conceptualization. He uses this apophatic silence to discuss the Trinitarian relation between Father and Son.

Panikkar tells us: “Silence is one. Words are many.”123 Another way he discusses this is in comparing Spirit (another Trinitarian relation, particularly connected with Divine immanence) and Word: “In trinitarian categories we could stress the attention the monk gives to the Spirit over the Word, without this implying absolute priority.”124 He connects this to the concern with mythos and logos to which we have already alluded: “Expressed in philosophical categories, we are dealing with the priority of myth over the logos.”125 Because of this priority, words are not, ultimately, the goal of true belief (orthodoxy). Rather, it is something deeper. For Panikkar, the measure of “orthodoxy” does not consist of “the correct formulation of doctrine.”126 Rather, it is “the authentic experience of the ‘glory of the truth’.”127 In other words, it is “the other side of orthopraxis.”128 Thus, in everyday life, words and actions are intimately bound together.

The separation of word and deed results in a loss of integrity.

In a similar way, Panikkar points to the intimate connection of silence and speech. He uses the prologue of John’s Gospel (Jn 1:1ff) as inspiration, saying, “Authentic silence is not the repression of the word, but rather the nonreflexive consciousness of the very womb of the logos; yet this is true in such a manner that if the umbilical cord uniting the two is severed, both miscarry—the silence is dispelled and the word dies.”129 For

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123 Raimon Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype, 47.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid., 48.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
Panikkar, ideally, the modern monk tries not to separate silence and *logos*. Rather, he allows them to coexist in intimacy and “fears that his life will be short-circuited if he isolates himself from the clamor of his fellow men who ask for bread, demand justice, and sing and dance to the sun, the moon, the seasons, or to the religious and civil events and festivities of their time.”\(^{130}\) The silence of contemplation ought not to occlude one’s sensibility to the voice of world. Rather, it ought to help to center the mind and direct the will in response to this voice by locating the voice of God therein.

The Word gives expression to the Silent Other. In this relationship, the two are irreducible, just as silent joy is not the same as exclamatory song. Yet, they are also inseparable, just as that joy inspires and is expressed in the song. Nonetheless, “The silence of the modern monk is not only at the beginning, holding fast to the very source of the word.”\(^{131}\) Rather, the ‘modern monk’ “tries to find the silence at the end of every word as well; he would like to let the exuberance of the world land again in the silence, so that the *perichoresis*, *circumincessio* or circular dynamism of the word might complete its return into silence.”\(^{132}\)

Thus, the two are intimately connected by mutual indwelling. Nonetheless, it is the *difference* between silence and expression that distinguishes Father from Son, respectively:

Silence does not speak, does not bear witness, does not even hint—at anything—because ultimately silence *is* not. In the beginning *is* the Word. Silence is fully acosmic. Silence

\(^{130}\) *Ibid.*, 49.
is the absence of *logos*. Silence is not intelligible. Silence does not hide itself, because there is nothing to hide.\textsuperscript{133}

This distinction between Silence and the Word shows us the kenotic character of the relationship between Father and Son:

Silence is not against the *logos*; it is simply prior to it. The *logos* is the sacrifice of silence, its immolation in the word. Silence is the Father, source and origin of the whole divinity, as I understand the Christian Trinity, but this is not just a Christian reflection.\textsuperscript{134}

This is an illustration of the seepage of Trinitarian ‘logic’ from the Godhead to all of reality. Silence and Expression, which represent the Father and Son respectively, also describe the poles of tension in the mystical life of the modern monk, who, for Panikkar need not be in monastery. However, this discussion is incomplete without considering the immanent connection of silence and expression, Father and Son: the Spirit.

\textbf{1.6 The Spirit: The Unity of Silence and Expression}

In a way, we have already pre-empted our discussion of the Spirit in Panikkar’s thought by mentioning above that the Spirit’s role is that of unity. Thus, the Spirit is “immanence.”\textsuperscript{135} In the kenotic giving of the Father to the Son, the Spirit is the “non-exhaustion of the source in the generation of the Logos.”\textsuperscript{136} In a very real way, the Spirit brings everything together, especially the Father and the Son. Panikkar tells us that “the Spirit is the communion between the Father and the Son. The Spirit is immanent to Father and Son jointly.”\textsuperscript{137}

Velti-Matti Kärkkäinen explains:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{133} \textit{Ibid.} Emphasis in the original.
\item \textsuperscript{134} \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{135} Velti-Matti Kärkkäinen, \textit{The Trinity: Global Perspectives}, 340.
\item \textsuperscript{136} Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, \textit{The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man: Icon—Person—Mystery}, 60.
\item \textsuperscript{137} \textit{Ibid.}
\end{itemize}
Applied to the ancient problem of unity and diversity in the Trinitarian God, the advaitic principle implies that the Father and Son are not two, but they are not one either; it is the Spirit who unites and distinguishes them.¹³⁸

Toward this end, the Spirit helps to explain how ‘nondualism’ is distinct from monism:

Both Trinitarian doctrine and advaita do desire to go beyond both monism and dualism. The Father and the Son are not two, but they are not one either: it is the Spirit who unites and distinguishes them.¹³⁹

In many ways, it is here that Panikkar further shows his indebtedness the Augustinian tradition of Western Christianity. Augustine begins his treatment of the Holy Spirit in *De Trinitate* by pointing to the Spirit’s role in the Trinity. The Trinity is the mutual love between the Father and the Son:

We have sufficiently spoken of the Father and of the Son, so far as was possible for us to see through this glass and in this enigma. We must now treat of the Holy Spirit, so far as by God’s gift it is permitted to see Him. And the Holy Spirit, according to the Holy Scriptures, is neither of the Father alone, nor of the Son alone, but of both; and so intimates to us a mutual love, wherewith the Father and the Son reciprocally love one another.¹⁴⁰

Augustine continues:

Love, therefore, which is of God and is God, is specially the Holy Spirit, by whom the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by which love the whole Trinity dwells in us. And therefore most rightly is the Holy Spirit, although He is God, called also the gift of God. And by that gift what else can properly be understood except love, which brings to God, and without which any other gift of God whatsoever does not bring to God?¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XV, 17, 27.
So, for Augustine, as for Panikkar, the Spirit is the principle of unity, not only in the Godhead, but also in us. So, in Panikkar’s theology, the Spirit is *communio*, *koinonia*. Therefore, as we have already mentioned above, for Panikkar, “one cannot have ‘Personal relations’ with the Spirit.” Rather, “one can only have a non-relational union with him.” This union extends throughout all of creation. It is the Spirit that makes this possible. Panikkar explains ‘Advaitic love’ in a way similar to the relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit, saying, “I love you, my beloved, without any ‘why’ beyond or any ‘because’ behind my love; I love you, simply, for in you I discover the Absolute—though not as an object, of course, but as the very subject loving in me.”

This ‘Advaitic love’ unites all of reality. It enables Panikkar’s cosmotheandric vision. Furthermore, this ‘Advaitic love’, or the love of *communio*, is not an egoistic kind of love. Rather, Advaitic love “is neither for God’s sake, as a foreign motivation for my love, nor—much less—for the ego’s sake.” Rather, it is a recognition of the cosmotheandric union that binds all of reality. As such, it is undeniably binding. In it, “every lover is taken up, wrapped in his love, overpowered by love.” Even though it is found in all of creation, it is rooted in the Divine:

It is a creative love, because—in theistic terms—it is the very love of God towards a person which makes that person to be. An *advaitin* can love only if the Absolute loves; his love cannot be different.

This relational quality is at the core of the human person. Panikkar insists that “the essence of person is relationship; my person is nothing but a relation with the I.”

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Thus, this nondualistic experience is at the root of the human experience of the self.

Consequently, various traditions have ways to express it:

If I were to describe the supreme experience in my own personal, *advaitic* and Trinitarian words, I would say nothing. Yet, if pressed to translate, I would say something like this:

It is the experience of the *thou*, the realization of my-self as a thou: *tat tvam asi*, or again: *filius meas es tu*, or *ecce ego quia vocasti me*, or *ἐζθε οὗ* (to use the language of four traditions and to which one could add the experience underlying the *nairātmyavāda*).\(^{149}\)

It is the presence of this Spirit of communio in all of reality that enables interreligious dialogue. However, it is not sufficient to speak of an “amorphous” spirit of truthfulness in all religions.\(^{150}\) Rather, we need to speak of the Spirit in confessional terms:

Now we can say that if Christian Jesus as the culminating point of God’s self-disclosure seems too specifically Christian a view to be accepted by a Hindu, then the Spirit of God—which Christians will consider the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of Christ, and which the Hindu will interpret as the Divine *śakti* penetrating everything and manifesting God, disclosing him in his immanence and being present in all his manifestations—this Spirit of God provides the real ground for an authentic religious communication and dialogue at a deep level.\(^{151}\)

Using traditional terms allows different traditions to encounter one another in truth and sincerity, rather than in some redacted and eviscerated form. In doing precisely this, Panikkar uses the Spirit to explain the lack of absolute egotism that we find in *advaita*:

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\(^{150}\) See Raimon Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany, Revised and Enlarged Edition*, 57.

\(^{151}\) *Ibid.*
The I has consciousness of its self as a you which, though it is not the I, identifies itself with the I. This “empty space” is the Spirit. Certainly the Logos is “equal” to the Father, the Logos is but the Logos of the Father, and the Father is “equal” to the Son he has generated. But precisely because there is no absolute egotistic consciousness but only consciousness of the thou, the I (whom we call Father) leaves “space” to the Spirit as hiatus, a space between the Father and the Son. The Spirit represents the advaita, the nondualism between the Father and the Son—hence they are neither two nor one.  

Thus, the space of the Spirit allows non-dualism (advaita) to avoid the collapse into monism. The Spirit keeps Father and Son united, but distinct. According to Panikkar, we find ourselves in this non-dual space. Therefore, “the spirit is the dynamism of Life—in which we exist.” The Spirit keeps all the members of reality united, but distinct. Without the Spirit, there can be no Advaitic, Trinitarian, or cosmotheandric unity.

Although, as we have briefly mentioned, he prioritizes mythos over logos, Panikkar does not desire to subordinate logos to pneuma. Panikkar does, however see the Spirit as allowing us to transcend a narrow focus on the rational (logos). The Spirit works as a ‘third eye’, which allows us to be aware of and attend to the cosmotheandric character of reality. Because of this, Panikkar even sees the Spirit working in figure of Jesus the Christ. Thus, the Spirit enables mystical abundance:

- Panikkar uses images, and paints pictures to say something more about the Spirit: The Father is the source of the river, the Son the river that flows from the source, and the Spirit the ocean in which the river ends.

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152 Raimon Panikkar, Christophany: The Fullness of Man, 73.
153 Ibid.
154 Ibid., 10.
S. Mark Heim compares Panikkar’s treatment of transcendence and immanence (Father and Spirit):

For Panikkar true transcendence (the Father) cannot be revealed, for then it would not be transcendent.\footnote{S. Mark Heim, \textit{The Depth of Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends}, 152.}

He continues to point out that the Transcendent Father is revealed instead as emptiness, which we have already mentioned. Heim compares this to the apophatic tradition, which he ties to Eastern Orthodoxy, although this seems to be an overgeneralization.\footnote{Ibid.} Immanence itself, however, is also beyond the grasp of conceptual revelation:

Likewise, true immanence cannot be revealed: if we could separate out what is immanent, it would no longer be so. To be immanent is to be truly united, present within another: an invisibility of identity. For Panikkar, this is the case with the Spirit.\footnote{Ibid.}

Thus, the Spirit is present as bond:

The Holy Spirit is the “we,” the bond of unity between Father and Son, the bond between the spirituality of emptiness and the spirituality of images.\footnote{Ibid.}

Heim continues:

The only connection we can have with the Spirit is that of non-relational union. We don’t pray to the Spirit; we are \textit{in} the Spirit.\footnote{Ibid.}

Thus, the Spirit is silent as the Father is silent. Therefore, it would perhaps be appropriate to say that Panikkar sees the Son as making the Spirit’s work explicit in the same way that the Son makes the Father explicit. The Spirit, however, unites all to the Father.

\footnote{S. Mark Heim, \textit{The Depth of Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends}, 152.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
Heim connects the Hindu the concept of Atman to the Spirit. After all, the Upanishads say that Atman is Brahman. Thus, the Spirit “is a consciousness of identity with supreme reality.” It is this unity that is central to Panikkar’s cosmotheandric view of reality. His central idea in this regard is that “the Trinity is, indeed, the real mystery of Unity, for true unity is trinitarian.”

Thus, according to Heim, Panikkar’s Trinitarian schema is as follows: the Father as the transcendent; the Spirit as the immanent; the Son as the mediator that gives the divine expression. But, this insight is not the sole property of Christianity. Actually, it is not the property of anyone. It cannot be held or kept by anyone. Rather it is to be approached in wonder and awe. For Panikkar:

All the religions are striving (or should be) for a Trinitarian synthesis. This synthesis would link a spirituality of the silent, empty God behind God (the Father who has given all to the Son, in Panikkar’s terms), a spirituality of a personal deity (the son who manifests God), and a spirituality of mystical union, forgetful of all distinction (the Spirit as the bond between the two). Panikkar can describe this synthesis poetically and at dazzling (if rather cloudy) length.

Despite the traditional Christian (even Augustinian-sounding) parentheticals in the above citation, Heim insists that Panikkar is similar to “other Indian Christian theologians” who identify the Father with nirguna Brahman and Son with saguna.

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161 Both ‘atman’ and ‘jiva’ are used to refer to the individual self. Generally, ‘atman’ refers to the self in a transcendentally, the eternal self, while ‘jiva’ refers to the self concretely. See Arvind Sharma, The Philosophy of Religion and Advaita Vedanta: A Comparative Study in Religion and Reason, (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 98. In Advaita Vedanta, atman is the self in its truest form, the self that is Brahman, while ‘jivas’ are ‘embodied Ātmans.”
162 Ibid.
163 Ibid.
However, “he firmly resists the traditional Hindu priority for nirguna Brahman, and instead argues in favor of co-equality.” Otherwise, in Trinitarian terms, Panikkar would be guilty of subordinationism.

According to Heim, Panikkar distinguishes himself from these other theologians by attempting to discuss what in the West is called the ‘immanent Trinity’:

Panikkar’s treatment of the Trinity is notable for its refusal to regard the personal and the relational as secondary, as only “economic,” as is so natural for Advaita Vedanta to do, for instance.

This fits with a worldview that believes in a real unity between God, humans, and the world. In such a worldview, insight into the Divine, no matter how limited and conditional, is, nonetheless, truly insightful. The union of all reality makes revelation not only desirable, but truly possible. Heim also compares Panikkar to Trinitarian theologians like Zizoulas and LaCugna. Panikkar’s view of relations between Trinitarian persons is also distinct from these thinkers:

The simplest way to put this is to say that for Panikkar person and personal relation are one feature of the Trinity, but are not strictly to be applied to more than one of the three divine persons. For these other theologians the most basic key to the Trinity is the “ontology of personhood,” the personal character of each of the three and of their relations with each other, all of which are mutually implied. The Trinity is a communion of persons whose personhood is constituted by their communion with each other.

Thus, the distinction lies in Panikkar’s use of personhood to describe the Son and his emphasis on inexpressibility of both Father and Spirit, although this inexpressibility

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166 *Ibid.*, 155. Heim is referring to Brahman without qualities and Brahman with qualities respectively. This corresponds to the above-mentioned view of referring to the Sons as the ‘existence’ of the Father and the Father as ‘non-existent’.
takes a different form for each. For Panikkar, the Trinity brings all of these together so that they do not, in the final analysis (although Panikkar would rightly say that the Divine is never ‘finally analyzed’), conflict with each other. Neither do their corresponding spiritualities:

- Apophatism is the spirituality of the Father, monism the spirituality of the Spirit, and theism is the spirituality of the Son. Christianity has a unique, universal witness to the religions in its testimony that Trinity is the only way in which these spiritualities can all be validated and integrated.170

But Christianity needs other religions to fully realize this integration. In fact, because of the Trinitarian dogma, Christianity is able to account for and anticipate other religious accounts of the Divine. Trinity welcomes and encourages dialogue between traditions. It makes this dialogue possible. As we have shown, the Trinitarian dogma, for Panikkar, is at the center of reality. Consequently, it is important to remember that, in Panikkar’s estimation, the role of doctrine is not merely analytical:

- The Catholic meaning of a dogma is not a ‘truth’ or a ‘formula’ to which credence must be given; dogma is rather a means to bridle our intellect in order that our higher knowledge may reach, as far as it is possible here on earth, the unfathomable inner nature of Reality.171

Thus, now that we have examined Panikkar’s Trinitarian schema, we are almost ready to delve deeper into his Christology. This foray into cosmotheandriism is necessary because, as Panikkar notes, “within the Christian tradition this Christ is

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170 Ibid., 156.
171 Raimon Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany, Revised and Enlarged Edition*, 53-54. See also Raymond (Raimon) Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, (London, UK: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 1964), 20. A shift in emphasis from Trinity as a way to describe the Divine to a characteristic of all reality can be seen here. In the original, ‘the supreme’ appears where we find ‘Reality’ in the second edition. The purpose of this is clearly to emphasize the participation of all in non-duality and to show that this is not limited to the Divine.
incomprehensible without the Trinity.”172 As we shall see in the next chapter, Christ reveals and manifests this cosmotheandrism.

1.7 Jacques Dupuis: An Alternative Approach to the Advaita-Trinity Relationship

Before embarking on the enterprise of examining Panikkar’s Christology, however, we should take a moment to examine an alternative, but similar, approach to Trinitarian-Advaitic theology. With this in mind, let us proceed to contrast Panikkar’s approach with that of another prominent Christian theologian, Jacques Dupuis. This is a worthwhile exercise because it will allow us to see that there are other ways to connect Trinity and Advaita that are not completely identical to Panikkar’s project. Like Panikkar, Dupuis finds a kinship between the Advaita Vedanta and Christian Trinitarian thought. Dupuis, however, is sensitive to the fact that Hinduism is “many-faceted and cannot be reduced to a monolithic entity.”173 Thus what we may call ‘Ultimate Reality’ can be seen as either non-personal or personal in different “currents” of Hindu thought.174 In similar fashion, the relationship between the world and this ‘Ultimate Reality’ can be seen as either “monism” or “nonduality” (advaita) or dualism (dvaita).175 In this regard, unlike Panikkar, Dupuis identifies advaita, non-dualism, with monism. As we have seen, Panikkar is unwilling to identify the two. This, perhaps, is the source of the distinction between the approaches of Panikkar and Dupuis. While admitting that bhakti theism is the most widespread current, like Panikkar, Dupuis wants to look at “the most

174 Ibid. See, for instance, the concepts of nirguna Brahman and saguna Brahman alluded to above.
175 Ibid., 269.
challenging view for Christian mysticism,” which is the *advaita* experience found in the Upanishads and the Vedantic theologians.¹⁷⁶

Central to Dupuis’ approach is the “originality of Jesus’ awareness of being one with God.”¹⁷⁷ Dupuis points out that, because of this awareness, many thinkers in neo-Hinduism consider Jesus to be a *jivanmukta*, that is, “a self-realized spirit.”¹⁷⁸ Therefore, “Jesus is imaged as one fully awake to his identity with the Brahman.”¹⁷⁹ Jesus’ experience is a filial experience of God the Father, which, of course, is not unknown to Judaism (See Ex 4:22).¹⁸⁰ However, what is essential for Dupuis is his insistence that Jesus’ experience of “Yahweh’s parenthood” takes on “new depth.”¹⁸¹ Jesus’ experience stands alone qualitatively: “Its filial nature vis-à-vis God is unique in its kind and is of a distinct order: Jesus is the Son (Mk 3:11), the very Son of God (Mk 12:6), the Only-Begotten (Jn 1:14).”¹⁸²

Thus, according to Dupuis, Jesus experiences a kind of “unique filiation.”¹⁸³ The “claim of unique filiation implies that between Yahweh-Father and Jesus-Son there is at once a distinction and a unity.”¹⁸⁴ He characterizes Jesus’ relationship with the Divine as “an ‘I-Thou’ relationship of Son with Father.”¹⁸⁵ This unity is not strict identity:

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.
¹⁷⁷ Ibid.
¹⁷⁸ Ibid.
¹⁷⁹ Ibid. See, for instance, John 10:30.
¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 270.
¹⁸¹ Ibid.
¹⁸³ Ibid.
¹⁸⁴ Ibid.
¹⁸⁵ Ibid.
Jesus is not the Father, but between him and his Father the communication of likeness and, indeed, the oneness are such that the call for expression in terms of a Father-Son relationship.\textsuperscript{186}

This is the source of the Christian understanding of the supreme revelatory character of the Incarnation and several ‘absolute’ Christian claims:

Jesus not only addresses to human beings words received from God as the prophets did—he is himself the Word of God made flesh. The reason why God’s self-revelation in Jesus is decisive and unsurpassed is that in his human consciousness Jesus experiences the mystery of the divine life which he personally shares.\textsuperscript{187}

It is important to understand that Dupuis does not want to discount the validity of other religious traditions. He insists, however, that the revelation given in the Incarnation is ‘qualitatively’ unique. It is of a different kind than both those that have preceded it within the Judeo-Christian tradition and its revelatory counterparts in other traditions:

In Jesus, then, the revelation of this mystery is qualitatively different, since in the biblical record he is himself the Son of God, who expresses himself and elucidates his divine parentage in human terms. This revelation is central and normative for Christian faith, in the sense that no one is capable of communicating to human beings the mystery of God with greater depth than does the Son himself, who has become a human being. Jesus brings the word because he is the Word.\textsuperscript{188}

Dupuis cautions us that “even this revelation remains limited, incomplete, and imperfect.”\textsuperscript{189} No human consciousness can completely comprehend Divine Mystery. Human words fail to completely encompass the Word. After all, Jesus of Nazareth was limited to one particular idiom, Aramaic.\textsuperscript{190} Like Panikkar, Dupuis notes that in

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{186} Ibid., 271.
\bibitem{187} Ibid.
\bibitem{188} Ibid.
\bibitem{189} Ibid. See also Ibid. 249.
\bibitem{190} Ibid., 271.
\end{thebibliography}
Hinduism, the experience of *advaita* has a similar place to Jesus’ self-awareness.\(^{191}\) However, even “at first glance” there is difference.\(^{192}\) Jesus seems to keep both distinction and unity between the Father and himself, whereas *advaita* statements like *Aham brahamasmi* (“I am Brahman”) seem to leave behind any distinction.\(^{193}\) For instance, Jesus’ “I” sayings point to Divine unity and distinction:

The “I” of Jesus’ Gospel sayings, while it establishes the distinction from the “Thou” of the Father, also implies unity with him. Ultimately this “I” does not mean, properly speaking, that a human person called Jesus is related to God as to a Father but rather that the Son-of-God-become-a-human-being is posited in relation with his Father.\(^{194}\)

As we have mentioned, their analogue in the Advaitic tradition is found in statements like *Aham brahamasmi*:

Applied to Jesus, the *Aham brahamasmi* then seems to correspond to Jesus’ “absolute” *ego eimi* in the Johannine Gospel (see Jn 8:24,28, 58; 13:19).\(^{195}\)

The question to be addressed, then, is how this “oneness-distinction” of Jesus’ human awareness which is at the root of Trinitarian doctrine relates to the concept of God behind *advaita* mysticism.\(^{196}\) In this tradition:

The Nirguna Brahman, or the Absolute in itself, is conceived in terms of *saccidananda* (being-consciousness-bliss). Being (*sat*), consciousness (*cit*), bliss (*ananda*) stand for three intrinsic perfections of the Absolute Brahman.\(^{197}\)

These three perfections are not found together in any text of the Upanishads. The compound word, rather, comes from the Vedantic theological tradition. Nonetheless, a three-in-one distinction-in-unity is posited, and, more to the point, divine attributes are


\(^{195}\) *Ibid.*


\(^{197}\) *Ibid.*
located, at least analogically, in humanity. In Trinitarian thought, Christians use “the same transcendental perfection” to describe the Godhead.\(^\text{198}\) Dupuis points, for example, to Augustine’s psychological analogy of the Trinity, which we have already visited above through the lens of Panikkar’s cosmotheandrism.\(^\text{199}\) Furthermore, both traditions possess a view of Ultimate Reality as unknown.\(^\text{200}\) Thus, while he see a qualitative uniqueness in Jesus Christ, Dupuis, like Panikkar, sees the basic Advaitic insight as rooted in the same reality as the Christian Trinitarian insight.

In his theology of religions, Dupuis seeks to go beyond theological approaches that are forms of “fulfillment theory” or forms of a “theory of the presence of the mystery of Christ.”\(^\text{201}\) Rather, Dupuis insists that the “Trinitarian Christological model” is the “hermeneutical key” for his Christian theology of religions.\(^\text{202}\) By this, he means to say that there is a Trinitarian structure to all experiences of the Divine:

Following this cue, it may be said that the divine Trinity is experiences, though hiddenly and “anonymously,” wherever human beings allow the Divine Reality that impinges upon them to enter into their life.\(^\text{203}\)

Therefore, Dupuis, like Panikkar is insisting that wherever God is experienced, the Trinity is experienced. While Dupuis sees the Christian Trinitarian tradition, centered on communion, as fulfilling the \textit{advaitic} insight, he does not see this in imperial terms, whereby the dialogue between the Christian tradition and the Hindu tradition is really a monologue, in that the only side that can learn is the non-Christian side. Rather, the

\(^{198}\) \textit{Ibid.}\n\(^{199}\) \textit{See Ibid.}, 275.\n\(^{200}\) \textit{Ibid.}\n\(^{201}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 276. Dupuis may have some elements of Panikkar’s thought (although not his entire project) in mind with this latter designation. He sees his theology as going a step further than these latter approaches because he sees the entire Trinity revealed and present across traditions rather than the \textit{Logos} alone.\n\(^{202}\) \textit{Ibid.}\n\(^{203}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 276-277.
dialogue is really a *dialogue*. This means that Christianity can learn much from other traditions, like Hinduism. For instance, the unity with the Absolute that is sought in the Advaita Vedanta is viewed as a kind of ‘identity’ (or maybe ‘nonidentity’) with Brahman that is “impersonal” because it is “transpersonal.”\(^{204}\) Taking this insight from the *advaitic* tradition can help to purify Christian theology:

True, we have shown above that the Christian mystery of communion surpasses, by completing it, the Hindu mysticism of identification. Nonetheless, the challenge presented by the latter forces Christians to cast off simplistic conceptualizations; to rid themselves of certain gross anthropomorphisms; in sum, to purify their own faith.\(^{205}\)

Thus, for Dupuis, the dialogue between traditions is mutual, but asymmetrical.\(^{206}\) This is the main distinction between Dupuis’ approach and Panikkar’s approach. Dupuis, like Panikkar sees the Holy Spirit as the “mystery of the divine intimacy and interiority”, the *advaita* of Father Son.\(^{207}\) However, he sees this reflection on the Spirit as an insight that Trinitarian thought offers to the *Advaita Vedanta*:

God’s being-together with human beings presupposes a radical mutual otherness; but the irruption of the spirit of God into history, be it the personal history of the human being or the history of the world, overcomes all distances without suppressing distinctions.\(^{208}\)

So, for Dupuis, as we have seen with Jesus’ self-consciousness, the key to Christian Trinitarian thought is the unity with distinction. This is manifested by the Spirit. The Spirit extends this unity-in-difference to humanity. We use the term ‘communion’ to denote it. In this way, for Dupuis, Christian-Trinitarian thought

\(^{204}\) *Ibid.*, 277.

\(^{205}\) *Ibid*.


\(^{208}\) *Ibid.*, 278.
completes Advaitic-Hindu thought without nullifying its insights, particularly those that pertain to transcendence. Thus, there is ‘incompleteness’ on both sides of the dialogue:

The religious traditions of the world convey different insights into the mystery of Ultimate Reality. Incomplete as these may be, they nevertheless witness to a manifold self-manifestation of God to human beings in diverse faith-communities.\(^{209}\)

The various religious traditions of the world represent “incomplete ‘faces’ of the Divine Mystery.”\(^{210}\) This incompleteness is not due to a limitation of the presence of God. Rather, it is due to the supereminence of the Divine. Thus, in the Incarnation is truly and uniquely encountered. However, a finite human nature cannot exhaust the Divine nature. The ‘incompleteness’ is not due to some lack of revelation in the Incarnation, but to the intrinsic limitation of the idiom, that is, humanity.

**1.8 Dupuis and Panikkar: A Contrast**

In many ways, Panikkar and Dupuis have very similar theological approaches. They both engage Christianity and Hinduism and truly value the traditions they are engaging. They both find an intimate connection between the Trinitarian theology of Christianity and the advaitic insights of Hinduism. However, there are a couple essential points of contrast between these two that can prove helpful for locating Panikkar’s thought within the overall theological milieu of interreligious dialogue in the late 20\(^{th}\) and early 21\(^{st}\) century.

1.8.1 **Panikkar’s encounter between traditions is more radical and ‘risky’ than that of Dupuis**

In contrast to Dupuis’ approach, Panikkar seems more willing to allow the traditions he is engaging to enlighten one another. Dupuis, however, seems to be more

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\(^{210}\) *Ibid.*, 279. See Jn 1:18; Ex 33:2.
concerned with examining each tradition in its own context. Dupuis identifies and compares the analogues that connect each tradition with the other. However, Panikkar takes this analogy a step further and (loosely) identifies these analogues with each other. As we saw above, he prefers to speak of ‘homologues’ rather than analogues. Consequently, he demonstrates greater comfort in using these homological terms interchangeably and, of course, even inventing a few new terms of his own. It seems that this ‘extra step’ that Panikkar takes puts him on a different and even, riskier plane than Dupuis.

Panikkar is essentially experimenting with what happens when a person of faith fully accepts two or more traditions. His entire project is based on this ‘intrareligious dialogue’. This project, then, of course, runs a few risks. First, Panikkar risks redaction of each tradition to something unacceptable to many of the theologians within those traditions. Secondly, he risks completely losing each tradition and finding himself creating something entirely new. These are serious risks, and, as we shall see, most of the criticism that Panikkar receives centers around one of these two issues.

Nonetheless, unless interreligious dialogue is simply to be an exercise in comparative religions, these risks must be taken. In fact, as we shall see in our next chapter, Christianity has risked its own identity on such forays into ‘hybridity’ from its inception. One need only consider the extension of Christianity into the Greek world in the first century at the hands of the early Christians, especially Paul of Tarsus, to find an example of this openness. Thus, Christianity has seldom taken ‘the safe road’ in the encounter with other religious traditions. Rather, it has risked all (even its own identity) to spread the Gospel.
1.8.2 Panikkar allows those religious traditions to encounter one another on a level plane

In his approach, Dupuis chooses to emphasize the role of the Incarnation as providing a qualitatively unique insight into the Divine. This, as we have seen, is enabled by the ‘unique filial consciousness’ of Jesus of Nazareth. Panikkar, by contrast, while not denying any of Dupuis’ claims, which are an integral part of traditional Christology, does not focus on the uniqueness of Christ or on the uniqueness of any elements of Hinduism either, for that matter. Rather, Panikkar’s point of emphasis is on the areas of overlap, which, Dupuis concurs, is exemplified in Trinitarian-Advaita connection. Panikkar, it bears repeating, does not wish to deny any element of the Christian tradition or of the Hindu tradition. Quite to the contrary, Panikkar seeks to find the commonality that these traditions share. As we look at the issues of ‘Christ’ in our second chapter and ‘identity’ in our third chapter, we will see Panikkar insists that this commonality is part of what it means to be human. However, unlike Dupuis, Panikkar consciously avoids any terms that connote any form of triumphalism of one tradition over another (particularly of the Western tradition over the Eastern tradition). Thus, by contrasting Panikkar’s thought with that of Dupuis, who shows great respect for the Hindu tradition, it is easier to see the novelty and radicality of Panikkar’s dialogical approach. This relationship between traditions will come into greater relief as we move forward into our second chapter and we begin to consider the intricacies of the relationship of particularity and universality, particularly in reference to Christ in Panikkar’s thought.
1.9 Conclusion

Above, we have examined the cosmotheandric roots of Panikkar’s thought. We have glimpsed the evolution of Panikkar’s Trinitarian theology from a more ‘traditional’ focus on the interrelation of the divine hypostases to one on the interrelatedness and communion of all reality. It is here that the nondualistic/Advaitic tradition of Hinduism finds common ground with Christian Trinitarian insight. In many ways, this extension of the concept of Trinity to all of reality represents an extension of Augustine’s apprehension of vestigia trinitatis within God’s creation (particularly humanity). This insight into the communion of all of reality in its three poles (the world, God, and humanity) inspires Panikkar to coin the term ‘cosmotheandrisism’ to describe this mystical connection.

This understanding of Panikkar’s cosmotheandrisism can serve as a starting block from which we can examine other aspects of his theology. For instance, as we have already said, without such an understanding of Panikkar’s Advaitic-Trinitarian theology, one cannot understand the meaning of ‘Christ’ in Panikkar’s writing. Thus, now that we have examined the cosmotheandric matrix of Panikkar’s thought in some detail, let us now turn our attention to Panikkar’s Christology. Let us also momentarily leave our comparison between the theologies of Panikkar and Dupuis until after we have attempted to pinpoint Panikkar’s understanding and usage of the term ‘Christ’.
Chapter 2

Christ

Now that we have examined Panikkar’s Trinitarian theology in some detail, we are ready to delve into some other aspects of his thought. With this in mind, we shall take up our consideration of Panikkar’s Christology. Toward this end, we shall attempt to pinpoint exactly what Panikkar does and does not mean when he uses the term ‘Christ.’ As we shall see, this consideration is founded upon Panikkar’s cosmotheandric worldview. In very much the same manner as Jacques Dupuis, whose thought we have already visited at the end of our first chapter, Panikkar’s Trinitarian theology is intimately related to his Christology.¹

However, Panikkar’s Christology is very much unlike Dupuis’ Christology, which is rooted in Jesus the Christ’s ‘unique filial consciousness’. For Panikkar, by contrast, ‘Christ’ refers to something that is shared across religions. Christians simply use the term ‘Christ’ to denote it.² For this reason, Panikkar, while connecting Christianity and Hinduism, makes the claim that Christ is “not only the ontological goal of Hinduism but also its true inspirer.”³ It is no wonder then that, as Jyri Komulainen points out, “the strongest association Panikkar’s name evokes in the minds of most theologians is

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¹ Throughout the Christian tradition, there is an intimate connection between Trinitarian theology and Christology. It cannot be forgotten that the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE had as its central concern the appropriate to talk about Jesus the Christ. Thus, the so-called ‘Trinitarian controversy’ was rooted in Christology.
probably with cosmic Christology.”⁴ After all, as we mentioned in our first chapter, Panikkar’s most well-known work is *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*.

Komulainen, however, has some reservations about Panikkar’s Christology:

My overall impression is that Christology is ultimately rather loosely related to other themes within his pluralistic thinking, for instance to his radical pluralism and cosmotheandric vision.⁵

Komulainen insists that there are “occasional accentuations that are, to some extent, inconsistent with his cosmotheandric metaphysics.”⁶ As we shall see, this criticism is somewhat warranted. We have already seen that even in Panikkar’s treatment of the Trinity, there is the presence of what we can call an ‘unevenness’, particularly as his thought has evolved over time. This is due to his shift from Trinity as a Divine reality to Trinity as a characteristic of all of reality. Thus, they are difficult to tie together with complete coherence, as we have attempted in the previous chapter. Those who endeavor to read his Christological reflections face this same challenge. Then, as Komulainen has pointed out, combining these two aspects of Panikkar’s thought can present further challenges. Perhaps, Panikkar is more of a mystic than a systematician. Nonetheless, we must not allow mysticism to become mystification. Thus, below, we shall endeavor to give an, at least relatively, systematic account of Panikkar’s Christology.

### 2.1 The Evolving Worldview of Raimon Panikkar and the Resulting Christology

As is the case with any thinker who is still actively ‘thinking’, throughout his lifetime, Panikkar’s thought underwent a great deal of evolution. For example, before coining the term ‘cosmotheandrism’, Panikkar preferred to speak in terms of

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‘theandrisms’. In the same way that ‘cosmotheandrisms’ represents the unity between the poles of *Cosmos, Theos, and Aner* (World, God, and Man), it’s terminological predecessor, ‘theandrisms’ denotes the unity between the poles of *Theos* and *Aner* (God and Man). Panikkar himself describes the term as follows:

Theandrisms is the classical and traditional term for that intimate and complete unity which is realized paradigmatically in Christ between the divine and the human and which is the goal towards which everything here below tends—in Christ and the Spirit.7

Thus, the two terms, ‘theandrisms’ and ‘cosmotheandrisms’ represent the same insight. However, after reflection upon this mystery of communion, Panikkar realized that there is more to this communion than humanity and God. The rest of the world is also part of this intimate bond. What is interesting in the above-cited quotation is Panikkar’s use of the term ‘Christ’. ‘Christ’, for Panikkar here denotes the paradigmatic unity of the divine and the human. At first sight, it would seem that he is referring, in traditional Christian parlance, to the Incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth. However, when one takes a deeper look, even within the same work, this is not at all entirely clear. For instance, Panikkar chooses to end *The Trinity and World Religions* by saying that “Man is more than ‘man’; he is a theandric mystery.”8 So, it seems that, unlike Dupuis’ work, in Panikkar’s theology, consideration of uniqueness of Jesus’ ‘filial consciousness’ is not given or desired. If anything, Jesus of Nazareth is a ‘paradigm’ by which all of humanity (and maybe in his later thought, all of Reality) is to be understood. Thus, it is not clear, even at this early stage in his thought (1971-1973), whether Panikkar wishes to exclusively connect the term ‘Christ’ with the ‘Son’, upon whom he spent a great deal of

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8 *Ibid.*, 82.
The Trinity and World Religions reflecting, or with Jesus of Nazareth. In his later theology, we come to see that these terms are not synonymous. ‘Christ’ is a broader term than this.

This is a dilemma that will continuously come up in our examination of Panikkar’s Christology in this chapter and especially in our fourth chapter: What is the relationship between the reality that Panikkar calls ‘Christ’ and the historical personage of Jesus of Nazareth? We should note that this did not escape Panikkar’s attention. In his most mature work, Christophany, Panikkar admits that, in his thought, the relationship between his Trinitarian theology and the Christology of the Incarnation is “still weak.”

Jyri Komulainen tries to navigate the difficult waters of Panikkar’s Christology, particularly as it is connected to the shift from ‘theandism’ to ‘cosmotheandism’ in Panikkar’s metaphysic. He points out that in his later thought “Panikkar has not simply substituted ‘cosmotheandism’ for ‘theandism’. ”10 For instance, Panikkar went through a “transitional stage” during which he used both terms.11 Komulainen calls Panikkar’s early Christology “Link Christology” because, in it, “Christ is primarily an ontological ‘link’ between the relative and the absolute.”12 This earlier work centers on ‘theandism’, which is an element of every religion.13 In his concern for pluralism, Panikkar, in his own way, also reflects the concerns of traditional Christology:

10 Jyri Komulainen, An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions, 126.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 127.
13 Ibid., 128.
By accentuating the role of Christ as the link between the absolute and the relative, i.e. between two mutually incompatible ontological categories, Panikkar re-asserts his interest in the Chalcedonian doctrine of the two natures of Christ. 14

His much later Christological reflection, by contrast, to which Panikkar gives the name ‘Christophany’, on the other hand, “highlights Christ as a ‘symbol’ of reality.” 15 Komulainen calls it “Symbol Christology.” 16 This approach, while not a complete break or any form of negation of traditional Christology, is quite distinct from it. In this later phase, “Christ eventually becomes so abstract in Panikkar’s thinking that he applies the philosophical term ‘the christic principle’.” 17 Komulainen’s concern is that Panikkar has universalized ‘Christ’ so much that Christ no longer has any concrete, particular application.

While this concern is valid, it does not seem that Panikkar’s appraisal of ‘Christ’ is as simple as this. On the contrary, Panikkar’s Christological reflections are difficult to ‘nail down’ because they oscillate between considerations of the universal and considerations of the particular, although he does tend to focus more on the universal pole. In his thought, ‘Christ’ reflects both poles. According to S. Mark Heim, for Panikkar, in Christ, universality and particularity converge:

In Panikkar’s view Christians are right to understand all religious truth through the prism of the unique revelation in Christ. But precisely because this universal claim is true, the very universality of the “christic principle” it confesses means that all concrete, particular

14 Ibid., 129.
15 Ibid., 127.
16 Ibid.
“Christianness” stands in need of radical expansion and supplementation to approach the fullness of what it confesses.\textsuperscript{18}

He continues:

We must seek to include the valid truth in all religions within our particular religion’s defining framework, a framework which we must confess remains itself largely mysterious to us. In this process, what is particular will become increasingly universal.\textsuperscript{19}

Panikkar’s combination of universality and particularity in his Christological reflection has also been the cause of criticism for multiple fronts:

He is sometimes criticized from a “pluralistic” side for the Christian particularity of his framework. And he is often accused from the more conservative Christian side of making of “Trinity” something that comes unmoored from its specific formulations in Christian tradition, its specific roots in the historical Christ. Panikkar believes that theological reflection and spiritual life can be stretched to cover this distance, remaining authentically rooted in concrete particularity at one end and touching true universality at the other.\textsuperscript{20}

Possibly more to Panikkar’s point, he does not see any distance between particularity and universality in the first place. Nonetheless, both sets of concerns are valid. For some pluralists, Panikkar is too concrete and particular. For some Christian theologians, he is too abstract and universal:

A radically evangelical, mission-oriented Christian may propose that we will hardly recognize the church once it has been rooted and has flourished in all the diverse “unreached” cultures of the world. And a radically pluralistic, dialogue-oriented Christian may propose that we will hardly recognize the church once it has recognized


\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 150.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
and honored the validity in other religious traditions. Panikkar seems to suggest that they may both be quite right, and about the same church!\textsuperscript{21}

Panikkar seems to be most comfortable in bridging the gaps that arise between various schools of thought. The dynamism between particularity and universality does not present a stumbling block to his theology. Rather it enlivens and animates this theological reflection. He sees a universal longing, present in all, for the Divine:

There exists in each of us a desire for fullness and life, for happiness and the infinite, for truth and beauty that goes beyond religious and cultural contingencies.\textsuperscript{22}

But the object of this takes a particular form:

Note that I am not saying that Christ is the fullness of life but that this fullness, effective since the beginning, is one that the Christian tradition calls Jesus the Christ.\textsuperscript{23}

This makes complete logical sense. If there is a universal longing and desire for fullness, completeness, unity, communion, etc., this desire would remain only a desire if it had no concrete manifestation. Thus, for Panikkar, ‘Christ’ is the fulfillment of human desire.

This becomes especially explicit in the later stages of Panikkar’s thought. For instance, Jyri Komulainen insists that in the second, revised edition of The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, “Panikkar’s cosmic Christology and the ontological questions related to it” are crystallized.\textsuperscript{24} In this later thought, “Panikkar stretches his idea of Christ as the ontological link to the extreme, which has made his Christology more and more christophanic in character over the course of time.”\textsuperscript{25} In this later thought, Panikkar

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 150-151.  
\textsuperscript{22} Raimon Panikkar, Christophany: The Fullness of Man, xx.  
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{24} Jyri Komulainen, An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions, 36.  
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 130.
prefers his neologism ‘christophany’ to the term ‘Christology’ for several reasons. Firstly, it moves away from emphasis on the *logos*, which, as we have already mentioned and will examine more thoroughly in the next chapter, is secondary to *mythos*. ‘Christophany’ refers to a manifestation of what we call Christ. So, the emphasis is placed on what is revealed and not on the human reflection thereupon, although the two may not be as easily separable as Panikkar seems to presume. By contrast with ‘Christology’, which can be understood more or less as rational reflection on Christ, particularly Jesus the Christ, ‘christophany’ is an expanded concept that Panikkar uses refer to “reality as a whole.”26 In a way, for Panikkar, “all beings can thus be seen as manifestations of the christic principle.”27 Thus, “the christic principle ultimately embraces all that exists, since existence is nothing more than Christophany.”28 

So, Panikkar “sees every being as a manifestation of Christ in its essence.”29

Here, we see the concern that characterizes much of Panikkar’s later career: an accounting for reality as a whole, a metaphysic, what Komulainen refers to as Panikkar’s ontology. Thus, according to Komulainen, “Panikkar’s ontology is simply Christophany.”30 It is important to understand that ‘Christophany’, for Panikkar, represent the revelatory ‘showing forth’ of that cosmotheandric unity that underlies all reality:

However, it is essential to note here that, according to Panikkar’s recent Christological thinking, Christ is the symbol that symbolizes nothing less than reality itself. As such, Christ cannot be only theandric, but is more extensively *cosmo*theandric. For this reason,

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30 *Ibid.*,
Panikkar can even say that he prefers ‘Christ’ to ‘God’, since the latter is more restricted as a symbol.\(^{31}\)

Therefore, because of the deep roots of this unity, it is essential that we examine the relationship between Christology and anthropology in Panikkar’s thought. To do this, we must look at how what we call ‘Christ’ is part of Panikkar’s understanding of the human person, what he terms the *humanum*.

### 2.2 Christophany: Christ and the *Humanum*

As we have already mentioned, for Panikkar, ‘Christ’ refers to something universal. In other words, like the Trinity, Christ is not the sole property of Christianity. What Christians call ‘Christ’ refers to the manifestation of cosmotheandric unity that underlies all of reality. Thus, for Panikkar, Christ is not merely prepared for, but is actually present in other religions.\(^ {32}\) In his analysis of Panikkar, Christopher Denny locates Panikkar’s thought within George Lindbeck’s "experiential-expressive" model of religious experience.\(^ {33}\) This model is based on the insistence that different religious traditions are based on a common “core experience.”\(^ {34}\)

However, for Panikkar, this experience that various religious traditions share goes deeper than this. It is really something that all humans share. Thus, it is part of the *humanum*. As we have mentioned, in his most developed thought, found in *Christophany*, Panikkar describes this dimension of reality and refers to its manifestation as ‘christophany’:

\(^{31}\) *Ibid.*, 133.
\(^{34}\) *Ibid.*, 412.
Christophany simply intends to offer an image of Christ that all people are capable of believing in, especially those contemporaries who, while wishing to remain open and tolerant, think they have no need of either diluting their “Christianity” or of damaging their fidelity to Christ.\(^\text{35}\)

While the term ‘christophany’ could be interpreted in a docetic manner, referring to some form of divine façade as opposed to the strong language of Incarnation, Panikkar intends it in the sense that *phaneros* has in Christian scripture, that is, as a manifestation of a truth, revelation.\(^\text{36}\) This truth is found everywhere, permeating all of reality. This truth is none other than what Panikkar calls ‘cosmotheandrim’. Furthermore, he does not intend it as a replacement for Incarnational Christology, but rather as a rendering of the same insight in a manner that can be understood across religious boundaries. It is also quite clear that Panikkar sees his path as treading new ground. Consequently, he eschews conventional Christological labels:

Today one hears talk of a christology “from above” in opposition to a christology “from below.” Here we must be careful. Although labels have practical value, they always impose limitations on reality, which like a rainbow, shows no boundaries between colors. If someone were to classify this study, she might define it as a christology “from within.”\(^\text{37}\)

By entering ‘within’ Christology, Panikkar is attempting to get to the mystical insight that is at the heart of the Incarnation. This insight is cosmotheandric unity, communion, Trinity, advaita, etc. Panikkar’s particular goal is to present Christ to Buddhists and Hindus in a way they can understand, but also not in a way that makes the


\(^{36}\) Ibid., 10.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 84.
Christian feel “betrayed.” Therefore he prefers to refer to the Incarnation in revelatory terms, which also allows him to skirt the issue of exclusivism.

Panikkar can avoid exclusivism because a ‘christophany’ is a manifestation of the cosmotheandric character of all of reality. But, for Panikkar there is a basic human desire to realize this unity that is found in all persons. In this way, “Christ represents an intimate and complete unity between the divine and the human.” Thus, we are left with the question of Christian uniqueness and the absolute claims of Christianity that permeates much of the contemporary Christological debate and is not forgotten in Panikkar’s theological enterprise, particularly the latter part thereof:

Especially in his significantly revised version of The Unknown Christ of Hinduism in 1981, he moved definitely toward a pluralistic version of Christology. In that book he rejects all notions of Christianity’s superiority over or fulfillment of other religions by arguing that the world and our subjective experience of the world have radically changed since the Christian doctrine concerning Christ was first formulated.

Thus, the Incarnation is a christophany. We shall return to a consideration of the manner in which the christophanic Incarnation ‘radically changes’ the world, or what Christians term soteriology, in our final chapter. Let us turn now, however to the christophany of the Incarnation, particularly, its unique character.

2.3 The Question of the Uniqueness of Christ: A First Glance

The question of uniqueness of Christ shall concern us in various ways throughout the remainder of our exploration of Panikkar’s theology. Let us take a moment to take a ‘first glance’ at how Panikkar deals with this pressing issue in Christology. On the

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38 Ibid., 13.
40 Ibid., 338.
relationship between the statements ‘Jesus is the Christ’ and ‘Christ is Jesus’, for instance, Panikkar declares:

The Christian, however, cannot say that ‘Christ is only Jesus’, philosophically, because the is does not need to mean is-only and, theologically, because in fact the risen Jesus is more (aliud, not alius) than the Jesus of Nazareth, which is only a practical identification, different from personal identity.\(^{41}\)

There is a lot packed into this small statement. For Panikkar, it is correct to say that Jesus is the Christ. However, it is incorrect to limit ‘Christ’ to Jesus of Nazareth. Panikkar cites as an example the resurrected Jesus that transcends the so-called historical Jesus. So, even in the Christian tradition, ‘Christ’ is not limited to the historical presence of Jesus of Nazareth. However, ‘Christ’ is also not understood apart from this presence.

While we shall examine the issue of ‘identification’ and ‘identity’ in our next chapter and attempt to relate this to Christ in our fourth chapter, suffice it to say that the connection of Christ to Jesus of Nazareth is not exclusive. In other words, the Incarnation reveals the Logos, it does not circumscribe the Logos. Elsewhere, Panikkar expresses the same sentiment differently by declaring that “Christ is the Lord, but the Lord is neither only Jesus nor does my understanding exhaust the meaning of the word.”\(^{42}\)

Here, as Varghese Manimala points out, “the Christian mystery is to be sharply distinguished from the mystery of reality in general in that the transcendent Lord is believed to have disclosed himself by taking the initiative in revelation.”\(^{43}\) In the ‘Christian mystery’ of the Incarnation, the Divine is revealed “in finite terms.”\(^{44}\)

\(^{44}\) Ibid.
the Incarnation is a concretization of the ineffable. But even so, this Incarnational concretization does not exhaust Christ. The mystery that Christians call Christ extends beyond the Incarnation. With this in mind, Panikkar sees any of the traditional Christian exclusive claims as references to Christ, not to Christianity in general. Consequently:

Christ is the only mediator, but he is not the monopoly of Christians and, in face, he is present and effective in any authentic religion, whatever the form or the name. Christ is the symbol, which Christians call by this name, of the ever-transcending but equally ever-humanly immanent Mystery.45

45 Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The Intrareligious Dialogue, 36-37. As many will note, using terms like ‘symbol’ can often cause confusion. While Panikkar does not define the term ‘symbol’ here, in his earlier Worship and Secular Man he gives a definition that can be used in a somewhat analogous form to understand his intention. See Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, Worship and Secular Man, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), 20-21. In this work, Panikkar draws a distinction between a ‘sign’ and a ‘symbol’, stating: “Whereas the former is an epistemic device pointing to the ‘thing’, the relationship between the symbol and the symbolized is a sui generis one. The symbol is neither a substitute for the ‘thing’ nor the ‘thing in itself’, but the thing as it appears, as it expresses itself, as it manifests itself. This manifestation however is not the manifestation of some attribute or some effect of the ‘thing’ but the primordial manifestation, the genuine epiphany of the thing, so that outside or beyond that manifestation there is nothing except a mental hypothesis.” For example, the body and the face are symbols of the self. They do not substitute for the self. Rather, they reveal the self. While referencing Heidegger’s concept of ‘ontological difference’ Panikkar refers to his own concept of “symbolic difference” that exists “between the symbol and the reality.” The two are distinct, yet inseparable. It is the symbol that allows us to speak of the reality in the first place. He insists that “We cannot catch any being if we do not grasp its symbol, or rather if we do not discover the symbol of that reality which discloses itself only in its own and proper symbol. There ‘is’ no reality independent of its proper symbol. There is no symbol if it is not the symbol of a reality.” This is similar to the role of the Son as giving ‘being’ to the Father in Panikkar’s Trinitarian schema. See, for instance, Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man: Icon—Person—Mystery, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), 48ff. If these notions are taken together, the Son can be said to be the ‘symbol’ of the Father, allowing the unspeakable to be spoken. In a not-unrelated (yet not-well-defined) manner in Panikkar’s thought, Christ makes explicit the cosmotheandric unity of all of reality. So, ‘symbol’ seems to mean, for Panikkar, outward expression. However, Panikkar is hardly universal in his usage of the term symbol to describe ‘Christ’. Thus, one should not reduce Christ to the ‘merely’ symbolic. Rather, it would be more precise to say that ‘Christ’ functions symbolically. The notion of ‘symbolic difference’ may be the most difficult point to reconcile with Christological thought. Yet, while they share a common divine nature, the ‘Son’ is not the ‘Father’ nor is the ‘Father’ the ‘Son’. Therefore, if the ‘Son’ or ‘Christ’ is said to be the symbol of the ‘Father’ this is less problematic than, for instance, speaking more generally of Jesus as the ‘symbol of God’ as does Roger Haight. See Roger Haight, Jesus Symbol of God, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999).” For more on ‘symbolic difference’ see Raimon Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness, ed. Scott Eastham (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 49. See also Francis X. D’Sa, “The Notion of God,” in The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar, ed. Joseph Prabhu (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 38. D’Sa explains, “Symbol, for Panikkar, is the thing itself in as much as it manifests itself. The manifestation of the thing is not identical with the thing, but it is not separate either."
2.4 Universality, Concreteness, and Christ

Often at issue in contemporary Christological reflections is the relationship between universality and concreteness (or particularity). Interestingly enough, Panikkar seems to not regard this as a problematic. The two need each other. For instance, in his reflection on the nature of truth, Panikkar says:

A private truth, within its sphere can hardly be called a value. A private truth, like a private language, is a contradiction in terms, truth like language being fundamentally a matter of relationships.\(^{46}\)

So, a truth, even a universal truth, must be concretely expressed to be considered a truth at all. Truth only makes sense in context. Truth lives in the tension between the universal and the particular. Thus, the greatest Christian truth of all, the Incarnation, reflects this tension.\(^{47}\) For Panikkar, then, Christ (which is not distinct from, yet not limited to the Incarnation) also reflects this tension. In the spirit of Panikkar’s compounding of terms and consequent coinage of new terms, maybe we could talk about the \textit{uniticular} or the \textit{partiversal}, which neither universal nor particular. Thus, Christ can be said to be an embodiment of ‘uniticularity’ or ‘partiversality’. It is the communion that Christ reveals and that is at the basis of all reality that allows these seeming opposites to coexist without negating each other. Without such communion, there is no communication, no language, and no truth:

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

\(^{46}\) Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, \textit{Worship and Secular Man}, 62. See also \textit{Ibid.}, 1-2. The General thesis under which Panikkar is operating here is that “only worship can prevent secularization from becoming inhuman, and only secularization can save worship from being meaningless.” Thus, worship is “a universal value and not merely tied to a particular form of culture and religion” because “worship is a constitutive human dimension.” Therefore, it must be meaningful even in a secularized society. Values must be expressed in order to be shared. Worship serves this function.

\(^{47}\) See \textit{Ibid.}, 63.
communicatio in sacris (in the classical theological language) there is no communication, but only an exchange of goods or words or a simple acknowledgment of the presence of the other in order to have freedom to proceed further without obstacles. 48

This leads Panikkar to insist that action takes primacy over expression because without it, there would be no-thing to express. Therefore, for Panikkar, there is no doubt that orthopraxis is more essential than orthodoxy. 49 Union with the divine (and the cosmos) is the constitution and, at the same time, the primary goal of all reality. This union, which can be manifested in many particular ways, or, in Panikkar’s terms, by various ‘christophanies’, is not reducible to its various theological expressions, which can be found in different traditions. In fact, this union does not depend on concepts, thought, or expression at all:

I submit that the moment it is accepted that the idea of a personal God can be meaningless to somebody and that at the same time the core of religion lies in orthodoxy, one is not only condemning all who do not think in this way, but one is making God a superfluous hypothesis negating by this very fact the fundamental divine function of being to be the ultimate and necessary ground of everything. God can no longer be the foundation of thinking if I recognize the possibility of a real thinking which denies this very foundation. A real God, the foundation of everything, including the thinking those who deny his existence, can obviously not be denied by any thinking and much less be made the starting point of a division among men. 50

So, Panikkar sees the intrinsic limitations of the concept of God. But, God is ultimately not a concept. Panikkar explains that “the Anselmian id quo magis cogitari nequit means here id sine quo cogitari nequit, having the immediate consequence that it

48 Ibid., 65.
49 Ibid., 66.
50 Ibid., 67.
is *id quod cogitari nequit*.” In other words, Anselm’s description of God as ‘that than which a greater cannot be thought’ is also ‘that without which there cannot be thought’. This means, however, that God is also ‘that which cannot be thought’. Panikkar is simply following the ‘logic’ of transcendence here. Thus God escapes the grasp of the concept. Consequently, as we shall see in our next chapter, there must be more than *logos* that inspires the human spiritual life. At this point, suffice it to say that Panikkar “would simply say that no idea of God can replace the myth of God and that only the latter can be a universal ground for those who live in that myth.”

Christ comes into this equation by bridging the gap between thought and unthought. A Christophany manifests the interplay of transcendence and immanence that penetrates all of reality in cosmotheandric unity. In other words, Christ brings transcendence into immanence. Christ brings expression to the inexpressible. The otherness of divinity is united to the similitude of humanity in communion. All of reality is encompassed by and rooted in this communion.

Today, Christians must honestly face the question of the universal relevance of Christian faith and how that relates to the particular revelation in the Incarnation. On one hand, Christians can “identify the Christian *fact* with historically existing Christianity.” Then, however, Christianity is simply one religion among others, which never transcends its own terrestrial boundaries. On the other hand, “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.” It is precisely this ‘universal message’

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51 Ibid., 67-68.
52 Ibid., 68.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
that is expressed in the ‘christophany’ of the Incarnation, and in all ‘christophanies’ for that matter. However, to find expression, this universal truth must take on a particular form.

2.5 Christ the Tempiternal

As we have already mentioned, Panikkar’s theology presents a new spin on the traditional understanding of Christ as mediator. In many ways, Christ is found at the interstices of reality and is the principle that unites the seemingly disparate elements found therein. And as we have also mentioned, Panikkar’s mature thought refers to this union as cosmotheandrom. His earlier thought, by contrast (but not discontinuously), emphasizes theandrom. This arises out of the traditional Chalcedonian formulation of Jesus the Christ as truly divine and human:

I may add without wishing to be polemic or discriminatory, that if the Christian message stands for anything it is for this experience of the theandric reality of every being, of which the revelation in Jesus Christ, real man and real God is the paradigm.55

As we can see here, Panikkar does not completely separate Christ from Jesus of Nazareth. He maintains that his theology is consistent with the Christological tradition. Jesus the Christ is paradigmatic for understanding the unity that lies at the heart of all reality, which his later thought calls cosmotheandrom. As a paradigmatic representation of unity between the cosmos, God, and humanity, in Jesus Christ, we see that, in the final analysis, time and eternity are not polar opposites. Christ is the union of temporality and eternity, and Jesus the Christ is the paradigmatic manifestation of this unity, which

55 Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, Worship and Secular Man, 42.
Panikkar calls ‘tempiternity’. Thus, Panikkar connects traditional concepts such as devotion and divine participation with the experience of what he calls ‘tempiternity’:

Tempiternity, as its very name would like to suggest, is neither eternity (an objectified notion belonging exclusively to God), nor temporality (a much too subjective concept and the monopoly of the human being).

The ‘tempiternal’ perhaps fulfills the human longing for fixity, while also realistically accounting for the fact that humans live in time:

Any profound human experience occurs in time and yet is not bound to or by time. It has no meaning to fix a mystical experience temporally, it is senseless to say ‘I love you for five minutes’, it is incongruous to affirm that death is not real because it abolishes subjective time, it is incoherent to relate what is intrinsically an aesthetic experience to any time outside its own temporality, it is impossible to have any experience of time during an intellectual discovery of something which dawns on us for the first ‘time’, and so on.

Thus, time is not absolute. Yet, time is very real and a necessary component of human experience. In his seventh sūtra in Christophany, his most mature Christological work, Panikkar picks up this theme of the tempiternity by discussing Christ and historicity. The particular sūtra that Panikkar is asserting states that “the Incarnation as historical event is also inculturation.” Thus, in the Incarnation, Christ enters a particular culture and is manifested therein. The followers of Christ cannot escape historicity either:

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56 ‘Tempiternity’ is another of Panikkar’s neologisms.
58 Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, Worship and Secular Man, 45-46.
59 Raimon Panikkar, Christophany: The Fullness of Man, 173.
Christianity too is a cultural construct, inextricably bound to Western history and culture. No christology is universal, and one aspect of christophany consists in its being conscious of that fact in confronting the problem of Christ’s identity. Therefore, Christianity is an “historical religion” and the Incarnation is an historical manifestation, but Christ is “more (not less) than a historical reality.” In contrast to traditional Christology, Panikkar’s “christophany does not limit itself to the identification of Christ but aims at reaching some understanding of his identity.” One needs the ‘mystical vision’ of “the third eye” to accomplish this. One must look beyond the dichotomy of historicity and ahistoricity. Consequently, it must be understood that the Incarnation is particular to a cultural context and can only be understood with reference to it, it is a form of divine inculturation. But, it is also transformative of that culture. The christophany of the Incarnation forever changes the outlook of those influenced by it. It enables them to use this ‘third eye’ to see the tempiternal character of cosmotheandric reality.

2.6 Christ Enables Participation in the Divine, Trinitarian Life

Consequently, there can be a variety of christophanies and a variety of divine names. This causes Panikkar to “distinguish experiential Christianness from cultural Christianity and doctrinal Christendom.” Thus, there is a difference between, although not necessarily a complete separation of, being a Christian and Christian expression, orthopraxis and orthodoxy, if you will. While this may sound like Karl Rahner’s anonymous Christianity, Panikkar would not appreciate such a comparison, although it

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60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid., 174.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., 175.
may not be altogether inaccurate. We shall explore this issue further in the next couple of chapters.

This issue of tempiternal unity, brings us to the question of what is meant by what Christians traditionally call divine participation. In *Christophany*, Panikkar touches this topic by looking at the question of filiation in the context of his cosmotheandism. He points out that, if one follows the Pauline approach to filiation, there is a difference between Jesus the Christ’s filiation and ours, based upon the Paul’s distinction between natural and adopted filiation. With this in mind, Panikkar asks the question of whether Jesus is God’s natural son in his human nature as well as his divine. The Pauline answer is that this is so as a gift of God. It seems that God makes an “exception” in Jesus’ case.\(^{65}\) What then of us? What is our relationship to the divine?

To answer these questions, Panikkar looks to Paul’s use of the term *koinonia*. He also looks to a similar concept in the Petrine corpus, that is, divine participation:

Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants in the divine nature (2Pt 1:4).

The Petrine insistence on the human goal of participation in divine nature envisions something greater than Paul’s language of ‘adopted heirs’.\(^{66}\) No matter what phrase or expression is used, however, Panikkar stresses that what is being discussed is “real participation”, not an illusion or appearance of unity.\(^{67}\) Thus, “our divinization is as little docetic as the humanization of the Logos.”\(^{68}\) Furthermore, “Jesus is the natural son

\(^{65}\) Ibid., 94.
\(^{66}\) Ibid., 94-95.
\(^{67}\) Ibid., 96.
\(^{68}\) Ibid.
of God in a metaphorical sense.”\(^69\) This is due to the fact that the language of filiation, in itself, is analogical. But, there is, nonetheless, in the Pauline corpus, a difference between the analogy of Jesus’ filiation and ours. The metaphor being used for Jesus is from the nature of things, whereas adoptive filiation is a cultural reality or a “juridical fiction” that does not put our filiation the “same level” with his. This leads to Panikkar’s critique of monotheistic thought, of which he sees a welcome transgression in Trinitarian theology:

> Within a monotheistic context we cannot be God’s real children. It is important to avoid pantheism while at the same time we do not undervalue our filiation without reducing it to a natural necessity. After all, the subtitle of this book is *The Fullness of Man* not “human fullness”—we are more than “human.” Conscious of this reality, theology introduced the concept of the supernatural, an idea that carried with it certain difficulties. The whole philosophical infrastructure must be thought out anew in a trinitarian direction. It is Christ who makes it impossible to sustain both dualism and the abyss man-God.\(^70\)

Thus, the Pauline filiation imagery, while enlightening, does not fully capture the scope of the message of Jesus the Christ. For instance, Jesus’ radical statements of unity between himself and the Father stretch the limits of monotheistic concepts. If one examines them “from a monotheistic point of view, these ‘blasphemous’ confessions seem to threaten the radical separation of the human from the divine.”\(^71\) By contrast, “What we see here [in Jesus the Christ] is a bridge, a bridge we are capable of crossing.”\(^72\) Thus, for Panikkar, “the meaning of the confession ‘Christ is God the Son, the Logos’ is that Christ is both symbol and substance of this nondualistic unity between

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\(^{69}\) Ibid.

\(^{70}\) Ibid., 98.

\(^{71}\) Ibid., 110.

\(^{72}\) Ibid.
God and humanity.” Thus Jesus is a Christophany that reveals not only the divine, but also the truth of what it means to be human. Panikkar’s insistence here is consistence with the message of the Second Vatican Council’s *Gaudium et Spes*. Panikkar, however finds this truth in the cosmotheandric structure of reality, described in chapter one. Human relationality is rooted in this structure: “relation is in fact the category of the Trinity—and advaita.” This is what is revealed in Christ Jesus: the fullness of humanity.

### 2.7 S. Mark Heim on the Incarnation

Perhaps this is the opportune time to interject a bit of S. Mark Heim’s take on the uniqueness of the Incarnation because it can help us to understand Panikkar’s use of the term ‘Christ’ in a sense that goes beyond the parameters of the Incarnation found in Jesus of Nazareth. As Heim correctly points out, in the Christian theological tradition, Christology is the key to understanding salvation. This is due to Jesus’ full participation in divine life. The Incarnation enables communion between God and humanity:

> Through the web of communion from this single human point, God becomes a participant on the creature side of the creator/creature relation. This means, for instance, that God also has a communion with the characteristic forms of alienation in these relations.

This solidarity with the alienated can be seen in Jesus’ own experiences of abandonment and fear. Panikkar’s thought does contrast with Heim’s here. For Panikkar, the Incarnation is a clear manifestation of an *already-present* union between

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74 See *Gaudium et Spes*, 22. Here the bishops of the council state, “The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear. It is not surprising, then, that in Him all the aforementioned truths find their root and attain their crown.”
75 Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany: The Fullness of Man*, 112.
God and creation, a ‘christophany’. Thus, for Panikkar the Incarnation is not the beginning point, but a delectable fruit of the tree that has roots as deep as creation itself. The divine solidarity with human feelings of abandonment, etc. that is manifested in the Incarnation is the swelling of divine love that can relate to humanity because it, in fact, has never abandoned creation.

Heim, while holding to the uniqueness of the Incarnation, does not see the Incarnation as the only source of divine revelation:

If people object that one incarnation is too few, they may miss the point that the Christian doctrine of God does not limit the going out of God into creation to just one instance.

God’s living presence in the world has a complex variety.  

Panikkar, while not emphasizing the uniqueness of the Incarnation, does not deny it either. Panikkar would, of course, whole-heartedly accept that the Incarnation is unique. After all, all ‘christophanies’ are unique outcroppings of the cosmotheandric unity that lies at the root of all of reality. However, as Heim would agree, the uniqueness of the Incarnation does not place a limit on divine self-revelation. For Heim, a Trinitarian theological outlook leads away from Christomonism because it does not see Jesus the Christ as the exclusive source of knowledge about God. He insists that “one way to put this is to say that what was revealed in the particularity of Jesus Christ has in fact not yet been fully specified.” So, for Heim, there is still a fullness of revelation in the Incarnation, but there still remains more “meaning” that can yet be uncovered. In a manner that is no doubt influenced by Panikkar, Heim asserts:

\[\text{\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 136.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.}\]
There is an "unknown Christ" for Christianity, a Christ whose full dimensions and character are hidden from Christians and await the further particularization that can only come from additional contexts.\footnote{Ibid., 141.}

While Panikkar might phrase this slightly differently, preferring to hold the revelation that is Christ as being of interest not simply to Christians but to all, the point is very much the same. The reality that can be called ‘Christ’ is clearly, and Christians believe most clearly, revealed in Jesus of Nazareth. Yet this reality is too great and too large to be exhausted by one particular manifestation. It is intrinsically open to others.

\subsection*{2.8 Jacques Dupuis: A Helpful Dialogue Partner on Speaking of Christ Outside of Jesus}

Perhaps this is the appropriate juncture to resume our dialogue with Jacques Dupuis by examining his treatment of the so-called \textit{Logos asarkos}. We have already visited some of Dupuis’ thought in our first chapter. Following the Second Vatican Council’s \textit{Dei Verbum}, Dupuis notes that Jesus Christ "completes and perfects" revelation, which means that "Jesus Christ is personally the fullness of revelation."\footnote{Jacques Dupuis, \textit{Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue}, 129. See \textit{Dei Verbum}, 4.} However, this supreme character of revelation in Jesus Christ, according to Dupuis, ought to be understood "qualitatively" not "quantitatively."\footnote{Ibid. See \textit{Dei Verbum}, 4.} This insistence that the ‘fullness’ of God's revelation found in Jesus is ‘qualitative’ and not ‘quantitative’ is a key feature in Dupuis’ thought. Based upon this, Dupuis envisions a kind of mutuality between Christianity and other religions, but also an asymmetry. Thus, there is room for a two-way dialogue between religious traditions, but the Incarnation sets the Christian
While it is ‘full’, “this revelation is not ‘absolute’; it necessarily remains limited.” This is due to the intersection of Jesus’ full humanity, which is, in itself, finite, and the incomprehensibility of God, the infinite.

For Dupuis, this leaves space for an “open” theology of revelation. After all, in the Old Testament, God spoke to other nations and even has covenants with them by virtue of Adam and Noah. How is such an ‘open theology’ to be understood when, as *Dei Verbum* states, after the Incarnation, there is no new public revelation? According to *Dei Verbum*:

Then, after speaking in many and varied ways through the prophets, "now at last in these days God has spoken to us in His Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). For He sent His Son, the eternal Word, who enlightens all men, so that He might dwell among men and tell them of the innermost being of God (see John 1:1-18). Jesus Christ, therefore, the Word made flesh, was sent as "a man to men." He "speaks the words of God" (John 3:34), and completes the work of salvation which His Father gave Him to do (see John 5:36; John 17:4). To see Jesus is to see His Father (John 14:9). For this reason Jesus perfected revelation by fulfilling it through his whole work of making Himself present and manifesting Himself: through His words and deeds, His signs and wonders, but especially through His death and glorious resurrection from the dead and final sending of the Spirit of truth. Moreover He confirmed with divine testimony what revelation proclaimed, that God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death, and to raise us up to life eternal.

Thus:

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84 Ibid., 130.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid., 133.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
90 *Dei Verbum*, 4.
The Christian dispensation, therefore, as the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away and we now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Tim. 6:14 and Tit. 2:13). 91

It is the quality of the Incarnation that gives the ‘Christian dispensation’ its unique character. Thus, Dupuis claims that revelation takes place in a variety of ways throughout history. Therefore, since “revelation is progressive and differentiated,” 92 terms like ‘Word of God’, ‘inspiration’, and ‘sacred scripture’ are “analogical concepts” that are applied in different ways at different stages of this process. 93 Thus, there are different forms of revelation. With this in mind, there is a reciprocal complementarity between biblical and nonbiblical revelation. 94 This does not, however, mean that anything is missing from Christian revelation. 95 Jesus is, qualitatively, the fullness of revelation, so there is a “mutual ‘asymmetrical’ complementarity” between the ‘Christian dispensation’ and other religious traditions. 96

For Dupuis, Jesus’ uniqueness is not absolute; rather, it is God’s saving will that is absolute. 97 So, Jesus is uniquely salvific, but, he is thus in such a way as to also be related to all other mediations of the divine. 98 If they are true revelations of the divine, then they are compatible with his revelation. Because of this relation, Dupuis intentionally avoids applying terms like “absoluteness” to both Jesus Christ and Christianity because absoluteness is an attribute of the “Ultimate Reality” and cannot be

91 Ibid.
92 Jacques Dupuis, Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue, 135.
93 Ibid., 134.
94 Ibid., 135.
95 Ibid., 136.
96 Ibid.
98 Ibid., 388.
applied to any finite reality, including the “human existence” of God incarnate. In other words, “that Jesus Christ is ‘universal’ Savior does not make him the ‘Absolute Savior’—who is God himself.”

Dupuis strives to think of the character of Jesus’ salvific efficacy in such a manner that combines both uniqueness and universality. These two elements provide a mutual corrective. Dupuis sees Jesus Christ as having both a “constitutive” uniqueness and universality that is neither relative nor absolute. By this, he means that the Christ event is the “cause” of salvation of all. But such attributes must also be understood relationally. Among other saving figures, Jesus is the one “human face” “in whom God, while remaining unseen, is fully disclosed and revealed.” So Jesus is one among many mediations of the divine, but among these, he has pride of place by virtue of the Incarnation. This must not, however, be considered a disregard of the truth found in other religious traditions:

A constant blemish of the pluralist paradigm consists in imagining that the only concretely possible alternative to its own standpoint is a dogmatic, exclusivist dismissal of other religions. Such a black-or-white dilemma is neither biblically nor theologically warranted. For the New Testament affirmation of Christ the man’s uniqueness as “the way” (Jn 14:6), the “one mediator” (1 Tim 2:5), the “one name” (Acts 4:12) in whom human beings may find salvation does not cancel out faith in the Logos asarkos of which

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99 Ibid., 282.
100 Ibid. Dupuis here notes that “Absolute Savior” is a phrase from Rahner. Above on the same page, he insists that Rahner uses ‘absoluteness’ “perhaps unadvisedly” to refer to Christianity.
101 Ibid., 283.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
the Johannine Prologue speaks…, through whom all people may be saved and in whom all ways may converge.\textsuperscript{106}

With this statement, Dupuis sets forth his vision of the relationship between Christianity and other religious traditions. This relationship is rooted in their sharing of a common \textit{Logos}, the divine \textit{Logos}. This \textit{Logos} is communicated through a variety of mediums. The Christian dispensation is set apart because of its medium: the human nature of Jesus of Nazareth. However, the Incarnation does not preclude the action of the \textit{Logos} outside of its limits.\textsuperscript{107}

Nonetheless, for Dupuis, “no revelation…either before or after Christ can either surpass or equal the one vouchsafed in Jesus Christ, the divine Son incarnate.”\textsuperscript{108} Thus, the Incarnation is a unique medium of the revelation of the \textit{Logos}, uniting the divine and the human inseparably. Despite this uniqueness, there still remains “room for an open theology of revelation and sacred scriptures.”\textsuperscript{109} Dupuis explains how this is possible:

Just as the human consciousness of Jesus as Son could not, by nature, exhaust the mystery of God, and therefore left his revelation of God incomplete, in like manner neither does or can the Christ-event exhaust God’s saving power.\textsuperscript{110}

Furthermore, for Dupuis, there must also remain a certain “distance” between Jesus, as “God’s human icon” and God (the Father).\textsuperscript{111} In other words, “Jesus is not a substitute for God.”\textsuperscript{112} Thus, the Christ-event is the “universal sacrament” of God’s

\textsuperscript{106}{\textit{Ibid.}, 288.}
\textsuperscript{107}{See \textit{Ibid.}, 243. Dupuis declares, “The universal significance of the incarnation of God’s Word notwithstanding, room must be let for his anticipated action in history as well as his enduring influence under other symbols.”}
\textsuperscript{108}{\textit{Ibid.}, 250.}
\textsuperscript{109}{\textit{Ibid.}}
\textsuperscript{110}{\textit{Ibid.}, 298.}
\textsuperscript{111}{\textit{Ibid.}}
\textsuperscript{112}{\textit{Ibid.}}
saving will. However, because of the above-mentioned distance, the Christ-event is not “the only possible expression of that will.” Thus, the divine Logos can act outside of the Incarnation:

In terms of a Trinitarian Christology, this means that the saving action of God through the nonincarnate Logos (Logos asarkos), of whom the Prologue of John’s Gospel states that he “was the light that enlightens every human being by coming into the world” (Jn 1:9), endures after the incarnation of the Logos (Jn 1:14), even as God’s saving action through the universal presence of the Spirit, both before and after the historical event of Jesus Christ, is real.

In this way, the incarnation of the Logos in Jesus of Nazareth remains a constitutively unique salvific act, but other saving figures can also be “enlightened” by the Word or “inspired” by the Spirit. Dupuis’ unique contribution to Christology is this insistence on the action of the Logos asarkos. However, Dupuis is careful to insist that this real divine action does not negate or render irrelevant the Incarnation. In way that recovers much of the wisdom of the classical Antiochene school of Christology and an important facet of the Chalcedonian definition, Dupuis explains the distinction between the Logos ensarkos and the Logos asarkos:

Admittedly, in the mystery of Jesus-the-Christ, the Word cannot be separated from the flesh it has assumed. But, inseparable as the divine Word and Jesus’ human existence may be, they nevertheless remain distinct. While, then, the human action of the Logos ensarkos is the universal sacrament of God’s saving action, it does not exhaust the action of the Logos. A distinct action of the Logos asarkos endures—not, to be sure, as

113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
constituting a distinct economy of salvation, parallel to that realized in the flesh of Christ, but as the expression of God’s superabundant graciousness and absolute freedom.\(^{117}\)

In his later work *Christianity and the Religions*, Dupuis affirms that he wishes to avoid two erroneous tendencies he sees in a ‘Logocentric’ theological paradigm. This paradigm either regards the work of the Word outside of the Incarnation as a completely separate, parallel economy of salvation or retains a single economy of the Word that regards salvation as something understood and accomplished independently of the Incarnation.\(^{118}\) Thus, Dupuis follows the line of thought found in John Paul II’s *Redemptoris Missio*, in which the pontiff insists that we cannot separate Jesus from the Logos.\(^{119}\)

Nonetheless, Dupuis insists that, without losing sight of this unity, we can still speak of an action of the Logos as distinct from the Incarnation. Thus, he distinguishes the action of the “*Verbum incarnandum*” or “the Word-to-be-incarnate,” (before the incarnation) and the “*Verbum incarnatum*,” or the Word incarnate.\(^{120}\) Dupuis points out that there is no reason to believe that this action outside the Incarnation does not persist

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\(^{117}\) *Ibid.*, 299.

\(^{118}\) Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 139.

\(^{119}\) John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 6. Here John Paul II insists: “To introduce any sort of separation between the Word and Jesus Christ is contrary to the Christian faith. St. John clearly states that the Word, who "was in the beginning with God," is the very one who "became flesh" (Jn 1:2, 14). Jesus is the Incarnate Word—a single and indivisible person. One cannot separate Jesus from the Christ or speak of a "Jesus of history" who would differ from the "Christ of faith." The Church acknowledges and confesses Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt 16:16): Christ is none other than Jesus of Nazareth: he is the Word of God made man for the salvation of all." John Paul II here exhibits the same concerns Dupuis articulates regarding the ‘Logocentric’ theological paradigm seen above. The pontiff reminds us here that “although it is legitimate and helpful to consider the various aspects of the mystery of Christ, we must never lose sight of its unity.” Dupuis, it seems, concurs with this sentiment. See Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 139.

\(^{120}\) Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 140. Dupuis, in response to his critics, avoid using the term *Losog asarkos* in this later work, yet the concept is similar. However, ‘*incarnandum*’ implies activity of the Logos that is temporally (historically, economically) prior to the Incarnation. This more precisely captures John’s prologue. He then expands this temporality by questioning whether there is a legitimate reason for limiting this activity to the time that precedes the Incarnation.
into the time after the Incarnation. Dupuis' discussion of the 'Verbum incarnandum' is rooted in the prologue of John’s Gospel. The fourth gospel begins with the activity of the Logos and does not describe the incarnation until the fourteenth verse.\textsuperscript{121} Thus, all of the following is the activity of the ‘Verbum incarnandum’:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God (Jn 1:1-13).

Even the testimony of John the Baptist points toward the pre-incarnate action of the Logos. The light of life comes into being through the ‘Verbum incarnandum’. In addition to its usage in the Johannine prologue, the idea of the action of the Logos outside the Incarnation is rooted in the conciliar developments of the later church. Of particular importance among these is the Chalcedonian insistence up the two distinct, unconfused natures of Christ.\textsuperscript{122} In fact, to reduce and limit the Logos to the incarnation can result in

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 142.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 144.
a form of what Dupuis calls “inverse monophysitism,” in which the divine nature of Christ is reduced to a part of his human nature.\textsuperscript{123} Thus, it is important to remember that even after the Incarnation, the Word remains the Word and “God remains God.”\textsuperscript{124}

Therefore, just as Panikkar does not limit the action of God’s self-revelation to the Incarnation, Dupuis does not limit the action of the Logos to that same event.

Dupuis also finds support for his thesis in several patristic theologians, most notably, in the ‘\textit{Logos spermatikos}’ doctrine of Justin Martyr.\textsuperscript{125} For Justin, all truth finds its source in the Logos. Therefore, any time the philosophers of old (it is chiefly the philosophers treasured by his pagan interlocutors that Justin has in mind) stumbled upon any elements of the truth, it represents a ‘seed’ of the full truth, sown by the \textit{Logos}.\textsuperscript{126}

So, for Justin, the \textit{Logos} acts outside of the Incarnation, and even outside of the Judeo-Christian economy. However, the ‘seed’ of the truth sown by the Logos-sower, does not overtake the fullness of the Word encountered in the Incarnation.\textsuperscript{127}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[123] \textit{Ibid.}
\item[124] \textit{Ibid.}
\item[125] \textit{Ibid.}, 147. See Raimon Panikkar, \textit{The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany, Revised and Enlarged Edition}, 92. Panikkar picks up the ‘seed’ analogy: “As for the analogy of seed and fruit, if ‘Christianity’ is a name for the fullness of religion, for the realization of the theandric mystery, then Hinduism as a concrete religion may indeed give rise to it, in which case the seed-fruit analogy would have a certain validity.”
\item[126] See Justin Martyr, \textit{First Apology}, Transl. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, In \textit{The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. I The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus}, Ed. Philip Schaff, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1886), XLIV. Justin states, “And whatever both philosophers and poets have said concerning the immortality of the soul, or punishments after death, or contemplation of things heavenly, or doctrines of the like kind, they have received such suggestions from the prophets as have enabled them to understand and interpret these things. And hence there seem to be seeds of truth among all men; but they are charged with not accurately understanding [the truth] when they assert contradictories.”
\item[127] See Justin Martyr, \textit{Second Apology}, Transl. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, In \textit{The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. I The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus}, Ed. Philip Schaff, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1886), XIII. Justin says, “For I myself, when I discovered the wicked disguise which the evil spirits had thrown around the divine doctrines of the Christians, to turn aside others from joining them, laughed both at those who framed these falsehoods, and at the disguise itself; and at popular opinion; and I confess that I both boast and with all my strength strive to be found a Christian; not because the teachings of Plato are different from those of Christ, but because they are not in all respects similar, as neither are those of the others, Stoics, and poets, and historians. For each man spoke well in proportion to the share he had of the spermatic word, seeing what was related to it. But they who
\end{footnotes}
Thus, for Justin, there is a distinction between the seed and the reality of the
Word, itself. Nonetheless, to use Justin’s imagery, a seed has the potential to grow into
the Word. Furthermore, and more to the point, the philosophers possess their own
authentic experience of the activity of the Logos, apart from the Incarnation. Toward
this end, Dupuis highlights four major points in Justin’s thought. First, there are three
kinds of religious knowledge: the kind possessed by the nations, the kind that is the fruit
of God’s covenant with Israel, and Christian religious knowledge, rooted in the
Incarnation. Secondly, the Logos is the ‘unique source’ of all of these kinds of religious
knowledge. Third, the difference between these lies in the fact that they represent various
kinds of participation in the Logos. And finally, any one who has known the Truth and
lived righteousness are all, in a way, Christians because they have partaken in the Logos.
Thus, these three forms of religious knowledge are really all a piece of the same
revelation of the Logos, celebrated in Christianity. The Incarnation, then, represents the
fullness of this differentiated revelation:

The key to the whole system is in differentiated participation of the Logos: all people
share in him, but while others have received from him partially (apo merous), we to
whom the Logos revealed himself in his incarnation have been blessed with his complete
manifestation.

contradict themselves on the more important points appear not to have possessed the heavenly wisdom, and
the knowledge which cannot be spoken against. Whatever things were rightly said among all men, are the
property of us Christians. For next to God, we worship and love the Word who is from the unbegotten and
ineffable God, since also He became man for our sakes, that, becoming a partaker of our sufferings, He
might also bring us healing. For all the writers were able to see realities darkly through the sowing of the
implanted word that was in them. For the seed and imitation imparted according to capacity is one thing,
and quite another is the thing itself, of which there is the participation and imitation according to the grace
which is from Him.”

Nonetheless the “seed of Logos” (sperma tou logou) is planted in them all by the “Logos-sower” (spermatikos logos).\textsuperscript{131} Dupuis points out that this is the insight that is at the root of Rahner’s discussion of ‘anonymous Christianity’.\textsuperscript{132}

Another patristic source for Dupuis is Irenaeus of Lyons. For Irenaeus, the relationship of the Logos to the Father centers on visibility. Thus, the “revealing Logos” makes the Father visible.\textsuperscript{133} For Irenaeus, “Visibile Patris Filius,” that is, “the Son is the visible of the Father.”\textsuperscript{134} It follows from this that “all divine manifestations are Logos-manifestations.”\textsuperscript{135} The climax of these manifestations is found in the incarnation. In this way, “the historical Christ is a sacramental Logophany.”\textsuperscript{136} Thus, the Incarnation holds a pride of place in the economy of divine manifestation. For Irenaeus, in fact, the Incarnation universalizes this visibility.\textsuperscript{137}

Dupuis completes his triad of patristic theologians emphasizing the activity of the Logos outside the Incarnation by reference to Clement of Alexandria. According to Dupuis, Clement’s contribution is emphasizing the word “Logos” using it more for Christ than “Son” which his predecessors used primarily. Clement essentially concurs with Irenaeus’ vision of the Logos making the Father manifest. The difference between Clement and the other two thinkers lies in Clement’s insistence that there are two levels.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{132} Jacques Dupuis, \textit{Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue}, 149. See also Jacques Dupuis, \textit{Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism}, 60. Here Dupuis points out, “Christianity exists beyond its visible boundaries and prior to its historical appearing, but up to the incarnation, it is fragmentary, hidden, even mixed with error, and ambiguous. It may be asked if this is not, but for the expression, the theology of ‘anonymous Christianity’, even eighteen centuries before K. Rahner.”\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 150.
\textsuperscript{134} Jacques Dupuis, \textit{Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism}, 61.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 66.
\textsuperscript{137} Irenaeus of Lyons, \textit{The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching}, Transl. Armitage Robinson, (New York, NY: The Macmillan Co., 1920), 92. Irenaeus says, “And that He should become visible amongst us—for the Son of God became Son of man—and be found of us who before had no knowledge (of Him), the Word Himself says thus in Isaiah: I became manifest to them that sought me not; I was found of them that asked not for me. I said, Behold, here am I, to a race that called not on my name.” See Is 65:1. 

83
of knowledge of the Father: one level that can be reached through human logos, reason and the other that is the gift of the divine Logos and otherwise inaccessible.\textsuperscript{138} Thus, for Clement, the human logos can get to "elementary knowledge of God" on its own, but the only "personal action of the Logos" reveals "God's secrets."\textsuperscript{139} For Clement, this activity of the Logos extends beyond the Judeo-Christian tradition into the pagan world, which possessed its own ‘prophets’.\textsuperscript{140} Thus, for Clement, “philosophy comes from God; it constitutes for the Greek world a divine economy, parallel, if not in all things equal, to the Jewish economy of the Law.”\textsuperscript{141} This revelatory economy is “a means of salvation” to the Greeks.\textsuperscript{142} Thus, unlike the much later neo-scholastic tradition, the insights of the Greek philosophical tradition are not seen in Clement’s theological vision as merely a ‘natural’ form of knowledge of God as opposed to the ‘supernatural’ economy found in Christianity. Rather, they are gifts of the Logos.

In this same way, Clement also explicitly affirms the truth found in both Buddhism and Hinduism.\textsuperscript{143} Using Pauline concepts, Clement portrays this pre-Christian distribution of the Word as a ‘schoolmaster’, functioning in the same way as the Law for the people of Israel, preparing those that encounter it for the Christian dispensation.\textsuperscript{144} This concept has been used in the later Christian tradition to disparage other religious traditions as mere ‘preparation for the Gospel’ and not as ‘logophanies’ in their own way.

In the later western tradition, the sense of the ‘seeds of the Logos’ in other traditions was lost, being reduced to natural human intellectual capacity, effectively

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\item\textsuperscript{138} Jacques Dupuis, Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism, 66.
\item\textsuperscript{139} Jacques Dupuis, Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue, 153.
\item\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{141} Jacques Dupuis, Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism, 67.
\item\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{143} Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, I, 15. See Jacques Dupuis, Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue, 153.
\item\textsuperscript{144} Jacques Dupuis, Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue, 155.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
placing all non-Christian forms of knowledge of the divine in the realm of ‘natural theology’. For Catholics, this sensibility was not fully recovered until the Second Vatican Council.145

As we have seen, for Dupuis, the presence of the Logos in other religious tradition does not conflict with or negate “the unique salvific meaning of the historical event of Jesus Christ.”146 The universal action of the Logos and the particular action of the Incarnation “are neither identified nor separated; they remain, however, distinct.”147 In this way, for Dupuis, the ‘Christ-event’ remains "constitutive" of salvation.148 In the Incarnation, God is "once for always" (ephapax) inserted into human history and even personally united to each human.149 In the Incarnation, "the Word was undoubtedly manifested in Jesus Christ in the most complete way possible to conceive, and therefore in the way best adapted to our human nature."150

However, while not all "Logophanies" are of the same value, those outside of the Incarnation are not merely "stepping stones" but are really and truly the "self-giving" of God.151 To demonstrate this, Dupuis points out that "from a Christian viewpoint, God—and God alone—saves."152 Thus, it is important to remember that even in the New

145 See Ad Gentes, 11. For instance, while discussing the missionary activity of Christians, the decree on the missionary activity of the Church, Ad Gentes, states, “In order that they may be able to bear more fruitful witness to Christ, let them be joined to those men by esteem and love; let them acknowledge themselves to be members of the group of men among whom they live; let them share in cultural and social life by the various undertakings and enterprises of human living; let them be familiar with their national and religious traditions; let them gladly and reverently lay bare the seeds of the Word which lie hidden among their fellows.”
146 Jacques Dupuis, Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue, 156.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid., 157.
149 Ibid., 158. See Gaudium et Spes, 22.
150 Ibid., 159.
151 Ibid., 160.
Testament, the "principal cause" of salvation is the Father. Consequently, "it is an abuse of language, then, to say that religions save or even that Christianity saves." When it comes to the particulars, namely how these universal ‘Logophanies’ relate to the divine plan laid out in the Incarnation, Dupuis suggests an approach of "theological apophatism." In the face of the incomprehensibility of the Divine Mystery, then, “it behooves theology to be reserved and humble.”

Following the 1997 publication of Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism, Dupuis drew the ire of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) because:

- his book contained notable ambiguities and difficulties on important doctrinal points,
- which could lead a reader to erroneous or harmful opinions. These points concerned the interpretation of the sole and universal salvific mediation of Christ, the unicity and completeness of Christ’s revelation, the universal salvific action of the Holy Spirit, the orientation of all people to the Church, and the value and significance of the salvific function of other religions.

In the Postscript of 2002’s Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue, Dupuis reacts to the 2001 notification on his book, the theological approach of which, he connects to the CDF’s 2000 Declaration Dominus Iesus. For Dupuis, the
CDF approach is not illegitimate, but "not necessarily exclusive," by which he means that it remains open to approaches such as the Trinitarian approach that he and Panikkar propose. He cautions that:

Absolute and exclusive statements about Christ and Christianity, which would claim the exclusive possession of God's self-disclosure or of the means of salvation, would distort and contradict the Christian message and the Christian image.

This ‘message’ is that of Trinitarian love. Thus, "the plurality of religions, then, finds its ultimate source in a God who is Love and communication." He boldly cautions the CDF on the dangers of intimating a connotation that does not correspond to the fullness of the denotation of the faith:

I am deeply convinced that the teaching church would do well, in keeping with its oft-stated desire and claim to reproduce in its own life and practice the divine approach in the dialogue of salvation, to abstain from any ways of proposing the Christian faith which may imply insensitive or exclusivist evaluations of the others.

In essence, Dupuis is attempting to bridge two seemingly irreconcilable worldviews: one that regards Christ as uniquely salvifically efficacious and one that regards the possibility of salvation outside the so-called ‘Christian dispensation’. Panikkar (perhaps prudently) steers clear of this controversy by speaking in a new way of Christ’s activity in the world outside of Christianity, but avoiding any discussion of the unique salvific efficacy of the Incarnation. Dupuis, in many ways does something similar. However, as implied in his ‘friendly recommendation’ to the CDF above,
Dupuis takes greater pains to demonstrate that this is a strain of thought that is really an integral part of Christian tradition already.

Some other critics argue that Dupuis emphasizes universality to the detriment of particularity. For instance, Nadia Delicata criticizes Dupuis for underemphasizing the particular actions of Christ, namely Christ’s death and resurrection. Giving due attention to such particularities highlight the primacy of orthopraxis, which precedes and grounds orthodoxy. It is through this activity, Delicata argues, that the divinity of Christ is revealed. While this does not seem to be Dupuis’ intent, this oversight does lend a bit of deficiency to Dupuis’ thought. This critique is valid for Panikkar as well. As we have seen, Panikkar strives to emphasize that the universal, cosmotheandric character of all of reality is only revealed through christophanic particularity. Yet, in much the same way, he does not elaborate extensively on any particular christophany, including the Incarnation and the incarnate actions of Jesus the Christ. Like its analogue in Dupuis’ thought, this does not negate the validity of Panikkar’s theology, but it does leave Panikkar’s theological reader to desire ‘more’.

Jon Paul Sydnor similarly contends that Dupuis:

seems to presume a highly incarnational Christology insofar as he advocates an implicit moral exemplar atonement theory. That is, throughout his work Dupuis suggests that salvation occurs through the encounter with agapic love. Nowhere does he imply that salvation also occurs through Christ’s substitutionary atonement or satisfaction of human

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indebtedness. This implicit move is highly contentious and warrants explicit discussion.165

Sydnor’s contention might at first seem somewhat strange. After all, many theologians today try to avoid espousing some form of Anselmian atonement theory. Yet, Sydnor’s criticism points to a danger that is implicit in any Christology. This danger is that of privileging some scriptural texts over others. While privileging the texts that emphasize the salvific efficacy of the incarnation (See, for instance, Jn 1 and 2 Pt 1:3-4), we sometimes choose to ignore those that discuss salvation using ‘ransom’ imagery (See, for instance, Mark 10:45; 1 Tim 5-6; Rom 6:23). With the wide diversity of scriptural Christological images, we must realize that any systematization of Christology is also a reduction, not only of the incarnate reality that is Jesus the Christ, but also of the primary sources that provide us with information about Jesus Christ. However, as we have seen, Dupuis’ theology is well grounded in patristic thought. And, given the above-mentioned variety of Christological images in scripture, it is inevitable that one will have to choose one or a few of these as a point of emphasis. On a side note, we should also mention that, in this criticism of Dupuis, one catches a glimpse of another idea (perhaps peripheral to the critique itself) is also a quite valid contention: one of the dangers in any soteriology that emphasizes praxis is that of Pelagianism. This danger is also present for Panikkar, and we will address it in our final chapter.

Sydnor does not take this route, however, yet he is critical of Dupuis’ emphasis on agape. Dupuis declares, “The Gospel…requires that love be universal.”166 He continues, “Love of God and of fellow humans go hand in hand; it is by that latter love that people

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shall be judged.”167 In response to this, Sydnor contends, “The presentation is perhaps contradictory. Salvation is universal; those who are saved practise agape and by that practice shall be judged. But we notice that not all practise agape; therefore all are not saved. So salvation cannot be universal.”168 What Sydnor is pointing to here is, at heart, a matter of semantic precision. Salvation is extended to all and it is through agape that this offer of salvation is accepted. However, it does not seem that Dupuis is insisting that all salvation is in fact universal, but that salvation can be universally accessible. Dupuis is not advocating a doctrine of *apokatastasis* as a necessity, but rather a vision that sees *apokatastasis* as possible.

Like many theologians with a pluralist bent, Dupuis is frequently maligned for failing to give due respect to the differences between religious traditions. Sydnor is concerned that Dupuis’ focus on *agape* leads him to “skirt over essential differences between the religions” and to try to “find unity through ethical analysis.”169 However, he contends, “a religion is more than an ethic.”170 He points to Dupuis’ criticism of John Hick, in which Dupuis insists that the adherents of particular religious traditions may be offended to see their “divine personae or impersonae reduced to manifestations of the Real *an sich*.”171 With this in mind, Sydnor charges, “But it is also doubtful that any divine personae or impersonae would want their religion, every aspect of which touches their being, reduced to ethics.”172 This results in a religious tradition’s “reduction to one

169Ibid., 68.
170 Ibid.
of its parts.”\textsuperscript{173} This leads Sydnor to conclude that, “As soon as someone who adopts Dupuis' theology encounters another religion at a deep level (where the differences become both consequential and irreconcilable) Dupuis’ framework will fall apart.”\textsuperscript{174}

However, it seems that Sydnor himself holds a reductionist view of agapic love. Agapic love is not merely an ethical notion. Scriptural texts such as the first Johannine epistle give a deeper view of agape: “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love (1Jn 4:7-8).” In this view, the ethical imperative of agape that leads to orthopraxis is rooted in the nature of God. In fact, this text has been frequently used as a basis for Trinitarian theology. The relationship of agapic communion is what God is, and, consequently, salvation, which is a share in the Divine life, is also agapic. Thus, it does not seem that Dupuis’ emphasis on agapic love is, in the end, reductionist. Rather, it is a concept that is pregnant with potential.

More importantly for the task at hand, one of the more frequent criticisms of Dupuis is aimed at his Christology, in particular his utilization of the notions the Logos asarkos and the Logos ensarkos, which we examined above. Many critics are concerned that Dupuis divides the Logos into two separate entities. This, of course, would have serious repercussions. The most serious of these would be the fact that it would result in the positing of a fourth hypostasis in the Trinity. Gerald O’Collins defends his friend against this charge:

Critics have alleged that he separates the Word of God and the man Jesus into two separate subjects, but they have never produced chapter and verse to back up this accusation. What Dupuis has consistently argued is that within the one person of Jesus

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., 70.
Christ we must distinguish the operations of his (uncreated) divine nature and his (created) human nature. Here Dupuis lines up with Thomas Aquinas, who championed the oneness of Christ's person but also had to recognize that Christ's "divine nature infinitely transcends his human nature (divina natura in infinitum humanam excedit)"

(*Summa contra gentiles* chap. 4, 35, 8).\(^{175}\)

O’Collins reminds us here that Dupuis’ theology is thoroughly Chalcedonian. Too often Chalcedon is interpreted as having an Alexandrian tone, emphasizing the unity of the two nature of Christ. However, it often forgotten that the definition that was reached at Chalcedon represents a compromise between the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools. While the two natures of Christ are inseparably united in the incarnation, they are also unconfused. Thus, the human nature of Christ is completely human with all the limitations that entails. O’Collins explains that Dupuis “is sensitive to the limits involved in the historical Incarnation of the Son of God, the created character of the humanity he assumed, and the specific quality of his redemptive, human actions.”\(^{176}\)

This, however, does not mean that Dupuis wants to simply “reduce Christ to being one Savior among many.”\(^{177}\) This, as we have seen, is the root of Dupuis’ ‘mutual, but asymmetrical’ dialogue. Citing Avery Dulles, O’Collins explains that our knowledge of the divine received through Jesus Christ is “neither ‘absolute’ nor ‘definitive’.”\(^{178}\) To “claim otherwise” is to “ignore the way the language of revelation in the New Testament is strongly angled toward the future (e.g. 1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 John 3:2).”\(^{179}\)


\(^{176}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{177}\) *Ibid.*


\(^{179}\) *Ibid.*
It is for this reason that Dupuis acknowledges the action of the Logos asarkos. However, because of the above-mentioned misunderstanding of this distinction as a bifurcation of the Logos and not a distinction in the acts of the Logos, Dupuis revises his language in his later work. O’Collins explains:

In *Toward a Christian Theology* Dupuis distinguished the Logos asarkos (the Word of God *in himself* and not, or not yet incarnated) from the Logos ensarkos (the Word of God precisely as incarnated). Dupuis was surprised to find this distinction leading a few readers to conclude that he was “doubling” the Logos, as if he were holding that there were four persons in God! To avoid such odd misunderstandings, in *Christianity and the Religions* he has dropped the terms asarkos and ensarkos. However, he continues to distinguish between the Word of God *in se* and the Word of God precisely as incarnated.180

O’Collins here emphasizes the importance of making accurate “terminological distinctions”.181 After all, “Those who fail ‘to watch their language’” can wind up attributing “an eternal, real (and not just an intentional) existence to the human being created and assumed by the Word of God at a certain point in the history of the world, as well as appearing to cast doubt upon the loving freedom of the Word of God in becoming incarnate for our salvation.”182 Simply put, Dupuis’ theological schema is characterized by intricate nuance. Failure to attend to such nuances can lead to misinterpretation of his thought.

O’Collins, Dupuis’ advocate throughout his turmoil with Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, gives a thorough defense of Dupuis’ theology, citing the fact that Dupuis “has never maintained… a personal distinction between the eternal Word of God

and the historical Jesus of Nazareth.”\textsuperscript{183} Rather, “He has always upheld firmly that the Word of God and Jesus are personally identical.”\textsuperscript{184} Simply claiming that the activity of the Word extends beyond the Incarnation does not imply that it is not the same Word that is active both in and beyond the Incarnation. To interpret such a notion as such is to misunderstand the nature of the Incarnation. It is for this reason that “Dupuis insists on distinguishing (but never separating) the two natures of Christ and their respective operations.”\textsuperscript{185} As we have already pointed out, this is the message of the Council of Chalcedon. O’Collins also cites the Third Council of Constantinople (of 680 or 681 CE), which “distinguished not only between the two wills of Christ but also between the ‘energies and operation’ of the two natures,” to defend Dupuis.\textsuperscript{186} It is important to remember that “before and after the Incarnation, the Word of God remains divinely present and active everywhere, and has not been somehow “eclipsed” by the assumption of a human nature.”\textsuperscript{187} Thus, failure to acknowledge Dupuis’ distinction between the activity of the Logos \textit{ensarkos} and \textit{asarkos} threatens the integrity of both the divinity and the humanity of Christ. If there is no possible distinction between these activities, Christ becomes some amalgam of divinity and humanity that is actually neither of the two. We must remember that Christ is both completely human and completely divine or else we miss the wisdom of the Christian tradition.

Along these same lines, O’Collins points out that it is also incorrect to read Dupuis’ distinction as implying that there are two different economies of salvation

\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., 393.  
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., 394.  
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid.
operative in human history.\textsuperscript{188} This is one of the criticisms found in the ‘Notification’ on *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The ‘Notification’ warns, “It is therefore contrary to the Catholic faith not only to posit a separation between the Word and Jesus, or between the Word’s salvific activity and that of Jesus, but also to maintain that there is a salvific activity of the Word as such in his divinity, independent of the humanity of the Incarnate Word.”\textsuperscript{189} Interestingly, however, (possibly due to O’Collins’ staunch advocacy for Dupuis), the ‘Notification’ never actually accuses Dupuis of making any such claims. O’Collins explains Dupuis’ position, saying, “All people are called to share finally in the one divine life of the Trinity, through the gracious activity (both human and divine) of the incarnate Son of God and the divine activity of the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{190} He also points out that, for Dupuis, the Word is not the only divine *hypostasis* that transcends superficially constructed boundaries. For instance, “he also emphasizes that the action of the Spirit is not confined to acting in and through the risen humanity of Christ. Before the Incarnation, the Spirit acted in a revelatory and salvific fashion.”\textsuperscript{191}

These criticisms of Dupuis are similar to the ones we have seen leveled against Panikkar. The essential element to understand here is that both Panikkar and Dupuis are appealing to an important, but often underappreciated, facet of the Christian tradition. The activity of the logos outside (but never separate from) the Incarnation demonstrates the universality of God’s salvific will. The divine is not the sole property of Christians or Christianity (or anyone or anything, for that matter). If one is attuned to the nuance of

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\textsuperscript{188} *Ibid.*, 394-395.
\textsuperscript{190} *Ibid.*, 394.
Dupuis’ Christology, then one can also appreciate Panikkar’s christophanic theology because they share a common ground in the Christian tradition and a similar methodology.

While their approaches are distinct, both Panikkar and Dupuis agree that the key to interreligious dialogue lies in emphasizing the unity of God’s salvific economy. Dupuis, basing his approach on the Logophanic theologies of the Johannine Gospel, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, and Clement of Alexandria, locates this salvific unity in the activity of the Logos, the same Logos that became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. While he also uses the term ‘Christ’ to speak of this divine activity outside of the Incarnation, it seems that Dupuis prefers the language of ‘Logos’. To describe this same activity, Panikkar, on the other hand, does seem to prefer to use the term ‘Christ’, which, as we have seen, for him, has a more universal scope than the Incarnation. Consequently, for Panikkar, “whatever God does ad extra happens through Christ.” Therefore, he can speak of the ‘unknown’ activity of Christ in Hinduism and Buddhism. Like Dupuis, Panikkar insists that this is not a novelty, but the essence of the Christian understanding of the activity of Christ. Thus, he says, “I am only reflecting the Christian tradition if I consider the symbol Christ as that symbol which ‘recapitulates’ in itself the Real in its totality, created and uncreated.” Dupuis, however, illustrates this connection with the Christian tradition much more overtly than Panikkar. Dupuis’ patristic sources, however, help us to locate Panikkar’s thought within the Christian

192 For instance, Dupuis insists that ‘Christ’ is a powerful symbol that goes beyond the historical Jesus. Furthermore, Christ can be called by other names, including Rama, Krishna, and Ishvara. See Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 57.
194 Ibid., 28.
tradition. The “theology of history” proposed by Justin, Irenaeus, and Clement, by which all “history becomes salvation history, inasmuch as through it God progressively manifests himself and communicates with humankind,” which has been explicitly recalled by Dupuis, serves to support Panikkar’s claim that Christ is active throughout history, even in the history other religious traditions. Thus, for Panikkar (and for Dupuis), God’s salvific activity throughout all of history is one. Panikkar uses Hindu terminology to bring this forth, by saying that “the presence of Christ in Hinduism in the above-mentioned sense makes of Hinduism, in the eyes of the Christian, not another dharma, but a part or stage of the sanātana dharma that Christianity also claims to be.”

Nevertheless, Panikkar contrasts with Dupuis in two very important ways: (1) his terminological usage of the term ‘Christ’ to refer to salvific activity outside of the Incarnation, which we have discussed, and, perhaps more glaringly, (2) his avoidance of any terms that may be construed as Christian triumphalism. This becomes even more pronounced in Panikkar’s later thought, as a comparison of the original version of The Unknown Christ of Hinduism with the revised version thereof would reveal. Dupuis believes, on the one hand, that reiterating Christian elements that might be construed by some as divisive, like the salvifically constitutive function of Jesus, does not hurt, but only helps interreligious dialogue. He opposes any attempt to undermine this because, he insists, "to conceal differences and possible contradictions would amount to cheating and would actually end by depriving the dialogue of its object." This object can be

196 Raimon Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany, Revised and Enlarged Edition, 50. The term dharma means ‘law’ in Sanskrit, while the term sanātana dharma refers to the ‘eternal law’.
197 Jacques Dupuis, Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue, 229.
described as "understanding in difference." Thus, for Dupuis, the central issue in interreligious dialogue is honesty. Therefore, we must openly and honestly face the issues that divide us.

Panikkar, on the contrary, envisions such dialogue as centering on an authentic encounter of religious traditions with each other. In this encounter, he recognizes the universal presence Christ. Panikkar avoids any language that might seem like Christian triumphalism because, in his mind, real dialogue (intrareligious dialogue) also requires openness to mutual correction. We will discuss this ‘intrareligious dialogue’ in greater detail in our fourth chapter. Furthermore, Panikkar sees no need to speak of Christianity in triumphalist terms because Christ is present throughout all of history. It is the encounter with Christ that is salvific, not, per se, the encounter with Christianity, which is understood best as a means that makes this encounter with Christ possible.

2.9 Panikkar Accounts for the Connection between Christ and Jesus of Nazareth

This universalizing of Christ does not always keep Panikkar clear of criticism. The delicate balance on the spectrum comprised by the poles of universality and particularity is often disputed, although, as we have seen above, for Panikkar this polarity is often a false one. Gavin D’Costa, who understands Panikkar’s Christology in terms of a ‘Logos Christology’, based upon the intrinsic connection it has with the thinkers that Dupuis’ theology brings to explicit focus, finds Panikkar’s universalizing tendency underwhelming:

Others like Raimundo Panikkar have sought to rehabilitate a Logos Christology.

However, Panikkar makes the Logos a universal revelation, of which Jesus Christ is one

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198 Ibid.
199 We do not mean to imply here that Dupuis would not concur with this sentiment. See, for instance, Ibid., 52.
instantiation, and then reads other revelations in like manner. The prioritizing of the economy of salvation in the particularity of Adam and Eve and Jesus and Mary’s history is bypassed, and the series of relations specified in the Conciliar documents is made subordinate to a higher controlling idea of “Logos.”

D’Costa’s very valid concern is that Panikkar’s approach de-particularizes the salvific revelation found in the Incarnation, thereby relativizing it. D’Costa believes that the particularities that surround Jesus of Nazareth are an essential element of God’s economy of salvation. However, Panikkar, while discussing the tendency of many to articulate an understanding of Christology nearly exclusively in the context of a search for the ‘historical Jesus’, discusses the irony that this Incarnational Christophany seems to constantly elude our conceptual grasp. For example:

The more we make Jesus a Jew—as a certain contemporary current wishes to do for the commendable reason of eradicating the Christian shame of anti-Semitism—the more clearly does his distancing himself from Jewish orthodoxy emerge.

Even discussion of the particularities of Jesus, which is often based upon reconstructed generalizations of common tendencies of the groups under which Jesus can be categorized, fails to grasp the individual Jesus. Furthermore, limiting God’s saving activity to the historically particular Jesus of Nazareth violates the very logic of the Incarnation itself. The Incarnation is an extension of God’s saving economy, not a limitation thereupon.

But, D’Costa is not the only critic of Panikkar’s thought. Like D’Costa, Velti-Matti Kärkkäinen sees Panikkar’s ‘cosmic’ Christology as problematic. He asserts that “while there is not necessarily a compelling reason to make a total identification between

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201 Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany: The Fullness of Man*, 49.
Jesus and Christ, neither is it possible to make the kind of separation that Panikkar’s 1981 [revised] edition of the *Unknown Christ of Hinduism* posits.” He prefers, instead, the approach of the original 1964 edition, insisting that it is “healthier theologically” because it “still holds on to the uniqueness of Jesus when defining Christ, while not totally exhausting all that Christ is.”

Kärkkäinen explains:

> The main problem of the later approach is that he [Panikkar] expands the Christic principle—as he calls it—beyond the figure of Jesus of Nazareth, which has serious implications for the doctrine of the Trinity. According to Christian theology, one does not have access to Christ, at least in the biblical-historical sense, apart from the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Therefore, he ties Panikkar’s approach to several other pluralistic theologies and their problems:

Panikkar’s Christology and thus Trinitarianism seems to share the typical weaknesses of “theocentric” approaches to the theology of religions, according to which the significance of Jesus is to be diminished in favor of the concept of God.

Furthermore, he sees this ‘cosmic’ Christology of Panikkar as being in conflict with his Advaitic-Trinitarian approach:

Especially in light of the fact that in Panikkar’s Trinitarian doctrine the Son is the whole focus of deity, his pluralistically constructed Christology creates internal contradiction. Sometimes Panikkar seems to support his Christology with reference to the “mystical” or “Mystery,” or to the idea of advaitism or nonduality, but the concrete meaning intended by this kind of appeal is vague.

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203 Ibid.
204 Ibid.
205 Ibid.
206 Ibid., 343.
Thus, Kärkkäinen thinks that Panikkar’s Trinitarianism is too christocentric. On the contrary, “in the Christian tradition the Son is not the focus.”\(^{207}\) Rather, the Son is the way to the Father. It seems, however, that this is exactly what Panikkar’s Trinitarianism is all about: the Son making manifest the Unknown Father. With regard to Kärkkäinen’s other assertion that Panikkar’s later thought is at odds with the Christian tradition because, in it, he asserts that you can have access to Christ outside of Jesus of Nazareth, one need only look at the elements of the tradition that Dupuis brings to explicit focus (John’s Gospel, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, and Clement of Alexandria). It seems, quite contrary to Kärkkäinen’s analysis, that access to Christ outside of the Incarnation has been a part of Christianity since its early years.

This access to Christ outside the Incarnation, furthermore, need not render the Incarnation meaningless. While discussing how his unique approach (christophany) transcends traditional Christology, Panikkar takes pains to indicate that “christophany does not contest the historicity of Jesus.”\(^{208}\) Rather, “it merely affirms that history is not the only dimension of the real and that Christ’s reality is thus not exhausted with Jesus’ historicity.”\(^{209}\) Panikkar maintains that salvation comes through believing that “Jesus is the Christ.”\(^{210}\) This assertion, however, is not a theory or a concept; rather, it is a “confession” or “an existential affirmation.”\(^{211}\) Thus, “Jesus is Christ, but Christ cannot be identified completely with Jesus of Nazareth.”\(^{212}\) Panikkar uses example of iconography to help clarify this. The icon manifests that of which it is an icon. It is not

\(^{207}\) Ibid., 344.
\(^{208}\) Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany: The Fullness of Man*, 162.
\(^{209}\) Ibid.
\(^{210}\) Ibid., 149.
\(^{211}\) Ibid.
\(^{212}\) Ibid., 150
simply identified with that ‘original’, yet it is not completely distinct from it either.  

So, “In Panikkar’s thinking, Jesus does not exhaust the mystery of Christ.”

This leads us into a discussion of the complex issues of identity. As Jyri Komulainen insists, identity lies at the root of Panikkar’s Christology:

It seems that his Christology rests upon the following fundamental theological basis: the role of Jesus of Nazareth is confined to the background, and to providing a starting-point for Christian consciousness, whereas Christ holds the pivotal theological position.

Thus, according to Komulainen, Panikkar draws a clear “distinction between the personal identification of Jesus of Nazareth and the personal identity of Christ.” Only the latter constitutes Panikkar’s Christology. It doesn’t seem, however, that Panikkar’s distinction is as rigid as Komulainen supposes. Rather, as we have mentioned, Jesus can be identified with the Christ, yet Christ is not limited to Jesus of Nazareth. This issue of Christ’s identity in Panikkar is a complex one. Consequently, we will resume this discussion in our fourth chapter, in which we will discuss both the identity of Christ and Christian identity.

Another issue that we should raise is the contrast between the particularity of the term ‘Christ’ itself and Panikkar’s universalized usage. ‘Christ’ is derived from Χριστος, the Greek translation of the Hebrew messiah, meaning ‘anointed’. This concept belongs to a particular context and can really only be understood as a part of the messianic expectations latent in first century Judaism. Does Panikkar’s universalization of this term, which is really an extension of what much of the later, particularly conciliar,

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213 Ibid., 151.
215 Ibid., 137. Komulainen points out that Panikkar occasionally ignores his own words in this regard.
217 Ibid., 139.
Christian tradition has done with it, further detach it from the context in which it derives meaning, effectively making it a meaningless term?

For reasons such as this, it may be advisable to speak in terms similar to those that Dupuis uses: *Logos asarkos*, etc. While *Logos* also has a particular context from which it derives meaning, within that context, it already has a universalized application. As we have seen, this also has the benefit of being rooted in earlier proponents of the Christian tradition, such as Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, and Clement of Alexandria. However, on the other hand, one could also argue that the purpose of the revelation of Christ Jesus is precisely to universalize the faith that was previously particularized in Israel. Therefore, Panikkar’s ‘cosmic’ Christ is an entirely appropriate and faithful interpretation of the Christian tradition’s use of the term ‘Christ’.

**2.10 Conclusion**

For Panikkar, the term ‘Christ’ denotes a principle that extends beyond the concrete manifestation of Jesus of Nazareth. Christ, rather, represents the fulfillment of the universal longing communion that is found in all of reality. As Panikkar’s thought developed over time, the scope of the concept of ‘Christ’ expanded. What is essential for Panikkar and serves as the condition for the possibility of dialogue between religions is the universal presence and efficaciousness of Christ. Christ is present wherever cosmotheandric union is present. As we have seen, this union underlies all of reality for Panikkar. Thus, this communion is always already present. Yet, there are many and varied concrete expressions and manifestations of this unity, which as we shall see in our final chapter, tend toward the realization of this union (soteriology).
These manifestations are what Panikkar calls ‘christophanies’. It is important to note that, while the incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth is somewhat privileged in Panikkar’s thought, in that he prefers to use the Christian terminology, this does not imply any exclusion or triumphalism. So, Jesus is a christophany, but he need not be the only christophany. A christophany manifests and effects the communion that is always already present, yet unrealized in all of reality. Therefore, just as the Trinity is not the property of Christianity, neither is Christ. Toward this end, Jacques Dupuis’ work on the concept of the Logos asarkos helps to demonstrate that Panikkar’s position is actually firmly within the Christian tradition in this regard. In what follows, we shall leave these considerations momentarily and examine Panikkar’s thoughts on the concept of identity.
Chapter 3

Identity

In our previous chapters, we have examined Panikkar’s cosmotheandric worldview and his usage of the term ‘Christ’. We have seen the mystical unity that Panikkar recognizes as binding all of reality together. We have also seen its explicit manifestation in various ‘Christophanies’, with particular emphasis on the one we find in Jesus of Nazareth. We shall return to examine some of the concerns that we have already raised regarding the identity of Christ in our next chapter. But before we do so, let us first determine what the term ‘identity’ itself means in Panikkar’s thought.

The issue of identity is central for much of the contemporary reflection on the dialogue between religions. In his own faith experience, Panikkar blurs the lines that typically divide the dialogue partners in this conversation into ‘us’ and ‘them’. In fact it is because of Panikkar and others who blur this line that the issue of identity is so central to interreligious dialogue. However, for Panikkar, the issue of identity itself is aided by this dialogue. Panikkar’s starting point on this topic is his distinction between the ‘differentiated identification’ that is found in Western thought and ‘identifying identity’ found in Eastern thought. As we shall see, Panikkar seems to favor the Eastern view because he believes that it offers a corrective to the Western view. Thus, like everything else in Panikkar’s thought, his views on identity are the fruit of the mutual encounter of religious traditions.

3.1 East and West on Identity

Perhaps Panikkar’s most essential reflection on the issue of identity can be found in a relatively short article that Panikkar contributed to the 2002 book Many Mansions?
Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity, entitled “On Christian Identity:
Who is a Christian?” Panikkar begins this article by quoting the Gospel of Matthew:
“For whoever wishes to save one’s own life will lose it; yet whoever loses one’s own life for my sake will find it (Mt 16:25).”¹ His gloss on the text is to substitute the word “identity” for “life.” Thus, the only way to save one’s own identity is to lose it.
Panikkar’s idea of identity seems to center on the nonduality of cosmotheandrisrn. It is rooted in advaitic-Trinitarian thought. Therefore, identity is found in its highest form in mystical union.² So, for Panikkar, unity is the source of identity.

The significance of this becomes clear when we compare various approaches to the issue of identity to each other. For instance, one way of thinking of identity, philosophically-speaking, involves using the principle of non-contradiction.³ The law of non-contradiction basically tells us that two things are identical if there are no differences or distinctions between them. In this view, identity is based on differentiation.⁴ Thus, I am me precisely because I am not you and vice versa. It is this view that, as we have mentioned above, Panikkar recognizes as generally operative in the Western tradition.

Another way of thinking of identity is what Panikkar refers to as the ‘principle of identity’.⁵ This is the approach that Panikkar recognizes as setting the general tone of the Eastern tradition. In contrast to the approach based on non-contradiction, this approach is based on unity, not on a lack of difference. Thus, one is identified with that with which he or she (or even it) is identified. So, for instance, a Buddhist is not to be identified as a

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² Ibid.
³ Ibid., 130.
⁴ Ibid.
non-Christian (as what he or she is not). Rather he or she is to be identified by that
tradition with which he or she is united, Buddhism. Thus, Panikkar urges the West to
move behind the “classificatory mania” that it has derived from the law of non-
contradiction.\(^6\) This obsession with classification must stop when we speak of identity
precisely because one cannot classify identity. After all the ‘classificator’ cannot be
classified, and identity belongs is the ‘classificator’. Thus, Panikkar wishes to move from
a ‘categorical’ approach to identity to a more ‘transcendental’ one. This Western need
for certainty can be seen in Panikkar’s assessment of infallibility:

There is an obvious link between the post-Cartesian attitude that requires the security of
rational knowledge and the felt need for infallibility—a need that culminated in the First
Vatican council. In a pre-Cartesian world, the infallibility proclaimed by the Council
would scarcely make sense. Thus the Orthodox church, which has not suffered the
Cartesian impact, does not feel the need to declare its dogmas infallible because the need
for an additional certainty is not felt.\(^7\)

This is an intriguing insight into the overall pattern of Western thought. In the
West, we are ‘hung up’ with absolute certainty. Cartesian doubt leaves everything in
question but the *cogito*. However, at the same time, in practice, we have been quite
content to leave the speculative world of Descartes and rest assured that, for instance, the
copy of Descartes’ *Meditations* that I am reading does, in fact, really exist despite my
inability to prove that existence with absolute certainty. Descartes probably never
actually doubted that he was jotting his *Meditations* down on a real sheet of paper, using
a real pen with real ink, all of which actually existed even though he could not prove their
existence absolutely. Thus, we have uncovered an element of faith, by which we must all

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\(^6\) Raimon Panikkar, "On Christian Identity: Who is a Christian?" 131,
abide in order to live functionally in the world. This level of consciousness containing our presumptions is precisely what Panikkar refers to when he uses the term ‘myth’, which we will discuss below. It is for this reason that, as we shall see, the *logos* cannot exist without the *mythos*; it is in the realm of *mythos* that we come to believe that *logos* says or can say anything at all. Thus, he concludes, “Infallibility is the very expression of the Christian myth; but to spell it out weakens the myth. The myth of infallibility is undermined by the *logos* of infallibility.”

Thus, “identification by differentiation…is typical of occidental Christianity and gives rise to its own problems.” For instance, the Western Christian mind tends to be too exclusive in its approach to the other. This can even be seen in approaches that are typically considered inclusivist, such as Karl Rahner’s concept of the ‘anonymous Christian’, which is often criticized for its ‘one way’ character and seeming disregard of the traditions of others. Panikkar, points out that for this approach to be valid, there must be some form of conceptual *quid pro quo*:

It is acceptable to Hindus to be ‘anonymous Christians’, provided one also admits that Christians are ‘anonymous Hindus’ (though this expression makes little sense in a tradition which takes polynomy for granted, ever since the famous *rgvedic* saying, ‘One is he whom the sages call by many names’).

However, Western sensibility seems to be programmed to draw distinctions, many of which, like the concept of the ‘anonymous Christian’, contain some kind of superiority claim. Thus, to the classical Western mindset, Panikkar is on dangerous ground in

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proposing the Eastern unifying approach to identity as a corrective to the Western distinguishing approach thereto:

Hence, when I maintain that Christ is real and effective, though hidden and unknown, in Hinduism, I allegedly violate the ‘sacred’ Western canons used to identify Christ, since Christ is seen only in terms of differentiated identification instead of in terms of an identifying identity.\(^{12}\)

The approach to the Christian life that is informed by this Eastern approach to identity, then, would focus on identification with Christ rather than focusing upon the difference between Christ and the rest of us. This helps us to further understand and contextualize Panikkar’s Christology, which we examined in our previous chapter. Panikkar’s overall theological project involves overcoming the individualism that pervades Western post-Enlightenment culture. This approach to viewing the world through the lens of the ego is rooted in Cartesian thought and has been expanded by later thinkers in the Kantian, Husserlian, and Heideggerian traditions, among others. However, such an excessively individualistic worldview is unfathomable to an Eastern mind, even today:

The purely individualistic attitude of nineteenth-century Europe is still unthinkable for the Indian people. It is difficult to find in India a concept identical to that which we mean by ‘individual conscience’. In Hinduism, Man is still immersed in collective consciousness, he still has cosmic instincts which lead him through life with more certainty than a ‘modern’ Man may possess through his own ‘private’ reason.\(^{13}\)

However, Panikkar points out that the “\(kaivalya\) ideal,” the ideal of detachment, is prevalent in the Hindu mind.\(^{14}\) “But even there ‘isolation’ implies universalization and

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 15.
\(^{13}\) Ibid., 87.
\(^{14}\) Ibid.
not ‘individualization’.”

Thus, the goal is to become united with all and to move away from particularity. This Eastern ‘universalization’ involves unity-in-difference, consonant with Trinitarian thought in the West. This contrasts with a ‘Western’ view of ‘universalization’ that tends to seek unity that is accomplished by eradicating differences. This gives us some insight into Panikkar’s own brand of pluralism, in which “All attempts toward universalization [that destroy distinctions], so prevalent in Western culture as he sees it, are anathema to Panikkar.”

Thus, true dialogue should be based on the Trinitarian-Advaitic insight that suffuses Panikkar’s cosmotheandrisim. Because of this, Panikkar uses the Trinitarian term “perichoresis” to talk about “diversity and complementarity” among religions. The same holds true for the identity of individuals. Therefore, the identities of others are connected to my own and do not threaten it. Rather, I can only find my identity in union with others. They are a part of who I am.

Then, as we mentioned above, it is only in giving of oneself that one truly finds his/her identity. However, Panikkar is perhaps too quick to label this an “Eastern” insight. For this kenotic openness to the world is also at the heart of Christianity in the West. With this in mind, it is agape that is also at the heart of the mystical insight that makes explicit what Panikkar calls cosmotheandrisim, and therefore, it is agape that is at the heart of any real dialogue (dialogical dialogue) between traditions. Dialogue is not simply predicated on the willingness to receive; rather, dialogue also requires a willingness to give oneself and to be given completely. This gift entails a risk. In true

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15 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 See Raimon Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness, 67. Regarding the Eastern and Western conception of identity, Panikkar insists, “I submit that the time has come to integrate these two principles.”
love (agape), one gives oneself at the peril of losing oneself. But, it is only in giving oneself completely and wagering complete loss of self that one can hope to truly (and perhaps for the first time) find oneself. Once a person comes to this understanding, he or she finds him or herself both changed and reaffirmed at the same time. In other words, he or she finds identity.

This identity transcends categories, even the categories of ‘same’ and ‘different’. In many ways, then, human identity is elusive and the human being is ‘unclassifiable’:

When I refuse to be called “a human being,” or when I criticize evolutionistic thought, when I claim to be unique and, to that extent, unclassifiable, I am reacting against the invasion of the scientific mentality, which tends to obscure one of the most central of all human experiences: being a unique divine icon of reality, constitutively united with the Source of everything, a microcosm that mirrors the entire macrocosm.19

It is this unclassifiable character of the human that fuels Panikkar’s frequent use of the term ‘Man’. He does not intend to be sexist by referring to the human as ‘Man’. Rather, he intends to communicate the enigmatic character of humanity.

3.2 Identity and Identification

With this in mind, in his third sūtra in Christophany, Panikkar asserts that “the identity of Christ is not the same as his identification.”20 Even if one can identify another person that person’s identity can still escape one.21 In other words, identity is something that is not quantifiable. It transcends the particularities of one’s life and historical context and puts those particularities into perspective and gives them significance. It is these particularities that are captured in what may be called ‘identification’. According to

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20 Ibid., 153.
21 Ibid.
Panikkar, it is the confusion of these two closely related categories that has mired many traditional Christologies. They have attempted to universalize the particulars of Jesus of Nazareth rather than discussing how Christ also transcends these:

Too often christologies have concentrated on the identification of Jesus. They have forgotten that identity is not an objectifiable category and have proceeded to project into different contexts the identity of Jesus Christ, which was discovered in a particular cultural situation.\(^{22}\)

But, Jesus is not the only one to whom this conflation applies. This brings us back to Panikkar’s article on Christian identity. His thesis in this article is to overcome the dualism between who and what. That is, he’s trying to overcome a subject/object separation when talking about one’s identity.\(^{23}\) This leads him on a peculiar path. The problem of identity can be seen when people say that they accept Christ or accept Jesus’ message, but reject Christianity.\(^{24}\) The question this generates is that of determining in what way these individuals are Christian (although the term ‘determining’, as we shall see, is only half correct). Because of the complexity of the issue, Panikkar emphasizes that the answer can only be “relatively satisfactory.”\(^{25}\) After all, as we have mentioned, identity is elusive.

So, what is so complex about identity? Well, for Panikkar the complexity lies in the subject/object duality which he is trying to overcome. One may describe oneself as a Christian but have no real affiliation with any Christian community. The same can apply

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 154.

\(^{23}\) Raimon Panikkar, "On Christian Identity: Who is a Christian?" 121.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 122.

\(^{25}\) Ibid., 136.
to any other group. In fact, one may even be in poor standing with a particular community. Also, on the other side, one may say that they are no longer ‘Catholic’ or ‘Christian’ because they have some disagreement with official church authority, but others might still recognize them as Christian. In others words, the central question regards what way we should relate ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ criteria for Christian identity.

Panikkar insists that both are important. Much like other thinkers such as Roger Haight, Panikkar draws a distinction between faith (a transcendent relationship) and belief (an intellectual conviction). This helps him to say that Christian identity ought not to be limited to holding the correct beliefs (orthodoxy) as has been done in the past. Rather, it goes beyond that. This is why he claims that identity belongs not the rational sphere of *logos*, but to the non-objectifiable sphere of *mythos*, which we shall discuss below.

It is with this distinction in mind that Panikkar offhandedly mentions that early Christian creeds were not called ‘doctrine’, but “symbols”. Since he connects it with the early creeds, he intends the term ‘symbol’ in the sense that it was used in the early Church. For Panikkar, it is not concepts that are “thrown” together, but individuals, and all of reality. What is important, however, is that Panikkar is acknowledging the role that theological formulations of the church have served. He is saying that they are primarily intended to unite. They are about identity. This is why, as we saw in our previous

26 Christianity is not special in this regard. However, the central issue in both Panikkar’s article and our project is Christian identity. So, it is useful to continue this focus here, although we will really be discussing Christian identity in our next chapter.


29 *Ibid.* The etymological meaning of the word “symbol” is ‘to put or throw together’. 
chapter, Panikkar never really seeks to abrogate the legitimacy of Christological doctrine, but rather seeks new ways to express Christ in the language of other religions.

Therefore, for Panikkar, Christian identity cannot be limited to some objective criteria: doctrinal assertions or even baptism. This is so because the Spirit cannot be stifled.\(^{30}\) Of course, does that mean that anyone can be a Christian if he/she says he/she is one? In a way, yes it does. But, the significance of this assertion can vary. As we have begun to point out, Panikkar prefers to think of identity as consisting of two poles: subjective and objective. These poles stand in tension: my self-definition and the acknowledgment of this by a group. So, there is interplay between the two poles with identity lying somewhere in the middle.

Panikkar claims that one cannot meaningfully be described as a Christian if he/she does not explicitly claim this designation. Thus, he finds Rahner’s idea of the ‘anonymous Christian’ to be problematic in terms of identity, because it does not make much sense to identify someone in a way contrary to what he or she professes (although he acknowledges that one can use it if Christianity is defined as an “ontological, metahistorical fact”).\(^{31}\) Identity, then, must be something that is explicitly grasped by the one whose identity it is.

But, it is also not meaningful to talk about identity if there is no communal acceptance of it. Panikkar compares this to having a private language. Language is pointless if there is no one with whom to share it. A private language serves no purpose because the purpose of language is to communicate something. Identity is the same way. Identity unites one to others. It does not isolate one. Identity, then, is intrinsically

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 125-126.
\(^{31}\) Ibid., 126-127.
Interestingly, Panikkar points out that it is this pole of communal acceptance that kept Gandhi from claiming to be Christian. He was moved by such teachings as those included in the Sermon on the Mount, but never wanted to be called a Christian because this may lead to misinterpretation, particularly by Christians.\textsuperscript{33}

As we have mentioned, he refers to the typical Western approach to identity as being based in the law of non-contradiction. That is, non-contradictory things are identical. This leads to an emphasis on differentiation. What he means here is that I am me, quite simply because I not you or this computer or this piece of paper or anything else. This is contrasted with the alternate view (the view of the East) as one based on unity. In this way, I am what/who I am because of what/whom with which I am united. This includes my affiliations and all my relations. All of this aims at mystical unity. In a 2000 interview with \textit{Christian Century}, Panikkar quite pointedly criticizes this Western tendency, saying “Someone who is afraid of losing his or her identity has already lost it.”\textsuperscript{34} The fear of losing who you are makes you forget who you were in the first place. In the same interview, Panikkar points out that for those in the Hindu tradition, everything can be taken from you but your identity.\textsuperscript{35}

Inspired by this, without discarding the communal pole, Panikkar places the \textit{primacy} of identity on the subjective pole. For Panikkar, I cannot begin to understand you unless I try to understand how you understand yourself.\textsuperscript{36} There is a clear example of this mentality within Western thought, although Panikkar is correct that too often we

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 128.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 129.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Raimon Panikkar, “Eruption of Truth: An Interview With Raimon Panikkar,” \textit{Christian Century} 117, no. 23 (August 16-23, 2000): 834.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Raimon Panikkar, "On Christian Identity: Who is a Christian?"132.
\end{itemize}
in the West have worried about classifying others from without. When one meets another for the first time, one of the first questions that is asked is “what is your name?” In English, this question is asked in an ‘objective manner’, but in most romance languages, this question is asked in the reflexive. For instance, in Italian, you would ask “come si chiama?” or “come ti chiami?” Literally, one is asking, “how do you call yourself?” Thus, the person’s self-perception is primary. However, it is never detached from communal reflection. After all, one must consistently use the same name or he or she can never be called by another. In such a case, a name would serve no purpose.

3.3 The Humanum: One’s Identity as a Human

Identity for Panikkar, however, is not merely an individualized reality. This would be an overemphasis on the law of non-contradiction. Identity also contains a communal, and even universal, component. The concept of ‘religion’ helps us to identify this aspect of identity. Panikkar defines religion as “the path Man follows in order to reach the purpose of life, or, shorter, religion is the way of salvation.” Religion, then, is “a way to fulfillment—if we prefer.” This means that there are three elements to religion: 1. A view of ‘Man’ as he appears to be here and now; 2. A notion of end or “final station” for Man; and 3. A means of how to get from 1. to 2. But, in order to understand where ‘Man’ is going, one must first uncover what ‘Man’ is. We have already mentioned that human nature, for Panikkar, is best understood as something elusive that can never be fully grasped. However, that does not mean that there is nothing to be said on the matter.

38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
The text of Panikkar’s *Blessed Simplicity* was formulated using the transcripts and notes of a conference at which Panikkar was asked to speak on the topic of “the monk as universal archetype.”\(^{40}\) He begins to address this topic by pointing out that “the phrase [‘the monk as universal archetype’] is ambiguous…but its ambiguity is revealing.”\(^{41}\) He insists that “the symbol of the monk can only be communicated in fragments.”\(^{42}\) Thus, “the universal archetype of the monk” must first be destroyed or ‘smashed’ to see what is inside...“and within, we may discover emptiness.”\(^{43}\)

However, by this, Panikkar does not mean that the topic he is addressing is not useful or does not communicate truth. Rather, he means that the idea of the monk has to be dissected and rebuilt anew. After all, Panikkar locates himself within the monastic tradition, but in a different sense than we are accustomed to discussing when considering monasticism. He says, “Since my early youth I have seen myself as a monk, but one without a monastery, or at least without walls other than those of the entire planet.”\(^{44}\)

With this in mind and especially considering his non-monastic audience, Panikkar uses the idea of the monk as an ‘archetype’ to speak of “the monk in every one of us.”\(^{45}\) Thus, instead of examining past figures, Panikkar wishes to “probe the transhistorical present.”\(^{46}\) Panikkar makes a delicate distinction between a monk as an example and the monk as a manifestation of a monastic archetype.\(^{47}\) By this latter view, which reflects Panikkar’s approach, to speak of “the archetype of the monk” is to say that there is a

\(^{41}\) Ibid.
\(^{42}\) Ibid., 6.
\(^{43}\) Ibid.
\(^{44}\) Ibid.
\(^{45}\) Ibid., 7.
\(^{46}\) Ibid.
\(^{47}\) Ibid.
“human” archetype that monks have “reenacted in their own way.”\textsuperscript{48} Thus, the monk can shed light on what it means to be human. Furthermore, there is something ‘monastic’ about humanity and “we may have no other entrance into the archetype than to study or come to know the monk as archetype.”\textsuperscript{49}

However, Panikkar is quick to point out that the monastic life is not for all. Humans should not all live within monasteries. He declares, “To be, then, quite specific: Is the monk a universal archetype; i.e., a universal model for human life? No. The monk is only one way of realizing a universal archetype.”\textsuperscript{50} This leads to a kind of polarity when discussing ‘monkhood’:

On the one hand it is something special, difficult, even sometimes queer, with tinges of social and cultural nonconformity; on the other hand, it is something so very much human that it is ultimately claimed to be the vocation of every human being, what everybody should be or is called upon to be—in some way or other, sooner or later.\textsuperscript{51}

But, what is a monk?

By monk, monachos, I understand that person who aspires to reach the ultimate goal of life with all his being by renouncing all that is not necessary to it, i.e., by concentrating on this one single and unique goal.\textsuperscript{52}

What makes the monk a monk is ekāgratā (Sanskrit for “singlemindedness”).\textsuperscript{53} In this way, Panikkar chooses to focus on the “archetype of the monk” in contrast to the assigned topic, ‘the monk as archetype’.\textsuperscript{54} Thus, he asserts, “The thesis I am defending is that the monk is the expression of an archetype which is a constitutive dimension of

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 9.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
human life.” For Panikkar, as Jyri Komulainen notes, “man is always homo religious” because humans possess a “constitutive religious dimension.” However, by speaking of this as ‘constitutive’, Panikkar does not intend to posit a theory of human nature. He continues to maintain the irreducibility of the person:

The perfection of the human individual is not the fullness of human nature; it is not nature, but personhood; it is not the essence of humanity, but the incommunicable and unique existence of the person.

Thus, perfection can be realized by many in as many different ways. So, “the perfect human nature does not exist, nor does it exist in a particular being.” However, different people reach different degrees of actualizing their potentialities. Thus, rather than choosing a formal Platonic view, Panikkar prefers the Aristotelian teleology of potency and act. In contrast to this Platonic misconception that a perfect ‘nature’ does exist or that there can be a ‘perfect Christian’, he reiterates: “In point of fact, a perfect human nature is a contradiction in terms.” Thus:

Each person will have his own way of realizing the perfection of “humanity.” I shall call the humanum this core of humanness that can be realized in as many fashions as there are human beings. Humanity is one; the humanum exists in the particular form of each and every individual person who realizes that fullness of being. Even if this fullness is considered to be a merging with Brahman or a total annihilation, this could be called the humanum from the viewpoint of the human person.

55 Ibid., 11.
58 Ibid., 13.
59 Ibid. Emphasis in original.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
Therefore, for Panikkar each person realizes the *humanum* (Christ-ness?) in his/her own unique and particular way. This is why for Panikkar, the monk cannot be the model for the realization of the *humanum*, but rather stands as a manifestation of the quest for realization, particularly in the monk’s realization of the fact that it *is* a quest at all. For Panikkar, as we have mentioned, “religion is a path to the *humanum*, be it called salvation, liberation, or by whatever generic name.”

Panikkar’s connection of the *humanum* to soteriology will play a very important role in our concluding chapter.

In Panikkar’s view, this *humanum*, this core of what the human is, which cannot be exhausted by the category of ‘nature’ has “many aspects” and “facets.” It is for this reason that there is a diversity of religious traditions in the world. It is also for this reason that these traditions, while different, do not necessarily negate each other. To use the language we discussed above, the *humanum*, while identifiable, cannot be exhausted by identification. It is part of identity. The *humanum*, then, is incalculable. However, as we have said, it can be identified (but not exhausted):

My hypothesis is that monkhood, i.e., the archetype of which the monk is an expression, corresponds to one dimension of this *humanum*, so that every human being has potentially the possibility of realizing this dimension.

While Panikkar can refer to the ‘Monastery’ as an institution, ‘monkhood’ is prior to and beyond this institutionalization. To describe this *humanum*, Panikkar points to the metaphor of “the center” found in both Eastern and Western traditions. He

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62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., 14.
65 It would be erroneous to conclude that Panikkar implies any pejorative connotation to the term institution. Rather, he insists: “Institutions are necessary, and the more human a need the more necessary the institution.” Blessed 15. He is simply saying that there is something more basic (the *humanum*) that necessitates an institution.
66 Ibid., 15.
asserts that “inasmuch as we try to unify our lives around the center, all of us have something of the monk in us.” However, even with this commonality, the distinction between the Eastern and Western views of ‘identity’ hold strong here. After all, to ‘center’ oneself is to touch one’s identity. So, while Eastern ideas of the ‘center’ tend to see it as immanence and identify the self with this center, which is ‘no-thing’ and ‘emptiness’, Western ideas of the ‘center’ tend to view it as transcendence, “exteriority,” “ultimate difference,” and something other than oneself to which one must relate in order to find oneself. However, Panikkar’s distinction here can be exaggerated. After all, we cannot forget about the kenosis we discussed in our first chapter. It is in divine outpouring that the Ultimate emptiness of the East and the divine ‘fullness’ (pleroma) of the West are reconciled. Furthermore, as we have seen in our previous chapter, immanence and transcendence are not, in the final analysis, polar opposites. Rather they need each other and are actually different facets of the same mystery.

In one of his nine sutras in Blessed Simplicity, Panikkar points out that the monk is enamored with “the memory of the Ultimate and the presence of its gate.” This means that for the monk, “in so many words, ontology is psychologized and psychology is ontologized. Ontology is brought to mind, and psychology is given an ontological weight.”

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67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., 17-18.
69 Ibid., 88.
70 Ibid.
The Ultimate and the gate to the Ultimate have many names. The ‘Ultimate’ can be called God, Brahman, Nothingness, etc. and the ‘gate to the Ultimate’ can be called Death, Justification, Innocence, etc.\(^{71}\) In the monk’s consciousness:

The Ultimate is there not only as the goal of existence, but also in the mind and heart of the monk all the time. Death is not only recognized and accepted, it is given a status of its own and allowed to dominate and condition all other human activities.\(^{72}\)

Therefore, because it is an institutionalization of this consciousness, “monasticism, as it were, institutionalizes the presence of death and the reality of the Absolute.”\(^{73}\) This single-minded focus on the presence of the divine is the characteristic that makes the monk a monk (\textit{monachos}). Truly, “it is the experience of the Ultimate, the reality of God, the Other Shore or whatever that magnetizes the monk and allows him to simplify his life.”\(^{74}\) As Panikkar comments:

Death may be considered the final stage of all human endeavors, even if “afterwards” there is supposed to be something else. Or it may be considered the real birth of authentic life. This is the monastic attitude, and for this reason the act of dying is advanced in the monastic profession.\(^{75}\)

But this death is not only personal death. Rather, it is “the fate of everything.”\(^{76}\)

All things give way to the Ultimate:

Always we have known that to love God is to love one’s neighbor, that to seek \textit{nirvāṇa} is really to aid \textit{samsāra}, that sublimation of a value represents a higher fruition of the value

\(^{71}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 88-89.
\(^{72}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 89.
\(^{73}\) \textit{Ibid.}
\(^{74}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 90.
\(^{75}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 91.
\(^{76}\) \textit{Ibid.}
renounced, that abandoning the world contributes to its salvation, etc., but the monk’s
cconcern is that he has only one life, and often he wonders how all this can be possible.\footnote{Ibid.}

All of this is possible because of the union of all that underlies all of reality. All
things can yield to the Divine because the Divine is always ‘there’. It is this communion
of all reality that lies at the heart of monasticism. It is also this communion of all reality
that lies at the heart of the incalculable \textit{humanum} that the monk brings into relief. The
monk reveals \textit{cosmotheandrisism} to us. \textit{The monk is a Christophany}.

Panikkar’s monastic reflection uncovers the archetype that is at the heart of the
\textit{humanum}. This cosmotheandrisism which lies at the root of all reality finds special
articulation in the human person. Unlike many in the post-Enlightenment tradition of
Western thought, Panikkar tries to avoid reducing the human to the \textit{ego}. Rather, he
insists, “The person is the complex of all the personal pronouns: a relation.”\footnote{Raimon Panikkar, \textit{Christophany: The Fullness of Man}, 64.} He
explains:

\begin{quote}
The person is neither an individual nor an undifferentiated existence. Precisely insofar as
it is something ultimate, the person escapes every definition. Person is relation because
Being is relation.\footnote{Ibid.}
\end{quote}

Thus, the person is not isolated, but only finds his/her identity in communion.
The ‘I’ is not ontologically prior to the ‘you’ nor is the ‘you’ prior to the ‘I’. Rather, the
mutuality of cosmotheandrism grounds them both.\footnote{Ibid., 65.} Varghese Manimala echoes
Panikkar’s trans-personal approach to identity by insisting that “mankind needs to
achieve not merely a collective existence, but has to move towards what is called a hyper-
personal existence.”  

In this way, “personalization” involves love. Following Teilhard de Chardin and his ‘omega point’ teleology, Manimala insists that “universal love will vivify and make everything reach the stage of consummation.” Thus, human beings reach fulfillment by realizing their identity, which can only be found in union with all of reality.

For Manimala, the “human being is a peculiar being trying to understand its own uniqueness.” But, this uniqueness can only be realized in giving oneself to another. It cannot be realized in isolation from others. After all, “a person is a disclosure. This disclosure takes place through his/her face.” Consequently, “a face is a message; a face speaks often unbeknown to the person.” Therefore:

The being of a person is never completed, final. The status of a person is a status nascendi. This becoming a person is in union with others; therefore solidarity becomes a need of every person.

Thus, the cosmotheandric self-fulfillment that is the deepest yearning of the humanum is only fully realized ethically. Thus, as Manimala points out, in Panikkar’s thought, “the human being achieves fullness of being in fellowship, in care for others.” Mysticism and praxis are not opposites. Rather, praxis is necessary for mystical union. As Manimala points out, “in this sensitivity for the other one discovers one’s own

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82 Ibid.
83 Ibid., 36.
84 Ibid., 37.
85 Ibid., 38.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid., 38-39.
88 Ibid., 39.
meaning and purpose of existence.”

Thus, according to the logic of Panikkar’s thought, elaborated upon by Manimala, identity is found in orthopraxis. For Panikkar:

Man is much more than a spectator or constructor of this world. Above all he/she is an actor; fundamentally he/she enacts himself/herself through his/her capacity—not exhausted by his/her facere—to embrace his/her agere as well. This activity is above all a praxis. Human being is one who modifies the world through orthopraxis.

Thus, human identity is a complex notion. The humanum has a necessary communal aspect. As Manimala shows, the human being is “basically a seeker, in search of truth and seeking meaning in life.” But, this is a “communitarian” quest not an individualistic one. Humans have an “existential openness” toward a “plus ultra.”

Human identity can only be realized through transcendence. The individual human must be open to the otherness of all of reality in order to realize the much deeper union that binds that reality together. It is this openness to others and otherness, for instance, that makes interreligious dialogue a necessary part of the religious quest.

3.4 Mythos and Logos

It is in the context of full human realization that Panikkar encourages the rediscovery of myth and its place in human life. In Panikkar’s assessment, “rationality” should be ‘situated’ in the “total human—cosmotheandric—context.” To achieve this, Panikkar insists that we should always strive to understand logos in the context of the

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89 Ibid.
90 Ibid., 40.
91 Ibid., 131.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid., 132.
95 Raimon Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype, 110.
mythos. Logos alone is unreliable. Manimala explains that, for Panikkar, “myth is nontheoretical in its very meaning and essence. It defies and challenges our fundamental categories of thought.” In this sense, when assessed as a literary genre, myth is closer to poetry than to historical narrative. Consequently, “myth combines a theoretical element and an element of artistic creation.” However, it is important to point out that while myth is frequently identified with a story, an element of a narrative, or a literary genre, Panikkar insists that mythos is what is behind the story. In this sense, it is more like a worldview than a text (although even a worldview is the rationalization of a myth):

This field demands a peculiar attitude: You cannot look directly at the source of light; you turn your back to it so that you may see—not the light, but the illuminated things.

Light is invisible. So too with the myth—myth here is not the object of discourse, but the expression of a sui generis form of consciousness.

Francis D’Sa explains:

There is a general tendency to reduce consciousness to the Logos, to equate consciousness with the Logos. The underlying presupposition is that whatever we know can be thematized, explained and analyzed. This rests on the belief that there is nothing in consciousness which cannot be put in words. What is overlooked in the process is that the consciousness which puts the contents into words itself cannot be put in words.

Therefore, when we try to bring this non-rational (or pre-rational) element into the rational, we lose it. In this way, “the hermeneutic of a myth is no longer the myth, but its

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96 Ibid. In this context, Panikkar is referring to logos in the general sense of rationality. This general concept of logos is distinct from the concept of the divine Logos.
97 Varghese J. Manimala, Toward Mutual Fecundation and Fulfilment of Religions: An Invitation to Transcendence and Dialogue with a Cosmotheandric Vision, 43.
98 Ibid., 43.
99 Raimon Panikkar, Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics, 4.
Like the light in the above-cited example, the myth is difficult to define and is even, in itself, elusive to reason. Panikkar tells us, “The myth is transparent like the light, and the mythical story—\textit{mythologumenon}—is only the form, the garment in which the myth happens to be expressed, enwrapped, illumined.”\textsuperscript{102} This creates some logical difficulties. As Panikkar notes:

I hear already the objection that I am contradicting myself by establishing the doctrine that we cannot rely on doctrines. This is not so, on at least two counts. First, because I am not saying that we should not rely on doctrines. I am affirming that this reliance is shaky.\textsuperscript{103}

He explains:

We have a plurality of conflicting doctrines, and so doctrine is no criterion for supraindividual truth.\textsuperscript{104}

Doctrines, the result of rational analysis, are important, but they do not completely comprehend the realities that they purport to communicate. Here, it seems also that Panikkar seems to be saying that divergences among human worldviews exist based on the human articulation thereof, but that the myths they express are either the same or reconcilable.\textsuperscript{105} This is consistent with his insistence that there is a cosmotheandric unity that grounds all of reality. Because it cannot fully comprehend this mysterious communion of all, human reason is limited. However, we should note that Panikkar also sees room for a plurality of myths.

\textsuperscript{101} Raimon Panikkar, \textit{Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics}, 4.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{103} Raimon Panikkar, \textit{Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype}, 111.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{105} See Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, \textit{The Intrareligious Dialogue}, 57. Here Panikkar points out, “The \textit{ultimate} religious fact does not lie in the realm of doctrine or even individual self-consciousness. Therefore it can—and may well—be present everywhere and in every religion, although its ‘explication’ may require varied degrees of discovery, realization, evangelization, revelation, hermeneutics, etc.”
Continuing his defense of the primacy of mythos, Panikkar follows this first point with a second:

But secondly, I am not contradicting myself because I am not contending that the rational aspect of Man should not be rational. I am affirming that rationality and even the logos are not the only aspects of the human being which constitutes its “essence”: what Man is. Man is also spirit, and the spirit is not subordinated to the logos; Man is also myth, and the myth is irreducible to the logos; Man is also body, and body is not reducible to the mind.106

These elements of spirit and reason must coexist and cannot exist without each other. Panikkar points out that the Christian Church has condemned subordinationism of this sort from an early time. 107 However, Western thought follows the paradigm begun by Parmenides and expressed up to Husserl. This paradigm states that there are two “ultimate pillars” for “human orientation in the world—thinking (nous) and being (on).”108 This means that “thinking discovers but also conditions being.”109 Nonetheless, “this paradigm is not universal.”110 For instance:

In India, the ultimate polarity, the yin/yang so to speak of the Indian effort at human orientation in reality, is not thinking and being, but being and wording. Or rather, being and speaking: being and letting be; being and letting being escape.111

In this view, “there is no way to control the flow of reality. Thinking is not the ultimate parameter. Being is just…explosion!”112 Thus, reality or existence transcends the expression thereof, even including the term ‘being’ itself. According to Panikkar,

106 Raimon Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype, 111.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid., 122.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid., 123.
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
“The myth you live is comprised of the ensemble of contexts you take for granted.”  

Therefore, “myth represents the invisible horizon on which we project our notions of the real.”  

Because of this, our myths make us each unique. Thus, mythos is an important component of identity, especially because it is at the root of logos:

*The ideology you follow* is the demythicized part of the view you have of the world; it is the result of the passage from *mythos* to *logos* in life and personal reflexion; it is the more or less coherent ensemble of ideas that make up critical awareness, i.e. the doctrinal system that enables you to locate yourself rationally—ideologically—in the world at a particular time, in a particular place.

It is in this context that Panikkar explains the function of symbol. For Panikkar, symbol is “the conscious passage from *mythos* to *logos*.”

He explains:

Symbol here does not mean an epistemic sign, but an *ontomythical* reality that is precisely in the symbolizing. A symbol is not a symbol of another (‘thing’), but of itself, in the sense of the subjective genitive. A symbol is the symbol of that which is precisely (symbolized) in the symbol, and which, thus, does not exist without its symbol.

Thus, religious symbols, for instance, function in this way to move *mythos* into *logos* with as little loss as possible. One could, for instance, understand sacraments in this way.

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114 Ibid., 30.
115 Ibid., 21. Some examples of Panikkar’s usage of myth can be found in *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, where Panikkar interprets the Hindu Prajapati myth as pointing to a primordial unity that has been lost and that we seek to reunite. Later, turning to a Christian myth, he declares “The myth of the anima mundi suggests that the Earth is a living organism, that she has a spontaneity which does not just mechanically follow a pattern or patterns set once and for all.” Both of these myths communicate ‘something’ universal that cannot be reduced to the logos thereof. See Raimon Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness*, ed. Scott Eastham (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 15-19 and 139. The particular myth points to a universal myth. See also Raimon Panikkar, *A Dwelling Place for Wisdom*, transl. Annemarie S. Kidder, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 148. Here Panikkar notes that pluralism belongs to the “sphere” of mythos.
117 Ibid., 6.
118 Ibid.
manner.\footnote{A sacrament is a tangible participation in the reality that it signifies. Being revelatory as such, they bridge mythical and rational discourse.} Furthermore, “the symbol encompasses and constitutively links the two poles of the real: the object and the subject.”\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 7.} So, symbols unite (or ‘throw together’, to use the etymology of \textit{symbolon}) the self and what is not the self. Symbols, then, play an important part in religious traditions by serving as means for the realization of cosmotheandric unity. In this way, symbols function on their own without excessive elaboration. After all, “a symbol that requires interpretation is no longer a living symbol.”\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 8.}

So, symbols allow humans to touch \textit{mythos} in a way that ordinary language cannot. This is essential to human life because humans need myth:

Now man cannot live without myths. When the primordial myths are demythicized—and they are not yet, neither throughout the world nor even completely where they are most under attack—Man seeks others.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 44.}

Thus, myths are so important that when they are eradicated through demythicization, we need to replace them with other myths. Panikkar contends that this is dangerous. For instance, he insists that we form our morality based upon myth. In his discussion of the demythologization of the Adam and Eve story, he identifies a problem with demythicization:

When the $\delta$\textit{αιωνιόν} and the $\pi\nu\epsilon\nu\mu\alpha$ disappear, we must explain sin by natural, even rational, causes and this amounts to explaining it away. Sin thereby becomes rational, even reasonable; at most it is an error.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 48.}
To counteract this reduction that takes place through the manufacture of replacement myths, Panikkar promotes ‘remythicization’:

We do not question the moral values we accept. And this is ‘why we accept them, because we find them ultimate and thus without any further ‘why’. Just so, in today’s world there are certain social values we do not discuss: justice, democracy, communal well-being, loyalty to one’s own country and even national integrity, particularly in the case of young nations. These values are rooted in humanity’s collective consciousness.\(^{124}\)

Collective values such as these are to be defended in order to keep humanity from continuing to fall into the dangerous reduction to a self-centered ethos that has begun in the post-Enlightenment West. In this way, if we wish to speak of any kind of ‘universal truth’, mythos brings us much closer to it than logos. Panikkar explains, “From a myth’s ahistorical point of view, historical facts are only transitory examples—often deceptive and always partial—of a reality that is always tranhistorical.”\(^{125}\) The truth of the mythos is timeless.

### 3.5 Myth and the Anthropological Level of Faith

Because there is more to reality than that which is graspable by human reason, it is essential that humans are able to inculcate and ‘touch’ this timeless truth. In Panikkar’s anthropology, it is faith that enables us to do so. For Panikkar, “faith is understood as that dimension in Man that corresponds to myth.”\(^{126}\) Because it enables people to come in touch the cosmotheandric union of all reality, faith is a constitutive component of the humanum. Because it brings one in touch with the humanum, faith is necessary component of one’s identity. One must understand oneself as a human if he/she is to begin to understand him/herself at all. Panikkar asserts, “Faith is not a

\(^{124}\) Ibid., 52.

\(^{125}\) Ibid., 99.

\(^{126}\) Ibid., 5. Emphasis in the original.
superfluous luxury, but an anthropological dimension of the full human being on
earth.” Furthermore, Panikkar insists that “by faith Man is distinguished from other
beings.” Thus, faith both “unites” and constitutes humanity:

Our thesis maintains that if creaturliness can be said to be simple relation to God, to the
Source or whatever name we give the foundation of beings, faith is another name for the
ontological relation to this absolute that characterizes Man, distinguishing him from all
other creatures.

In the West since Descartes, we have seen humanity grounded in reason. Faith,
on the contrary, has been seen as something for the chosen few. This view reverses (or at
least augments) that tendency. Humanity, which is rational, is also, and more
importantly, faithful. Since it is a constitutive element of the humanum, faith cannot
be lost. Panikkar asks, “Does one really lose faith or is it simply an abandoning of
certain beliefs?”

In this way, Panikkar distinguishes between faith and beliefs. He states, “Belief
articulates the myth in which we believe without ‘believing’ that we believe in it.” It
seems that by the term ‘in’, Panikkar means ‘within’. We do not ‘believe’ that we
‘believe in’ the myth because ‘belief’ is an act of reason, logos. However, belief is
distinct from knowledge:

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127 Ibid., 190.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
131 See Ibid., 192.
132 Ibid., 194. On the distinction between faith and belief see also Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The
that while distinguishable, the two (faith and belief) can never be neatly separated. He states, "I cannot strip
off my belief-insofar as it is a real belief, i.e., insofar as I believe in 'it' (or more simply said, I believe)-
without touching and even transforming my faith." Thus, "faith without belief does not exist-not for those
who believe."
133 Raimon Panikkar, Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics, 5.
‘I believe in God’, for instance is a cognitive statement when it stands for the expression of the act of believing (former case) and is a real belief only when I do not know what God is, i.e., when I do not know God as the object of my belief (latter case). If you ask me if I believe in God, I cannot possibly respond, except when giving a rhetorical answer to a rhetorical question. Otherwise, I simply do not know what you are asking: I do not know what you mean by ‘God’ and so cannot answer whether I believe in this ‘God’.

The question about God either destroys itself because it does not know what it is asking for or dissolves the God we are asking about into something that is no longer God, but a sheer idol. The God of belief is a symbol but not a concept. In a way we believe only (what we ‘believe’ to be) the unquestionable.134

This does not mean, however, that belief and knowledge exist in a relationship of superiority of one to the other:

The fact that the believed is not the known does not subordinate the one to the other, but it relates knowledge and belief as different forms of consciousness without allowing the reduction of awareness to mere knowing (of object) or where believing (in myths). This fact opens up an image of Man irreducible to mere logos or to sheer mythos.135

Unlike knowledge, a belief is “a particular crystallization of faith.”136 The distinction between the two can be considered under the categories of particularity and universality:

I consider faith, on the other hand, a universal phenomenon, a constitutive dimension of man and, we might add, his existential openness to the transcendent, that is, if we agree not necessarily to interpret this term along purely ontological lines. If faith is a human dimension, it does not allow of any plurality.137

134 Ibid., 6.
135 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
While commenting on Panikkar, Jacques Dupuis points to this distinction. He explains that while faith is "a constitutive element of the human person" which indicates a basic religious experience at the heart of the *humanum*, belief is the particular "expression" of this in a situation. Dupuis points out that the content of faith is "the Mystery" or what Panikkar calls the "cosmotheandric reality." The content of beliefs, on the other hand, according to Dupuis, is comprised of the religious myths that concretely express faith. As Dupuis explains, it is these different beliefs that give us different religions. However, because all true religious traditions share this underlying faith, "all of these myths have equal value." Varghese Manimala elaborates:

> The life of religions may be summarized in a single word: belief. Religion is a matter of belief, and belief is the overarching *mythos* that makes possible the various manifestations that constitute religion. Therefore dialogue of religions must be a dialogue of beliefs; dialogue originates from belief and is about belief.

Thus, the religions of the world are comprised of beliefs, which are distinct from, yet not unrelated to, this anthropological level of faith. Manimala explains, "In philosophical terminology faith may be called an existential openness toward transcendence or simply as existential openness." This openness we call faith pulls us to constantly reach farther towards a "*plus ultra*." Thus, it enables humanity to strive towards transcendence. Faith pulls the individual out of isolation. So, as Manimala

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139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.
143 Ibid., 42.
144 Ibid.
asserts, faith “is that which makes him/her to go beyond (transcendence) and establish relationship. Hence a human being is a relational being.”

Humanity expresses this relationality of faith in belief. Belief flows from faith. Panikkar says, “The particular act of faith by which man responds to his faith is what I would like to call belief.” Nonetheless, the two remain distinct yet interdependent. Panikkar explains, "Faith cannot be equated with belief, but faith always needs a belief to be faith. Belief is not faith, but it must convey faith. A disembodied faith is not faith." He continues, "Faith finds expression in belief, and through it Men normally arrive at faith." Thus, the two have a symbiotic relationship. They need each other and do not exist independently.

Panikkar is not unique in positing such a distinction between belief and faith. For instance, Roger Haight makes a similar point. Haight declares, "Faith in its primary sense is an intentional human response, reaction, act, or pervasive and operative attitude." Like Panikkar, Haight insists that “faith is not knowledge.” Nonetheless, “faith is cognitive.” Haight draws this conclusion because the object of faith is transcendent and is therefore something that cannot be grasped by reason. Haight, like Panikkar, maintains that beliefs express faith, but are distinct from faith. He explains, "Beliefs may change while faith at its deepest level remains constant, even as it is modified."

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145 Ibid.
146 Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, Worship and Secular Man, 9.
147 Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The Intrareligious Dialogue, 18.
148 Ibid.
149 Ibid., 4.
150 Ibid.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid., 5.
153 Ibid.
However, what is distinct, or at least characteristic, for Panikkar’s schema is that faith is one, that is, faith is one across all human boundaries. This enables faith to be an essential component of one’s identity, or at least of human identity, for Panikkar. Panikkar’s view is different from Haight’s in that, for Panikkar faith is not an act of cognition, but an anthropological stratum. Therefore, because it is an aspect of the humanum, it is something that all humans share. Panikkar and Haight provide similar descriptions of beliefs, yet their concepts of faith diverge slightly. For Haight, belief is an act of rational analysis, while faith is an act of trust. For Panikkar, beliefs are rooted in the aspect of the humanum known as faith and are rational crystallizations thereof. It seems that Panikkar envisions faith as something that precedes and inspires action. Thus, Panikkar’s analysis seems to allow for a slightly more organic relationship between the two.

Therefore, it is important to remember that for Panikkar, while beliefs vary across personal, communal, cultural, religious, temporal, etc. boundaries, faith remains constant:

When cultural change or an encounter between religions robs the notions hitherto bound up with faith of their solidity and unmistakable correspondence to faith, naturally a crisis erupts. But this is a crisis of belief, not faith. Undoubtedly the bond between the two is intimate; it is in fact constitutive, since thought itself requires language, and belief is the language of faith. Hence what begins as a crisis of belief turns into a crisis of faith, as a rule due to the intransigence of those who will tolerate no change because they do not distinguish between faith and belief.¹⁵⁴

This, however, does not mean that belief is the mere clothing of faith. Against such a claim, Panikkar explains, "I cannot strip off my belief—insofar as it is a real belief, i.e., insofar as I believe in 'it' (or more simply said, I believe)—without touching and

¹⁵⁴ Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The Intrareligious Dialogue, 19.
even transforming my faith."\textsuperscript{155} Thus, the dynamic between faith and belief is not simply one-way. While belief flows out of faith, the anthropological stratum of faith is something that is living. It can be strengthened or weakened. Furthermore, there is a similar symbiosis between belief and worship. For Panikkar, “worship is an act giving expression to a belief.”\textsuperscript{156} This expression is a necessary component in this relationship because it allows belief to be articulated; it gives belief an experiential outlet.

In our first chapter we saw that, in Panikkar’s Trinitarian schema, the Father does not have existence without the Son. Something similar can be said about the relationship between faith and belief. Panikkar asserts that "faith without belief does not exist—not for those who believe."\textsuperscript{157} Thus, faith, like the Father (or Brahman), is unutterable, outside the grasp of language. Beliefs, rather, bring this unutterable into the reach of language and human cognition. This explains the diversity of religious traditions in human history. Thus, as Panikkar points out, there is a certain ‘relativity’ in the beliefs comprising each of these traditions. However:

The relativity of beliefs does not mean their relativism. Our human task is to establish a religious dialogue that, although it transcends the logos—and belief—does not neglect or ignore them.\textsuperscript{158}

Thus, there is something ‘more than’ reason that several religious traditions share.\textsuperscript{159} Nonetheless, that does not mean that this ‘something’ is unreasonable either.

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 20.
\textsuperscript{156} Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, \textit{Worship and Secular Man}, 9. Emphasis in original.
\textsuperscript{157} Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, \textit{The Intrareligious Dialogue}, 21.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{159} See Raimon Panikkar, \textit{The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness}, ed. Scott Eastham (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 15. Panikkar explains that relativism is not the same as relativity: "Here I would distinguish between relativism and relativity, between an agnostic attitude which is intellectually paralyzed due to a fear of error and a relational awareness which understands that because all knowledge and even all being is inter- and intra-related, nothing has meaning independent of a delimited context."
For Panikkar, while beliefs are not interchangeable, they are "generally equivalent" because they have the same function: expressing human faith. To use a concept we visited in our first chapter, they are homological. This homology enables what Panikkar calls "cross-fertilization," that is, the mutual enrichment that takes place when two or more traditions meet. Because of this, Panikkar declares, “Faith is not a religion, but stands at the basis of all religion.”

Varghese Manimala elaborates on Panikkar’s anthropology by saying, “As historical, human being stands in a twofold openness: openness to other human beings (horizontal or immanent openness) and openness to the Transcendent.” Manimala points out that this second openness to the Transcendent is what Panikkar calls “Faith.”

He also describes the elusiveness of this anthropological stratum of faith:

Authentic faith, so it seems, cannot question itself. Real faith is always unsatisfied with the answer; it is always a question so virgin that it does not even know there is an answer. Hence faith is a myth.

But, we cannot take cognizance of the myth or else it is gone. He continues: Mythic faith is good faith, but good faith does not recognize itself as mythic, nor will it claim to be. Myth is not and cannot be the object of faith because it is by its very constitution the vehicle of faith.

Thus faith is animated by myth and expressed by belief. While reflecting on Panikkar’s insistence that faith is a fundamental religious dimension distinct from beliefs,
Jyri Komulainen uncovers an important aspect of Panikkar’s unique brand of pluralism. He points out, “Panikkar understands that language is one of the human invariants.” By this, he means that there is a “primordial language” hidden in spoken languages. Thus, he points out, “A universal theory of religion would not be dissimilar to a universal language, which he discounts.” Thus, the diversity of beliefs is to be expected, just as the diversity of language is to be expected. However, the existence of beliefs in every human setting, like the existence of language in every human setting is also to be expected. There is something universal that ‘needs’ particular expression: faith. At one’s deepest core, identity flows from faith because openness to the transcendent is a basic characteristic of humanity itself.

This universal ‘something’ makes human beings what they are, it mediates human identity:

The Openness of faith is a constitutive openness. It cannot be closed; it is infinite, neither limited nor limitable. Faith is like a hole in the human being that is never filled, saturated, or turned into a kind of substantivity that would represent the supreme religious blasphemy and sever Man from any relation with the infinite. Through this hole he reaches the infinite (cf. śūnyatā). For Panikkar the human being (Panikkar uses the term ‘Man’) “is an inquiring being who desires, seeks, questions.” This quest is an endless searching:

The essence of faith seems to me to lie in the question rather than in the answer, in the inquisitive stance, in the desire rather than in the concrete response one gives.

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168 See Jyri Komulainen, An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions, 95.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
171 Ibid., 96.
173 Ibid., 210.
He continues by insisting that we are not isolated in this quest:

Everybody ‘has’ faith, every human being is endowed with this constitutive dimension; but no one is forced to live ex fide, out of faith or from faith.\textsuperscript{175}

Thus, for Panikkar, the human being (or ‘Man’) is \textit{homo quaerens}. To reprise a theme we introduced in our first chapter, Panikkar here echoes Augustine. In one of the most famous phrases from his \textit{Confessions}, Augustine begins his recollection by praying, “Thou movest us to delight in praising Thee; for Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee.”\textsuperscript{176} However, since God always transcends our grasp, the search always continues, even as ‘rest’ in union with the divine. To have faith, then, is not to have all of the answers. Rather, to have faith is to be ever open to transcendence. This openness is something found in each of us that we are each capable of cultivating. The restless search that Augustine describes, and to which Panikkar attests, is not simply a rational search for an infinite divine principle. Rather, it is an existential search; it comes from the ‘heart’ and affects the human being at his/her core. It is the search for identity. Faith, then, is a foundational component of the \textit{humanum}; the human being is a being that is capable of faith.

Some may contend that this universalization of faith may be problematic. After all, if faith is said to be everywhere, is there anything distinct about the so-called ‘believer’? In many ways, this is the question of the relationship between the Church and the world. We will elaborate on this in detail in both our fourth and fifth chapter. However, at this juncture, it may be helpful to point to Panikkar’s reflection on secularization. Panikkar, in his love for linguistics, takes an etymological approach,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., 212. \\
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saying, “The *saeculum* is not simply the world, and certainly not the *kosmos*, but rather its temporal aspect: the *aiôn*.“\(^{177}\) He continues,

“Secular means, therefore, the temporal world, the temporal aspect of reality.”\(^{178}\) Therefore, he deduces, “In a word, the process of secularization is connected with ever increasing importance being given to time and the temporal.”\(^{179}\) For Panikkar, the purpose of secularization is not to force the sacred to yield to the profane and mundane, as many read it. Rather, it is an invitation to uncover the sacred within the profane and mundane. For this reason, he tells us that “the sacred quality of secularism” is “emerging in our days.”\(^{180}\) He elaborates:

> In other words, what seems to be unique in the human constellation of the present *kairos* is the disruption of the equation sacred-non-temporal together with the positive value so far attached to it. The temporal is seen today as positive and, in a way, sacred.\(^{181}\)

Thus, faith, rather than pointing exclusively to particular contexts or, on the other extreme, discarding them altogether, animates these particular contexts and directs them to the underlying communion of all reality. Faith, then, as a stratum of the *humanum*, enables human beings to realize this communion. Faith points to the cosmotheandric unity of all reality. Faith is an essential component of identity. And, as we have seen, and will continue to see, identity is a complex reality.

### 3.6 A Philosophical Approach to Identity: Paul Ricoeur

Let us take a moment, then, to enhance Panikkar’s reflections on identity with two contemporary approaches: one from the philosophical world and another from post-

\(^{177}\) Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, *Worship and Secular Man*, 10. *Aiôn* refers to the “life-span” of the *kosmos*.

\(^{178}\) Ibid.

\(^{179}\) Ibid., 11.

\(^{180}\) Ibid.

\(^{181}\) Ibid.
colonial thought. Let us begin with Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur insists that personal identity “can be articulated only in the temporal dimension of human existence.”

Interestingly, Ricoeur sees the issue of identity as a juncture at which the Continental and Anglo-American Schools of philosophical thought cross paths. To begin his reflection, Ricoeur distinguishes between two uses of the term ‘identity’. Identity can be understood under concept of ‘sameness’, exhibited in the use of Latin *idem*. However, identity can also be understood under the concept of ‘selfhood’, following the Latin *ipse*. The two uses of ‘identity’ are not interchangeable. Ricoeur asserts, “Selfhood, I have repeatedly affirmed, is not sameness.”

According to Ricoeur, the question of personal identity circulates around the question of “permanence in time.” Ricoeur begins by pointing out that *idem*-identity is typically the way analytic philosophers approach the question of personal identity. For thinkers who take this approach, relationality is the key to understanding identity. Ricoeur points out, “Sameness is a concept of relation and a relation of relations.”

Relationally-speaking, there are different aspects of *idem*-identity. For instance, an important element of idem-identity is numerical identity. In other words, there is one thing that is identical to itself. Another element of *idem*-identity is qualitative identity, in which there can be “substitution without semantic loss, *salva veritate*.”

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183 Ibid.
184 Ibid., 116.
185 Ibid.
186 Ibid.
187 Ibid.
188 See Ibid.
189 Ibid.
substitution, however, it is essential that there is uninterrupted continuity.\textsuperscript{190} The issue of permanence in time underlies this similitude and continuity.\textsuperscript{191} To illustrate this, Ricoeur points to a tool whose component parts are all gradually replaced over time. Even though all of its components are different than they once were, the tool is the same tool.\textsuperscript{192} One could also point to the fact that all the cells in the human body gradually regenerate over time in such a way that eventually the ‘stuff’ of our bodies is completely different than it once was, yet they are still the same bodies. So, there is a relational character to identity, which is shown by the idea of structure. As structure remains, identity is not lost. But once the underlying structure changes the identity of sameness is no more. Once one of the old components of the tool is removed from the tool, it is no longer identical to it. Once a cell in the human body dies and is lost, it is no longer part of the body.

With this in mind, Ricoeur concludes, “The entire problematic of personal identity will revolve around this search for a relational invariant, giving it the strong signification of permanence in time.”\textsuperscript{193} This leads him to ask the central question of his reflection:

Does the selfhood of the self imply a form of permanence in time which is not reducible to the determination of a substratum, not even in the relational sense which Kant assigns to the category of substance; in short, is there a form of permanence in time which is not simply the schema of the category of substance?\textsuperscript{194}

In other words:

\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., 117.  
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., 118.  
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.
Is there a form of permanence in time which can be connected to the question “who?”
inasmuch as it is irreducible to the question of “what?”? Is there a form of permanence in
time that is a reply to the question “Who am I?”?\footnote{195}

What Ricoeur is asking here is whether we must reify the self to get at the
permanence in time, which we call ‘identity’. Towards this end, Ricoeur finds two
commonly used expressions or concepts that show two ‘non-substantial’ models of
permanence in time: “character” and “keeping one’s word.”\footnote{196} He describes his goal in
the following manner:

The polarity I am going to examine suggests an intervention of narrative identity in the
conceptual constitution of personal identity in the manner of a specific mediator between
the pole of character, where \textit{idem} and \textit{ipse} tend to coincide, and the pole of self-
maintenance, where selfhood frees itself from sameness.\footnote{197}

At the outset of his reflection on character, Ricoeur defines ‘character’, saying,
“By ‘character’ I understand the set of distinctive marks which permit the reidentification
of a human individual as being the same.”\footnote{198} Character gives “numerical identity and
qualitative identity, uninterrupted continuity and permanence in time.”\footnote{199} After
discussing the variety of forms the term ‘character’ has taken in his own thought, Ricoeur
concludes, “Character, I would say today, designates the set of lasting dispositions by
which a person is recognized.”\footnote{200} It is important to note that for Ricoeur, \textit{ipse} and \textit{idem}
are indistinguishable here.\footnote{201}

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textit{Ibid.}, 118-119.
\item \textit{Ibid.}, 119.
\item \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textit{Ibid.}, 121
\item See \textit{Ibid.}
\end{itemize}
Ricoeur uses the concept of habit to discuss the temporal dimensions of character, pointing out that there are two ‘valences’ of habit: ‘being formed’ and ‘already possessed’. Because of this temporal aspect of character, “habit gives a history of character, but this is a history in which sedimentation tends to cover over the innovation which preceded it.” So, it has temporal significance in being acquired, but this temporality is masked by the assessment that a habit has been acquired. The term sedimentation here denotes a kind of ‘layering’ of character. It is almost an archeological image. One must dig to find the past where character was built. And it is difficult to see it as it is being built and set in stone. Rather, it is much easier to see it ‘after the fact’, as an artifact. This ‘sedimentation’ is essential for Ricoeur:

It is this sedimentation which confers on character the sort of permanence in time that I am interpreting here as the overlapping of *ipse* by *idem*. This overlapping, however, does not abolish the difference separating the two problematics: precisely as second nature, my character is me, myself, *ipse*; but this *ipse* announces itself as *idem*.

Thus, the habit becomes a “trait” or a “character trait” by which one is identified. In addition to these habits, there are also “acquired identifications” that allows “the other to enter into the composition of the same.” Ricoeur explains:

To a large extent, in fact, the identity of a person or a community is made up of these identifications with values, norms, ideals, models, and heroes, *in* which the person or the community recognizes itself.

Thus, the identity of persons within community is made up of shared traits by which both outsiders and insiders can identify members of the community. For instance,
heroes and values connect us with “a ‘cause’ above our own survival.” This brings an aspect of loyalty and fidelity into one’s character. Thus, as we have seen, Ricoeur’s two aspects of identity are ultimately compatible:

Here the two poles of identity accord with one another. This proves that one cannot think the idem of the person through without considering the ipse, even when one entirely covers over the other.

This is true because character traits require stability. And:

By means of this stability, borrowed from acquired habits and identifications—in other words, from dispositions—character assures at once numerical identity, qualitative identity, uninterrupted continuity across change, and finally, permanence in time which defines sameness.

Therefore, “character is truly the ‘what’ of the ‘who.’” Thus, there is an aspect of both idem- and ipse-identity at work here. However, ipse and idem are not completely reducible to on another. This meeting of sameness and selfness in character formation points to history:

The dialect of innovation and sedimentation, underlying the acquisition of a habit, and the equally rich dialectic of otherness and internalization, underlying the process of identification, are there to remind us that character has a history which it has contracted, one might say, in the twofold sense of the word “contraction”: abbreviation and affection.

Thus the formation of character requires narrative because character is formed over time.

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208 Ibid.
209 Ibid.
210 Ibid.
211 Ibid., 122.
212 Ibid.
213 Ibid.
214 Ibid.
215 Ibid.
So, personal identity requires narrative identity. This brings Ricoeur to the model of ‘keeping one’s word’. As we mentioned above, faithfulness to one’s word is Ricoeur’s other model for discussing permanence in time. He explains the significance of this act for identity:

Keeping one’s word expresses a *self-constancy* which cannot be inscribed, as character was, within the dimension of something in general but solely within the dimension of “*who*”?

In other words, the action of keeping a promise requires a ‘*who*’, a subject to keep this promise, an object of accountability. Ricoeur points out that this phenomenon presumes relationality, insisting, “The continuity of character is one thing, the constancy of friendship is quite another.” Thus, “an interval of sense” is opened up between the poles of the ‘*consistency*’ of character and ‘*constancy*’ of self presumed in the promise. Narrative fills this space by ‘oscillating’ between the two limits of the poles. Thus, one cannot have personal identity without narrative identity, which by combining sameness and selfness, gives permanence in time to the subject.

Much like Panikkar’s reflections on identity visited above, Ricoeur gives us a model of identity that is dipolar. Ricoeur’s poles, sameness and selfness are similar to Panikkar’s poles, self and others. While Panikkar’s reflections on identity cast identity as an oscillation between self-designation and the appraisal of others (the community), Ricoeur’s reflections on the same topic see personal identity as bound up with narrative identity, which represents a similar oscillation between sameness and self-possession.

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216 Ibid.
217 Ibid., 123.
218 Ibid.
219 Ibid.
220 Ibid., 124.
Both sets of poles may be (cautiously) seen by the classical epistemological terms of subject (self) and object (sameness, communal acceptance), or better, subjectivity and objectification. Both thinkers tell us that identity lies somewhere between these two poles. It is essential to note that, because of this, both descriptions of identity are necessarily imprecise because of the irreducibility of one’s identity to a mere concept (objectification).

Ricoeur’s main point is to demonstrate that through the question ‘who?’ identity ‘resists’ reduction to sameness, a category of the question ‘what?’. Thus, he avoids reducing the living subject to an impersonal description. While there is no completely neutral observation in identity, we do need both moments of dispossession and self-possession to maintain selfhood.\textsuperscript{221} Therefore, answers to the questions ‘who’ and ‘what’ are both necessary components of identity. For Ricoeur, identity is richly complex and cannot be reduced to a mere object. The self cannot be reified and can only be found through narrative identity.

Therefore, for Ricoeur, we need both idem and ipse identity for complete selfhood. We can roughly tie idem-identity to the ‘Western’ view of identity that Panikkar connects with the law of non-contradiction. Ipse-identity may be closer to the ‘Eastern’ sense of identity as union, although it is distinct. This element of identity is perhaps best understood as the subjectivity that makes this union (and communion) with others possible. Furthermore, without this narrative aspect of identity, one cannot have the ability to learn and inculcate knowledge, both through logos or mythos. Ricoeur points out that both aspects (idem and ipse) are necessary parts of the whole of identity, which can only be approached in the oscillation between these poles found in narrative

\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., 138.
identity. Perhaps, using Panikkar’s East-West distinction, we can assert that both approaches are necessary. After all, to generate meaning in the world, we must use the law of non-contradiction to distinguish between things. For instance, Panikkar would not be able to discuss the mystical union of cosmotheandrism if there were not three distinct ‘things’ to unite. This is the distinction pole of the unity-in-distinction that is the hallmark of Trinitarian thought. The distinction-identity of the West makes the unity-identity of the East possible and vice versa.

3.7 Postcolonialism and Identity: Homi K. Bhabha

Let us now turn to bring another approach to identity in dialogue with that of Panikkar: that of Postcolonialism. Panikkar himself acknowledges coming from a postcolonial context. For instance, he describes his own context as a “neocolonialistic” situation. One of the best known writers in postcolonial thought is Homi K. Bhabha. Bhabha describes the term ‘postcolonial’ as follows:

If the jargon of our times—postmodernity, postcoloniality, postfeminism—has any meaning at all, it does not lie in the popular use of the ‘post’ to indicate sequentiality—after-feminism; or polarity—anti-modernism. These terms that insistently gesture to the beyond, only embody its restless and revisionary energy if they transform the present into an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment.

In this way, just as the term ‘postmodern’ points ‘beyond’ modernity, so too does the term ‘postcolonial’ point beyond the oppressive state of colonialism. Postcolonialism goes beyond oppression to empowerment. However, the postcolonial state of culture is steeped in ambiguity. Just as after modernism, we cannot return to a state of premodern

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naïveté, so too postcolonial culture cannot return to precolonial ‘native’ culture.224

Bhabha is enamored with the idea of ‘boundaries’, which in the postcolonial milieu are often transgressed. Following Heidegger, Bhabha describes a boundary as the place where “something begins its presencing.”225 So boundaries are, in a sense, generative, not limiting. Bhabha poignantly uses the term “hybridity” to refer to identity in cultures that find themselves in a postcolonial context.226 A ‘hybrid’ is a new combination of things that belongs to neither of the categories from which it has sprung. It is almost a Hegelian concept, except that it makes no claim to either superiority and progress or inferiority and regress. Rather, it is simply different. Postcolonial identity is neither that of the natives nor that of the oppressors, but is, rather, a tertium quid, a ‘third thing’. So, for instance, those in postcolonial India do not fit perfectly into the category of their Indian ancestors nor their British colonizers. Rather, they are forever changed and impacted by the British occupation of the past. Thus, the experience of ‘hybridity’ is not necessarily a positive experience. Another example can be in the experience of a person taken into slavery, whose identity has been forever forcibly altered. For this reason, many descendents of slaves in North America cannot trace their family history back to their ancestor’s native lands, but only back to the slave trade. In the same way, the postcolonial has been forced into the ‘beyond’ never to return to the ‘before’. Bhabha describes this situation:

Being in the ‘beyond’, then, is to inhabit an intervening space, as any dictionary will tell you. But to dwell ‘in the beyond’ is also, as I have shown, to be part of a revisionary

224 Often times, even such an idea that envisions the past of a culture as monolithic and isolationist is largely reductive.
225 Ibid., 5.
226 Ibid., 6.
time, a return to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity; to reinscribe our human, historic commonality; to touch the future on its hither side.[227]

Bhabha describes this experience of displacement as ‘unhomeliness’, a constant, lingering sensation of ‘not belonging’.228 According to Bhabha, there is a “third Space” or a new home, which is opened up by the ‘not this, not that’ experience of hybridity.229 To explore this more deeply, Bhabha follows the thought of Frantz Fanon.230 Fanon’s thought is the product of dealing with racial division and identity as a psychoanalyst in French Algeria.231 In the postcolonial setting, Bhabha summarizes:

Forms of social and psychic alienation and aggression—madness, self-hate, treason, violence—can never be acknowledged as determinate and constitute conditions of civil authority or as the ambivalent effects of the social instinct itself.232 Rather, they are ignored and “explained away.”233 Thus, in many ways, one simply continues to reinforce the isolation and alienation of oppression within one’s own psyche, without acknowledging its roots. Bhabha illustrates this phenomenon of self-splitting as follows:

The representative figure of such a perversion, I want to suggest, is the image of post-Enlightenment man tethered to, not confronted by, his dark reflection, the shadow of colonized man, that splits his presence, distorts his outline, breaches his boundaries, repeats his action at a distance, disturbs and divides the very time of his being.234 Thus, identity, in a post-colonial context, is characterized by a kind of oscillation between the past and the present. With regard to identity, Bhabha identifies three

227 Ibid., 7.
228 See Ibid., 8-18.
229 Ibid., 38.
231 Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture, Second Edition, 40-42.
232 Ibid., 43.
233 Ibid.
234 Ibid., 44.
conditions of the “process of identification” that is conditioned by the “analytic of desire.” First, “to exist is to be called into being in relation to an otherness, its look or locus.” He explains:

It is always in relation to the place of the Other that colonial desire is articulated: the phantasmic space of possession that no one subject can singly or fixedly occupy, and therefore permits the dream of the inversion of roles.

In other words, one identifies oneself by what one thinks one has that the other wants. Secondly, “the very place of identification, caught in the tension of demand and desire, is a space of splitting.” This is the ‘difference’ that sets one apart from the ‘different’. This would be exemplified by one of the ‘colonizers’ declaring that one of the ‘colonized’ is one of ‘us’ and not one of ‘them’ because he/she is a doctor or an intellectual, etc., which makes him/her different from ‘them’ and one of ‘us’. Bhabha explains:

It is precisely in that ambivalent use of ‘different’—to be different from those that are different makes you the same—that the Unconscious speaks of the form of otherness, the tethered shadow of deferral and displacement. It is not the colonialist Self or the colonized Other, but the disturbing distance in-between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness—the white man’s artifice inscribed on the black man’s body.

Thus, identity becomes severed from itself. Thirdly, Bhabha points out that “the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a self-fulfilling prophecy—it is always the production of an image of identity and the

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235 Ibid.
236 Ibid.
237 Ibid.
238 Ibid.
239 Ibid.
240 Ibid.
241 Ibid., 44-45.
transformation of the subject in assuming that image.”

So, identification “is always the return of an image of identity that bears the mark of splitting in the Other place from which it comes.”

In this way, identification changes that which it identifies. Thus, for Bhabha, the act of identification can be seen as an irreversible act of violence imposed on the Other from without.

Bhabha sets out to examine the parameters of identification. He points out, “In the postcolonial text the problem of identity returns as a persistent questioning of the frame, the space of representation, where the image…is confronted with its difference, its Other.” In order to analyze this ‘frame’ of identity, following Roland Barthes, Bhabha defines identity as a ‘symbolic sign’ consisting of an image based on resemblance.

Thus, resemblance marks the “space” where this image of identity is “inscribed.” This categorization of identity based on resemblance is necessarily reductive. It tames or ignores the uniqueness inherent in each individual and reduces it to categories like ‘us’ and ‘them’. Therefore:

Each time the encounter with identity occurs at the point at which something exceeds the frame of the image, it eludes the eye, evacuates the self as site of identity and autonomy and—most important—leaves a resistant trace, a stain of the subject, a sign of resistance.

Because of this, for instance, the complete image of the Other is invisible to the Western gaze. It is seen only as absence. This is the postcolonial experience. The

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242 Ibid., 45.
243 Ibid.
244 Ibid., 46.
246 Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture, Second Edition, 49.
247 Ibid.
248 Ibid., 47.
struggle inherent in this experience is characterized by the refusal to circumscribe identity to the categories imposed upon it. Thus, Bhabha speaks of ‘double inscriptions’. 249

The desire for the Other is doubled by the desire in language, which splits the difference between Self and Other so that both positions are partial; neither is sufficient unto itself.

As I have just shown in the portrait of the missing person, the very question of identification only emerges in-between disavowal and designation. 250

Thus, identity is elusive and always escapes the categories imposed on it, even the categories of self and other. One cannot say the Other is the Same, yet one can also recognize similarities that prevent the radicalization of alterity. Because of this, Bhabha insists that “identity is never a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality.” 251 There is always ‘more’ that can never be completely accounted for conceptually. These concepts and categories are at best only relatively adequate (and at worst violently oppressive). Bhabha distinguishes between the image perceived in identification and identity itself, which is the cause of this splitting of the subject:

For the image—as point of identification—marks the site of an ambivalence. Its representation is always spatially split—it makes present something that is absent—and temporally deferred: it is the representation of a time that is always elsewhere, a repetition. 252

In other words, the ‘image’ or appearance of identity derives its efficaciousness from reference to other images. In this way, identity is formed by locating the individual within, or, more precisely, between these other images. Thus, this image is an

“appurtenance to authority and identity.” Thus, true identity is distinct from identity perceived from without through ‘identification’. Because of this, true identity always eludes the grasp of identification. Bhabha explains that for Fanon:

The Other must be seen as the necessary negation of a primordial identity—cultural or psychic—that introduces the system of differentiation which enables the cultural to be signified as a linguistic, symbolic, historic reality.

So, this system of negation and splitting is thus inculcated into the subject’s own self-identification. The subject identifies him/herself within the system of identification given. This leaves him/her with a sense of ambiguity because of his or her ‘not this/not that’ status. Thus, identification always points to “a lack.” In other words, identification always fails to completely do what it sets out to do. The identified always eludes the grasp of the identifier, even if the identifier is oneself. So, identification (and self-identification) is a process that is never complete because of this doubling or splitting the subject.

Thus, one is left in the aforementioned state of ‘hybridity’:

The subaltern or metonymic are neither empty nor full, neither part nor whole. Their compensatory and vicarious processes of signification are a spur to social translation, the production of something else besides which is not only the cut or gap of the subject but also the intercut across social sites and disciplines. This hybridity initiates the project of political thinking by continually facing it with the strategic and the contingent, with the countervailing thought of its own ‘unthought’.

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253 Ibid.
254 Ibid., 52.
255 Ibid.
256 Ibid.
257 Ibid., 64.
Thus, in this experience of hybridity, there is an element of resistance. Bhabha insists that the identity of the person living as a postcolonial citizen is somewhere between the oppressor and oppressed. The oppressed has taken on the language, mannerisms, dress, and concepts of the oppressors and the neat categories of the identification of the past are no longer adequate, if they ever were. Once this inadequacy of identification is uncovered, the oppressed must re-envision their identity. However, this must be done with caution. Bhabha insists, “What must be left an open question is how we are to rethink ourselves once we have undermined the immediacy and autonomy of self-consciousness.”258 This question must ‘remain open’ in order to avoid setting up new and additional hegemonic structures that can become just as oppressive as the old ones.

The question we must ask in order to bring Bhabha’s ideas into dialogue those Panikkar is whether hybridity is a peculiar experience of the subaltern. In a sense, we can say each individual, regardless of his or her context, has an identity that is not reducible to the prevailing categories of that context. However, this identity is conditioned by those categories. Consequently, each individual stands in a state of ‘hybridity’, always eluding the confines of identification. This form of hybridity, however, may not necessarily be the result of a condition of oppression and may not necessarily be a ‘negative’ experience.

Bhabha’s approach reflects a dynamic similar to the self/community dynamic of identity seen in Panikkar’s reflections above. For Bhabha, the postcolonial identity is characterized by the tension between hegemonic categories. Panikkar, as we have seen, believes there is a similar tension between one’s identification of oneself and the

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258 Ibid., 65.
community’s assessment of one. Bhabha’s thought can enhance this understanding first by underscoring the ambiguity of identity, but also by demonstrating that this ambiguity is due to the inherent limitations of the categories being used. Panikkar is quite comfortable in the world of ambiguity (or rather with the ambiguity of the world):

Ecumenical ecumenism 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 would 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.²⁵⁹

Bhabha also adds an element to this tension articulated by Panikkar. As we have mentioned, in the phenomenon of self-identification, one’s identity, as one sees it, is conditioned by the categories one has at his/her disposal with which to identify oneself. So, one is either ‘this’ or ‘that’, ‘one of us’ or ‘one of them’. The reality that is identity, Bhabha insists, transcends this categorization. So, even one’s own self-appraisal is a reflection of the structures imposed by the community, which could be the local community or the global community, oppressive or benign. Regardless, in reality, neither the assessment of self, nor the assessment of others, nor some combination of the two takes place without an element of reduction. Thus, it is necessary to acknowledge ‘hybridity’ to avoid further reduction. This seems to reflect well Panikkar’s emphasis on the ‘Eastern’ approach to identity based on union over the ‘Western’ approach to identity based upon non-contradiction.

3.8 Conclusion

²⁵⁹ Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The Intrareligious Dialogue, 4.
As we have seen, identity is an essential element of Panikkar’s thought. In this regard, he favors an ‘Eastern’ conception of identity as based upon unity over a ‘Western’ conception of identity based upon differentiation. Thus, identity, for Panikkar is clearest in that with which one unites oneself. As we shall see, this gives direction to Panikkar’s emphasis on cosmotheandrim. We see a similar dipolar dynamic at work in Paul Ricoeur’s reflections on identity. Ricoeur notes the tension between what he calls *idem* identity (sameness) and *ipse* identity (selfhood; narrative identity). By using these categories, Ricoeur helps us to see that both of these elements are necessary components of human identity. While the categories of sameness and differentiation are important, there is also a unifying narrative identity that unites the subject over time and, we might add, allows one to be united to others.

Panikkar also emphasizes the necessity of both individual self-designation and communal acceptance in the determination of identity. Identity is neither found in isolation nor without one’s presence. In this regard, Homi K. Bhabha’s reflections on ‘hybridity’ and identity help to show us that the distinction between these two poles may not be as easy to determine as one may at first think. For Panikkar too, this phenomenon is more complex than it may at first appear. The human person finds his or her true identity only at the deepest level of his or her subjectivity. For Panikkar, this level of faith corresponds with *mythos*, which is fuller than and prior to *logos*. Thus, whenever one attempts to clearly delineate identity (obviously using reason, *logos*), one is necessarily carrying out an exercise in which some of the ‘content’ is lost.

In our next chapter, we will continue our reflection upon ‘identity’ in Raimon Panikkar’s thought. However, we will concretely apply this concept. We will
particularly focus on the identity of Christ and Christian identity. Through our examination of these two interrelated concepts, we will see how the concept of identity that we have just visited is applied in Panikkar’s theology. We will also examine the connection between Panikkar’s reflections on identity, which we have examined in this chapter, and Panikkar’s Christological reflections, which we examined in our previous chapter.
Chapter 4

The Identity of Christ and Christian Identity

Now that we have examined Panikkar’s thoughts on identity, it is natural that we should seek to apply them concretely. Let us now look at the connection of Christian identity and Christ’s identity in Panikkar’s thought. After doing this, it is also important to examine how this Christian identity appears in the encounter between religions. To do this, we will have to examine in detail Panikkar’s thoughts on the dialogue between religions. What is essential to Panikkar’s vision here is that the other religious traditions that Christians encounter are not threats to Christian identity. Rather, they provide an opportunity for growth.

4.1 The Identity of Christ

4.1.1 The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth

As we have already begun to see in our second chapter, one of the most difficult components of Panikkar’s theology to pinpoint is the relationship between ‘Christ’ and Jesus of Nazareth. Jyri Komulainen is critical of this ambiguous relationship between ‘Christ’ and Jesus. Komulainen notes a distinction between Christ and Jesus based upon a distinction between ‘person’ and ‘individual’ in Panikkar’s thought. He points out: “Panikkar’s cosmic Christology is based on a distinction between ‘person’ and ‘individual’. This enables him to detach the true meaning of Jesus, i.e. his personal mystery, from a particular historical being.”

1 Jyri Komulainen, *An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, (Boston, MA: Brill, 2005), 139.

explains that a ‘person’ is always in relation.\textsuperscript{3} This relationality contextualizes the person. Identification refers to the more ‘external’ aspects of this relationality. In this way, “personal identification is based on empirical data, on the external signs of the person in question, thus not touching the person proper.”\textsuperscript{4} However, as we have already mentioned, personal identity points to the center of the human being with which one engages in personal relationships.\textsuperscript{5} However, for Panikkar, Christ’s identity is ambiguous. Thus, Komulainen contends that because Christ’s identity is “ambivalent” and cannot be located and tied exclusively to any single historical manifestation, Panikkar can find Christ anywhere.\textsuperscript{6}

As we have mentioned, because it is conditioned by the law of noncontradiction, the Western mind tends towards ‘exclusive’ statements, declaring that Jesus \textit{is} Christ. However, “the gist of his [Panikkar’s] logical argument is that he does not consider ‘is’ sentences to imply exclusiveness.”\textsuperscript{7} According to Komulainen, Panikkar uses a “rather idiosyncratic understanding of the resurrection” to support this logical openness in that Christ, as risen, “is not limited by any geographical categories or historical parameters.”\textsuperscript{8} Consequently, Christ can be found everywhere.

Komulainen sees Panikkar’s Advaitic roots as influential in this regard. He believes that Panikkar’s Christology is dependent upon a definition of ‘person’ that is

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{3} \textit{Ibid.}
  \item \textsuperscript{4} \textit{Ibid.}
  \item \textsuperscript{5} \textit{Ibid.}, 141.
  \item \textsuperscript{6} \textit{Ibid.} See Raimon Panikkar, \textit{The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany, Revised and Enlarged Edition}, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981), 169. It is more precise to say that Panikkar sees Christ wherever God acts. He says, “Whatever God does \textit{ad extra} happens through Christ.”
  \item \textsuperscript{7} Jyri Komulainen, \textit{An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions}, 142.
  \item \textsuperscript{8} \textit{Ibid.}, 143.
\end{itemize}
very similar to the manner in which ‘ātman’ functions in Advaitic philosophy. In the
Advaitic tradition, the ātman is the self, or better, the transcendent self, which is united to
Brahman and the rest of reality in a non-dual relationship. Komulainen sees two
identifying features of ātman that feed Panikkar’s Christology: “First, ātman is very
dynamic and extensive, transcending the universe. Secondly, despite its infiniteness,
ātman as such is the center of everything.”
Thus, ātman is the transcendent ‘Supername’ that extends beyond particular individuals. So, if Christ functions in the
same manner as ātman for Panikkar, he can make a distinction (although not a
separation) between Jesus of Nazareth and Christ:

Thus Panikkar may, on the one hand, speak about Jesus of Nazareth who, through his
kenosis, reveals the Supename. On the other hand, Christ is for Panikkar a vital symbol
of cosmotheandric reality, even the Being itself through the kenosis of the Father.
Therefore:

Christology is not exhausted in the historical Jesus since the resurrected Christ is more
than Jesus of Nazareth.

But, for Komulainen, Panikkar’s Christology has the same problem as his
theology of religions, in which he attempts to affirm concrete religions, while also
attempting to transcend them. Christologically, Panikkar is attempting to affirmed the
particularities of Jesus of Nazareth, while also trying to distill a more universal ‘Christ-
ness’ that Jesus of Nazareth manifests. The central Christological question that
Panikkar’s Christophanic enterprise faces is whether, in this universalizing process, the

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9 Ibid., 144.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 145.
12 Ibid., 146.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., 148.
historical person of Jesus of Nazareth been completely left behind, and consequently, whether the Incarnation has any significance at all. Jacques Dupuis’ concern over Panikkar’s thought is similar to that of Komulainen. He sees this particularly as a problem in Panikkar’s later thought, beginning with the significantly revised second edition of *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*. Dupuis points out that in this later stage of Panikkar’s Christological development the salvific significance of Jesus seems obscured. Thus, we are left to inquire: in what way is Jesus the way for adherents of other religions?

It is important to examine Panikkar’s intentions in this regard. Panikkar does not wish to mutate either the Christian tradition or the Hindu tradition. Rather, he wishes to allow them to dialogue and enlighten each other. He sets this forth at the outset of *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, declaring:

> The goal of this study is not to obtain agreement at the cost of fundamental Christian or Hindu principles. On the contrary, it is an attempt to arrive at a certain understanding without renouncing any of the specifically Christian or Hindu truths.

We can probably assume that the revelatory and salvific uniqueness of Jesus of Nazareth as the ‘Christ’ lies among these ‘fundamental’ Christian truths, although Panikkar does not spell these out. Again, Panikkar describes the main intent of *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*:

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16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
It speaks to the bona fide Hindu and Christian who are no longer mutually unsympathetic, but who do not wish to dilute their own religiousness or to lose their own identity, in spite of being ready for openness and even change should such be required.\textsuperscript{19}

Thus, Panikkar does not intend to upset or scandalize bona fide (‘good faith’) adherents of the traditions of Christianity and Hinduism, while, at the same time, he wishes to allow them to encounter each other in open dialogue. While this may be Panikkar’s intention, the question remains in the minds of many of his critics, like Komulainen, as to whether he actually accomplishes this. Interestingly, in this regard, Panikkar’s troublesome ambiguity which roots Komulainen’s criticism may also be an asset. S. Mark Heim points out that there remains in Panikkar’s thought a special place for what he [Panikkar] would term the ‘christophany’ of Jesus of Nazareth:

Panikkar does not presuppose that Christ must always be identified with Jesus of Nazareth. Christ, who links God and the world, does this linking in many places without association with Jesus of Nazareth. And yet Panikkar does seem to claim that though the linking need not be done in the guise of Jesus, yet the one who does the linking is himself most fully revealed in Jesus.\textsuperscript{20}

After all, Panikkar utilizes the term ‘Christ’, which for Christians is traditionally linked with Jesus of Nazareth to describe this salvific unity that underlies and comprises the goal of all reality. And while he uses other terms, like Īśvara, Krishna, etc., somewhat interchangeably with ‘Christ’, this Christian term seems to hold some sort of normative place for Panikkar. Consequently, Jesus of Nazareth, with whom this title is historically linked, is irreplaceable.

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}, 22.
The ambiguity of Panikkar’s position can also leave room for a variety of interpretations and applications. For example, Jacques Dupuis’ insistence that there is a mutual, but asymmetrical relationship between Christianity and other religions based upon the ‘unique filial consciousness’ of Jesus of Nazareth may work well in tandem with Panikkar’s theology. Although Panikkar prefers to avoid any statements that might be interpreted as Christian triumphalism, he also never explicitly denies such claims. Such an omission is telling.

4.1.2 The Identity that the ‘Christophany’ Reveals

Christophanies, for Panikkar, reveal the identity of all because they show the communion at the root of all reality. Thus, ‘Christ’ reveals the Trinitarian, Advaitic structure of reality. So, the revelatory character of ‘Christ’ extends beyond the particular revelation of Jesus of Nazareth. However, as we have just mentioned, it is revealed (perhaps to a unique degree) in the Incarnation. Panikkar’s earlier writings connect the unity of all, as well as the existence of all, with the Trinitarian hypostasis of the Son, stating, “Beings are in so far as they participate in the Son, are from, with and through him. Every being is a christophany a showing forth of Christ.” As we have already noted in detail in our second chapter, Panikkar makes use of this term (‘christophany’) more frequently in his later theology, particularly in the book that employs it as its title. But, a christophany is not simply a revelation of the identity of Jesus of Nazareth, although this revelation does take place in Jesus of Nazareth. The

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‘mystery’ that Christ reveals “is a disclosure of a reality that I am and you are.”\textsuperscript{23} In other words, this mystery discloses the very essence of identity. But, this identity is not completely “objectifiable” nor is it simply “subjective” either.\textsuperscript{24} It is a transcendent communion of all reality, which eludes the conceptual grasp of the mind.

Christians find this communion exemplified in a special way in Jesus of Nazareth. As he lays out the main thesis of \textit{The Unknown Christ of Hinduism}, Panikkar explains that Christianity and Hinduism encounter each other in their grasp of a reality that communicates the union of the Divine and the Human, which Christians call ‘Christ’.\textsuperscript{25} For Panikkar, then, religious traditions meet not in the ‘essential’, but in the ‘existential’ sphere.\textsuperscript{26} That is, “Religions meet in the heart rather than in the mind.”\textsuperscript{27} For Panikkar, the ‘heart’ here does not denote one’s emotive potency, but rather the “concrete reality of our lives.”\textsuperscript{28} The meeting place of the religions is in human fulfillment, which can only be realized kenotically:

Only when a Man is completely empty of himself, is in a state of kenosis, of renunciation and annihilation, will Christ fulfill his incarnation in him. Only kenosis allows incarnation, and incarnation is the only way to redemption. Only the naiskārmya attitude, the renunciation of the fruits of any good action, only the ego-less action in which the \textit{ahamkāra} has been overcome, leads Man to his true Self and allows him to serve and liberate the whole World.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{23} Raimon Panikkar, \textit{The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany, Revised and Enlarged Edition}, 24.
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Ibid.}, 37.
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid.}, 43.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Ibid.}
As we have seen, for Panikkar, all human beings have the ability to realize this ‘Christic’ union by virtue of the fact that cosmotheandric union is already present, undergirding all of reality, even though it often remains unrealized. As Panikkar points out in *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, speaking of an ‘Unknown Christ’ is indicative, not of a monotheistic or polytheistic claim. Rather, it is indicative of ‘something’ that is within every human being that does not abandon humanity and leads humanity to its fulfillment. He simply contends, “Our only point is that this cosmotheandric or Trinitarian, *purushic* or *īśvaric* principle exists.” Furthermore, where this ‘principle’ subsists, there is Christ.

**4.2 Christian Identity**

4.2.1 Christian Identity as Human Identity

This variety of religious experiences leads Panikkar to his discussion of tolerance. He describes tolerance not as a temporary acceptance of someone’s self-designation for now until that can be later disputed, but rather as a “mystical virtue.” Thus, Panikkar sees identity “in terms of function and not of content.” This leads him to make an important distinction between ‘categorical’ and ‘transcendental’ identity. Categorical identity is identity narrowly defined and consists of the profession of particular doctrines, e.g. the Nicene Creed, etc. By contrast, Panikkar points to the concept of transcendental identity, which is harder to ‘pin down’. Essentially, transcendental identity envisions Christian beliefs, or any other doctrinal suppositions for that matter, as

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‘communicating’ the truth, but not as “identical with” the truth.\textsuperscript{35} This leaves room for both disagreement and self-identification. Both of these positions can lead to their own brand of distortions (too narrow a view of identity that isolates or too broad a view of it that makes it meaningless), so Panikkar combines the two by locating the categorical within the transcendental.

Panikkar defines a Christian as “someone for whom the Christ symbol discloses or illumines or in one way or another touches the central mystery of one’s own existence.”\textsuperscript{36} And, as we saw in our previous chapter, the role of the community is to provide confirmation for one’s self-identity.\textsuperscript{37} Thus, a Christian, for Panikkar, is one who finds meaning in the Christ ‘symbol’.\textsuperscript{38} For Panikkar, the symbol participates in the reality that it mediates. In the case of the symbol of Christ, \textit{what} the symbol mediates is essential: all of reality and one’s place in it (i.e. identity). It is through the realization of cosmotheandric communion that one realizes one’s basic human and Christian identity. Christian identity, then, \textit{is} human identity. Panikkar’s project, then, is at one and the same time, completely concerned with Christian identity and unconcerned about Christian identity. He does not care to distinguish the identity of Christians from that of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{35} \textit{Ibid.}, 136.
\item \textsuperscript{36} \textit{Ibid.}, 137.
\item \textsuperscript{37} \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{38} See \textit{Ibid}. Panikkar’s use of the term “symbol” is noteworthy. For Panikkar symbols identify. In this way, a symbol is “distinct from a concept.” For Panikkar, then, a symbol “reveals, expresses or manifests something appertaining to the very core of the real in general, and of one’s existence in particular.” As such it can have a variety of meanings. See Roger Haight, \textit{Jesus Symbol of God}, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999). In some ways, Panikkar’s analysis here is similar to Roger Haight’s idea of the symbol in that a symbol manifests something. For Haight, however, there is a certain ‘distance’ between the symbol and the thing symbolized. The symbol points to a reality other than itself. See Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, \textit{Worship and Secular Man}, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), 20-21. For Panikkar, on the other hand, the symbol participates in the reality that it mediates. See Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, \textit{The Intrareligious Dialogue}, 36-37. Here Panikkar asserts, “Christ is the symbol, which Christians call by this name, of the ever-transcending but equally ever-humanly immanent Mystery.”
\end{itemize}

168
the rest of humanity. Rather, he is intent on demonstrating that Christ reveals the true human identity that is found and realized in communion and mystical unity.

Because Panikkar envisions identity as flowing from mystical unity, Panikkar’s central message regarding identity consists of both a question and a suggestion: “Why do we worry about christian identity? Only by letting it go may it be bestowed upon us.”39 Ultimately, for Panikkar, Christian identity derives from the cosmotheandric experience mediated by the Spirit of Christ. Because this can take a variety of forms, he lists five different kinds of Christian identity. These are: ontic, ontological, historical, sociological, and catholic.40 These types of Christian identity form a continuum moving from a purely transcendental acceptance of Christ (ontic Christianity) to a full categorical acceptance of Christ as found in Catholic doctrine (catholic Christianity) with a few positions in between (ontological, historical, and sociological).

What is interesting here is that his inclusion of the “ontic” Christian seems to go against his general thesis, which we explored in our last chapter, that identity consists of the interplay between self-designation and communal acceptance. Thus, it would seem that Christian identity for Panikkar seemingly requires some kind of explicit profession of faith. However, he leaves this ‘ontic’ option open in order to say that there could be such a thing as a “non-conscious” identity (ironically similar to Rahner’s ‘anonymous Christian’), calling it his “larger personal thesis.”41 This, of course, further obfuscates our attempt to ‘pin down’ what identity is and what makes a Christian ‘Christian’ for Panikkar. However, Panikkar’s intent is precisely to introduce more complexity into that conversation.

40 Ibid., 140.
41 Ibid.
As we have mentioned, Panikkar does not attempt to redact Christianity in order to make room for other religions. He sees the connection as already present in the consciousness of mystical union. He does not try to reinterpret the symbols of the Christian faith to promote a new form of “orthodoxy,” as it seems that many others do. Rather, he is trying to demonstrate that Christianity can be encountered through the religious consciousness of other traditions.

In this regard, Jesus’ Trinitarian consciousness, which Panikkar describes as an advaita experience (nonduality), is essential. Because Christ mediates this cosmotheandric mystery, one can legitimately say that Christ is present in other religious traditions, albeit under a variety of names. Many authors like Paul Knitter utilize a similar theme. Panikkar is set apart from such thinkers because he emphasizes the uniqueness of the experiences and myths that underlie each religious tradition. Jyri Komulainen notes, “Mythos seems to be first and foremost a collective category in Panikkar’s thinking because he suggests that a culture or a religion shares one and the same mythos.” These collective reflections of particular cultures and religions reveal the same ‘ultimate reality’, but they reveal it differently. Thus, various names for the divine may serve similar functions (homology) across traditional boundaries, yet they are not purely interchangeable.

For Panikkar, wherever one encounters cosmotheandric consciousness, one has found what the Christians call ‘Christ’. This leaves room for the experience of ‘multiple

43 See, for instance Paul F. Knitter, Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility.
44 Jyri Komulainen, An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions, 78.
belonging’ and, consequently, openness to a range of Christian identities.\textsuperscript{45} For Panikkar, what is central and universally salvific in Jesus Christ is his identity (Jesus as Christ), which can be understood as a Trinitarian-Advaitic experience. However, the purpose of this identity is to become our identity. In other words, Jesus reveals to us, as humans, who we are. It is for this reason that the subtitle of Christophany is “The Fullness of Man.”\textsuperscript{46} Thus, for Panikkar, the ‘identity of Christ’ and ‘Christian identity’ are different aspects of the same reality. Ultimately, that reality is cosmotheandric communion.

Here Panikkar’s theology contrasts with that of several other ‘pluralist’ theologians including Roger Haight and John Hick. For these theologians, it is precisely Jesus’ identity with the divine that is supposed to be averted. It is for this reason that they use terms like “symbol” (Haight) and “metaphor” (Hick) to describe the Incarnation. Panikkar, on the other hand, does not shy away from mystical identity. In fact, this identity is to be our own identity. However, Panikkar does share with Haight and Hick the risk of making the Christ-event insignificant as one event or a single mediation among many similar ones. They only ‘run the risk’ of this because all of these authors insist that there is a special significance to Jesus of Nazareth.

\textbf{4.2.2 Panikkar’s Ontology of Perspectivism}

Jyri Komulainen is critical of Panikkar in his treatment of religious experience. He even notes an “elitist tone” to Panikkar’s view of dialogue, which can be explained by the difficulty of attaining the “principles of dialogue” given contemporary culture.\textsuperscript{47} He


\textsuperscript{47} Jyri Komulainen, \textit{An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions}, 54.
asserts that Panikkar has a “very normative understanding of religiosity as such, and ends up with a rather exclusivistic interpretation of religion at large.” Komulainen’s point here is well-taken. Panikkar’s emphasis on mystical sensibility can seem rather exclusivistic, as if Panikkar envisions only those whose experiences are similar to his own. Ironically, however, Komulainen finds:

Given the significance that religious experience holds in his theology, it is surprising that nowhere does he describe his own experiences, although he gives the reader to understand that such experiences exist.48

However, Panikkar may avoid telling his own story because of the ultimate unutterability and of religious experience that makes it difficult, if not impossible to communicate without significant loss of meaning.49 Furthermore, from the outset of his theological project, Panikkar does not intend to become an overly individualized theologian who turns away from religious traditions to create some new ‘religion’.50 Rather, he envisions himself as standing within and handing on these religious traditions.51 Panikkar’s respect for various religious traditions and the experiences embedded in them leads him to espouse his own brand of “perspectivism.”52 Thus, Panikkar’s interpretation and explanation of the multiplicity of religious traditions begins with the idea that we all envision reality from our own unique perspectives. Because we all envision and make sense of reality through our own perspectival lens that is conditioned by our unique set of experiences, Panikkar’s epistemological outlook is

48 Ibid., 55-56.
49 Ibid., 56.
50 Ibid. However, for Komulainen, this is exactly what Panikkar does.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid., 75.
intrinsically ‘perspectivistic’.\textsuperscript{53} We may all have a view of part of the whole. Human beings have an "open horizon" but also a "limited human perspective."\textsuperscript{54}

In this way, religious experience and knowledge is analogically like looking out a window. When looking out a window, we can only see what the parameters of the window allow us to see, even though the world outside the window is much larger than our perspective permits us to experience.\textsuperscript{55} However, perspectivism is not without certain logical problems for the enterprise of dialogue:

Here is a dilemma that is inherent in Panikkar’s work: if he aims at analyzing epistemological starting points or outlining the nature of reality, he inevitably has to speak, so to say, from a general perspective.\textsuperscript{56}

Komulainen continues by insisting that:

A certain tension prevails in Panikkar’s thinking between his explicit refusal to speak about things in general and how he himself is obliged to do so when depicting reality. He tries to solve this dilemma by emphasizing the need for intersubjectivity and mutual interaction. It is also in this sense that the condition sine qua non of his vision is interreligious dialogue, since only through this can we widen our perspective and understand its limits.\textsuperscript{57}

This may be a necessary problem inherent to any effort at metaphysical reflection. Varghese Manimala explains this as he distinguishes the metaphysician from the scientist:

What differentiates the metaphysician’s yardstick from that of the scientist is that the latter’s is adequate to what he is trying to describe (e.g., measurable aspect of things,

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 77.  
\textsuperscript{55} Jyri Komulainen, An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions, 75-76.  
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 76.  
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
ignoring what is not commensurable with it), whereas the metaphysician’s yardstick is never adequate; it is always being broken.\(^{58}\)

Nonetheless, Panikkar’s ‘perspectivism’ does not lead to amorphous chaos. Komulainen notes that Panikkar utilizes his perspectivism as a kind of ‘stepping-stone’ that actually brings him to a radical ontological claim.\(^{59}\) This claim, of course, is his cosmotheandric worldview. Through it Panikkar claims to avoid both the extremes of "rigid and deadly monism" and "ultimately anarchic and equally fatal plurality."\(^{60}\)

For Panikkar, pluralism leads to two, interrelated, but distinct results that Komulainen describes as ‘the dethronement of reason and the abandonment of the monotheistic paradigm.’\(^{61}\) Reason is ‘dethroned’, as we saw in our previous chapter, in favor of mythos, which is prior to and forms the foundation for reason. The monotheistic paradigm is abandoned in favor of Trinitarian cosmotheandrism, which Panikkar, unlike ‘traditional’ Trinitarian theologians, envisions as a distinct development from monotheistic metaphysics. Thus, for Panikkar, pluralism is not merely a reflection of our intellectual inability to integrate disparate threads of thought; rather, it is ontologically determinative and is something that actually lies at the “very heart of reality.”\(^{62}\) With this in mind, Komulainen notes that the general human ‘attitude’ of pluralism (acceptance of multiplicity and openness to the other) is complemented by Panikkar’s ontology of pluralism (Being consists of unity-in-diversity):


It cannot be denied that both aspects—pluralism as attitude and pluralism as
metaphysics—belong to Panikkar’s thinking. It is true that pluralism is an attitude of
human consciousness. For Panikkar, however, human consciousness does not stand, so
to say, outside the realm of reality. Instead, it participates authentically in the pluralistic
reality and its processes.  

Because pluralism is metaphysically grounded, Panikkar does not subscribe to the
approach of the “many paths, one goal” simile that is common among pluralists. Rather, Komulainen points out that a more accurate metaphor can be seen in that of a
mountain peak with many slopes leading up to it. The slopes of the mountain give the
peak its shape. In the same way the multiple religious traditions approach the same
divine reality from the different facets of its contours. In true cosmotheandric form,
Panikkar believes that perichoresis or circumincessio can and ought to be the overall tone
and goal of the encounter between religious traditions.

4.2.3 Christian Worship Mediates Christian Identity

For Panikkar, worship “means that act by which we express in one way or another
the fullness of the human person.” Panikkar insists that worship is not ‘this-worldly’ or
‘other-worldly’ but holistic, cosmotheandric, meaning that it provides a vision of the
whole of reality through contemplation and meditation. He poignantly notes, “Within
this context the answer to the question of why we should worship at all would run along
the following lines: because otherwise I could neither be myself nor could you be

63 Ibid., 81.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid. See Raimon Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany,
66 Ibid., 83.
68 Ibid., 48. Note that ‘theandrism’ is the term Panikkar used before adopting ‘cosmotheandrism’.
yourself.\textsuperscript{69} Worship, then, is liberating and salvific. It leads to self-realization, identity. Thus, through worship one comes to know his/her true cosmotheandric identity. And, conversely, when one comes to know this cosmotheandric identity, one also engages in worship.

For Panikkar, then, worship is transformative. He muses on its potential:

It would be one of the most fascinating roles of real worship to transform the present technological age into a \textit{technicultural one}. By this word, as I have elaborated elsewhere, we do not mean a thorough and ruthless technification or an abandonment of ecological reality. On the contrary, we mean, first of all, the discovery that the earth belongs to the human being, and vice-versa, that the human background today is neither agricultural nor technological, but technicultural: included in this word are of course, the earth and nature, for pure nature and untrodden earth are just as much an illusion as a purely mechanized man.\textsuperscript{70}

This ‘technicultural’ reality is a realization of the cosmotheandric union of all of reality resulting in a communion of humanity and its environment. Because of this, worship leads to self-realization. Panikkar explains that worship is not, in the end, an individual or a collective action.\textsuperscript{71} Rather, it is a personal action.\textsuperscript{72} So, worship is “the act by which the person cultivates his center and consequently that act by which the person participates in the core of all reality, shares on that deepest level with his fellow-beings and is in communion with the entire universe.”\textsuperscript{73} As we have said, this communion is salvation.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 60.  
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 90.  
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
For Panikkar, “Christian worship should give expression to man’s inner and constitutive urge towards something which remains for ever beyond him.”

Panikkar even insists that such worship should appeal to atheists, humanists, secularists because it expresses the deepest human urge. In this sense, Panikkar’s cosmotheandrism functions in a manner not unlike the ‘natural law’, which finds its most well-known and extensive expression in the thought of Thomas Aquinas and the many schools of intellectual followers he spawned. It is for this reason, as we saw above, that praxis is an essential component of the realization of cosmotheandric union.

Because he is confident in the existence of this ‘inner yearning’ at the deepest level of the human, Panikkar is not convinced that religion is threatened by the increasing secularization of the present cultural climate of the West. Quite to the contrary, he asserts, “For me secularization represents the regaining of the sacramental structure of reality, the new awareness that real full human life is worship, because it is the very expression of the mystery of existence.” Thus, worship should be “the integration of all dimensions of life.” Worship is not simply an act of the mind or an emotive act, etc. Rather it is an act of the whole self that enables one to realize the true self. Therefore, worship is not theology, “which is the conscious passage from mythos to logos.” Rather it “represents the espousal of mythos and logos.” Worship unites and unity is salvation.

That is, worship expresses and enacts communion by bringing together worshippers for a

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74 Ibid., 92.
75 Ibid.
77 Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, *Worship and Secular Man*, 92.
78 Ibid., 93.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
common existential purpose, namely the realization of identity. Thus, worship is sacramental (a sacrament is an efficacious sign of God’s grace); it is christophanic.

4.2.4 A Universal Religious Experience?

At the center of the application of Panikkar’s reflections on identity and Christology is the insistence that there is a universal religious experience that cuts across cultures and is anthropologically rooted. It seems that this may in fact not be too different from Karl Rahner’s insistence on a universal pre-reflective encounter with the divine that provides the foundation for one’s ‘fundamental option. Both thinkers insist on a kind of religious experience that transcends the categorial and is at the root of human experience generally. Rahner’s “Theology of Freedom” gives a detailed account of what fundamental option entails, particularly from an anthropological standpoint. In this article, Rahner begins by pointing to the transcendental character of the fundamental freedom of the human being:

Freedom, therefore, has a theological character not only when and where God is represented explicitly and side by side with other objects in the objectivity of categories, but always and everywhere by the nature of freedom itself, since God is present unthematically in every act of freedom as its supporting ground and ultimate orientation.81

In this regard, human freedom is "freedom vis-à-vis God,” meaning that, in its most basic and primary form freedom represents a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to God, who is experienced as the condition of one’s individual infinite horizon and as the object towards which this infinite horizon is oriented. This infinite horizon of the human person is fundamentally experienced in the human ability to transcend by knowing (and loving).

Thus, there is an implicit "unthematic" ‘yes’ to God in the very “choice” to go beyond oneself in knowing (and loving) finite things.  

Because God is both the condition and the term of human transcendence, human freedom "can culpably deny the very condition of its own possibility [by orienting oneself away from God in teleological terms] in an act which necessarily reaffirms this condition." This can occur thus because it is God’s infinitude that makes one’s infinite horizon possible in the first place. Rahner elucidates this by defining freedom as “the capacity to make oneself once and for all, the capacity which of its nature is directed towards the freely willed finality of the subject as such.” He continues by positing this fundamental freedom in eschatological terms:

This is obviously what is meant by the Christian statement about man and his salvation and damnation when he, the free person, must answer for himself and the totality of his life before the judgment seat of God, and when the eternally valid sentence about his salvation or damnation in accordance with his works is passed by a judge who does not regard merely the appearance of his life, the 'face', but the freely governed core of the person, the 'heart'.

Thus, just as we saw above, by one’s freedom, one is able to determine who he/she will be. This has eschatological import because through this decision, one is ultimately choosing life with God or life apart from God.

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82 Ibid., 181-182. See Jean Porter, “Moral Language and the Language of Grace: The Fundamental Option and the Virtue of Charity,” Philosophy and Theology: Marquette University Journal 10, (1996): 171. Jean Porter describes this aspect of Rahner’s thought: “Through one's self-awareness as a being whose capacities are never satisfied by categorical objects, the human person is likewise aware at a pre-thematic level of an infinitely satisfying Object of knowledge and love, which forms the necessary horizon for every categorical act of knowledge or will.”


84 Ibid., 183.

85 Ibid.
Ultimately, freedom comes from and has its goal in God. Thus, Rahner maintains that, as was said above, in this freedom the human makes a fundamental decision for or against God at a pre-reflective level. It is important in this regard to remember that when Rahner (and those that follow him) speak of a “pre-reflective” exercise of human freedom, he does not necessarily mean to speak of temporal priority. Rather, he is referring to the fact that one’s fundamental option represents a disposition that conditions one’s consciousness and consequently one’s concrete decisions.

To conclude his reflection on human freedom, Rahner shows that fundamental option is a grace-filled experience by pointing out that we would not have the ability even to say ‘no’ to God if God had not previously said ‘yes’ to communicating Godself to us.\(^{86}\) Furthermore, in Christ, God has shown a "final, irrevocable decision to liberate freedom."\(^{87}\) This is achieved through the Incarnation, whereby God has become a categorical "object" of freedom, which, as seen above, contributes to the establishment of one’s fundamental option.\(^{88}\)

Panikkar has a similarly stratified view of the human person. We saw this in our previous chapter when discussed the anthropological level of faith. Faith is enabled by myth, which, as we also mentioned in our last chapter, is prior to and provides the foundation for reason, \textit{logos}:

Mythic faith is good faith, but good faith does not recognize itself as mythic, nor will it claim to be. Myth is not and cannot be the object of faith because it is by its very constitution the vehicle of faith. A demythologized faith is empty, it becomes reason,
changes into *logos*. Undoubtedly, good faith is a myth, but it seems that without myth faith is not even possible.\(^89\)

It is here that Panikkar’s similarity to Rahner’s thought is clearest. Both posit a mysterious level of the human that precedes rational reflection. Rahner’s conception of human fundamental freedom helps to bring Panikkar’s thought on identity into relief in a key way. For Rahner, as we have mentioned, at this pre-reflective level, humans make a choice of ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to God. For Panikkar, however, what occurs at this level is not a fundamental ‘option’, but something more like a fundamental ‘identity’. It does not seem, for Panikkar, that there is any real ‘choice’ involved. Rather, one’s identity is formed by mythic faith, and one’s reason and will are *informed* by this basic encounter. So, the two are different, although Rahner would say that even a ‘no’ to God involves an implicit ‘yes’ in the very making of the choice. Furthermore, while Rahner’s treatment of fundamental freedom seems to point to a definite universal experience, Panikkar’s treatment of mythic faith is more ambiguous because it is open to acknowledging a variety of myths rather than one universal myth underlying all human experience. The closest he comes to a ‘universal myth’ is his discussion of cosmotheandrisms, which is itself a logical deduction that Panikkar makes based on a variety of myths.

Additionally, unlike that of Rahner, Panikkar’s idea of a universal religious experience is not completely ‘pre-reflective’. Rather, myth is still communicated through language, via mythical stories, although the myth behind the story is only accessible to reason by some form of logical reduction. While all humans share the anthropological level of faith and a basic openness to myth, there are a variety of particular myths that fill this experiential need. In this way, as we have seen, faith, for Panikkar, both transcends

and anchors particular beliefs. But, on the other hand, faith cannot exist without particular expression. This is why the religious traditions of the world are so essential to human religious experience. They communicate the myths that nourish and enlighten human faith. Panikkar here distinguishes between relativity and relativism. The beliefs arising from the myths that express universal human faith are relative to the contexts in which they are formed as passed on. However, for Panikkar, this does not lead to a complete relativization of truth. Rather, these myths are often glimpses into the same ultimate reality, aspects of the same insight: cosmotheandric unity.

4.2.5 The Impossibility of Religious Epoché: Christian Identity Cannot Be Denied

With this conception of Christian identity in mind, we shall now turn to Panikkar’s discussion of dialogue in order to come an understanding of the application and enactment of Christian identity concretely. It is important to keep in mind what we have just noted about Panikkar’s conception of Christian identity, particularly that there are various manifestations of it, so that it may be more appropriate to speak of Christian identities. For Panikkar, one’s religious identity is essential and cannot be bracketed off through some form of ‘religious epoché’ for the sake of dialogue. One cannot dispense with one’s identity that easily. This is why Panikkar is taken aback by the Western conception of identity based upon non-contradiction, which seems to reflect a concern that one’s identity could be lost simply by finding commonality with others. On the contrary, identity can hardly be lost even when we try to lose it, as in religious epoché.

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91 Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man: Icon—Person—Mystery, 1.
With this noted, Panikkar also points out that due to the increasing consistency of encounters between people and cultures in our world, one cannot avoid interreligious dialogue of some kind today.\textsuperscript{92} One is bound to encounter persons and social groups that embrace a different religious tradition from one. Toward this end, Panikkar stresses the need for an “intrareligious dialogue” that accompanies and grounds interreligious dialogue.\textsuperscript{93} He describes this ‘intrareligious’ dialogue as “an inner dialogue within myself, an encounter in the depth of my personal religiousness, having met another religious experience on that very intimate level.”\textsuperscript{94} This ‘intrareligious’ dialogue involves intimate knowledge of the religious disposition of the other, which seeks to overcome the distance of alterity. If interreligious dialogue must be accompanied by ‘intrareligious dialogue’, one must necessarily adopt a “self-critical attitude” and be prepared and open to the views of others as if they were one’s own, which they may well become.\textsuperscript{95} Panikkar explains, “I shall never be able to meet the other as he meets and understands himself if I do not meet and understand him in and as myself.”\textsuperscript{96}

Thus one ought to strive to encounter the other on his/her terms and to understand him/her as he/she understands him/herself. Panikkar states, “To understand the other as ‘other’ is, at the least, not to understand him as he understands him-self (which is certainly not as ‘other’, but as self).”\textsuperscript{97} It is important to understand that this ‘intrareligious dialogue’ must be a genuine encounter with the other, not a reduction of the other to oneself.\textsuperscript{98} In this way, one seeks one’s own conversion as well as that of the

\textsuperscript{92} Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The Intrareligious Dialogue, 40.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid. Emphasis added.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid.
other because “Real understanding transforms my ego as well as the alius.”\textsuperscript{99} Therefore, one’s faith plays an active role in one’s dialogue. The repression of faith through \textit{epoché} is simply a task that cannot be accomplished. One’s fundamental disposition cannot be cast off like an old shirt. Panikkar points out, “The problem arises when we pretend to bracket not a formulation, a notion, but a fundamental conviction of the person at the existential level.”\textsuperscript{100}

However, on the more concrete and less foundational level of the \textit{logos}, in which faith convictions have manifested themselves as particular beliefs, \textit{epoché} is possible. Thus there may be the possibility some kind of \textit{epoché} of beliefs. Varghese Manimala encourages this by emphasizing that for true dialogue to take place, one may need to exercise a phenomenological \textit{epoché} of beliefs that entail ‘exclusivist’ elements. But, he insists, one should not bracket one’s existential faith, which lies at the heart of one’s identity.\textsuperscript{101} In this regard Panikkar “would prefer to call for transcending them altogether as long as we are engaged in a serious interreligious dialogue.”\textsuperscript{102} Nonetheless, on the more foundational level of faith and myth, such disentanglement is not simple and, Panikkar insists, not even desirable.

For Panikkar, interreligious dialogue is not primarily an intellectual enterprise. Rather, it is an interpersonal encounter. Furthermore, this interpersonal encounter is enabled by an \textit{intrapersonal} encounter, through which one comes to intimately understand the other. Panikkar insists, “Obviously, before meaningful dialogue can take

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 43.
\textsuperscript{101} Varghese J. Manimala, \textit{Toward Mutual Fecundation and Fulfilment of Religions: An Invitation to Transcendence and Dialogue with a Cosmotheandric Vision}, 174.
\textsuperscript{102} Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, \textit{The Intrareligious Dialogue}, 43.
place one must already know the religion of the partner.”

Because of this, dialogue is a “total human contrast and participation in deeper communication and fuller communion.” To cut oneself out this communion in order to analyze it is “psychologically impracticable” and “phenomenologically inappropriate.” Panikkar asserts that one cannot forget, even momentarily, one’s deeply held convictions regarding ultimate truth. One cannot even pretend that these convictions are briefly forgotten or put to the side. Rather, such conviction condition and shape one’s knowledge of reality. Additionally, in religious dialogue, it is “philosophically defective” to cut faith out the equation. Panikkar argues, “You do not experiment with ultimate convictions. You experience them.” Thus, “If I believe in God, for example, I cannot pretend that I do not believe in God or speak and act as if there were no God when—by definition if I believe in him—it is God who lets me speak and act.”

Furthermore, such an attitude of religious epoché is also “theologically weak.” Panikkar explains:

If I keep my faith in brackets it is doubtless because I think it does not foster religious understanding, probably because my partner is not enough advanced to bear the ‘sublime heights’ of my particular brand of ‘faith’, which I carefully try to withhold from his scrutiny.

This problematically puts “anthropological integrity” in question because:

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{103 Ibid., 44.} } \]
\[ \text{\textsuperscript{104 Ibid.} } \]
\[ \text{\textsuperscript{105 Ibid.} } \]
\[ \text{\textsuperscript{106 Ibid., 45.} } \]
\[ \text{\textsuperscript{107 Ibid.} } \]
\[ \text{\textsuperscript{108 Ibid., 47.} } \]
\[ \text{\textsuperscript{109 Ibid.} } \]
\[ \text{\textsuperscript{110 Ibid., 48.} } \]
\[ \text{\textsuperscript{111 Ibid.} } \]
\[ \text{\textsuperscript{112 Ibid., 49.} } \]
\[ \text{\textsuperscript{113 Ibid.} } \]
If faith is something Man can discard with impunity so that he can still meet his fellow beings religiously, meaningfully and humanly, this amounts to affirming that what I happen to believe is simply supererogatory to my being and has no fundamental relevance for my humanity.\textsuperscript{114}

This \textit{epoché} is also “religiously barren” because, through its exercise, one loses his or her religious bonds.\textsuperscript{115} If dialogue is truly to be an encounter of religious traditions, one who takes such an approach to dialogue has already obfuscated this end at the outset. By detaching oneself from one’s religious convictions, one no longer has anything to contribute to such a dialogue. Interreligious dialogue, then, becomes a fruitless endeavor.\textsuperscript{116} Such religious dialogue must be \textit{real} dialogue. Dialogue entails not just listening, but also correcting and being corrected.\textsuperscript{117} Furthermore, it must also be \textit{truly} “religious,” that is, not just about doctrines and beliefs, but about mutual understanding between two parties.\textsuperscript{118} Panikkar clarifies, “In other words I understand him, or try to, both from and within my faith.”\textsuperscript{119} Thus, in the interreligious encounter that is upheld by \textit{intra}religious dialogue, one encounters the other by extending oneself empathetically. Thus, faith is not bracketed. Rather, the encounter happens through faith. This serves to avoid the reduction that pushing \textit{mythos} into \textit{logos} entails:

I am saying that the \textit{phenomenon} of religion does not exhaust the whole of religious \textit{reality}; so that besides, not opposed to, phenomenology of religion there is yet room for philosophy and theology—and indeed for religion itself.\textsuperscript{120}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 50.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 51.
\end{itemize}
Panikkar adamantly insists that “the religious *pistema* is different from and not reducible to the Husserlian *noema*.”\(^{121}\) It is different because religious knowledge cannot be observed neutrally as a mere phenomenon. To do so would be to reduce religion to a concept or set of concepts, rather than an existential commitment. To be sure, phenomenological analysis has its place, but not in interreligious dialogue. Such a dialogue must be honest and sincere, which entails sharing one’s faith with the other.

In this respect, several other thinkers, including Jacques Dupuis, concur with Panikkar’s sentiment. Rather than a conversation between neutral observers, interreligious dialogue is an encounter between committed individuals who are sharing their identity with each other. For Dupuis particularly, the dishonesty of taking the position of a neutral observer is counterproductive to dialogical progress. He says, "On the contrary, honesty and sincerity in dialogue specifically require that the various partners enter it and commit themselves to it in the integrity of their faith."\(^{122}\) Thus, in dialogue, "Commitment to one's own faith and openness to the "other" must therefore be combined."\(^{123}\) Inspired by Panikkar’s "intra-religious" dialogue, Dupuis underscores the need for ‘sym-pathy’, ‘com-prehension’, and ‘em-pathy’ in the encounter between religions.\(^{124}\) One must strive to know the other ‘from the inside’.\(^{125}\)

Thus, Dupuis insists that openness to "double belonging," by which one may even become a "hyphenated Christian," is an essential aspect of the dialogical disposition.\(^{126}\)

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\(^{121}\) Ibid.
\(^{123}\) Ibid., 230.
\(^{124}\) Ibid.
\(^{125}\) Ibid.
\(^{126}\) Ibid., 231.
another. He insists, nonetheless, that whether or not it is totally possible to fully engage both traditions, one must at least make the effort in dialogue to "enter into" the religious experience of the other.\footnote{127} This allows any dialogue to begin from a disposition of mutual honor and respect. Following Panikkar, Dupuis sees the potential here for "cross-fertilization" of traditions and a positive form of "syncretism" which does not destroy the religious traditions that encounter each other but rather builds them up.\footnote{128} In this way, dialogue with other traditions can 'enrich' and 'purify' the Christian faith.\footnote{129} However, this cannot be accomplished through a "universal theology" that ignores the differences between religious traditions.\footnote{130} Thus, for both Panikkar and Dupuis, real dialogue is not a threat to identity, but rather identity is the channel through which real dialogue takes place. Therefore, one’s religious identity (one’s Christian identity) cannot be bracketed off in order to facilitate dialogue.

4.2.6 Intrareligious Dialogue

It is for this reason that Panikkar has created his neologism ‘intrareligious dialogue’. This term emphasizes the fact that the true locus of interreligious dialogue is found in the human heart.\footnote{131} Thus, real interreligious dialogue must be accompanied by ‘intrareligious dialogue’. As we have mentioned already, intrareligious dialogue encompasses one’s self-critical attitude, through which one is open to conversion. This enables what Panikkar calls the ‘mutual fecundation’ between religions. It is for this reason that an epoché of one’s faith in interreligious dialogue is impossible.\footnote{132} Panikkar

\begin{footnotes}
\item[127] Ibid.
\item[128] Ibid., 233.
\item[129] Ibid.
\item[130] Ibid., 235.
\item[131] Jyri Komulainen, An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions, 68.
\item[132] See Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The Intrareligious Dialogue, 40ff.
\end{footnotes}
insist that any “authentic science of religions” must look not just at manifestations of religion(s) found in various sociological forms and permutations; rather, such an enterprise must gaze “within” the religious traditions in question. It is for this reason that he insists that the self-criticism of intrareligious dialogue is the best attitude to bring to the ‘dialogical table’.134

As we have already mentioned, for Panikkar, one’s encounter with a religion (even if it not one’s own) must be a ‘truly religious’ encounter. He explains, "If the encounter is to be an authentically religious one, it must be totally loyal to truth and open to reality." This means that: “A religious Man is neither a fanatic nor someone who already has all the answers. He also is a seeker, a pilgrim making his own uncharted way; the track ahead is yet virgin, inviolate." This seeker "trusts in truth." This trust entails total commitment. Thus, the ‘religious man’ "may lose his life—he may also be born again." Thus, the exploration of a religious tradition cannot be undertaken lightly. It is a quest for truth; a religious quest.

To use the categories we uncovered in our previous chapter, religious adherents are deeply committed to the divine at the level of faith. Because of this, Panikkar insists that “Religions are much more than doctrines.” Because they transcend the conceptual, religious traditions cannot be analyzed exhaustively externally. Panikkar insists that any external interpretation of a particular tradition must correspond to an

133 Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man: Icon—Person—Mystery, 1.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid., 27.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid., 30.
internal interpretation, or an interpretation ‘from within’ that tradition from the point of view of the believer.\textsuperscript{141} This religious encounter always has cosmotheandric communion on its horizon:

The religious encounter is a religious, and hence sacred, act through which we are taken up by the truth and by loyalty to the ‘three worlds’ with no further aim or intention. In this creative religious act the very vitality of religion manifests itself.\textsuperscript{142}

With this in mind, the \textit{interreligious} encounter must also be religious. This entails openness and vulnerability. This vulnerability leaves one open to finding God in the other, or rather, finding God as the other finds God. This is an essential component of maintaining accord among religious traditions. One must remember that one’s commitment in dialogue is to the truth, not necessarily to one’s particular religious tradition, although one is a participant in such a dialogue because one believes that he/she has already found truth in this tradition. Therefore, according to Panikkar, in order to “coexist” religions must “co-insist.”\textsuperscript{143} So:

‘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.\textsuperscript{144}

Toward this end, Panikkar encourages a “dialogical dialogue” as opposed to a “dialectic dialogue.”\textsuperscript{145} Such a dialogue is a genuine conversation, not a hostile confrontation (as a dialectical dialogue would be). Furthermore, it is a dialogue of life

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 37.
\textsuperscript{143} Raimon Panikkar, \textit{The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany, Revised and Enlarged Edition}, 43.
\textsuperscript{144} Raimon Panikkar, \textit{Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics}, 278.
\textsuperscript{145} Jyri Komulainen, \textit{An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions}, 65.
\end{flushleft}
and of sharing life. It is not about proselytism. For Panikkar, “Dialogue has its basis in both cosmology and anthropology.” Thus, Panikkar’s understanding of dialogue contains ‘ontological’ overtones. Consequently, Panikkar frequently “identifies method with ritual.” Varghese Manimala explains, “The dialectical dialogue is a dialogue about something whereas the dialogical dialogue is a dialogue about those who are engaged in dialogue.” Thus, this dialogue is about an interpersonal encounter. As such, it is an enactment of the communion at the root of all reality. Unless the dialogue is genuine, this communion is not genuinely expressed. Therefore, “In dialogical dialogue no pretense will do. Any ulterior motive—to convert, to dominate, and even to know the other for specific reasons—will destroy dialogical dialogue.” For this reason one must possess a firm sense of identity to enter into dialogue. One must be comfortable enough with him/herself in order to avoid the temptation reduce the identity of the other to oneself.

With this in mind, Panikkar is sure to point out that ‘dialogue’ is not ‘dialectics’. He explains, “Dialogue does not seek to be primarily duo-logue, a duet of two logos, which could still be dialectical; but a dia-logos, a piercing of the logos to attain a truth that transcends it.”

146 Ibid., 67.
147 Ibid., 69.
148 Ibid., 68-69.
149 Ibid., 69.
151 Ibid., 143.
152 Raimon Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany, Revised and Enlarged Edition, 22. By taking an “interior” approach to Christ’s presence in this book, Panikkar claims that he “speaks to the bona fide Hindu and Christian who are no longer mutually unsympathetic, but who do not wish to dilute their own religiousness or to lose their own identity, in spite of being ready for openness and even change should such be required.” Christian identity, then, requires openness to others.
153 Raimon Panikkar, Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics, 243.
He continues, “We call this *dialogical dialogue* and we add that the relational nature of all witnessing belongs to this dialogue.”\(^{154}\) What is important for Panikkar is that such dialogue goes beyond the *logos*. As Francis D’Sa points out, for Panikkar, "The essence of dialogue is not grounded in the Logos but in the Mythos."\(^{155}\) Dialogue, then, takes place on a level different from reason; a less tangible level, a *deeper* level. This level, where *mythos* is engaged, may be analogous to what we speak about when talk about ‘resonance’. Musically speaking, a note does not become musical until it resonates, that is, until it permeates some body and emanates from it. This is true for the singer as well as for the player of the crafted musical instrument. In much the same way, dialogical dialogue does not simply sound, it *resonates*, permeating *somebody* and emanating from him/her.

Nonetheless, the main thrust of this dialogue is to realize that there is a deeper identity that the interlocutors already share. Manimala explains:

Another important assumption of dialogical dialogue is that the other is not just an other (*alius*), and much less an object of my knowledge (*aliud*), but another self (*alter*) who is a source of self-understanding, and also of understanding, not necessarily reducible to my own.\(^{156}\)

Thus, “Thinking is not purely individualistic, but an intercourse, an act of language.”\(^{157}\)

So, one’s identity entails a communal aspect.\(^{158}\) After all, if true identity includes the ‘identifying identity’ that Panikkar connects with the Eastern perspective, as we

\(^{154}\) *Ibid.*


mentioned in our third chapter, then the communities to which we unite ourselves are just as important as or more important than the individuals and communities from which we differentiate ourselves. This is important to remember, especially when we encounter the imperfections of ourselves and others. This necessitates the virtue of ‘mystical tolerance’:

It presupposes that you may be capable of assuming what you tolerate. You redeem, you raise up what you tolerate; you transform it, and this transformation purifies the active agent as well as the passive agent of the tolerance. Tolerance here is experienced as the sublimation of a state of affairs by the power of tolerance itself.  

This tolerance is based upon Panikkar’s cosmotheandric vision of reality. He explains, “The notion of tolerance implies that all reality is redeemable because it is never immutable.” This represents a movement away from rigid ideology. Panikkar insists, “The more perfect an ideology, the less tolerant it is, but also the less it needs to tolerate tolerance.” Therefore, tolerance is only necessary when speaking about someone or something that goes beyond the borders of one’s ideology. For Panikkar, then, “Tolerance is the very index of an ideology’s weakness.” And when dealing with divine mystery, a weak ideology is much safer than a strong one.

158 Raimon Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany, Revised and Enlarged Edition*, 61. Panikkar points out, “The religious encounter is in reality much more than the meeting of two friends, it is a communion in being, in the one Being which is much more intimate to both than they are to themselves. It is a communion not only in Christ, but also of Christ. No condescension, no paternalism or superiority is to be found in the true encounter.” See Raymond (Raimon) Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, (London, UK: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 1964), 27. In the revised edition, Panikkar has changed the phrase ‘Christian’ encounter to ‘religious’ encounter. The interchangeability of the terms implies that Panikkar believes authentic religiosity to be truly Christian.


Thus, mystical tolerance is best approached at the level of *mythos* rather than that of *logos*. What is necessary is communion in a common myth. However, Panikkar points out, “communion in a myth” does not in itself yield a peaceful relationship.\footnote{Ibid., 32.} For instance, civil wars seem worse than international wars because of the competing ideologies that are so closely akin to each other and are borne by the same myth.\footnote{Ibid.} Thus, this communion must be accompanied by weak ideology. In this way, “Communion in the same myth is what makes tolerance possible. Love that loves without understanding could be an example.”\footnote{Ibid.} Myth can be tolerant because it can withstand contradiction, but logos cannot. For Panikkar, this common myth is the possibility of communion itself.

The common myth that is accessible to all is cosmotheandrisn.

Thus, in order to realize one’s Christian identity, one must be attuned to the identity of others. Intrareligious dialogue enables one to understand others from ‘the inside’. But it also enables one to find Christ, the source of Christian identity, in new and unexpected places. Finding Christ anew does not destroy one’s identity. Rather, it enhances Christian identity by drawing one closer to human fulfillment. Christian identity is realized through love, as the ‘great commandment’ implies (see Mk 12:28-34; Mt 22:34-40; Lk 10:25-28). Intrareligious dialogue facilitates love; it enables the realization of Christian identity, that is, human identity.

4.2.7 The Type of Pluralism that Christian Identity Must Embrace

It is also important to distinguish Panikkar’s pluralistic views from the pluralistic theologies of his contemporaries. Many theologians, including Roger Haight, John Hick, and Paul Knitter insist that all religions mediate the same Ultimate Reality (or whatever
one prefers to call the Divine), but none of them really point to any specific instance that
demonstrate this commonality. Panikkar, by contrast, uses an experiential starting point,
through which he is able to allow religious traditions to meet in a unique way:
intrareligiously. Based on his own intrareligious dialogue between Christianity,
Hinduism, and Buddhism, Panikkar asserts that all authentic religious traditions exhibit a
tendency toward cosmotheandrism.

Joseph Prahbu explains the difference between Panikkar and other pluralist,
saying that while many other pluralists view the variety of religious traditions as
equivalent ways to salvation or as “phenomenal manifestations of one transcendent
noumenon,” Panikkar takes a different approach.\footnote{167} He explains, “Panikkar’s view is
almost the opposite. He does not think that one can trump religious pluralism by
metaphysical universalism, because there is as much diversity in metaphysics as there is
in religion.”\footnote{168} Thus, for Panikkar, “Each religion has unique features and presents
insights that are mutually incommensurable.”\footnote{169} Consequently, “there is no neutral
tertium quid.”\footnote{170} Religious traditions are not simply translations of the same divine
communication. Rather, if they are authentic communications of the divine, they are
distinct communications. The multiplicity of these distinct communications reveals a
richly textured mystery that is approached from different vantage points. So, for
Panikkar:

Each culture or mythic context comes up with a unique formulation of truth, which, being
unique, is irreducible to another. Nevertheless, to the extent that each is a formulation of

\footnote{168}{\textit{Ibid.}}
\footnote{169}{\textit{Ibid.}, 9.}
\footnote{170}{\textit{Ibid.}}
truth and not just something purely subjective, that truth is universal, though not necessarily in that particular form. This is Panikkar’s notion of homeomorphic equivalents.\textsuperscript{171}

In the introduction to \textit{The Intrareligious Dialogue} Panikkar describes the different attitudes taken toward the multiplicity of religious traditions. These appear to be based on the three interreligious approaches classically identified by Alan Race.\textsuperscript{172} The first approach is exclusivism, in which “the claim to truth has a certain built-in claim to exclusivity. If a given statement is true, its contradictory cannot also be true.”\textsuperscript{173} Exclusivists claim that their religious tradition is the only true one and that all other are irreparably deficient. However, Panikkar rightly points out, there are very few strict exclusivists, as is the case with many conceptual models. He says, “As a matter of fact, although there are many \textit{de facto} remnants of an exclusivistic attitude today, it is hardly defended \textit{de jure}.”\textsuperscript{174}

The next approach that Panikkar describes is that of inclusivism. The inclusivist claims that his/her religious tradition is the only true one, yet others may have partial truths that can only find their full realization in the inclusivist’s tradition. In the inclusivist model, “You are tolerant in your own eyes, but not in the eyes of those who challenge your right to be on top.”\textsuperscript{175} Many Christians take this approach. In fact, it is often thought to be, more or less, the official position of the Catholic Church, although Panikkar would dispute this.\textsuperscript{176} A cursory glance at Panikkar’s emphasis on the universal

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{171} \textit{Ibid.}, 11. For more on this idea of ‘homeomorphic equivalents’ see our treatment of ‘homology’ in our first chapter.
\item \textsuperscript{173} Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, \textit{The Intrareligious Dialogue}, xv.
\item \textsuperscript{174} \textit{Ibid.}, xvi.
\item \textsuperscript{175} \textit{Ibid.}, xxvi.
\item \textsuperscript{176} See, for instance, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, \textit{Dominus Iesus} 2.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
presence of Christ would cause one to believe that this is Panikkar’s position. However, Panikkar insists that this position is problematic because of its one-sided dynamic. In fact, he spends the latter decades of his career trying to overcome the overtones of Christian triumphalism found in his own earlier thought. For Panikkar, the inclusivist position is simply a moderate version of exclusivism.

In contrast with these positions, Panikkar prefers an approach that affirms the various religious traditions in their respective quests for truth. He calls this approach ‘parallelism’. In parallelism, you encounter the diversity of religious traditions and “assume that all are different creeds which, in spite of meanderings and crossings, actually run parallel to meet only in the ultimate, in the eschaton, at the very end of human pilgrimages.” 177 Velti-Matti Kärkkäinen explains that Panikkar’s prefers the term ‘parallelism’ over ‘pluralism’ because, for Panikkar, “all religions run parallel to meet only in the Ultimate, at the end of time.” 178 To Panikkar, this approach is an improvement over the others in that it affirms that there are “parallel paths” of the religions. 179 In this regard, John Cobb, Jr. concurs with Panikkar, pointing out, “One cannot solve the pluralism of religions by claiming universality for one's own metaphysics.” 180

4.2.8 Critical Evaluation: Parallelism

Panikkar’s analysis here is helpful. But at this point, we should point out that there is a slight logical problem inherent in the imagery of ‘parallelism’ espoused by

177 Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The Intrareligious Dialogue, xviii.
179 Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The Intrareligious Dialogue, xviii.
Panikkar. The problem with this paradigm is that if one takes this approach, then, logically-speaking, one should not interfere with others and their religious traditions. After all, parallel lines never intersect. However, the dialogical encounter between religions is itself a form of ‘interference’ mutually exercised between religious traditions. Therefore, the espousal of parallelism seems to presume that dialogue is undesirable at best and impossible at worst. Given the *de facto* encounter between religions in the world today (and throughout all of history), this position may be unrealistic. Panikkar constantly walks a thin line here. One may contend that by simply speaking of an unknown ‘Christ’ in another religious tradition like Hinduism, he has crossed a line that should not be crossed (parallel lines never intersect) or cannot be crossed logically.

On the other hand, the image of ‘parallelism’ may also imply that elements are easily translated between traditions. While, as we saw in our first chapter, homology is an important component of Panikkar’s thought, homological equivalents cannot simply be substituted for one another. Krishna cannot be simply substituted for Christ. Rather, such concepts make sense within an overall system of thought. But, once they are removed from that context, they lose meaning. Even in the way that Panikkar speak of the unknown ‘Christ’ present outside the Christian tradition, there is an element of caution. What Christians call ‘Christ’ represents the cosmotheandric insight that can be found in all authentic religions. The term ‘Christ’ still requires the Christian theological context in order to be understood.

It seems, then, that the image of parallel pathways to the divine, while helpful and useful, is also too simplistic to describe the relationship between religious traditions, particularly as Panikkar sees it. While this is a relatively minor point of contention, it is
nonetheless problematic that Panikkar’s descriptive paradigm seems to logically undermine his overall theological project. It may be for this reason that Panikkar is inconsistent in his preference of the term ‘parallelism’ over ‘pluralism’ and actually uses both terms to describe his own position. Perhaps a better alternative would be to speak of something like ‘multidimensionalism’, which adds complexity to such two-dimensional imagery and allows the rich texture of the Divine to shine through. This would serve his purposes much better. Nonetheless, Panikkar’s point is well-taken and he is right to locate the ultimate convergence of religious traditions eschatologically.

4.2.9 A Unique Brand of Pluralism

Because of this ‘parallelistic’ approach, Panikkar’s vision can be distinguished from those of several of his pluralistic contemporaries. Kärkkäinen, while noting similar motives among Panikkar and other ‘pluralists’, also highlights the distinction we have mentioned:

Yet his pluralistic vision, based on the doctrine of the Trinity is radically different from the typical pluralistic idea of a “rough parity” among religions. Trinity speaks for diversity, not for uniformity or denial of differences.\(^{181}\)

Therefore, the Western drive towards universalization is alien to Panikkar’s thought.\(^ {182}\) And, as we have seen, Panikkar uses the idea of “perichoresis” to articulate the “diversity and complementarity” among religions.\(^ {183}\) Kärkkäinen explains:

The goal of pluralistic theologies is not to water down or dismiss plurality but to enhance it. Therefore dialogue matters; through interaction religions condition and enrich each


\(^{183}\) *Ibid.*
other. Each religion comes out of the encounter with a deeper sense of its own identity, yet with the awareness of needing the others.\textsuperscript{184}

In this sense, Panikkar, although he uses the term pluralism (in tandem with ‘parallelism’), also provides “a major critique of pluralism” as it is typically understood.\textsuperscript{185} As Rowan Williams notes, Panikkar is an “uncomfortable ally” for those who hold the typical “pluralist” view.\textsuperscript{186} This is due to the fact that “he is not interested in the essence of religion as something that in principle might be tracked down and isolated, nor is he content with amiable mutual toleration.”\textsuperscript{187} The difference is Panikkar’s intra-religious dialogue. Kärkkäinen explains that, in this regard, Panikkar’s view amounts to saying “understanding what a statement means is the same as acknowledging its truth.”\textsuperscript{188} Kärkkäinen’s explanation touches Panikkar’s approach, although Panikkar’s explanation is slightly more nuanced. Panikkar insists that to understand another’s position, one must share that person’s view, so one must judge it to be "somewhat true."\textsuperscript{189} He explains, "Accordingly, to understand is to be converted to the truth one understands."\textsuperscript{190} As we have mentioned this leads to a dialogue within the self:

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.\textsuperscript{191}

\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., 342.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 345.
\textsuperscript{189} Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, \textit{The Intrareligious Dialogue}, 9.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., 10.
Thus, dialogue is part of one’s religious experience. So, dialogue is not simply an accidental addition to religiosity. Rather, it is “an essential part of the religious act par excellence.”\textsuperscript{192} Thus, true Christian and religious identity is not based on claims to religious superiority. No one has a monopoly on the truth.\textsuperscript{193} It is part of living out the Gospel command to love God above all and to love one's neighbor as oneself.\textsuperscript{194}

Therefore:

Understanding my neighbor means understanding him as he understands himself, which can be done only if I rise above the subject-object dichotomy, cease to know him as an object and come to know him as myself. Only if there exists a Self in which we communicate does it become possible to know and love another as Oneself.\textsuperscript{195}

Toward this end, Panikkar insists, “The aim of the intrareligious dialogue is understanding.”\textsuperscript{196} This requires a real encounter between traditions and the adherents thereof. Panikkar envisions pluralism as a middle way that mediates between extremes. “Pluralism stands between unrelated plurality and a monolithic unity.”\textsuperscript{197} Thus, for Panikkar, pluralism is not uniformity, yet it also does not reduce to relativism because the pluralist, as Panikkar envisions him/her, acknowledges a shared unity, which Panikkar locates in cosmotheandric communion. For Panikkar, the possibility of pluralism is opened up by the mystical sensibility that all have access to and the intellectual humility that goes along with realizing it. Therefore, Panikkar emphasizes that one must

\textsuperscript{192} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., xxvii.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid.
acknowledge relativity in order to avoid relativism. He has to do this with his own thought. He explains that "the whole idea of belonging to a chosen people, of practicing the true religion, of being a privileged creature, struck me not as a grace but as disgrace." Thus, in order to avoid losing all grasp of truth, Panikkar had to re-envision truth as manifested in the world in a variety of ways. It is of these manifestations that Panikkar’s concept of the Christophany, which we examined in our second chapter, speaks. For Panikkar pluralism “means being able to, so to say, accept another as the other.”

Jyri Komulainen tersely explains, “To sum up, Panikkar insists on more radical pluralism.” He elaborates, “Panikkar considers the diversity of religions to be so compelling that, in principle, it jeopardizes the legitimacy of comparative religion.” It is for this reason that Panikkar is opposed to any kind of meta-language, which reduces the various traditions and robs them of their efficacy. He points out that “according to Panikkar, pluralism as well as the dialogical dialogue are grounded in the pluralistic nature of reality itself, and that they are tantamount to participating in its essence.”

Nonetheless, as we shall see below, there remains ‘a certain dissonance’ in his pluralism. Komulainen summarizes Panikkar’s movement as “building bridges between positions that are, in principle, unbridgeable.” He explains this tension:

\[\text{References:}\]

198 Ibid., 5.
199 Ibid., 6.
201 Ibid., 84.
202 Ibid., 85.
203 Ibid., 86.
204 Ibid., 87.
205 Ibid., 88.
206 Ibid., 89.
The intrinsic tension between dialogue and pluralism existing in Panikkar’s thinking could be summarized as follows. ‘Dialogue’ conceptualizes his endeavor to build bridges between different human positions, whereas ‘pluralism’ describes the unbridgeable character of these positions. On the other hand, the above analysis has shown that, despite the inherent tension, both of these concepts go, so to say, hand in hand. Panikkar intends to advocate a middle way that could provide the basis for communication, although not for any single system.\(^{207}\)

For Panikkar this task is urgent.\(^{208}\) Komulainen here puts his finger on the most difficult aspect of Panikkar’s thought to comprehend. The attempt to find a connection and commonality between points of view that are ultimately incommensurable is the hallmark of Panikkar’s theology. Panikkar’s stratified anthropology, which we discussed in our previous chapter, allows him to do this. As Komulainen points out, Panikkar solves his dilemma by insisting on “common anthropological foundation” that is the common “root” to religious experience.\(^{209}\) This root is the humanum, which ultimately leads one to cosmotheandric sensibility if properly nurtured. Komulainen summarizes Panikkar’s position in this regard by stating that, for Panikkar:

The diversity of religions is genuine on the doctrinal and phenomenological levels. Therefore, religions cannot be said to be one and the same. Nevertheless, on the deep anthropological level, too—i.e., in the “underground”—where the roots of religions are to be found, there exists a profound tie between them.\(^{210}\)

Varghese Manimala comments on the state of de facto pluralism today. Manimala insists that it is not possible for us to obtain absolute truth. After all we are merely finite creatures. Thus, we do not possess the epistemological capacity for

\(^{207}\) Ibid.
\(^{208}\) Ibid., 90.
\(^{209}\) Ibid., 93.
\(^{210}\) Ibid., 94.
absolute truth. We can only, at best, obtain a “glimpse of truth.” Manimala applies this insight to the dialogue between religions:

Since our concern is with religion and the encounter of religions in various fields, what we wish to state is that religions need to restrain from a claim to the knowledge of absolute truths and also from a pretension of being dispensers of this absolute truth. Such an attitude presents a barrier to dialogue. As we have mentioned, this leads to ‘relativity’ not ‘relativism’. This relativity is the result of varying perspectives. For Manimala, this underscores the importance of orthopraxis:

The absolute quality of truth, if at all we may talk about it, has to be spelled out especially on the practical ethical level of liberating praxis; the relative felt on the reflexive level. In what truth calls us to do, in the liberating praxis it generates, it can be ‘absolute;’ yet when we reflect on how we have known this truth and the limitation of knowing it, we feel the relative aspect of truth.

Attaining truth is an important part of human existence. Manimala insists that it is the “greatest desire” of every person. However, in this enterprise, we lack certainty “as long as we live in this world.” Thus, while we are “groping in darkness” we need collaboration in order to “reach as best an approximation to truth and certainty as possible.” Such collaboration requires mutual trust because no one has an “advantaged position” from which to know everything. Therefore, “It is a ‘walking together,’ where our identity is not lost and our underlying fellowship is not destroyed. This means

211 Varghese J. Manimala, Toward Mutual Fecundation and Fulfilment of Religions: An Invitation to Transcendence and Dialogue with a Cosmotheandric Vision, 95.
212 Ibid., 97.
214 Ibid., 105.
215 Ibid.
216 Ibid., 106.
217 Ibid.
that to be true to oneself is as important as to remain faithful to the other.”\textsuperscript{218} In this way, as a human community, working together helps us to overcome our epistemological limitations. To expound upon Manimala’s imagery, if we all grope together in the dark, we will gain a fuller picture of the room. If we do not work together, we may all be isolated to separate corners and never come to know what surrounds us.

Manimala discusses the problems that pluralism faces, saying, “The present-day problem of pluralism stems from a genuine experience of disorientation and chaos, and not from a theoretical problematic.”\textsuperscript{219} Therefore, the answer is not theoretical, but practical.\textsuperscript{220} He continues, “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.”\textsuperscript{221} This means that pluralism cannot remain on the conceptual level. It requires action because pluralism is not ‘plurality’ or ‘pluriformity’, the mere recognition of differences and varieties respectively.\textsuperscript{222} Genuine pluralism attempts to respect the “radical diversity” of these divergences.\textsuperscript{223} With this in mind, “pluralism is irreducible to unity—even of a higher order.”\textsuperscript{224} Yet, “pluralism stands between unity and plurality—without dialectically oscillating between them.”\textsuperscript{225} Manimala explains that ‘dialectics’, for Panikkar, refers to the Hegelian attempt to preserve rationality in the face of contradictions.\textsuperscript{226} Thus, the tension is maintained and not superficially resolved.

\textsuperscript{218} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{219} Ibid., 110.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid., 111.
\textsuperscript{224} Ibid., 114.
\textsuperscript{225} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{226} Ibid.
As we have mentioned above, because it differs from this dialectical attitude, pluralism does not consist of a religious *epoché* that awaits an eschatological resolution. Rather, “Pluralism is an attitude which emerges when we acknowledge the limits of reason and do not identify them with the limits of Being; when we do not equate Thinking and Being, or assume a priori the total intelligibility of reality.”227 Thus, pluralism requires a mystical sensibility, which can be attained through attention to the cosmotheandric character of reality. This sensibility entails knowing the relativity of our knowledge.228

This relativity involves an awareness of relationality. As Manimala points out, faith is a personal experience lived out relationally. Thus, interreligious dialogue is *inter*personal (and is supported by *intra*religious dialogue). Manimala is sure to point out that religions do not form the “locus of faith”; rather “the locus of faith is persons.”229 Therefore, it is important to remember that in interreligious dialogue, the religious traditions themselves are not the interlocutors. Rather, the persons who are adherents to these traditions, in their various permutations, are the actual interlocutors. So, dialogue does not actually take place between religions, properly speaking, but between persons.

In contrast to the different kinds of ‘centrism’ prevalent in interreligious dialogue today, including the theocentrism and the regnocentrism of John Hick and Paul Knitter respectively, Manimala presents Panikkar as an alternative. He states, “In our case, we have to say that *truth has no centre.*”230 Rather, true pluralism (as exemplified by Panikkar) recognizes that different “ultimate beliefs” are ultimately incommensurable

\[227\] Ibid., 115.
\[228\] Ibid., 116.
\[229\] Ibid., 124-125.
\[230\] Ibid., 127. Emphasis in original.
and incompatible and takes this seriously.\textsuperscript{231} Truth, however, is not merely de-centered. For Panikkar, “\textit{Truth is polar.}”\textsuperscript{232} It is a relation (between subject and object, etc.). It is for this reason that humans cannot bracket themselves out of the equation. So, religious \textit{epoché} is further undesirable because truth itself always includes subjectivity.\textsuperscript{233}

4.2.10 Critique: Is Such a Pluralistic Outlook Possible?

Thus the global encounter of religions is the theological \textit{locus} of Panikkar’s thought. Komulainen explains, “Although Panikkar’s theological career is in many ways related to India, the proper context of his thinking, especially in the latter part of his work, is to be found in the contemporary situation characterized by the suspense of globalization and localization.”\textsuperscript{234} Komulainen insists that in Panikkar’s theological project, a “new theological paradigm” is “emerging.”\textsuperscript{235} Komulainen classifies this new paradigm not as pluralism, but as ‘post-pluralism’.\textsuperscript{236} In this line of thought, Panikkar proposes a “new kind of inclusivism” which maintains an “irreconcilable tension” between religious traditions.\textsuperscript{237} This is reflected in Panikkar’s (albeit inconsistent) usage of the concept of ‘parallelism’ that we examined above.

In this way, Panikkar’s new paradigm opposes the tendencies exhibited by other theologians who classify themselves as pluralists and do so by establishing and utilizing a

\textsuperscript{231} \textit{Ibid.} Another good example of this can be found in S. Mark Heim, \textit{The Depth of Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends}.
\textsuperscript{232} \textit{Ibid.}, 128. Emphasis in original.
\textsuperscript{233} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{234} Jyri Komulainen, \textit{An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions}, 7.
\textsuperscript{235} \textit{Ibid.}, 8.
\textsuperscript{236} \textit{Ibid.}, 12.
\textsuperscript{237} \textit{Ibid.}, 13.
‘meta-level’ language to categorize these. It is from this ‘post-pluralist’ perspective that Komulainen analyzes Panikkar’s theological project.238

Post-pluralistic critique thus represents attempts to dig below the surface of rhetoric in order to see, for instance, whether the method utilized in the implementation of a pluralistic program is, in the final analysis, congruent with its explicative aim, in other words, proving all religions to be equally and autonomously salvific.239

With this in mind, Komulainen’s assessment of Panikkar’s theology is that although he has tried to avoid the perils of other pluralists, his position is “still rather ambiguous.”240 Thus, Panikkar is not thoroughly ‘post-pluralist’. Furthermore, there are still “some internal tensions” in his thought.241 These tensions are in part present because Panikkar attempts to access, as far as possible, the anthropological level of mythos not logos.242 Komulainen explains, “Panikkar walks on a tightrope between holism and pluralism in a way that is not easy to articulate in terms of discursive rationality.”243 As we have seen, Komulainen points out that, while Panikkar seeks to allow each tradition as irreducible to the others, by proposing his cosmotheandric vision he seems to violate this tenet:

Anyone analyzing concepts such as ‘advaita’ or ‘Trinity’ in Panikkar’s texts cannot avoid the impression that, despite his pluralistic rhetoric, he seems to be de facto very willing to interpret different religions as concrete embodiments of one and the same religiousness.244

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238 Ibid., 18.
239 Ibid.
240 Ibid., 19.
241 Ibid.
242 Ibid., 103.
243 Ibid.
244 Ibid.
Komulainen calls this the “holistic side” of Panikkar’s thought, in which he describes the cosmotheandric character of all reality, “constitutive spirituality” because, as we have seen, it entails a basic anthropological orientation.\footnote{Ibid.} With regard to this element of Panikkar’s theology, Komulainen rhetorically asks, “Given that constitutive spirituality provides the basis for the communion of religions, does not this kind of spirituality have a normative role in regard to concrete religions?”\footnote{Ibid., 110.} He explains, “What I am trying to say is that, after closer examination, Panikkar’s pluralism is not so pluralistic at all.”\footnote{Ibid., 107.} In his project Komulainen sets out to demonstrate that there are both exclusivist and inclusivist tendencies in Panikkar’s theology. The source of these is Panikkar’s ‘cosmic confidence’.\footnote{Ibid., 111.} The expression of this ‘cosmic confidence’ becomes the Panikkar’s norm for evaluating religious experience. Komulainen uses a musical analogy to point to his main criticism of Panikkar. The inconsistencies in Panikkar’s thought arise when he takes on this “normative tone” in order to eliminate ‘cacophonies’.\footnote{Ibid., 114.}

Panikkar endorses a “Copernican revolution” in Christian theology, “a Jerusalem II.”\footnote{Ibid., 115.} Komulainen explains, “Panikkar uses his rhetoric to express the idea that Christianity should expand its horizon and admit the fundamental theological significance of other religions.”\footnote{Jyri Komulainen, An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions, 115.} For Panikkar, the Christian tradition itself plays a “vital role” in

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \footnote{Ibid.}
\item \footnote{Ibid., 110.}
\item \footnote{Ibid., 107.}
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\item \footnote{Ibid., 114.}
\item \footnote{Jyri Komulainen, An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions, 115.}
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this process. However, according to Komulainen this process also involves a revision of Christology. Furthermore, Komulainen interprets Panikkar’s revision as a major one because Panikkar “suggests” that ‘Christophany’ should completely replace traditional ‘Christology’. Thus, Komulainen is concerned that Panikkar’s christophanic theology is a complete replacement for traditional Christology. He is not convinced that Panikkar accomplishes his stated goal:

Even though he tries to avoid giving the impression that everyone should unconditionally endorse the substitution of Christology with Christophany, there is a strong normative tone in the above quotation: revising Christological thinking is associates with positive words such as “contemporary,” “ecumenical,” “open,” and “tolerant.” The point is clear: the new Christophany is proposed as a far better option than the predominant interpretations when facing the challenges of the contemporary world.

Velti-Matti Kärkkäinen is also critical of Panikkar’s approach in this regard:

Any kind of universal theory, in Panikkar’s opinion, denies pluralism; he opts for the latter. But, of course, Panikkar’s own notion of pluralism cannot be a universal theory, and therefore truth itself is pluralistic. Panikkar, however, no more than any other relativistically oriented thinker, cannot live up to his philosophical claims to relativism. His position, like that of many other pluralists, makes certain propositional claims and thus requires a propositional network and operates with truth-falsehood logic.

This raises the titular question of Komulainen’s book, a published version of his dissertation. Is Panikkar establishing a new religion, a tertium quid? Komulainen notes that Panikkar tries to foster dialogue “on as transcendent a level as possible.”

252 Ibid., 115-116.
253 Ibid., 116.
254 Ibid.
255 Ibid., 117. See Raimon Panikkar, Christophany: The Fullness of Man, 4.
256 Velti-Matti Kärkkäinen, The Trinity: Global Perspectives, 344-345.
257 Jyri Komulainen, An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions, 98.
points out, “Since Panikkar strongly emphasizes the ultimate existential character of religion, his thinking betrays an obvious actualistic tinge: faith is rather an “act” than a substance.”\(^\text{258}\) In this way, Panikkar’s thought is “transcendental” and “metaontological.”\(^\text{259}\) Thus, Panikkar’s pluralism is defined against the backdrop of “the ineffable” and “the silent.”\(^\text{260}\) It centers upon the mystery of the Divine.\(^\text{261}\) However, Komulainen points out, “It seems that Panikkar himself is taking the precise bird’s-eye perspective that he has vehemently repudiated.”\(^\text{262}\) To Komulainen, this seems like a “fatal intrinsic flaw” in Panikkar’s system.\(^\text{263}\) He argues:

> Even though he wishes to think in a radically pluralistic way, his search for a common ground for interreligious dialogue leads him to propose that such an element could be found on some deeper or higher level that unites different religions and, correspondingly, forms the inner core of any tradition.\(^\text{264}\)

Although one could interpret Panikkar’s perspective in this way, this may not be the only way to look at what Komulainen describes as Panikkar’s ‘perspectivism’.\(^\text{265}\) After all, even though one may not possess a bird’s eye perspective, one still knows that there is one and can thus speculate about what it is like based upon the observations he/she can make. To use a map analogy, early cartographers rarely had a bird’s eye perspective. Instead, they drew the best maps they could based on their own observations, but which depicted the areas they mapped from a bird’s eye view. In fact, they did this with more or less relative adequacy. Nonetheless, their work was not

\(^{258}\) Ibid., 99.  
\(^{259}\) Ibid., 100.  
\(^{260}\) Ibid.  
\(^{261}\) Ibid.  
\(^{262}\) Ibid.  
\(^{263}\) Ibid., 101.  
\(^{264}\) Ibid.  
\(^{265}\) Ibid., 77.
perfect. They missed certain features because certain observations could not be made. For instance, geologists did not know that the entire Yellowstone region in the United States was one huge caldera until we had satellite imaging of the region.

Alternately, to use the window analogy that Komulainen utilizes to describe this ‘perspectivism’, each perspective is limited by the frame of the window. However, maybe we can describe Panikkar’s project as something like leaning out the window and looking up, down, and side-to-side and even talking to one’s neighbors. Such an enterprise can be informative. However, it is dangerous because one no longer has the sure footing that he/she previously had. Thus, the level of certainty is diminished the farther one ‘leans’ out the window. Yet, the observations one makes and the information one collects from his/her neighbors still allow him/her to make conclusions about the reality glimpsed on the other side of the window.

Nonetheless, for Komulainen, “There is a distinct feeling that, with his cosmotheandrisim, he is sketching out a kind of intellectual meta-religion expressing the universal human experience in a language that is as general as possible, if not universal.” At first glance, based on his ‘cosmotheandrisim’, it might be easy to label Panikkar a ‘pantheist’, one who equates the world and God. One can hardly universalize to a greater degree than that. But, such an appellation is “too superficial.” On the other hand, epistemologically, Panikkar “wishes to reject the notion that knowing is an independent category alongside being, or an even more fundamental perspective on reality.” Because of this intimacy between ‘knowing’ and ‘being’:

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266 Ibid., 75-76.
267 Ibid., 189.
268 Ibid., 190.
269 Ibid., 192.
His cosmotheandrism seems to be more of an existentialist philosophy than a genuinely religious vision. It provides a sort of analysis of human experience: the divine dimension of reality means only that every being transcends itself, whereas the human dimension is reduced to the knowability of being. The cosmic dimension is tantamount to the intrinsic relationship of every entity with spatio-temporality.270

Thus, Komulainen notes that Panikkar’s thought could be considered a form of ‘humanism’, albeit a humanism that has “religious and metaphysical underpinnings.”271 This ‘humanism’ takes on a kind of normativity in Panikkar’s thought. Thus, Komulainen insists, “In conclusion, when studied critically from a postpluralistic perspective, Panikkar’s radical pluralism reveals inherent problems analogous to those in many other pluralistic theologies of religions.”272 These ‘problems’ are based on the danger of cosmotheandrism becoming a normative meta-level of religion that violates the internal logic of Panikkar’s epistemology of ‘perspectivism’.273

Similarly, Velti-Matti Kärkkäinen comments: “Without really giving substantial answers, he [Panikkar] lets it suffice to insist on the continuity with Christian tradition. His version of Trinitarianism, however, certainly elicits serious questions.”274 With this in mind, Kärkkäinen articulates a few questions for Panikkar:

Panikkar postulates a coming convergence of religions: Does that mean envisioning one single end for all? Or different goals for different religions? A related question, one that Panikkar has not really dealt with much in his writings, is the question of the relation of the Trinity to existing religions of the world.275

270 Ibid., 199.
271 Ibid., 201.
272 Ibid., 206.
273 Ibid., 207.
274 Velti-Matti Kärkkäinen, The Trinity: Global Perspectives, 343. See Panikkar, Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man, 43.
275 Ibid., 345.
To a certain extent, this criticism articulated by both Kärkkäinen and Komulainen is not only valid, but cuts to the very heart of Panikkar’s project. This central inconsistency presents a major problem for Panikkar. However, Panikkar’s thought may be rehabilitated by its emphasis on mystery. This ‘constitutive spirituality’ that Panikkar posits is ultimately something intangible, or at least something of which we only catch incomplete glimpses. Epistemologically then, Panikkar’s analytical conclusions, under his own logic, can only have provisional character. Thus, while this cosmotheandric sensibility is normative for Panikkar, no one, including Panikkar himself, has a complete grasp of cosmotheandric communion. Thus, these objections may ‘weaken’ the standing of Panikkar’s position, but they do not negate it. Panikkar can only propose his worldview with provisional certainty. But, there is no reason to believe that this is problematic for him. Quite to the contrary, it seems to be consistent with his epistemological leanings.

Furthermore, Panikkar’s epistemological sensibility would lead us to conclude that all positions and perspectives contain relativity. This includes critical perspectives, which, by the very nature of critique, make a universal claim to validity (or at least some meta-level claim to validity in relation to that which is critiqued). Thus, even when Panikkar posits some form of universal religious experience of cosmotheandrsim, his position remains situated in his own perspective, shaped by his context. The articulation of it in linguistic form betrays a Western predisposition (the terms that form the neologism ‘cosmotheonandrism’ are all of Greek origin). Such a predisposition is unavoidable. Without a prior intellectual and categorical matrix, it is impossible to make meaning out of experience. Nonetheless, the linguistic matrix itself is finite and
functions precisely by relativity (concepts that are contrasted with each other). Thus, relativity is a necessary component of meaningful discourse. Yet, there is often, nonetheless, ‘something’ beyond the relative that is communicated in such discourse. It is along this line that Panikkar artfully walks.

In his assessment of Panikkar, Komulainen is also critical of some aspects of Indian spirituality, especially those that tend toward monism. With these in mind, he calls Panikkar’s position, ‘affirmative orientalism’. He explains, “This term refers to the kind of stereotypical attitude that highlights the difference between the East and the West, giving preference to Eastern values.” Komulainen points out, then, that Panikkar’s criticism seems rather one-sided. Thus, “The primary target of his criticism is the modern Western way of thinking and, as already seen, it seems that in his view, it is Christianity that needs transformation more than other religions.” However, this seems out of step with Panikkar’s concept of ‘mutual fecundation’, which we will visit below. Ironically, however, this emphasis on critiquing Western Christianity can also lead to criticism from the opposite perspective. One can declare that Panikkar is showing favoritism to Christianity by using it as the overall matrix within which to work out a theology of religions. After all, Panikkar does not focus on ‘krishnaphany’, but on christophany. It is this Western Christian tradition that is receiving special treatment through revision because it is the one that Panikkar is plugging ‘new parts’ into, so to speak, in order to keep it running. He seems to be taking those ‘parts’ from other religions and using them freely. Furthermore, maybe it is not just Eastern spirituality,

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277 Ibid.
278 Ibid.
279 Ibid.
but, as we mentioned in our first chapter, mysticism in general, that is the corrective for Panikkar. This is the purpose that cosmotheandrism plays in Panikkar’s thought: it is universally accessible.

Komulainen is also critical of Panikkar’s ‘christophanic’ emphasis. In Komulainen’s estimation, “Christophany seems to stand for religiosity of a higher level than traditional Christianity.” However, Komulainen acknowledges that Panikkar envisions continuity between christophany and traditional Christology. He continues, “Nevertheless, Panikkar sees Christophany as continuing the intentions of traditional Christology by providing it with new prospects.” Thus, it gives traditional theology an opportunity for “growth.” The above-mentioned ‘cosmic confidence’ demonstrates that “For Panikkar, being Christian is existential, not essential.” Komulainen categorizes Panikkar’s ‘constitutive spirituality’ as an anthropological stratum or level that is normative for all other levels, but also only reached through them. The christophany reveals this level of humanity. As we have mentioned, Panikkar insists that christophany should not be interpreted as docetism. With this in mind, Komulainen discusses the difference between christophany and Christology:

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280 Ibid., 117.
281 Ibid.
282 Ibid. See Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The Intrareligious Dialogue, (New York, NY, Paulist Press, 1978), 70-71. Here Panikkar notes, “In the life of religion as in the life of a person, where there is no growth there is decay; to stop is stagnation and death.” He concludes, “Without allowing for such growth, no religious maturity is possible.”
283 Jyri Komulainen, An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions, 118.
284 Ibid.
285 Ibid., 119.
Panikkar thus understands Christophany to be more mystical than traditional Christology, more cosmological, and also more universal in the respect that its purview extends outside the boundaries of Christendom.\footnote{Ibid., 120-121. See Raimon Panikkar, \textit{Christophany: The Fullness of Man}, 5.}

Komulainen is concerned that Panikkar has deserted traditional Christology in favor of a mystical interpretation of ‘Christ’ that Panikkar himself has built. However, while it does represent a distinct development of Christology, it is not at all clear that Panikkar’s christophanic position is as extreme as Komulainen seems to presume. Nowhere does Panikkar challenge traditional Christological formulations. Quite to the contrary, his christophanic position is a development of themes found in traditional Christology. A prime example of this is Panikkar’s universalization of the idea of ‘Christ’ (‘cosmic’ Christology), which as we saw in our second chapter, is a development of the patristic theme of the activity of the Logos outside the incarnation. Therefore, Panikkar envisions a ‘cosmic’ Christ not because he is dissatisfied with traditional Christology but because he understands traditional Christology as demanding and supporting such a concept.

Furthermore, by highlighting this idea of christophany, Panikkar emphasizes the “priority of spirituality and experience over rational reflection.”\footnote{Ibid., 121.} Yet, his is not some kind of “\textit{Laissez-Faire} pluralism.”\footnote{Ibid.} Cosmotheandrism provides the norm by which religious experience is measured. The christophany becomes the tool with which to measure such experiences. Thus, for Komulainen, the problems inherent in Panikkar’s pluralism are the typical problems found in pluralist thinkers. The most difficult of these is the exclusivism that necessarily accompanies pluralism:

\footnote{Ibid.}
On the other hand, I have shown that similar post-pluralistic criticism can be leveled at Panikkar as at other pluralists. Panikkar also seems to presume that it is ultimately possible to find at least some common ground that provides the Archimedean point for grasping religious pluralism—although he untiringly points out that this common ground is to be found only on a very transcendental level, and it can never be reached outside concrete religious traditions.\footnote{Ibid., 122.}

He continues:

The discerning of epistemological and ontological principles in his thinking confirms that his pluralistic theology of religions rests upon particular metaphysics, and accordingly discloses an ideological quality that is not consistent with the basic idea of pluralism.\footnote{Ibid., 123.}

Thus Komulainen’s main concern is that in his disavowal of establishing a doctrinal norm based on the beliefs of a particular tradition, Panikkar instead establishes his own set of norms, which are just as limiting. Part of this ‘new norm’ is the idea of Christophany, which serves as a replacement of Christology. However, as we have mentioned, perhaps we should take the epistemological humility that Panikkar endorses with regard to the particular beliefs of religious traditions seriously. Thus, we could apply this even to Panikkar’s conclusions, which are ‘logocizations’ of mythic reality, which, as we mentioned in our third chapter, always lead to reduction and loss of content. Panikkar is attempting to put into words that which by definition cannot be put into words. In this way, Panikkar’s thought, like all theological expression will always necessarily be inadequate. The question we must ask, then, is whether or not Panikkar provides an adequate analogy. From a Christian perspective, because of his emphasis on cosmotheandrisism, which is essentially an expression of communion (a concept dear to
the Christian tradition), the answer to this question is most likely affirmative. However, this affirmation, like all theological affirmations, must be held humbly.

4.2.11 Dialogue Fosters Growth

As we have mentioned, for Panikkar, Christian identity is broader than those who explicitly identify themselves as ‘Christian’. Thus, there is an interrelation between the concepts of ‘christian’ and ‘human’ in Panikkar’s thought. Panikkar insists that the Christian must strip him/herself of the “christian religion.” By this he does not mean doing away with one’s religious affiliation or even the beliefs thereof. Rather, he means that the Christian must free him/herself from the merely sociological aspects of religion. Faith is deeper than this:

On the contrary the faith that I still desire to call christian, though others may prefer to call it simply human, leads to the plenitude and hence to the conversion of all religion, even though up to date it has only succeeded, from a Judaic substructure in converting to a great or lesser extent helleno-latin-gothic-celtic ‘paganism’.

Thus, Panikkar sees this faith commitment as part of, and even mediated by, one’s religious tradition. On this traditional identity, Panikkar says, “As I have already indicated, every believer sees a tradition from the inside, so that for the believer it becomes a symbol of all that is true.” Nonetheless, as we have seen, true dialogue seeks to see the religious tradition of another ‘from the inside’ as well. One may find that the faith that Panikkar connects with Christian commitment can also be found and expressed in a variety of traditions. The encounter with these other forms of faith,

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293 Ibid.
particularly as an ‘insider’, leads to an opportunity for growth in one’s own faith. As Christopher Denny points out:

What defines commitment to dialogue for Panikkar is growth. One must grow in dialogue. If the self has not been transcended in this engagement, the dialogue has failed. Hence, Panikkar’s dialogue is properly called "dialogical dialogue," because it travels dialogos, through speech. In this model the other is not a problem to be solved. Nor is the other a minefield who has to be gingerly stepped through with the use of interreligious pleasantries dispensed only to maintain an uneasy peace. In Panikkar’s idea of dialogue, the so-called other is absolutely necessary for the transcendence of the so-called self. Moreover, the alleged other is necessary because of its very otherness, not because of some propositional truth or phenomenon it can yield up.\(^{295}\)

Panikkar prefers to use organic growth language to describe this phenomenon. Among his preferred metaphors are ‘mutual fecundation’, ‘cross-fertilization’, and ‘interpenetration’.\(^{296}\) The choice of such terms is important to Panikkar’s understanding:

This kind of biological language is neither accidental, nor just a matter of rhetoric. Panikkar compares religious and cultural studies explicitly with botany. Human traditions are dynamic like seeds, and they could be understood only in the light of the potentiality hidden in them.\(^{297}\)

Thus, for Panikkar, faith is something living. It grows over time. Komulainen points out that in Panikkar’s theological schema change is an integral part of the religious disposition, and to demonstrate this, he uses these organic images like ‘evolution’ and ‘progression’.\(^{298}\) Nonetheless, Panikkar is critical of envisioning evolution and


progression from an ‘outsider’s point of view’ where the goal is clearly seen. In this sense, we should not think of Panikkar’s project as involving teleology in the strict sense. However, while it is not a well-defined teleology, it does seem that there is a general teleological thrust to Panikkar’s worldview, in that all religious traditions are ‘aimed’ at the same ‘goal’: cosmotheandric union.

As we have mentioned, for Panikkar, the encounter of religions “must be truly religious.” “Thus interreligious dialogue is not only a method, but also a religious act par excellence.” Varghese Manimala interprets this to mean that the various religious traditions need each other to reach fulfillment. This is perhaps Manimala’s grandest claim. Yet, he insists that if there is to be a global civilization, it cannot be truly such if it destroys particular civilizations. Rather, the various civilizations throughout the world exist, subsist, and persist symbiotically.

Religious traditions are subject to the same finitude as individual humans are. Therefore, “Religions are seeking fulfillment because as long as they are on earth they continue to evolve and stand in need of completion.” Furthermore, all the religions that seek this fulfillment are not ‘self-sufficient’ and, consequently, need each other in order to reach their goal. Because of this, “Religions all stand on the same level, in that each one is an approximation of the divine, trying to lead their followers to the

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299 Ibid., 62.
300 Ibid.
301 Ibid., 64.
302 Ibid.
304 Ibid., 482.
305 Ibid., 486.
306 Ibid., 487.
experience of the divine.” This experience of the divine, which Manimala refers to as an ‘Abba experience’, is an experience of the immanent-transcendence revealed in christophanies.

In an attempt to address the dilemma of seeing other religions as a threat to Christian identity, Panikkar utilizes the imagery of religious traditions as separate rivers that give life. With this image, Panikkar:

takes a courageous step toward a solution of this dilemma by showing that the rivers of the earth neither truly meet each other—even in the oceans—nor are dependent on such a merging in order to become life-giving rivers. The rivers do not meet, not even in the ocean. “They” meet each other nevertheless, namely, in heaven. “They” meet in the form of clouds after their initial transformation into vapor, coming down eventually as rain into the valleys of the mortals and nurturing the rivers of the earth.

This imagery highlights the mutuality of the relationship between religious traditions. They each independently give life, yet they meet ‘eschatologically’ and this eschatological union, in turn, feeds those rivers of life. Thus, because religious traditions need each other, we must accept pluralism as a “blessing” not a “curse”. This means avoiding any forced proselytism in the interreligious encounter. After all, Manimala contends, religious freedom is a basic human right. “If this freedom be abused, it is an

307 Ibid., 488.
308 Ibid.
309 See Raimon Panikkar, A Dwelling Place for Wisdom, 109-113ff. He roots Christian identity in three sacred rivers: the Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges. He describes them as depicting “three kairological moments in the Christian self-understanding.” The main point of this analogy is brought out by the chapter subtitle: “Does one need to be spiritually semitic and intellectually western in order to be a Christian?” The first two rivers point to Christianity up to this point. Jesus was baptized in the Jordan and Tiber represents Rome where Peter and Paul died and, generally speaking, the inculcation of Graeco-Roman culture by Christianity. The last, the Ganges points to the encounter with the East and the necessity to reach out to other religious traditions.
310 Ibid., 113.
311 Varghese J. Manimala, Toward Mutual Fecundation and Fulfilment of Religions: An Invitation to Transcendence and Dialogue with a Cosmotheandric Vision, 559.
312 Ibid., 560.
offence against God, *not against man.*” Thus, rather than seeking to turn others into copies of ourselves, we should seek communion between religions, which is true unity in distinction. As we have pointed out in our first chapter, the Trinity is the source of this, and all, communion:

Here the Trinitarian dimension of relationship may be greatly helpful. In the Trinity the analogous process is the radical immanence and the radical emptiness by which each divine person indwells the others and makes way for others to effect a reciprocal action.

The Trinitarian hypostases encounter each other as ‘others’ and do not seek to reduce this life-giving diversity to deadly uniformity. The identity of Jesus of Nazareth here is an entryway into cosmotheandric communion. Manimala points out, “The incarnation is the window into the Trinitarian communion, and the path to participate in it.” In reflection on this union we find that “The typical feature of communion is the discovery in ourselves of an openness or response to a third person which we can hardly credit as coming from us, except by virtue of the indwelling of a second in us.” *Perichoresis* is not limited to the Divine.

As we have mentioned in our first chapter and shall revisit in our final chapter, the Christian conception of salvation is based on this communion. This is the *theosis* discussed in Christian theology since its early years. Manimala explains, “The Christian vision of salvation looks toward a condition in which relation with God is realized and in

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which one shares that realization with others.” This inspires Manimala to urge a *metanoia* in our attitudes toward religion. He says, “Today the world yearns for a new type of religiosity; a paradigm shift is called for in living the life as people of a new religion.” But in contrast to Komulainen’s concern regarding such paradigms, Manimala’s conception of a ‘new religion’ is not one that does away with ‘old religion’. Rather it is one that reforms the current traditions to embrace a wider openness. For instance, the Christian tradition requires authority, but this should not result in authoritarianism. That is, the one exercising authority must realize that he is bound by human limitations. Such a paradigm seeks unity rather than uniformity. Panikkar explains the importance of openness:

Christian self-understanding must be open to other religious experiences and belief-forms (and systems). It must be willing to listen to them, to learn from them, even to absorb all they have to offer that will enrich or deepen the Christian interpretation. Christian self-understanding must show willingness for mutual transformation in dialogue. This interreligious enrichment could produce a new ability of perception and ultimately a new form of religious awareness and of religion in general.

Thus, for Panikkar, Christian identity must embrace pluralism because it must embrace reality. Reality itself is pluralistic. By embracing pluralism, Christian identity opens itself to growth through the encounter with Christ, wherever Christ might be found.

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319 Ibid.
320 Ibid., 565.
321 Ibid., 566.
322 Ibid.
323 Ibid.
324 Raimon Panikkar, *A Dwelling Place for Wisdom*, 121. Note that Panikkar is using ‘Christian’ in the traditional, particularized sense here.
4.2.12 Unity is at the Root of Christian Identity

While it pervades his entire theological corpus, Panikkar’s clearest treatment of the theme of unity comes in his opus magnum *Christophany*. In this work, he declares, “I would like to stress that man’s dignity lies precisely in his being conscious of the fact that he and the Father *are one.*”\(^{325}\) Thus, for Panikkar, Jesus the Christ’s identity, as articulated in John’s Gospel *is* the fullness human identity (see Jn 10:30). This mystical union is the key to humanity’s true selfhood. Panikkar sees the work of the Spirit in this union. Thus, it is for this reason that Jesus leaves his apostles shortly after the resurrection:

> Jesus knew that it was good that he leave, that he had not come to remain but to remain in us in the most perfect form, not as a more or less welcome guest foreign to us but in our very being. This is the meaning of the eucharist. This is the work of the Spirit.\(^{326}\)

Otherwise, Jesus would become an idol.\(^{327}\) Thus, Jesus the Christ leaves with “total faith in us.”\(^{328}\) Thus, trust in the Spirit implicitly implies trust in humanity.\(^{329}\) To give this theological articulation, Panikkar suggests the idea of an *incarnatio continua* through the continuation of Jesus’ ministry in those who are united to him in the Spirit. Panikkar insists, “This incarnation is in fact the trinitarian vision of creation.”\(^{330}\) In other words, “Creation does not exist outside (*extra Deum*) God. Rather, it is a moment, a dimension of the radical Trinity.”\(^{331}\)

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\(^{327}\) *Ibid*.

\(^{328}\) *Ibid.*, 125.

\(^{329}\) *Ibid*.


\(^{331}\) *Ibid.*, 129.
What is essential for our purposes here is that, in Panikkar’s vision, the identity of Jesus the Christ is Christian identity. And that is not all. Christian identity is the fullness of human identity.\(^3\) Thus, “The inner life of Jesus reveals a universal experience.”\(^4\) He makes this emphasis even clearer, stating, “I am not assuming a dialectical position when I assert that I have no hesitation in saying ‘I am God’—because God has said ‘I am Man’.”\(^5\) He continues, “What I am doing, rather, is describing my own experience in an intimate, personal way.”\(^6\) Panikkar’s emphasis is on communion and takes seriously the Eastern tradition of *theosis*, which finds its inspiration in the declaration of the Petrine corpus that through Christ we “may become participants in the divine nature (2 Pt 1:4).”\(^7\) This notion has found axiomatic expression through Athanasius, who famously who penned, “He [the *Logos* of God], indeed, assumed humanity that we might become God.”\(^8\) In other words, Panikkar’s ideas here are nothing new, but rather a time-honored element of the Christian tradition.

Furthermore, here it is clear that Panikkar is not dismissing the uniqueness of Jesus the Christ. Rather, he is saying that Jesus reveals a dimension that is found, though not necessarily realized, in all of us. However, Panikkar is not necessarily affirming that uniqueness either. Unlike many contemporary theologians, he is, quite simply, unconcerned with this issue. Thus, he declares:

\(^3\) See Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, 92-93. Panikkar insists that true Christian identity humanizes one: “Humanizing Man means to make him truly Man, but the expression is treacherous and ambivalent because this gerund is neither merely transitive nor merely intransitive. It is not as if someone else were humanizing Man or as if Man himself could achieve what he is not yet. Humanizing Man means rather this plunge into reality and participation in the overall destiny of all that is, which takes place inside and outside Man.”
\(^4\) Raimon Panikkar, * Christophany: The Fullness of Man*, 137.
\(^5\) Ibid.
\(^6\) Ibid.
\(^7\) Ibid.
\(^8\) Athanasius, *De Incarnatione (On the Incarnation)*, 8:54.
The mysticism of Jesus Christ is simply human mysticism. What else could it be? It is the ultimate experience of man as Man. *Sat-puruṣa* signifies not only an individual or exemplar of the human species but also the plenitude of what we all are.\(^{337}\)

Thus, “To sum up, the mystery of Christ is the mystery of the whole of reality—divine, human, cosmic, without confusion yet without separation.”\(^{338}\) This union is extended throughout time and space. It is continuous.\(^{339}\) For this reason, in the first of his nine sūtras in Christophany, he asserts that “Christ Is the Christian Symbol for the Whole of Reality.” Thus, “A nonreductive Christian vision should be able to assert that every being is a christophany, a manifestation of the christic adventure of the whole of reality on its way to the infinite mystery.”\(^{340}\) In other words, if Christians truly believe that Jesus the Christ reveals true human identity, then it should not be scandalous to assert the possibility that this identity (‘Christ’) may be revealed elsewhere as well. In his treatment of Panikkar, Francis D’Sa discusses Christ as the symbol of the cosmotheandric character of reality.\(^{341}\) He explains, "Symbol, for Panikkar, is the thing itself in as much as it manifests itself. The manifestation of the thing is not identical with the thing, but it is not separate either.”\(^{342}\) Furthermore, as we saw with Panikkar’s Trinitarian relationship between Father and Son, "The symbolized reality cannot be known except through the symbol.”\(^{343}\) Therefore, “Christ as the symbol of the

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339 This is how he derives the above-mentioned idea of *incarnatio continua*.
341 Francis X. D’Sa, “The Notion of God,” 38.
342 *Ibid*.
343 *Ibid*.
cosmotheandric Reality, ‘contains’ the two poles: the divine on the one hand and the cosmic on the other.”

This is explained further in the ninth sūtra of Panikkar’s Christophany, in which he asserts that “Christophany is the Symbol of the Mysterium Coniunctionis of the Divine, Human, and Cosmic Reality.” Thus, as we have already mentioned several times, the christophany is a revelation of “cosmotheandric experience.” In this short reflection, Panikkar clarifies, “It is worth saying that the nondual advaita to which I refer is neither a dialectical negation of duality nor a secondary act of the intellect—or perhaps better, the human spirit. Rather, it is the direct vision that transcends rationality (without denying it).” This is because Christ is the conjunction between the three aspects of reality. Thus Jesus the Christ’s identity has cosmic significance, or rather, cosmotheandric significance. That is, Christ reveals the true identity of humanity, God, and the world. Salvation, then, is attained through faith that “Jesus is the Christ.” However, this is not a theory, but a “confession” or “an existential affirmation.” This affirmation takes place at a deeper level than the human logos. It is an affirmation of faith not of belief. With this in mind we shall turn to the soteriological and ecclesiological implications of Panikkar’s theological vision in our next chapter.

4.3 True Christian Identity is Established Mystically

Joseph Prahbu points out that Panikkar’s “theology, or a-theology, takes its point of departure not from scripture or philosophy but from spiritual experience, both his own

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344 Ibid., 39.
346 Ibid., 182.
347 Ibid., 183.
348 Ibid., 149.
349 Ibid.
and that of others.” Jyri Komulainen notes that “for Panikkar, writing is meditation.” This poses many difficulties for the readers of his thought. For instance, “he often does not even pursue scientific accuracy, but rather allows himself the liberty of using words in his own way.” However, this mystical emphasis is also central to theology, an in-itself impossible task of putting the transcendent into finite terms.

Consequently, as we have seen, because of this experiential starting point, Panikkar particularly highlights the insights of mysticism. In a sense, mysticism allows Panikkar to maintain the tensions between religious traditions, resolving them only in divine eternity. Because of this, mysticism is also the lynchpin of Panikkar’s soteriology and ecclesiology. Varghese Manimala explains Panikkar’s utilization of mysticism in his overall theological project:

For Panikkar, as well as for other contemporary authors, the ultimate root of our personal and collective problems lies in the dualisms we have constructed: between the I and the world, subject and object, matter and spirit, secular and sacred, temporal and eternal, culture and nature, masculine and feminine, body and mind, reason and intuition.

Mysticism unifies and consequently combats these artificial fractures we construct. It integrates where there is dis-integration. The solutions to the struggles of humanity can be aided through mystical union. Salvation itself is mystical. Manimala explains, “According to Panikkar in order to overcome the contemporary predicament we

352 Ibid.
have to regain the elusive dimension of mystery.” Christopher Denny points out that in Panikkar’s thought, “The praxis of interreligious reading is tolerance. By tolerance Panikkar is not referring to political, theological, philosophical, or pragmatic tolerance but, rather, a mystical tolerance constituted by an experience that transcends theory.” He insists that, for Panikkar, tolerance is the essence of soteriology because it communicates hope.

In this way, mysticism is orthopraxis:

In order to remedy this situation praxis must take precedence over theory, a reversal of the priorities of an ideology. From Panikkar's perspective, one should read texts from other religious traditions in order to be converted to a mythic communion within which one can see the threads of a common human experience operative in the myths people live.

Thus, as we have seen, Panikkar insists upon the identification of self and Brahman. Yet, he tries to avoid “monistic terms” by discussing varying perspectives. In this way, he avoids the reduction of the multiplicity of religious experiences to one common experience and the absolute equation of such varying experiences. Komulainen explains, “The “transcendentals” of Panikkarian anthropology—if such a Kantian expression is appropriate here—are different from each other and not as universal as those of Kantian philosophy.” But, while distancing himself from modernism in this way, Panikkar is not purely ‘postmodern ‘either, he is

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354 Ibid., 60-61. Emphasis in original.
356 Ibid.
357 Ibid.
358 Ibid.
359 Jyri Komulainen, An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions, 166.
360 Ibid., 167.
361 Ibid.
also critical of some aspects of postmodernity. Rather, Panikkar’s interpretation of mystical unity and identity causes him to forge an intriguing synthesis:

He wishes to attach himself to the classical tradition of contemplation, and to give a new interpretation of it that highlights the irreducibility of the person to any abstract principle, divinity, or the Absolute—notwithstanding that his understanding of the person differs from that of modern individualism.

Thus the person is irreducible to others, yet the person is not solipsistic or isolated in any manner. Rather, as we have seen, it is through unity (with the divine and the world) that the person finds his/her fulfillment. As we mentioned in our third chapter, this yearning for cosmotheandric unity is the ‘monk’ in each human person. This ‘monastic’ longing has undergone various manifestations. Panikkar contrasts the ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ monk, saying, “While traditional monasticism tends toward simplicity (aplotēs) through simplification, with the accompanying danger of reductionism, contemporary “monasticism” seeks simplicity through integration, with the consequent danger of an eclectic juxtaposition.” For Panikkar, the ‘modern’ monastic manifestation that seeks simplicity through integration demonstrates the universality of this anthropological characteristic. Thus, monkhood is not exhibited by those who espouse complexity. He explains ‘simplicity’:

Simplicity, as the etymology of the word suggests, indicates a single-fold, singleness, a one-without-a-second, without duplicity of any kind. Sim-plicity on the ultimate level is only possible if the multi-plicity is but the fruit of a single reality unfolding. Ultimately, the manifold character of reality is viewed as only secondary, contingent. Simplicity as an ideal implies the belief that either the multiplicity is reducible to a unit or that there is

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362 See Ibid.
363 Ibid., 167-168.
364 Raimon Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype, 33.
no way of salvaging all those “inferior” elements, since they belong to a merely apparent world.\textsuperscript{365}

Panikkar explains that “blessed” simplicity and “harmonious” complexity are “two basic human options.”\textsuperscript{366} He elaborates by explaining that in its rudimentary form the attitude of ‘blessed simplicity’ rests on the belief in a perfect and simple God who, for monotheists, is at the root of reality. One finds meaning, then, by returning to the source of life.\textsuperscript{367} And in its rudimentary form ‘harmonious complexity rests on pluralistic beliefs that are not, in the end, compatible with belief in the simple God of monotheism.\textsuperscript{368} Both of these approaches, however, have “their respective insufficiencies.”\textsuperscript{369} Yet these two ideals are two ‘moments’ in the same timeline. He insists, “Complexity as an ideal implies the belief that there is a supereminent unity holding everything together.”\textsuperscript{370} Yet, one cannot reduce reality to a single, all-consuming principle; rather, one must have “a certain type of pluralism within the highest unity.”\textsuperscript{371} Thus:

In spite of all the differences and irreducibilities, the very awareness of plurality entails a higher unity. There has also to be a certain relationship between the ultimate ingredients of reality. This is, I submit, what the doctrine of the Trinity as well as that of Advaita stand for. Here is where I speak of the cosmotheandric character of reality.\textsuperscript{372}

In much the same way, Panikkar holds that contemplation and praxis are not diametrically opposed. Rather, one leads to the other. He insists, “Being is one, or it can be unified. Doing and having, on the other hand, entail multiplicity.”\textsuperscript{373} This multiplicity

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{365} Ibid., 36.
  \item \textsuperscript{366} Ibid., 38.
  \item \textsuperscript{367} Ibid., 36.
  \item \textsuperscript{368} Ibid., 37.
  \item \textsuperscript{369} Ibid., 38.
  \item \textsuperscript{370} Ibid., 37.
  \item \textsuperscript{371} Ibid., 38.
  \item \textsuperscript{372} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{373} Ibid., 45.
\end{itemize}
of ‘doing and having’ is ultimately grounded in unity. It is this unity that is sought by the monk (a category that is not limited to those in monasteries for Panikkar). Panikkar says, “At any rate, the value of each being lies in its being what it is, not in what it does or has. The intuition of being thus stripped of all spurs or inducements—this is what the monk glimpses.”374 He continues by insisting that monkhood does not focus on either doing or having something. Rather, the purpose of monkhood is to allow the core of the person to reach its full potential.375 And the ‘multiplicity’ of action finds a foundation in this ‘core’ or ‘fullness’. It is for this reason that in contemporary monasticism, praxis and theory are not polar opposites.376 Rather, praxis is rooted in theory and theory is often inspired by praxis.377 He deepens this insight into the union of unity and multiplicity, saying, “the new monk stresses the unity of being and doing, but he underscores the distinction between being and having. Having is not simply riches, it is also the power of the means.”378 Thus, the ‘new’ monk is engaged in the world. In fact, the modern monk is frustrated by the isolation of traditional monk that relegated the monk to a sphere of ‘social inaction’ in order to center the self in such a way that saw these two goals as opposed to each other.379

Panikkar explains that the mystic life of the monk has always been intended to ‘overcome spatio-temporal parameters’.380 In discussing this, Panikkar asserts, “Monastic existence does not move solely or principally in time and space. Interiority, on the one hand, and transcendence, on the other, are classical monastic categories. The

374 Ibid.
375 Ibid., 46.
376 Ibid.
377 Ibid.
378 Ibid., 46-47.
379 Ibid., 47.
380 Ibid., 54.
spatio-temporal involvement is foreign to the monk." Monastics are a sign for others of the transcendent. Thus, the monk give us a glimpse into that which is beyond our human experience by revealing a set of concerns that extend beyond those of everyday life. Panikkar’s ‘contemporary’ monasticism sees this “going beyond” as the uncovering of a dimension of life that does not negate the value of the ‘material’ concerns of everyday life but that instead transforms them. In other words, it is not dualistic, setting ‘imperfect’ matter against ‘perfect’ spirit. So, classic monasticism emphasizes transcendence while contemporary monasticism emphasizes immanence (or, better said, immanence in accord with transcendence). Panikkar defines immanence: “Immanence is not something that is so interior to a thing that it has somehow already transcended the thing itself, but rather something which dwells in very marrow of the being in question and constitutes it, without thereby being totally identified with it.”

The immanence that the monk seeks illuminates the tempiternity of which we spoke in our second chapter. Panikkar explains: “The lived experience of tempiternal awareness, for example, is not that of an existence faced with an atemporal and, in the last analysis, post-temporal eternity, but rather the experience of those tempiternal moments of this very existence in time and space.” As we saw earlier, it is precisely Christ who is identified with this tempiternal awareness. The tempiternal intuition that the monk strives for entails the union of transcendence and immanence that is only attainable through communion. It is for this reason that the monk does not eschew the values that give shape to everyday human existence. Rather, the monk tries to nourish and realize all

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381 Ibid.
382 Ibid.
383 Ibid., 55.
384 Ibid.
385 Ibid.
Thus, once again, we encounter Panikkar’s cosmotheandric worldview: “Reality is neither monistic nor dualistic, but *advaitic*, Trinitarian, and vital, that is, pluralistic (although) without separation.”

Panikkar discusses tempiternity in some more detail in one of his nine sutras in *Blessed Simplicity*, in which he discusses the ‘transhistorical consciousness’ of the monk and its priority over ‘historical concern’. He explains that it is neither a form of ‘perfect’ temporality nor a form of eternity that is completely shielded from temporality, but the harmonious integration of time and eternity, which seem to be disparate factors, into one holistic vision of reality. With regard to soteriology, this means that:

Salvation, *moksa, nirvāṇa*, and other expressions of the ultimate end of human life are not projected into a future that has been somewhat purified or perfected, but are discovered in the very fullness that we are capable of experiencing in time and not “later.” This awareness discovers, *in and through* the temporal, the tempiternal nucleus of the plenitude of our being—or however else we would choose to describe this reality.

Panikkar uses the Transfiguration as an example of a manifestation of tempiternity. He states, “The Taboric experience is for me a paramount example of what I call *sacred secularity*. The transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain—not in the temple—breaks down the separation between the *profanum* and the *fanum*, the profane and the sacred.” In the transfiguration, Jesus is seen in a glorified state, yet he has not left the Earth or ceased to be Jesus of Nazareth. This event is one of the many

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386 Ibid., 56.
387 Ibid.
388 Ibid., 65.
389 Ibid.
390 Ibid.
391 Ibid., 66.
christophanic events that are recorded in the Gospels. It shows forth the union of the sacred and the secular that is the christophany of Jesus of Nazareth (and any christophany for that matter). On this union of sacred and secular Panikkar notes:

This seeing is the Kingdom of God—here, now. The Buddhist symbol manifesting the same intuition is the Buddha-nature of all things, which only needs to be discovered as such. The Māhāyana tradition will express it by saying that samsāra is nirvāna and nirvāna, samsāra. Vedāntic Hinduism will emphasize that we are already Brahmā, even though we fail to notice it. And Jainism together with Gnosticism will tell us that the ātman and the real are simply buried or enclosed in karma and matter, and that one need only be freed of these occultations.392

This transhistorical “intuition” or “the—Taboric, if you wish—revelation that reality is nondualistic, Trinitarian, and simple, but with a simplicity that is at the same time multifaceted, and whose interpretation—perichoresis—is not always given to our experience.”393 Thus, it needs to be sought. For Panikkar, the basic human cosmotheandric intuition is at the heart of monkhood. It is precisely for this reason that all are called to ‘monkhood’, particularly in its ‘modern’ holistic form. The mystic will remark that once one catches a glimpse of the ‘beyond’, or “the other shore”, as the Buddhist insight goes, all else seems dreadfully mundane and it is difficult to come back. All other cares and worries, no matter how essential, are suddenly (or only apparently suddenly for they have always been this way) unimportant and non-essential. This is the essence of the Buddhist insistence on the non-reality of being. Thus:

Transhistorical consciousness lets us perceive that the meaning of life consists of reaching the greatest happiness that each of us can, at any and every given moment; freeing us in this way from the desire to chase after happiness where it cannot be found.

392 Ibid.
393 Ibid.
Salvation, says an immense majority of religious traditions, consists of joy, *chara*, *ānanda*, *sukha*, *nirvāṇa*, heaven, etc. The fact that this happiness was not seen to be fulfilled in the lives of the majority of mortals during this life, as well as the fact of being steered by a certain cosmological interpretation of time and space, has deferred and transplanted happiness to another other-worldly sphere. It is for this reason too that the majority of traditions believe that it is only the very few who are saved: very few reach complete happiness and peace in this life.\(^{394}\)

Because of this happiness, the monk is considered one who demonstrates that all of us can achieve the serenity and happiness of human fulfillment no matter what one’s condition and context may be.\(^{395}\) Simply put, the monk exhibits hope because the monk ‘sees’ him/herself and the world as it really is. Thus, it is not our riches, our political leaders, or even our friends and families *per se*, that give us hope; rather hope extends from the transhistorical consciousness exhibited by the monk, which can see all these things in their appropriate context. This transhistorical consciousness is attuned to finding christophanies. Thus, as Manimala points out, the cosmotheandric calling is also a call to find a lifestyle that transcends the historical.\(^{396}\) He continues by likening this transhistorical consciousness to ‘mystical awareness’.\(^{397}\) Through this salvific awareness, one “reaches the fullness of time”\(^{398}\) And, “Then my individuality touches everything and everybody and yet I am all the more: *aham Brahman*.”\(^{399}\) Once again we see that salvation is the realization of one’s true identity:

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\(^{395}\) *Ibid.*, 68.

\(^{396}\) Varghese J. Manimala, *Toward Mutual Fecundation and Fulfilment of Religions: An Invitation to Transcendence and Dialogue with a Cosmotheandric Vision*, 57.

\(^{397}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{398}\) *Ibid.*

And this is the paradox: I become all the more my authentic self the more my ego has disappeared. Transhistorical existence calls for sharing in the unfolding of life, the ability to share oneself with the whole of creation, the openness to the Divine and the World, the entrusting oneself to the macrocosm with the hope that explosion of the adventure of Be-ing will take place in due time. This is reaching fullness: nirvāṇa or salvation (soteria).

This brings us to another insight expressed in a sutra in Blessed Simplicity, in which Panikkar locates the quest of the monk in the prioritization of ‘the fullness of the person over the individual’. For Panikkar, the individual is a piece of the cosmotheandric whole that has been conceptually carved out. Thus, “The individual is an abstraction, in the precise sense of the word: all that would make Man too involved and unmanageable is abstracted from the human being. An individual is a manageable entity with clear-cut boundaries. It is an identifiable piece standing on its own, isolated.” By contrast, the ‘person’ extends beyond the limited parameters of the individual and finds him or herself in his or her context. The ‘person’ entails and includes the entire complicated ‘web’ of interwoven human relationships that form one. After all, an I needs a Thou in order to be an I. For the monk, “the person is the community, even if it is only a solitary monk.”

neither I nor Non-I. The relationship between the Thou and the I is neither the dialectic relationship between the Non-I and the I nor a relationship between the I and itself. This is nothing culturally specific, but a common human experience that each child has. Unfortunately, modern languages have completely lost the dual (as opposed to the plural), which exemplifies this twofoldness in terms of grammar. In sanskrit, arabic, and greek, on the other hand, it is preserved.” He explains the significance of the ‘dual’: “The dual reflects the discovery that the I needs a Thou, which is different in nature from a third, the It, and from all others.”

Varghese J. Manimala, Toward Mutual Fecundation and Fulfilment of Religions: An Invitation to Transcendence and Dialogue with a Cosmotheandric Vision, 57.

See Raimon Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype, 69.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., 70.
This has ecclesiological consequences. Panikkar states, “The membership in the *ecclesia*, the *umma*, the *matha* is not with a view to doing anything special, but of being—and being (perfectly) what (I believe) I am supposed to be.”\(^{406}\) Here, Panikkar connects the church with identity and self-realization, saying, “I am not only a *pars in toto*, but also a *pars pro toto*. I am unique and indispensible.”\(^{407}\) Therefore:

If I leave, I kill my very being and also do irreparable damage to the *ecclesia*, the *samgha*. This is Hell for me, and an incurable wound to the organism. The hand cannot live cut off from the body, nor can it be replaced by the eye—although in due time there may be regeneration (*kalpas* and the law of *karma*) and reconciliation (forgiveness and redemption). The famous dictum *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the *samgha*, Nature, the *buddhakāya*, the *dharmakāya*, the Church…there is no salvation) is an essential feature of that communion of the saints. When a particular group claims ownership of that *ecclesia* or knowledge of its boundaries, this is another matter altogether. The community outside of which there is no salvation cannot, obviously, be an organization. It has to be a sacrament, a *samskāra*, a *mysterion*. By burning your passport you may renounce the State (and its protection or oppression of you). But by this act you do not cancel your language or your nation.\(^{408}\)

Thus Panikkar returns to the famous axiom often connected to Cyprian. The Church is the place of the realization of identity. Thus, to leave the Church is to leave the self. Yet, at the same time, this ecclesial identity is not strictly identified with an institution, although it is not completely separate from the institution either. As Panikkar points out, “Now the monk discovers his roots within the entire reality.”\(^{409}\) So, being a person entails a centered life center in which one locates him/herself within the context of

the totality of reality. Being a person is a cosmotheandric act. For Panikkar, the monk favors the simplicity of the person over the complexity of the individual because it tends toward this integration.

This manifests itself variously. For instance, “The traditional monk is monachos because he is not a dipsychos, a being with a twofold soul, with a double end and a double life.” And the contemporary monk does not seek to be one who is merely ‘set apart’; rather he/she seeks to be one who is ultimately integrated within the whole of reality. Thus, integration is the key to Panikkar’s ‘contemporary’ monastic worldview. According to another of Panikkar’s sutras in Blessed Simplicity, the monk gives primacy to the ‘holy’. He explains that reality is complex and, consequently, human existence is complex as well. The monk seeks to achieve unification with all that is by seeking union with the holy. Because of this, “The monk endeavors to attain unqualified holiness. He strives for holiness only. He seeks the Absolute; if God is the holy, he strives for God.” Even those who, like Buddhists and Jainists, do not have a ‘Supreme Being’ are still striving for ‘absolute holiness’. They seek union with transcendent emptiness, that which cannot be described by human categories, including that of ‘emptiness’.

For Panikkar the monk (whether living in a monastery or in the ‘world’) seeks the ‘center’: “The sacred stands in relation to the profane, but the holy is the center of everything and of every activity.” Panikkar points out that for ‘classical monasticism’, this holy ‘center’ is discovered in that which is transcendent, eternal, and other-worldly,

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410 Ibid.
411 Ibid., 71-72.
412 Ibid., 73.
413 Ibid., 82.
414 Ibid.
415 Ibid.
416 Ibid.
417 Ibid., 83.
but in contemporary religiosity, this same holiness can be found in secularity.\textsuperscript{418} These two are actually united and ‘contemporary monasticism’ demonstrates that “the holy is also the center of the secular and acts at times as a catalyst.”\textsuperscript{419} This yields a new appraisal of the ‘secular’. Secularity can be seen as expressing that all that is temporal, including embodiment, historicity, and materiality are included in the Ultimate, although they are not the only or total manifestation thereof.\textsuperscript{420} He continues, “The secular is no longer that which is fleeting, provisional, perishable, contingent, and so forth, but is rather the very clothing of the permanent, the eternal, and the immutable—to continue using for a moment categories that must soon be superseded.”\textsuperscript{421}

Because of this, the monk who may be very involved in the world is nonetheless different from those around him/her:

In his own eyes the monk is one segregated, set apart [the etymology of ‘holy’], but in people’s consciousness he is holy and thus by no means a marginal or peripheral being.
The monk resides in the very center of society, and when they are faced by what appear to be technically insoluble problems the people approach their saints, their monks, hermits, and ascetics.\textsuperscript{422}

The monk then, while united to the whole of reality, also represents ‘something different’. The monk, by living a centered life, provides others with information about their own lives. The monk works christophanically to awaken the monastic element in the identity of each person, the monk within each of us. Christ is the source, end, and content of the monastic life. At the outset of \textit{The Unknown Christ of Hinduism}, Panikkar comments:

\textsuperscript{418} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{419} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{420} Ibid., 84.
\textsuperscript{421} Ibid., 85.
\textsuperscript{422} Ibid., 87.
The thesis of this book was and is that the Christian, in recognizing, believing in and 
loving Christ as the central symbol of Life and Ultimate Truth, is being drawn towards 
that selfsame Mystery that attracts all other human beings who are seeking to overcome 
their own present condition.\footnote{Raimon Panikkar, \textit{The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany, Revised and Enlarged Edition}, 23.}

But, the approach toward Mystery is not separate from Mystery itself; “The Way 
cannot be severed from the Goal.”\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 24.} ‘How’ we come to understand the Mystery maps 
out the contours of the Mystery. Panikkar uses the image of an approach to a mountain 
peak to demonstrate this, saying, “It is not simply that there are different ways leading to 
the peak, but that the summit itself would collapse if all the paths disappeared. The peak 
is in a certain sense the result of the slopes leading to it.”\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}} This does not mean, 
however, that the Mystery is no longer a Mystery:

And yet, the goal cannot be identified with any of the ways or means to it. Though Christ 
is the Mystery in the sense that to see Christ is to reach the Mystery, still the Mystery 
cannot be totally identified with Christ. Christ is but one aspect of the Mystery as a 
whole, even though he is \textit{the} Way when we are on that way.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 24-25.}

Here, by way of introduction to his thesis, it appears that Panikkar is using Christ 
in the particular Christian sense. Yet, even in \textit{the} work where he universalizes the 
concept of Christ, Panikkar is pointing out that the divine constantly outstrips our 
apprehension of it. Thus, the revelations of Christ, the christophanies that we experience, 
only allow us glimpses of the Mystery that encompasses all of reality. Yet, they are, 
nonetheless, true glimpses. It is this apprehension of Mystery and constant probing 
thereof that drives the mystic endlessly, even asymptotically, forward. Panikkar notes,
“There are ex-Catholics, ex-Marxists, ex-Buddhists and so forth, but I know of no ex-mystic.”

This could be taken in a couple of different manners. Panikkar obviously intends to say that those who practice mysticism do not ‘lose’ their faith. Rather, they get lost in their faith. But, as we saw in our third chapter, when we speak of faith, we are really speaking of a deep anthropological stratum. In this sense, there is an element of the mystical in each of us, even though it often remains unrealized. The mystic, then, cannot become an ex-mystic any more than a person can become an ex-person. This allows Panikkar to find mystical commonality in that which Christians call ‘Christ’. In dialogue, “There is an x which is unknown, qua Christ, to both parties and to which the name ‘Christ’ could be applied once it is made clear that both sides can make a meaningful use of it.”

Thus, “authentic unity” is found on the mystical level. This allows for unity in diversity. Panikkar contends:

There is more difference between, for instance, Saint Francis and Saint Dominic, two Catholic saints of the same century, than between a lukewarm Roman Catholic and a lukewarm Methodist. There is more unity, however, between the former pair, though there is less uniformity.

The same is true of the great divergences in Hinduism. Despite these differences, there is great unity shared by all of the traditions. This unity in diversity allows for the ‘ecumenical ecumenism’ we spoke of above. In this way, “The true Christian (as also

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427 Ibid., 22.
428 Ibid., 26.
429 Ibid., 64.
430 Ibid.
431 Ibid., 65.
the true Hindu) possesses nothing, not even the truth.” 432 The key here is epistemological humility. In much the same way, in his fourth sūtra in Christophany, Panikkar asserts that “Christians do not have a monopoly on the knowledge of Christ.” 433 With this in mind, he insists, “No religion that is lived in depth will be content with representing a part of the whole. It will rather yearn for the whole, even if in a limited and imperfect way.” 434 This can illustrate for us that relativity is not relativism. 435 Despite the conditioned character of religious knowledge, the true person of faith is, nonetheless, confident that what he/she professes is the truth even if it is communicated in finite terms. Thus, even the Christian religion finds mystical yearning for the fullness of truth as the basis of its truth. Christianity, then, is true because it does not claim to comprehend the truth; rather, it simply claims to receive it.

Panikkar tries to distance himself from triumphalism, insisting that the answer to whether the religious symbols of other traditions are “the same unique Christ” depends on one’s perspective. 436 From perspective of other religious traditions, the answer is ‘no’. They do not need Christian language and symbols. 437 From the Christian perspective, however, the answer is ‘yes’ because Christ is the “symbol of reality’s ultimate mystery.” 438 Here he is moderating his use of language from the titular phrasing of The Hidden Christ of Hinduism to something less offensive to the Hindu sensibility (and that of others). Thus, the same mystery is sought by all, yet named alternately. As we have

434 Ibid.
435 Ibid.
437 Raimon Panikkar, Christophany: The Fullness of Man, 157.
438 Ibid., 158.
439 Ibid., 159.
mentioned, this does not result in simple relativism. Rather, each description of the mystery brings out something different about that mystery. As we saw in our first chapter, the names for the divine expressed differently by different traditions are homological (functional equivalents), but, they are not thereby interchangeable.

How then does one account for the diversity of religious traditions? Regarding the relationship between religious traditions, Panikkar states:

If the analogy of static polar pairs was misleading, historically untrue, psychologically inadequate and theologically contradictory; and if the analogy of dynamic pairs was ambivalent by definition, psychologically disappointing and theologically misleading—how then are we to define the and of Hinduism and Christianity? It cannot be translated by an optimistic ‘towards’ or a pessimistic ‘versus’. Simply to shift the alleged horizontal movement of the dynamic analogy and to turn it into a vertical movement within each tradition may be a valid observation of the real nature of this phenomenon of religion, but it sidesteps the present issue of the relationship between two very different concrete religious realities and tends to equalize or ignore their differences. Differences are not by nature undesirable.439

These differences are important as we approach the Divine because “no single analogy” is adequate.440 In imagery reminiscent of a perichoretic, Trinitarian relationship, Panikkar theorizes, “Perhaps each religion is a dimension of the other in a sui generis co-inherence or co-involvement, just as each human is potentially the whole of Mankind, though each one develops and actualizes only a finite number of possibilities

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440 Ibid., 95.
in a limited way.”\textsuperscript{441} In this way, he suggests that these traditions are something like “maps” to the divine that are useful, yet finite guides.\textsuperscript{442}

With this in mind, Varghese Manimala begins his treatment of Panikkar’s work with an eye toward ‘something’ beyond the particularities of religious traditions. He states, “The earnest hope expressed in this book is that we all become capable of such transformation, and be endowed with the capacity of transcending our religion and reach out to others in true dialogue and sharing.”\textsuperscript{443} In much the same way, Panikkar’s efforts are aimed at establishing a transcendent horizon that allows one to deepen their particular faith. As we saw in our previous chapter, this almost sounds like a form of synchronism that establishes a ‘new religion’ that goes beyond the old ones. Yet, this is not what Panikkar envisions. It is precisely the inaccessibility of such a horizon that leaves it out of the reach of various religious traditions and individuals. Thus, Panikkar urges us to “go beyond their religious practices and reach silence and dhyāna, the core of mystical experience.”\textsuperscript{444} In this manner, “Religions need to realize that they are only means; they are not an end in themselves.”\textsuperscript{445} Thus, the human goal is mystical communion. In the Epilogue of Christophany, Panikkar sums up this aspect of his thought by saying:

The christophany from within which we are timidly suggesting constituted the deepest interiority of all of us, the abyss in which, in each one of us there is a meeting between the finite and the infinite, the material and spiritual, the cosmic and the divine. The christophany of the third millennium is a summons to us to live this experience.\textsuperscript{446}

\textsuperscript{441} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{442} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{443} Varghese J. Manimala, Toward Mutual Fecundation and Fulfilment of Religions: An Invitation to Transcendence and Dialogue with a Cosmotheandric Vision, 10.
\textsuperscript{445} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{446} Raimon Panikkar, Christophany: The Fullness of Man, 189.
For a time in late 1980s and 1990s, Panikkar distinguishes his expanded notion of Christian identity from a more narrow, traditional, ‘institutionalized’ version of Christian identity by calling the former ‘christianness’. He defines the traditional notion of the Christian in terms of the encounter with Christ in the Incarnation:

The christian is a person of faith. This faith has its basis in the person of Jesus. Therefore, theological discussions have to explain who Jesus is. Yet the primary point here is less Jesus’ nature than the reality of the Jesus-event, especially the event of the resurrection. This event is, above all others, a historical fact in the life of Jesus: the condemnation of one man from Palestine by the judicial religious and lawful authorities of his time. We are here firmly rooted in history and especially in the personal history of Jesus; hence, loyalty to his person is at the center. The teachings of this young rabbi are fascinating, though most of his words may have been others before him. His example exerts an irresistible magnetism.

Even such a focus on the historically particular is pregnant with universal significance. This particularized Christian identity fits into the broader notion of Christian identity that Panikkar promotes (in this case using the term ‘christianness’):

Christianness stands for the experience of Christ’s life in us, for the insight that we are in communion with all of reality without losing out identity; it stands for the experience that “I and the Father are one,” that labels are not relevant, that certainty is hardly important, that even reflection is only a secondary source of knowledge (thought a primary tool).

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447 Raimon Panikkar, *A Dwelling Place for Wisdom*, 129ff. Note that by the turn of the century, he has dropped this distinction. What he calls ‘christianness’ is the primary form of Christian identity that he espouses.
449 *Ibid.*, 152. We should note that here Panikkar recognizes the limited usefulness of the term ‘mystical’: “Only hesitantly am I using here the phrase “mystical experience”; but there is perhaps no better expression.”
True Christian identity, then is found in the realization of communion. It is found in cosmotheandric insight. It is found in union with Christ.\textsuperscript{450} As we shall see in our next chapter, this conception of true Christian identity has significant ramifications for both soteriology and ecclesiology.

4.4 Conclusion

As we have seen, Panikkar’s Christological reflections focus on the universality of ‘Christ’. At the same time, Panikkar does not wish to discard the particularities of Jesus of Nazareth. Because the category of ‘christophany’ is not limited to Jesus the Christ, there can be many ‘christophanies’. What is significant about each ‘christophany’, particularly that of Jesus of Nazareth, is the revelatory character thereof. The ‘christophany’ reveals the cosmotheandric unity that underlies all of reality and towards the fulfillment of which all of reality tends. Christ, then, reveals identity to humanity and to all of reality. Thus, Christian identity is human identity.

This identity is not threatened, but enhanced by dialogue with others. Because of this, Panikkar insists real interreligious dialogue is supported and made possible by \textit{intrareligious} dialogue. Thus, \textit{de facto} pluralism provides an opportunity for people of all traditions to come to know their own identity by opening themselves up to that of others. The many religious traditions all approach the ineffable in irreducibly different, yet not necessarily incompatible ways. Identity, at its deepest level is rooted in the divine mystery and the communion that flows from it. Because of this, Christian identity is never in jeopardy as the Christian encounters the identity of others. On the contrary, Christian identity is chiefly conditioned by union with Christ. And, Christ can be found

\textsuperscript{450} \textit{Ibid.}, 113. Panikkar notes, “My contention is that neither is the christic principle a particular event nor is it universal in the sense of a universal religion.” Rather, “It is the center of reality.” Here, Panikkar uses the generalized term ‘christic principle’ in contradistinction from the particularity of Jesus of Nazareth.
both inside and outside the tradition bearing the name ‘Christian’. In our final chapter, we will draw out the ecclesiological and soteriological significance of these reflections.
Chapter 5

Ecclesiological and Soteriological Implications

Now that we have examined Panikkar’s thoughts on Christology and identity and have related the two, let us attempt to apply these as we examine the ecclesiological and soteriological dimensions of Panikkar’s thought. As we have seen in our previous chapter, bound up with the identity of Jesus the Christ is the identity of those who follow him. Therefore, ecclesiology and Christology are intimately connected. As we have seen, Panikkar’s Christology centers upon a ‘cosmic’ notion of Christ. Below we will argue that, because the church flows from Christ, a ‘cosmic’ Christology demands a ‘cosmic’ ecclesiology. However, perhaps because of the exclusivist connotation, he does not use any such phrase. In fact, in order to avoid triumphalism, Panikkar tends avoid an extended discussion of ‘church’ in general. Nonetheless, there are many places where he provides the ecclesiological fragments that we shall attempt to assemble below. With regard to soteriology, we shall see that Panikkar’s notions of identity and ‘cosmic’ Christology and our reflections on a ‘cosmic’ ecclesiology shall come into play.

5.1 Ecclesiology

Ecclesiologically, Panikkar points out that the mission of the church is to point to Christ not to itself. In contrast to views that envision the centrality of the Church, Panikkar asserts, “In actual fact the claim of the Church is not that she is the religion for the whole of mankind but that she is the place where Christ is fully revealed, the end and plenitude of every religion.” Thus, the Church is the community that is united to Christ.

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As we have seen throughout this project, the human religious experience is that of cosmotheandric communion:

The religious encounter is in reality much more than the meeting of two friends, it is a communion in being, in the one Being which is much more intimate to both than they are to themselves. It is a communion not only in Christ, but also of Christ. No condescension, no paternalism or superiority is to be found in the true encounter.2

Because of this cosmotheandric unity, this communion is accessible to all beings. Thus Panikkar insists, “Any Christ who is less than a Cosmic, Human and divine Manifestation will not do.”3 Thus, Christ is communion. A christophany, then, reveals this communion. In this respect, Panikkar makes a rare mention of the concept of Church. He states, “Christian tradition is not doctrine alone; it is also ekklēsia in the deepest sense of the word. It has to do not only with what Jesus said and did but with who he was and who we are.”4 The Christian Church is an extension of the Christophany of Jesus of Nazareth. What is extended is Jesus’ Identity. Thus, the Church is an extension of Christ’s self-consciousness.5

For Paul of Tarsus, Christians are ‘set apart’. They are the ‘holy ones’, the ‘saints’. Paul’s usage of holiness to describe the Church finds its roots in the ‘Holy Assembly’ of Israel, who are told in Leviticus: “For I, the LORD, am your God; and you shall make and keep yourselves holy, because I am holy (Lev 11:44).” He tells the Thessalonians: “For God did not call us to impurity but to holiness (agiasmo; ἁγιασμό) (1

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3 Ibid., 27.
5 Ibid., 60.
In Romans, he greets “the beloved of God in Rome, called to be holy (agiois; ἁγίοις) (Rom 1:7).” Paul tells the Philippians to:

Give my greetings to every holy one (agion; ἁγίον) in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send you their greetings; all the holy ones (agioi; ἁγίοι) send you their greetings, especially those of Caesar's household (Phil 4:21).

We also see Paul use this concept of the ‘holy ones’ when referring to Christian communities other than the one with which he is corresponding. For instance, when taking a collection for the Church in Jerusalem, he refers to it a “collection for the holy ones (agious; ἁγίους) (1 Cor 16:1).” And he tells the Romans: “Now, however, I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the holy ones (agiois; ἁγίοις) (Rom 15:25).”

God calls all Christians to holiness. But, as is apparent in Paul’s mission to the gentiles, God calls all to Christ. Therefore, God calls all to holiness. The ‘saints’ are those that have been made ‘holy’ by union with Christ; those who have responded to this universal call (see 1 Cor 1:1-2). They are united with Christ and made ‘holy’ by baptism (see 1 Cor 6:11). So, ‘saints’ for Paul are not simply the great figures to be admired. Rather, all members of the Church are ‘saints’ because they are called to holiness. And, all are called to holiness, so all are called to be admirable. Therefore, for Paul, the saint, the ‘holy one’, is the basic unit of the Church. The saint is the ‘building block’, so to speak, of the Church. As we shall see momentarily, using Panikkar’s notions of monasticism and mysticism as basic anthropological categories, we can propose a Panikkarian gloss on this important ecclesiological concept.

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6 “Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God that is in Corinth, to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy, with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours (1 Cor 1:1-2).”
7 “That is what some of you used to be; but now you have had yourselves washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God (1 Cor 6:11).”
As we have seen, for Panikkar, cosmotheandrism is at the root of all reality and, consequently, is an important part of what it means to be human. The human quest, then, is to realize this mystical union. Therefore, ‘Christ’ is present wherever this union is present. Christ is everywhere; Christ has cosmic parameters. Particular Christophanies help to bring this mystical aspect of reality into explicit categories. This helps us to act upon and live out this union. The chief among these, particularly for Christians, is the Christophany found in Jesus of Nazareth. By extending the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, the Church too can be considered a Christophany.

When it comes to ecclesiology, however, Panikkar tends to remain rather muted. Like many of his colleagues in the field of the theology of religions, he (perhaps wisely) avoids emphasis on ecclesiology so as to avoid an overly-ecclesiastical tone. Panikkar rightly puts the emphasis on Christ. Ecclesiology, then, should follow Christology. But, if we take seriously, Paul’s image of the church as the ‘body of Christ’, then we ought to give ecclesiology some thought. And, if we do take this metaphor seriously, then we must conclude that a ‘cosmic Christology’ demands some sort of ‘cosmic ecclesiology’. After all, where there is real union with Christ, the Church is present.

5.2 Critical Evaluation: A Cosmic Christology Demands a Cosmic Ecclesiology

The term ‘church’ is somewhat polyvalent. It can conjure up different images from ones of ecclesiastical hierarchy to those of the ‘people of God’. It has both broad and narrow connotations. These can either be institutional, on the one hand, or mystical, on the other. It is to the latter pole that we are appealing here. In the 20th century in Catholic theology, we saw an increasing emphasis on this ‘mystical’ element of the Church. In broad terms, this emphasis finds its way into ‘official’ documents with
particular focus in Pius XII’s *Mystici Corporis Christi*, although Pius is sure to identify this mystical element strictly with the Catholic Church, insisting that the mystical and institutional elements can be distinguished, but never separated. However, *Lumen Gentium* of the Second Vatican Council left the matter a little more ambiguous declaring that the true Church of Christ “subsists in [subsistit in] the Catholic Church.”

Following both Panikkar and Pius XII’s emphasis on the ‘mystical’ element of the Church, we can perhaps expand upon Paul of Tarsus’ usage of the ‘holy ones’ or ‘saints’ to describe Christians. What makes one holy is union with the Holy One, God. This communion, which Panikkar calls ‘cosmotheandrism’, is at the root of all reality. It is already present, yet often unrealized. Where this cosmotheandric union is present, Christ is present. Taking cognizance of this aspect of the *humanum* brings one closer to human fulfillment. Therefore, simply put, the holy ones are the ones united to the Holy One; the saint *is* the mystic.

We should point out that rather than narrowing the notions of ‘saint’ or ‘church’, we are appealing to Panikkar’s broader notion of ‘mystic’. For Panikkar, the mystical is a dimension of any true anthropology. Thus, all humans are capable of building on this anthropological foundation. Those who do build on this foundation become the ‘holy ones’, that is, they become the ‘Church.’ Thus, the ecclesial ‘building blocks’, the ‘saints’, are perhaps more numerous than we typically admit because where there is union with Christ, *there is the Church*.

This creates a dilemma for ecclesiological reflection. ‘Church’ moves from something easily identifiable, based on institutional allegiance to something non-quantifiable. ‘Church’ cannot be completely extrinsically measured. Rather, one’s

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8 *Lumen Gentium*, 8.
membership in the Church, the body of Christ, is a function of one’s union with Christ, which entails both visible and invisible dimensions. But, more than this, if we take Panikkar’s christophanic reflections seriously, it also potentially entails a variety of manifestations, some of which may be difficult for Christians to recognize. After all, if there is a ‘hidden Christ’ of Hinduism, through whom the Hindu can find true communion with God (Ātman is Brahman), then there is a more or less ‘hidden Church of Hinduism’. Superficial ecclesiology, then, based on institution bonds must yield to a deeper, more human ecclesiology based upon union with Christ, as envisioned by Paul of Tarsus. This does not make the institutional element of ecclesiology meaningless, however. It is, rather, a challenge to that institution to deeper evangelization. True ecclesial identity cannot be quantified by enumerating who or what is ‘within the Church’. Such a description is too narrow to describe the body of Christ, who is present everywhere. On the contrary, ecclesial identity can only be realized (but never completely quantified) by those who live in union with Christ, and thus possess the ‘Church within’.

Varghese Manimala finds this characteristic within Panikkar’s cosmotheandrinism: “The Christian dogma of the Mystical Body affirms this: each of us is an integral part of a higher and more real unity, the Christus totus.” As we recognize that others seek human fulfillment in cosmotheandric unity, we can begin to recognize the presence of the ‘cosmic Church’ in new and unexpected places. However, we ought to temper these conclusions with Panikkar’s vision of identity as found in our third chapter. Identity is found on a continuum between the two poles of self-designation and communal

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recognition. The very reason that Panikkar avoids discussing the term ‘church’ on a cosmic level is because it would have little meaning for those who do not recognize this language. Nonetheless, because there is union with Christ outside of those who would employ the term ‘Christ’ to describe this unity, we also contend that there can be ecclesial unity outside of those who would employ such terminology. Where there is union with Christ, there is the Church. However, such designations are only useful to those who do employ these terms. Thus, while the unity is real, the terms employed to describe it are only of secondary importance.

As we saw through Dupuis’ discussion of the Logos Asarkos in our second chapter, from a very early time in the history of Christianity, Christian theologians have acknowledged the presence of Christ outside of the traditional ecclesial ‘walls’. These encounters with Christ as the Logos have not taken place in ‘Christian terms’. Let us recall, for instance, that Justin Martyr acknowledged the presence of Christ, who sewed the ‘seeds’ or truth, in the tradition of the pagan philosophers beloved by his Roman interlocutors. In this extended economy, union with Christ (though not as developed as that which is found in the Christian community) is possible even to those outside of the narrowly-defined Christian economy (although Justin is precisely insisting that this Christian economy ought not to be narrowly defined at all).

However, it may be contended that utilizing such cosmic language for the Church dilutes the term ‘church’ itself. After all, how can there be a ‘Church’ where there is no one to designate it thusly? And, if there can be such a ‘Church’, does membership in the Church, in the conventional, institutional sense, lose all significance? What difference does such membership make?
Let us once again recall our reflections on identity in our third chapter. Identity is found somewhere between the two poles of self-designation and communal recognition. The Christian Church provides this communal aspect to Christians. The community allows us to realize our identity because it provides one with a visible group with which one unites oneself. And, for Panikkar, identity is most truly realized through that with which one unites oneself. Far from becoming meaningless, then, in such a novel paradigm, the Church actually takes on greater significance. However, membership in the Church is not to be worn as a mark of distinction that completely separates one from everyone else. This represents the incomplete ‘Western’ conception of identity based upon the law of non-contradiction that we also visited in our third chapter. By contrast, membership in the Church points to the fact that one is called back to his/her neighbor. Thus, to be ‘holy’ or ‘set apart’ is not to be isolated, but to be set aside for a purpose. This purpose is to ‘make holy’, that is, to bring others to Christ as well; to bring others to the realization of cosmotheandric union.

This entails consequences for the concept of the mission of the Church. The Church’s mission is not simply to change the faith of others to that of Christianity by moving them away from something ‘other than Christianity’. Rather, the role of the visible, institutional Church is to feed, nourish, and encourage the cosmotheandric faith that is already present. The missionary Church does not venture out in search of a ‘them’ to make into an ‘us’. Rather, the Church finds that ‘they’ already are part of ‘us’ and seeks to bring this reality to fuller realization. The Church is not a group of insiders who either shun or invite outsiders. Rather, the Church is a group of those who have realized the identity that all of us already share, and it is a group of those who seek to share that
insight with others so that they too can lead a fuller and more meaningful life by coming to know their own identity.

The new challenge we face as the Christian community is to recognize union with Christ where we encounter it. Our eyes and ears must be appropriately attuned to find such unity. This does not necessarily mean that we should uncritically presume that any person who professes even a modicum of religious faith has come to a deep realization of cosmotheandric unity. Yet, we should also be careful about making judgments regarding anyone’s inner disposition. We must, however, recognize that latent in many religious traditions is a notion of union with the transcendent, a mystical element, that provides the potential for an encounter with Christ, should it be pursued sincerely. Thus, as Panikkar finds in examining the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, there is already some ‘common ground’ that we share cross-culturally and cross-religiously. This common ground is Christ.

Extending back to the logic of ‘Baptism of desire’ set out by Ambrose, the Christian church has insisted that where there is a desire for union with Christ, one has already united oneself with Christ and, in a mystical way, become part of the Church. Consequently, as we broaden our notion of Christ (and come to realize that Christ should never be limited by our notions in the first place), we must also recognize a broad (even universal) scope for the encounter with Christ. ‘Church’, then, can be found wherever this encounter takes place. Where there is union with Christ, there is the Church. This ‘universal’ presence of the Church, then, ought not to be seen as a threat to the members of the ‘institutional’ Church. Rather, it is a missionary opportunity and the ground of our hope for the future.
5.3 Soteriology

The cosmotheandric identity mediated by Christ is the centerpiece of Panikkar’s soteriology. At the end of our fourth chapter, we mentioned that, like most Christians, Panikkar believes that salvation comes through affirming that “Jesus is the Christ.” However, for Panikkar this is not a theory. Rather, it is a “confession” or “an existential affirmation.” Salvation is reached through faith, which enables one to live out the same cosmotheandric communion that Jesus the Christ reveals. To make this point, Panikkar cites the letter to the Colossians, which says of Jesus, “For in him the whole fullness of divinity dwells bodily (Col 2:9).” In response to this Christological assertion, Panikkar declares, “This is the human vocation!” Thus, the union with the divine that Christians find in Jesus of Nazareth is the key to human realization. Thus, Panikkar insists that Christological questions are really soteriological questions. So, to ask Jesus’ identity is to enter into the ultimate purpose and meaning of life.

The key to understanding this is the nonduality of advaita. Panikkar insists, “Christ is not an other. Nor is it a question of monism—I am not Christ. We are neither one nor two. This is the nondual relation of the person, the experience of advaita that we tried to describe earlier.” Because of this nondual relation with reality, Christ can be affirmed by Panikkar as the universal redeemer. Panikkar explains, “This amounts to saying that Christ is present in one form or another in every human being as he journeys...

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10 Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany: The Fullness of Man*, 149.
13 *Ibid.*, 75. Note that for Panikkar, Jesus may not be the only historical figure who functions in this way.
towards God.”16 As we have mentioned, this allows Panikkar to affirm other religious traditions as part of this same salvific economy:

In Hindu terms, Christianity, like other major religions, will lead its faithful to liberation to the extent that it imparts to their hearts the three central truths of the sanātana dharma, the eternal religion: namely that God is, that he can be realized, and that the purpose of life is to realize him.17

It is toward this salvific purpose that Panikkar develops his christophanic theology. A christophany offers a glimpse into the cosmotheandric unity that is at the root of all reality. It is the realization of this unity that comprises salvation, for Panikkar. Furthermore, these salvific opportunities are ubiquitous. Panikkar points out, “For almost half a century I have maintained the proposition that every being is a christophany.”18 In this way, for Panikkar, there is a “nondualist polarity between the transcendent and the immanent” in everything.19 Thus, the Trinity is the human (and cosmic) vocation. We are called to realize and enact this nondualistic unity, which maintains real distinction without complete separation.

Because of the closeness between human identity and fulfillment, Panikkar does not prefer to refer to salvation history in his writings.20 Jyri Komulainen points out, “He rarely uses the concept of salvation. As a matter of fact, he sees all soteriological expressions as tautologies—every human being is in any case pursuing the fullness of his being.”21 He insists that for Panikkar “man is rather an image of Reality than an image of

16 Ibid., 68.
17 Ibid., 69.
18 Raimon Panikkar, Christophany: The Fullness of Man, 15.
19 Ibid., 15.
21 Ibid.
God.”\(^{22}\) By this, Komulainen points to an important aspect of Panikkar’s theological paradigm. As we saw in our fourth chapter (and throughout this exploration), the human vocation is communion, namely cosmotheandric communion. And, humanity, because it already possesses this cosmotheandric union, can be thought of as a kind of ‘microcosm’. However, Komulainen here overstates his case in order to critique Panikkar. Panikkar does not intend to say that because the human is a ‘microcosm’, he/she is not in the image of God. Rather, it is the possession of the image of the divine that enables the human to model reality in communion because, cosmotheandrically speaking, all of reality is suffused with the presence of God.

This misinterpretation allows Komulainen to conclude, “Due to the fact that everything is already ontologically ‘ultimate mediation’ and ‘communion,’ there is no need for epistemological mediation. Being itself is thus ‘relation.’”\(^{23}\) Komulainen seems to insist here that there is no room in Panikkar’s thought for the notion of soteriology. While Panikkar’s thought may be interpreted in this way, this interpretation seems to ignore one of the major facets of Panikkar’s theology: the christophany. As we saw in our second chapter, christophanies are almost ubiquitous. Yet, at the same time, the christophany is a ‘manifestation’ of Christ, and a manifestation serves a purpose. Despite the fact that our cosmotheandric union is ‘already there’ in our identity, it is often forgotten or never even noticed at all. We often lose or distort our identity through ignorance and through sin. The christophany provides a revelation and a reminder that this union is present and urges one to act upon it. Because of this, awareness and epistemology become the keys to understanding soteriology in Panikkarian terms.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 156.
\(^{23}\) Ibid., 157.
Salvation is the knowledge of one’s identity and the consequent acceptance of that identity.

So, how then does one come to know and realize this salvation? How does the process of divinization take place in the Church (particular and ‘cosmic’)? For Panikkar, worship “means that act by which we express in one way or another the fulness of the human person.” Worship is the act of the Church (again, both particular and ‘cosmic’). For Panikkar, “Christian worship should give expression to man’s inner and constitutive urge towards something which remains for ever beyond him.” It is a form of the manifestation of the cosmotheandric unity of all reality. Worship is ‘christophanic’ and, consequently, both ecclesial and salvific.

However, simply because there is a closeness between what human beings are and what they are called to be (or, rather, nature and grace) in Panikkar’s thought, that does not mean that soteriology is meaningless to him or that Jesus of Nazareth is insignificant or unnecessary soteriologically. This becomes clear, for instance in Panikkar’s comparison between the Christian and Buddhist views of human fulfillment. To Panikkar, “Both are convinced that Man is a being not yet finished, a reality unachieved, growing, becoming, on the way, a pilgrim.” Thus, humanity is going ‘somewhere’. But where is it going? The difference between Christianity and Buddhism for Panikkar is found in the response that each offers. In this regard, Buddhism and Christianity offer the responses of nirvāna and sōtēria respectively. The distinction between these two is

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25 Ibid., 92.
27 Ibid., 80.
28 Ibid. Perhaps his identification of the term sōtēria exclusively with Christianity leads Panikkar to his general avoidance of the concept of soteriology, although he does speak of ‘salvation’ or ‘liberation’.

262
the distinction between Sunyata, or emptiness and Pleroma, or fullness. These ideas represent their respective traditions’ ‘quintessence’.\(^{29}\)

Panikkar explains the emptiness of Sunyata, saying, “The ‘other shore’ in recurring Buddhist metaphor is so totally transcendent that it does not exist; the very thought of it mystifies and negates it.”\(^{31}\) Sunyata reveals the ultimate ‘emptiness’ of all things.\(^{32}\) To know this emptiness is the defining characteristic of prajna, wisdom.\(^{33}\) This intuition, which uncovers the radical relativity of all things (pratityasamutpada) is the beginning of reaching nirvāṇa.\(^{34}\) In turn, the emphasis on the divine fullness in Christianity has its own unique corresponding dynamic. This dynamic leads to the goal of Theosis, or divinization, by which humans reach this fullness.\(^{35}\)

Therefore, Panikkar contends that there has always been a particular concern with death and a hope to transcend it or eliminate in some way in religious and human history.\(^{36}\) He notes, “One way or another, traditional religions want to overcome the human condition by reaching the unconditioned.”\(^{37}\) Different religious traditions offer up varying means toward this common end. The Christian approach is to posit a process of divinization that retains the distinction between God and humanity.\(^{38}\) However:

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 80-81.
\(^{30}\) Ibid., 81.
\(^{31}\) Ibid., 82.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., 83.
\(^{33}\) Ibid.
\(^{34}\) Ibid. See also Raimon Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness, ed. Scott Eastham (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 60. Panikkar says, “I am not only saying that everything is directly or indirectly related to everything else: the radical relativity or pratityasamutpada of the buddhist tradition. I am also stressing that this relationship is not only constitutive of the whole, but that it flashes forth, ever new and vital, in every spark of the real.”
\(^{35}\) Raimundo (Raimon) Panikkar, The Intrareligious Dialogue, 83.
\(^{36}\) Ibid., 87.
\(^{37}\) Ibid.
\(^{38}\) Ibid., 88.
Buddhism offers a different attitude. It does not want to uncondition but rather to
decondition Man; it is not concerned with reaching transcendence but with overcoming
immanence; it does not care as much about God as about deconditioning Man in a radical
and ultimate way. Man has to cease being what he *is*, not in order to become another
thing, not even God, but in order to totally negate the human and worldly situation.
Buddhism shatters the human dream of any imaginable or thinkable survival.\(^{39}\)

Panikkar contrasts these positions with secular humanism. Secularism, by
comparison, envisions time as something that is not to be transcended.\(^{40}\) Rather, human
fulfillment is to be accomplished in the present:

> And Man, Humanism would say, should banish any fear of worldly or superworldly
> powers. He has come of age, he need not fear being Man. But having overcome his fear
> of nature, of God and the Gods, Man now begins to fear himself and his societal reality.
> So the entire problem crops up again.\(^{41}\)

While these three positions may at first sight seem irreconcilable, Panikkar does
note some commonalities they share. He points out that in all three, “We may observe a
double assumption: (1) Man is an unachieved being; (2) this achievement is the real
Man.”\(^{42}\) Thus, for all three, humanity is in process. Not only is humanity in process, but
humanity is also striving towards self-realization. The human condition is that of an
identity-crisis. Therefore, Panikkar concludes, “Man is an open being: he ‘ek-sists’ by
stretching out his being, along time and space.”\(^{43}\) This openness is openness towards
self-fulfillment; towards the realization of human identity.

> It seems that there is more in common between traditions than these distinctions
may at first imply. For instance, we have mentioned, in Buddhism, ultimately there is no

\(^{39}\) Ibid.
\(^{40}\) Ibid.
\(^{41}\) Ibid.
\(^{42}\) Ibid.
\(^{43}\) Ibid., 89,
**atman**, that is, the human being *is not*. Yet, the Buddhist ethic is not one of libertinism or apathy as an outsider may expect:

And yet this does not conflict with the central orthodox Buddhist attitude of universal compassion (*karunā*), unlimited friendliness. You can embody a serene, joyful and even pragmatically effective loving attitude only if you have realized the Ānityā of all things.

Christianity and secular humanism are both also noted for their altruism. Because of this, these three traditions may find another meeting place in orthopraxis. Furthermore, a variety of anthropologies can help to uncover who the human being, who remains a mystery, truly is. Because of the complexity of humanity, understanding what it means to be human cannot be done by a single anthropology. Thus, anthropology requires “dialogical dialogue.” Panikkar elaborates, “It requires not a methodology but a methodic of its own, which makes its way in and through the mutual interaction and possible cross-fertilization of different religions and cultures.” Therefore these three traditions can work together and even enrich each other. From the contrast of these traditions, Panikkar finds that human fulfillment is ultimately the realization of human identity, that is, the discovery of what it means to identify oneself as a human being. Thus:

Humanizing Man means to make him truly Man, but the expression is treacherous and ambivalent because this gerund is neither merely transitive nor merely intransitive. It is not as if someone else were humanizing Man or as if Man himself could achieve what he

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is not yet. Humanizing Man means rather this plunge into reality and participation in the overall destiny of all that is, which takes place inside and outside Man.\textsuperscript{49}

With this in mind, Panikkar points out that the purpose of religion is salvation. He notes:

To call a religion a sinful religion or a vehicle of darkness (or damnation or falsehood) amounts to saying that in fact it is not a religion at all. Every religion deals with the salvation or liberation of Man, which means union with God, divinization of our being, the acquisition of truth, sanctity, light, and of freedom from the bonds of injustice, slavery, the passions of worldly existence, and so on.\textsuperscript{50}

Elsewhere, he defines religion as “the dynamism toward a \textit{terminus ad quem}, originating in a disconformity with the \textit{status quo}.”\textsuperscript{51} At the same time, he insists that “Religion is a path to the \textit{humanum}, be it called salvation, liberation, or by whatever generic name.”\textsuperscript{52} What is noteworthy here is that he identifies the \textit{humanum} with soteriology. This \textit{humanum} is something that must be fulfilled or fully realized. This fits with the relational character of the human person, who “is not a single entity but a set of relations.”\textsuperscript{53} Thus, the human person can never be self-satisfied; he/she must always be directed towards transcendence, constantly attempting to extend the self towards new horizons.

Because of this, the human is dissatisfied with the fleetingness, suffering, and plurality of existence.\textsuperscript{54} Consequently, he/she seeks to transcend this condition to realize and act upon the cosmotheandric unity that is already present. In \textit{Blessed Simplicity}, in

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 92-93.
\textsuperscript{50} Raimon Panikkar, \textit{The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany, Revised and Enlarged Edition}, 71.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 29-30.
which Panikkar discusses the monastic archetype as an anthropological characteristic shared by all humans, he describes this movement along the path of the *via negativa*, saying, “If man has been defined as the only animal that knows how to say No, monkhood could similarly be described as the radical articulation of this No to the excruciating multiplicity of all that appears to be.”\(^{55}\) The movement toward unity is a movement toward simplicity. Panikkar explains, “The monk is the one who tries to swim upstream, against the current, to the origin which one supposes to be simple. God is simple. Brahman is utter simplicity. The monk believes the Absolute is simple and that the goal of his life is to attain that very simplicity.”\(^{56}\) Furthermore, “The simplicity that the monk stands for is not a singleness without discrimination.”\(^{57}\) What then is it? Panikkar answers, “It has to be a *blessed* simplicity, i.e., a simplicity conquered with blood (blessed) and then made holy, sanctified, set apart in the singlemindedness that has reduced everything to its quiescence and reached the ultimate transparency of truth.”\(^{58}\) Therefore, this ‘blessed simplicity’ is not a violent severing from the world, but a respect for it, in which one seeks to penetrate “the core of being” and find simple unity there.\(^{59}\)

Thus, for Panikkar, all authentic religions are in one way or another concerned with salvation. The salvific character of a variety of religious traditions is derived from God’s universally salvific will, which Christians profess. Panikkar explains:

Two propositions are universally accepted by Christian theology: one, salvation comes exclusively through Christ; and two, God does not condemn anybody. Now, this second

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 30.

\(^{56}\) Ibid.

\(^{57}\) Ibid.

\(^{58}\) Ibid.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.
proposition amounts to saying that God provides every Man coming into existence with the *means* of salvation.\(^60\)

Elsewhere, he explains, “God wills that all Men should reach salvation. Here salvation is that which is considered to be the end, goal, destination, or destiny of Man, however this may be conceived.”\(^61\) He continues by insisting that there cannot be salvation without some kind of faith. But this faith is not the property of Christians or any other privileged group.\(^62\) Christians do not have exclusive access to salvific communion. Rather, Panikkar elaborates, “The means of salvation are to be found in any authentic religion (old or new) because a Man follows a particular religion because in it he believes he finds the ultimate fulfillment of his life.”\(^63\) Panikkar’s expansion of the concept of Christ beyond (but not apart from) Jesus of Nazareth, which we examined in our second chapter, enables him to profess universal access to salvific cosmotheandric unity. Thus, he insists:

> Christ is the only mediator, but he is not the monopoly of Christians and, in fact, he is present and effective in any authentic religion, whatever the form or the name. Christ is the symbol, which Christians call by this name, of the ever-transcending but equally ever-humanly immanent Mystery.\(^64\)

Thus, for Panikkar (and several others, including Jacques Dupuis), it is important to remember that it is Christ who saves, not Christianity per se.\(^65\) Thus, Panikkar contends, “Christ opens us to the trinitarian mystery. The divinization of man has

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\(^{60}\) Raimon Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany, Revised and Enlarged Edition*, 81-82.


\(^{62}\) *Ibid*.

\(^{63}\) *Ibid*.

\(^{64}\) *Ibid*.

constituted a human theme since at least the beginning of historical consciousness.”\textsuperscript{66} He continues, by reminding us that it is the awareness of the possibility of divinization, our grasping for infinity, which sets humans apart.\textsuperscript{67} We are different, that is, from the rest of the genus ‘animal’. This aspiration fuels the above-mentioned dynamism that characterizes the human quest for salvation. Thus, “True divinization is full humanization.”\textsuperscript{68} For Panikkar, the mediation of the christophany is the means of salvation. Toward this end, he points out, “Christophany bears a double meaning: the humanization of God corresponds to the divinization of man. Christ is the revelation of God (in man) as much as the revelation of Man (in God).”\textsuperscript{69} He uses the transfiguration of Jesus of Nazareth to explain this meeting place of God and humanity: “In a word, Christophany projects us into the taboric light that allows us to discover our infinite dimension and presents the divine in the same light that allows us to discover God in his human dimension.”\textsuperscript{70}

This is a telling passage in Panikkar’s theology. For Panikkar, soteriology involves revelation. Furthermore, what is revealed is the true identity of humanity, which can only be understood as cosmotheandric communion. Thus, Christophany is about an experience of ‘seeing’; it is not about a doctrine.\textsuperscript{71} This visual experience is one of “interpenetration”, or \textit{perichōrēsis} or \textit{circumincessio}, of all reality.\textsuperscript{72} So, for Panikkar, it is essential for one to seek his/her identity, but to truly do this, he/she must open

\textsuperscript{66} Raimon Panikkar, \textit{Christophany: The Fullness of Man}, 15.
\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ibid.}, 16.
\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Ibid.}, 17.
\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Ibid.}, 21.
\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Ibid.}, 22.
him/herself up to transcendence and to the infinite.\textsuperscript{73} In this way, seeking God begins with a self-emptying; a ‘death to self’, in which one seeks his/her true identity through orienting the self outward, toward the other.\textsuperscript{74} He explains the necessity of this receptive attitude by the finitude of humanity. He points out, “We cannot attain transcendence, but neither can we remain enclosed within immanence; we must open ourselves to transcendence—open ourselves only because we cannot cross the abyss without destroying it.”\textsuperscript{75} This is the uniqueness of Panikkar’s approach. As Komulainen notes, “The adjoining of the cosmic dimension with the divine and anthropic dimensions is the novelty of Panikkar’s cosmotheandric vision, given a certain tendency among religions to renounce the world, or at least to subordinate immanence to transcendence.”\textsuperscript{76}

In the same way, Varghese Manimala insists that the way to transcendence, for Panikkar, is necessarily the way of orthopraxis.\textsuperscript{77} He sees this as Panikkar’s definition of religion because, for Panikkar, all religions aim at \textit{moksha}, that is, liberation or salvation.\textsuperscript{78} He summarizes Panikkar’s view of religion and its goal:

Precisely because religion, in the best sense of the word, is the most profound human dimension that “binds” (\textit{religa}) us to the rest of reality through its most intimate constitutive bonds, it is not reducible to an exclusive belonging to any particular human group. On the contrary, it is precisely the conscious belonging to reality through a very concrete bond by means of which we are not only fully human but also fully real, although in a contingent and limited way. It is within and through this concreteness that

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Ibid.}, 28.  
\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Ibid.}, 29.  
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Ibid.}, 30. This passage demonstrates that Panikkar’s cosmotheandrisism is not monism because he acknowledges the ‘abyss’ between humanity and divinity. This distance cannot be overcome by human effort alone.  
\textsuperscript{76} Jyri Komulainen, \textit{An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions}, 193.  
\textsuperscript{77} Varghese J. Manimala, \textit{Toward Mutual Fecundation and Fulfilment of Religions: An Invitation to Transcendence and Dialogue with a Cosmotheandric Vision}, 228.  
\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Ibid.}
we are able to realize, to the extent of our limitations, the fullness of our being—as microcosm and mikrotheos.\textsuperscript{79}

Thus, for Panikkar, praxis is salvation because salvation involves enacting the cosmotheandric unity of all of reality. Panikkar says, “Every action that leads to the perfection of Man in his concrete existential situation, every action that leads Man to his realization, is authentic praxis, way to salvation.”\textsuperscript{80} Therefore, religion is centered upon orthopraxis. So, for Panikkar, it is orthopraxis and not orthodoxy that defines a religion as such.\textsuperscript{81} He explains that all authentic religions seek the salvation or freedom of humanity. Although this liberation or salvation can be interpreted in a variety of ways, religions always seem to define themselves as a means to bring humanity to its fulfillment.\textsuperscript{82} What is also common is that there is way or a path that humanity must traverse to reach its goal. Therefore, one must ‘do’ something to achieve this final state. We are not simply saved by our doctrine or by apathy.\textsuperscript{83}

Komulainen points out that Panikkar’s mystical, “holistic” theology merges spirituality and theory.\textsuperscript{84} In this way, he insists, “Praxis in Panikkar does not primarily mean the emancipating praxis of liberation theology but refers to a new spirituality with a new anthropology and cosmology: enduring solutions to contemporary problems are to be found only at the spiritual level.”\textsuperscript{85} Toward this end, Panikkar criticizes globalization and technocracy.\textsuperscript{86} Thus, Panikkar demands both engagement with contemporary concerns as well as removal of oneself from the status quo. Komulainen notes the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 229.
  \item \textsuperscript{80} Raimon Panikkar, \textit{Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics}, (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1979), 202-203.
  \item \textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 408.
  \item \textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{84} Jyri Komulainen, \textit{An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar’s Pluralistic Theology of Religions}, 50.
  \item \textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 51.
  \item \textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
connection between contemplation and action, explaining, “‘Contemplation’ in his
[Panikkar’s] terms denotes a comprehensive attitude towards life and thereby amounts to
an ontological act that participates in reality itself.”87 Therefore, only by practicing
contemplation can one transcend the limits of the variety of religious traditions.88

Thus, ‘religion’ refers to a path toward salvation, and any religion defines itself as
a road to liberation. This is Panikkar’s ‘existential’ definition of religion because this
existential thrust determines and shapes the conceptual elements utilized by the
tradition.89 The defining characteristic of a religion is that it is a way to reach the human
goal. However, there are many interpretations of this goal. Panikkar explains that there
are a variety of perspectives from which this goal can be explained. These range from
“perfect union with God to mere survival in society” or “in an otherworldly heaven,
individual annihilation, death, the absurd, or whatever.”90 While distinct, all of these are
nonetheless goals and give humanity a teleological character.

Because it is linked to an anthropological yearning, ‘religion’ is not reducible to
institutionalized religion. Thus Panikkar argues:

We should like only to say one thing and from it to suggest another: to say that Man’s
religious dimension is not indispensably bound to a predetermined concept of religion;
and to suggest that the religious crisis of mankind today is not due to the disappearance of
religion as a human dimension, but to the new reclamation of a sphere of the secular that
in the last centuries of Western history seemed to have been removed from religion.91

This secular sphere has certainly increased. Evidence for this can be seen all over
Western culture. “But,” Panikkar insists, “certainly separation of Church and State

87 Ibid., 52.
88 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid., 436.
should not be confused with divorce between religion and life."\textsuperscript{92} Even in secularized form, the human goal is always formulated as some form of freedom or liberation.\textsuperscript{93} So, as we have seen, ‘religion’ is that which makes the claim to provide humanity with liberation and to bring humanity to its goal.\textsuperscript{94} Religion, then, can be thought of as part of human identity. This religious component of one’s identity longs for liberation.

Panikkar describes this yearning:

If religion has always promised to save Man, then what mankind today eagerly awaits is precisely freedom, liberation from the sufferings, fears, doubts, anxieties and insecurities of life. Humanity today, especially in the West, feels imprisoned by its own inventions, enslaved by its own means of power. Technology frees Man from so many of his traditional and endemic nightmares that for the first time he can truly forge his own destiny in a spectrum of possibilities unsuspected just a century ago.\textsuperscript{95}

Thus, freedom plays a central role in Panikkar’s soteriology.\textsuperscript{96} But, Panikkar’s soteriology is one of self-realization, the enactment or realization of a mystical reality that is always already present. Thus, he points out, “There is a domain where Man has a very special autonomy: himself.”\textsuperscript{97} With regard to the various visions of human autonomy, Panikkar wishes to merge insights from East and West:

The well-known distinction between freedom-from and freedom-to (which could moreover express the characteristic modes of Eastern and Western spirituality, respectively) may serve as well to express the two faces of freedom we have just

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{96} See Raimon Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness, ed. Scott Eastham (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 8. Here Panikkar states, "Humanness demands the free fulfillment of Man. There is no justice if liberty is not respected. But there is no freedom where justice is violated."
\textsuperscript{97} Raimon Panikkar, Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics, 448.
mentioned. Freedom-to do what I will (West) would thus be counterbalanced by
freedom-from willing what I do (East).  

What is needed in the religious understanding of today is a “synergy” of the
internal and external aspects of freedom. Panikkar explains:

Human freedom is not only, or basically, the capacity to make decisions about things,
events or people. Real freedom takes root in the core of Man, which possesses this power
to become himself, in religious terms, to save himself. The prerogative of human
freedom is not limiter to the choice between given possibilities; it is not the power, either,
to do or to make just anything, but to make oneself, to make oneself oneself. In
theological terms we may say: The salvation to which Man aspires is not an extrinsic gift,
something superogatory, but a personal conquest—to realize oneself, to achieve one’s
being. To put it in Christian terms: Christ does not save by a heteronomic act, offering an
alien salvation foreign to Man, but by becoming flesh and blood so that he may be eaten,
assimilated, and by this divine metabolism transform Man also into the son of God. In
the Christian conception salvation comes neither by hetero-redemption (through an other)
[monotheism] nor through auto-redemption (by oneself) [Pelagianism], Christ being at
once truly Man and truly God, an authentic Mediator. Christian salvation comes neither
as from an outside rope, nor as from an inside power, but as from an in-spiration (of—and in—the entire Trinity), which links these two extremes together.

Thus, the purpose of human freedom is to enable the human being to realize
his/her identity, who he/she is. The only way to realize this identity is through union

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98 Ibid., 438-439.
99 Ibid., 438.
100 Ibid., 448.
101 For more on freedom, see Raimon Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament: the Way to Peace, transl. Robert Barr, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 69. Here Panikkar envisions freedom as something that is realized communally. Panikkar states, “To put it another way: the ultimate subject of freedom is not the individual, but being, reality in its totality. If individuals seek to isolate themselves from the totality, they will never be free. They will be tyrants is they are more powerful than their neighbors, but the latter will continue to impose conditions on them, if only negatively. Another person, in his or her quality as aliud, something else, will always be alienating, hence coercive. Only when the aliud is discovered to be alius/a, someone else—another “I”—can he or she be converted into a you and come to
with Christ. And, Christ functions not as an outsider, but as something we already find in ourselves. The purpose of the Incarnation, then, is to awaken the cosmotheandric union that one already possesses. Christ brings this characteristic of one’s identity to our awareness. Without such mediation, salvation is impossible and human identity can never be realized. Therefore, Panikkar explains that his position is not one of Pelagianism:

All this does not block the possibility of interpreting liberation via the grace of God, because this grace, precisely because it is divine, cannot be considered merely an external boost of some sort, but a divine—transcendent as well as immanent—force that transforms human nature without doing it violence, and so makes it possible for Man to attain the fullness of his being.\(^{102}\)

5.4 Critical Evaluation: The Freedom of Salvation and its Institutional Implications

Thus, it is important for Panikkar to insist that grace is not something merely extrinsic or merely intrinsic. It is for this reason that we insist that identity is the key to understanding Panikkar’s soteriology. This identity, revealed in Christ, generally, and Jesus the Christ, particularly, is the cosmotheandric unity of all reality. Thus salvation, for Panikkar, involves the realization of what one already is. But what one is also includes what one can be, the future. This is where freedom intersects with identity. For Panikkar, freedom refers to human creativity.\(^{103}\) In this sense, freedom is another component of Panikkar’s way of speaking of salvation. What the human being is is openness. And, this openness is openness to self-realization and self-determination.

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\(^{103}\) Ibid., 450.
In this regard, Panikkar finds an example of what he calls “transmythicization,” the appeal to the universal influence of mythos, in the grounding of religious freedom in human dignity at the Second Vatican Council.\textsuperscript{104} To illustrate the importance of freedom, Panikkar cites and reverses the Pauline saying that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (2 Cor 3:17).” Thus, for Panikkar, where there is freedom, there is also the Spirit of the Lord.\textsuperscript{105} Thus, “the Kingdom of freedom is built by the Spirit of the Lord. The Church, by definition, is the place of freedom. Freedom is the Spirit of the Lord. The ecclesiastical calling, the vocation, the congregation that constitutes the Church, is a call to freedom: ἐπ’ ἐλευθερία ἐκλήθη.\textsuperscript{106} So, the Church is the assembly of the free. It is important to note that all are called to be free, thus all are called to be part of the ‘Church’ in this sense.

But, if humanity is characterized by freedom, so is God. Panikkar insists, “Not only is the kingdom of God the kingdom of freedom, but God himself is absolute Freedom.”\textsuperscript{107} For Panikkar, freedom is transcendence. He insists that through freedom we come to know transcendence by coming to know what it means to be limit-less, barrier-less, restriction-less. This is an experience of infinitude.\textsuperscript{108} Because it is an experience of the infinite, God is central to the true meaning of human freedom. Panikkar points out, “God is the absence of every limit and Man is called to rejoin him by conquering his freedom, by stepping up from his creatureliness. Man arrived, achieved, perfect, will have been a creature (and this fact remains): he no longer will be one: he

\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Ibid.}, 431. Also see \textit{Dignitatis Humanum}.
\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Ibid.} “For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love (Gal 5:13).”
\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Ibid.}, 450.
\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Ibid.}
simply is.” In this way, Christ reveals the character of both God and humanity (while also revealing the union thereof):

> The message of Christ is a message of freedom; it carries the freedom requisite to perform the free act that saves. It is clear, moreover, that only an interior Christ (which does not deny a historical Christ identified with him) can make possible the realization of an act that is truly free, spontaneous and fully human; otherwise it would just be a new imposition from outside.

The idea of an “interior Christ” is important here. This interior character is Panikkar’s way of avoiding both extrinsicism, by which human beings have no influence on their salvation, and Pelagianism, by which human beings need no grace for salvation. For Panikkar, the grace is already there, yet human beings are works in progress and need to realize this grace of cosmotheandric identity. Using the term ‘religion’ in the institutional sense, Panikkar argues: “To carry out this free and saving act, there is no strict need of any ‘religion’, let alone Christianity. Only the faith of the human person is required. We have here the foundation of true pluralism. What matters is freedom.”

Therefore, Panikkar argues, “The human right of ‘freedom of religion’ appears to be a tautology, for without such freedom there is no religion, no religious act.” Yet, even though religion, in the institutional sense, is not a prerequisite for salvation, religious traditions are not rendered meaningless. If they are authentic religions, they are rooted in the anthropological sphere of the religious (the *humanum*), that is, the human yearning for liberation. And, if they are rooted in the *humanum*, they mediate knowledge and awareness of ones true identity; they mediate Christ. Furthermore, as we have seen, even

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109 Ibid., 451.
110 Ibid., 453.
111 Ibid., 454.
112 Ibid., 455.
though ‘Christianity’ is not strictly necessary for salvation, Christ is necessary. Thus, religion (in both the institutional and anthropological senses) involves the revelation of Christ. Because the goal of religion (salvation) is the true realization of human identity, religion essentially has a “self-revelatory character.”

Freedom, the human longing and capacity for transcendence finds itself expressed institutionally. Yet, the religious dimension of humanity is not strictly institutional. ‘Religion’ (understood institutionally) enables human beings to realize salvific self-transcendence. In Panikkar’s vision, religious institutions point one towards cosmotheandric communion. They pass on teachings that touch upon mystical unity and offer a community in which to begin to live this union out. If such religious institutions are functioning properly, they help one to realize his or her true humanity, that is, his or her true identity as a human being.

Because of his insight that sacred and secular are, in the final analysis, intimately united, Panikkar insists that salvation is immanent. He points out, “Salvation is within reach of our hands, it is nearby and even within us, but we are in need of a revelation, a word, a redeemer, a gift of grace, a personal effort, a spontaneous decision, a teaching, a guru, or an awakening of the very best that is in us in order to attain it.” Thus, salvation, one’s true identity is already present, yet one needs to cultivate this mystical intuition to realize it and make it effective. Outside intervention is necessary to prompt this ‘awakening.’ Salvation cannot be achieved by one’s effort alone. Thus, Panikkar is no Pelagian. One does not simply realize one’s identity in isolation. Identity must be

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113 Ibid.
114 See Raimon Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype, 85.
115 Ibid., 86.
realized communally because, as we saw in our third chapter, it has a communal component.

5.5 Realizing Salvific Identity

To realize one’s identity (salvation), one must fully give oneself to others. This kenotic movement is the concretization of cosmotheandric communion. Therefore, if I am to engage in this process of kenosis, I will see that “the Other is not another but Me—who is I.”116 Thus, in Me there is a microcosm, that is, “the world in small, miniaturized.”117 It is the communion of all, the commonality shared by all beings that allows me to find all others in myself. This union is the nondualism (advaita) which we visited in our first chapter. It is important, then to remember that this non-dualism is also not monism either. But, as we saw above in our assessment of Komulainen’s critique of Panikkar, this nondual relationship between the self and the cosmos is not all there is to my identity. In me there is also a “mikrotheos,” by which Panikkar means “God in human measure, an incarnate God.”118 With both of these elements in mind, Panikkar explains, we do not merely find the world around us contained in our identity, but we also find ourselves to be active participants in this reality. In this way we are “images, icons, of the whole of reality.”119 The relationship between God and the world plays out in the human religious sphere. The drive for communion that humans seek in the religious gives expression and form to the primordial union of the entire cosmos with its creator.

116 Raimon Panikkar, Christophany: The Fullness of Man, 30.
117 Ibid. See also Raimon Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness, ed. Scott Eastham (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 26. Here Panikkar depicts the human as microcosm, but he also depicts the cosmos as 'macanthropos'. See Ibid., 31. This lead one to seek holism. "Man is not isolated; even when he craves solitude, it is only in order to reestablish his proper bond with the whole, which might have been dislocated by disorderly affections or disrupted by entanglement in merely partial aspects of creation."
118 Raimon Panikkar, Christophany: The Fullness of Man, 30.
119 Ibid., 31.
Humans are part of the cosmos, but, as intelligent creatures with linguistic potential, they occupy a unique place in it. In the human, the world finds a voice with which to call out to God.

As we have seen, humanity is intrinsically relational. In fact, it is only in relation that one can find his/her identity. For Panikkar, when I seek “Me” in “you” I find myself in relation. But, the communion goes deeper than that, I also find “Me” in yourself as your “I.” This is true for Panikkar because in his epistemology “knowing” is “a certain ontological participation in reality.” Thus, ‘knowledge’ can only take place because there is a prior unity among all of reality. In this way, Panikkar insists:

The *seek me* cannot be divided from the *seek thyself*, for the *me* and the *thou* are correlative. The *metron* is human and divine, theandric—indeed, cosmotheandric. This is the third stage, the discovery of the I. Here the Trinity or *advaita* is central.

He continues:

I discover myself as the “thou,” God’s thou. God is the I, and I am God’s thou. It is the I who speaks and to whom we listen—not as slaves, not as creatures but as children (children of the Son) in the Spirit. This is the trinitarian life; this is the christophanic experience: neither the mere dualism of creatureliness, the worldly, nor the monistic simplification of divinization.

The interplay here of “I” and “Thou” here is very confusing to the reader. However, that is precisely Panikkar’s point. The cosmotheandric unity that underlies reality and that is to be realized in salvific communion has real consequences for the way one envisions the world. Once one’s ‘eyes are opened’ by the christophanic revelation of

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121 *Ibid.*, 34
123 Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany: The Fullness of Man*, 35.
cosmotheandric communion, the self, God, and the world will never ‘look’ the same again. In this sense, as we have mentioned, ‘salvation’ is self-discovery for Panikkar. In it, one discovers a union that is always already there at one’s deepest level. Thus, one discovers his or her true identity.

This is a fine example of the Eastern influence in Panikkar’s thought informing the Western mind. Salvation for the vedānta is self-knowledge, which involves knowing the one in the self who knows.\(^\text{125}\) The non-dualistic (advaita) identity that one discovers is cosmotheandric communion. As we have seen in our first chapter, this attitude is encapsulated in the profession of *ahambrahmāsmi*, that is, “I am brahman.”\(^\text{126}\) Enacting this ‘Ādhyātmic’ (Pneumatic) way of “mystical experience” and “integration” “consists in sharing not only ideas and ideals but Being itself.”\(^\text{127}\) For Panikkar, as we have seen, East and West come together here because this saving revelation is that which Christians call ‘Christ’.

**5.6 S. Mark Heim on Salvation and the Possibility of Multiple Religious Ends**

We should take a moment to look at an alternative approach to the integration of varying religious traditions. S. Mark Heim, who is inspired by Panikkar, argues that we should not confuse religious traditions and collapse them into each other. In Heim’s view, “salvation is communion with God and God’s creatures through Christ Jesus. It is the Christian religious end, if you like. This does not mean that there are not other religious ends, quite real ones.”\(^\text{128}\) Thus, Heim wishes to retain a distinction between the religious end of Christians and those of other traditions. On the common usage of the

\(^{125}\) Ibid., 70.
\(^{126}\) Ibid., 71.
\(^{127}\) Ibid., 67.
term ‘salvation’, Heim points out it tends to be used like it only has one meaning that encompasses all goodness and that the only alternative is to choose absolute evil.\textsuperscript{129} However this is a simplification of the term and it ought not to be understood in such stark terms. Thus, these diverse religious ends may in fact be compatible. However, for Heim, Jesus the Christ plays a special role in salvation because salvation is communion with him:

The proposition that Christ is the sole savior of the world is not adequately translated by saying that everyone must make use of Christ for at least one crucial moment, long enough to negotiate part of the passage to the promised land of “salvation,” after which time Christ can be discarded or replaced.\textsuperscript{130} He continues:

Jesus did not counsel his followers to go out and independently approach God as Jesus did. He invited them to share in that relationship by virtue of their connection with him. There is nothing purely instrumental about this: the images and substance are all organic. Communion is the way Christ saves, and it is the salvation that results.\textsuperscript{131} Like Panikkar, Heim’s soteriology is one of communion. Thus, for Heim, salvation is defined as communion with the Trinity, a share in the divine life.\textsuperscript{132} This communion is rooted in the nature of God because, according to the doctrine of the Trinity, God is communion by nature.\textsuperscript{133} Ecclesiologically, the church is seen as “a body called to live out this communion.”\textsuperscript{134} Also, like Panikkar, this salvific relationship is not limited to the individual and God. On the contrary, “Communion with God that does not at the same time encompass concrete communion with other human beings is a

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{129} \textit{Ibid.}
  \item \textsuperscript{130} \textit{Ibid.}, 53.
  \item \textsuperscript{131} \textit{Ibid.}
  \item \textsuperscript{132} \textit{Ibid.}, 63.
  \item \textsuperscript{133} \textit{Ibid.}, 62
  \item \textsuperscript{134} \textit{Ibid.}, 63.
\end{itemize}
contradiction.”\textsuperscript{135} Therefore, “Salvation is not an autonomous achievement.”\textsuperscript{136} It must be accomplished communally, ecclesially.

Unlike Panikkar, however, Heim contends that, from the perspectives of both Advaitic Hinduism and Buddhism, what Christians call ‘salvation’ is not the ultimate religious end. He explains:

Salvation is an intensification and fulfillment of a dimension that in many religious visions is regarded as penultimate at best: relationship between distinct persons with distinct identities. From such perspectives, salvation is simply one of the things from which humans need to be delivered. From the Christian perspective, such deliverance is one of the things from which we may finally hope to be saved.\textsuperscript{137}

Thus, Heim questions the close connection of \textit{Advaita Vedanta} and Christianity, which Panikkar holds so dear. Heim points out that the goal of the \textit{Advaita Vedanta} is \textit{moksha}, that is, “liberation or enlightenment.”\textsuperscript{138} For Heim this is distinct from Christian ‘salvation’. For instance, in the Advaitic tradition, “in the attainment of the religious goal nothing changes except the understanding.”\textsuperscript{139} One simply realizes what one already is. Therefore, Heim notes, “The religious end, full liberation, is achieved in and through the world just as it is.”\textsuperscript{140} Heim points out that the Advaitic worldview includes the idea of \textit{samsara}, that is, the cycle of reincarnation based on \textit{karma}.\textsuperscript{141} The religious end, then, is release from the cycle. In this process, the “gross body” is what dies, while the “subtle body” accrues karmic buildup.\textsuperscript{142} Underlying these is the self, \textit{Atman}, which is more

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 64.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 66.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 54.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 223.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 225.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.
specifically “the self that is also Brahman.”\textsuperscript{143} Through moksha, one comes to this realization and finds release from the cycle of samsara to which one is bound by karma. Thus, Heim explains, “The word advaita means ‘not two.’ Vedanta is non-dual because it rejects the icon relation of encounter between distinct entities (God with world, self with other selves), in favor of their ultimate identity.”\textsuperscript{144}

Like Panikkar, Heim uses Christian Trinitarian thought to discuss the relationship between divergent religious traditions, saying, “We might say that Christianity is a ‘not three, not one’ religion.”\textsuperscript{145} In the Trinitarian view, the three “dimensions of relation with God” are not alternatives to each other.\textsuperscript{146} He explains these ‘dimensions’: 

These three are not three ultimates. It is not right simply to say in sequence: there is no God, there is an impersonal God, there is a God of personal encounter, and there is a God of personal communion. Each of these is true in the sense we have describes in our earlier analysis: there is one God about whom they can each be said truthfully, under the special Trinitarian grammar.\textsuperscript{147}

In such a paradigm, Advaita emphasizes impersonal union with an impersonal God. Heim says, “This is the infinite interchange among the divine persons, the “emptiness” in which each makes way for the other and immanence by which each shares perfectly in the life of the other.”\textsuperscript{148} Much of this is given great attention in Panikkar’s thought, as we have seen in our first chapter. Yet, Heim differs from Panikkar in his emphasis that from the Christian point of view, this impersonal union is possible and real,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{143} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 227.
\item \textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 228.
\item \textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{147} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
but only “partial.”\(^{149}\) He explains the divergence of Christianity and the Advaitic tradition:

What is striking, and important, is that what from a Christian view is loss and limitation is quite the reverse from an advaitan view. Leaving “person” and relation behind is not loss but gain. In the Advaitan view, it is Christians’ attachment to such penultimate categories of understanding that restricts them to lower levels of spiritual attachment.\(^{150}\)

Thus, for Heim, the view of the Advaitans is the opposite view from that of Christians. To Advaitans, then, communion, the ultimate end for Christians, can only be secondary because it retains elements of the ‘gross body’ that are ultimately to be overcome as one comes to realize that Atman is Brahman.\(^{151}\) Of course, even within Hinduism itself, there are other traditions, which have other views of humanity’s ultimate end.\(^{152}\) For instance, there is the “Vishistadvaita” tradition, which agrees that this end is “identity with Brahman,” but yet “there is some real distinction in Brahman itself, so that difference is not abolished completely even in moksha.”\(^{153}\) There is also the tradition of dualism, which retains a complete distinction between Atman and Brahman.\(^{154}\)

Unlike Heim, for Panikkar, the impersonal/personal distinction is not what is central in the comparison of Hinduism and Christianity. Even in the Christian tradition, God can be spoken of in both personal and impersonal terms. Ultimately, the divine transcends even these categories. What is central is that both traditions seek union with

\(^{149}\) Ibid., 229.
\(^{150}\) Ibid.
\(^{151}\) Ibid.
\(^{152}\) Ibid., 230.
\(^{153}\) Ibid.
\(^{154}\) Ibid. Interestingly enough, what Heim calls ‘salvation’ is only the New Testament soteriology. Heim does not mention this fact, but even within the Judeo-Christian tradition, there may be a diversity of religious ends. For instance, much of the Old Testament views the ‘salvation’ given by YHWH as some form of political or quasi-political liberation.
the divine. Regardless of how they describe it, adherents of both traditions seek this same divine-human unity.

Nonetheless, for Heim (like Panikkar) all salvation relates to the Trinity. He insists, “The alternatives to salvation [the Christian term for humanity’s ultimate end] are in fact constituents of salvation, standing alongside each other.”

He uses Dante’s *Divine Comedy* as an illustration of multiple religious ends. Because in Dante’s epic there are many individualized spheres of salvation (and damnation and purgation), one can understand how these religious ends fit together in Heim’s estimation. One must also note the hierarchical character of Dante’s imagery. The *Divine Comedy* involves descent into damnation of increasing severity followed by an ascent through purgation into beatitude proceeding by degrees of increasing intensity. The Christian religious end of salvation, in this image, is the more ‘complete’ end compared with the others, yet all are ‘salvific’. In this way, alternative religious ends are forms of participation in the Trinitarian life. Heim asserts, “They are not simply the actualization of innate human capacities; they are distinct relations with aspects of the triune life.”

He explains that one might say that each religious end represents “heaven” for the one who reaches it, but only if we define “heaven” that which he/she truly desires or the greatest good possible according to his/her disposition. But, if we define “heaven” as the realization of the fullness of communion with the Trinity, then he/she does not necessarily reach it.

What is distinct for Panikkar, as compared with Heim is that, for Heim, communion is something that must be accomplished. For Panikkar, using the Hindu

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insight to inform Western Christianity, this communion already exists. As we saw above, however, it must still be realized. Lest Panikkar’s soteriology seem facile, this realization is not merely a matter of objective knowledge. It is knowledge in a deeper, more experiential sense. This knowledge is then to be given flesh in praxis. Praxis enables one to live out cosmotheandric communion.\textsuperscript{160} If such communion is to be authentic, it must be visible. Only by putting it into action, can one achieve this visibility. Furthermore, for Panikkar, this same communion is also implicit in the religious ends of other religions. By enacting communion through praxis, adherents of various religious traditions can find common ground.

While both thinkers utilize the Trinity to explain the relationship between the various religious traditions of the world, it seems that Panikkar’s theology takes the Trinity more seriously. If this communion is offered to all, then it would only make sense that humanity’s varying relations with the divine should in one way or another reflect this communion to a greater or lesser degree. Furthermore, if one is to use the analogy of the Trinitarian relations to describe the relationship between religious traditions, as Heim does, it would be logical to follow the Trinitarian logic completely. In the Trinity, the relations of Father, Son, and Spirit equally reflect divinity. Heim, on the other hand, seems to follow something more like a subordinationist analogy for the relationship between religious traditions, placing other, non-Christian traditions as lesser forms of relation with the divine. The danger here, which Heim is seeking to avoid, is the

\textsuperscript{160} Raimon Panikkar, \textit{Cultural Disarmament: the Way to Peace}, 41. Here, Panikkar describes peace as enabling the praxis of realized cosmotheandism: “Peace is not to be identified with human perfection here. Peace is rather that relationship prevailing among human beings that enables perfection, felicity, or, to use another word whose denotation has been unduly narrowed in the common language, \textit{salvation} (liberation, wholeness, fullness, \textit{sōtēria}, mokṣa, nirvāṇa, tao). Peace is \textit{cosmotheandric harmony}.”
reduction of all traditions to functional equivalency, resulting in a radical relativism that robs all traditions of their distinct significance and salvific efficacy.

Panikkar’s approach, however, does not reflect this kind of relativism. By contrast with Heim, Panikkar envisions communion as the basis of all true religious ends. But what of the distinction, seen above, between a personal communion, a non-personal communion, and a discovery of emptiness? This may at first seem to be a real difficulty in the thought of Panikkar, and it is in response to this difficulty that Heim posits his theory of multiple, compatible, religious ends. However, if one considers the logic of transcendence explored in our first chapter, one finds that the via negativa and the via positiva are ultimately parts of the same process because ultimately the way of negation must negate negation itself. It is this insight that many of the great mystics in the Christian tradition, such as John of the Cross, have heralded. Thus, there is room for all of these expressions of the religious end within communion itself; and these expressions are equally valid (and equally limited).

5.7 Critical Evaluation: Multiple Religious Ends or Multiple Human Conditions?

While his work is widely appreciated, many theologians have also found a variety of problems in Heim’s theory of multiple religious ends. For instance, there is some confusion regarding Heim’s description of the three aspects of the divine or the three ways of relating to God (impersonal, iconic, and communion), which he claims do not correspond to the three trinitarian hypostases. Kathryn Tanner inquires whether “the three dimensions of the Trinity have the effect here of replacing the traditional importance of the three persons of the Trinity in Christian accounts of God's relations

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161 See S. Mark Heim, The Depth of Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends, 184ff.
with the world.” They seem to be based on “a general pattern” of relating to divinity rather than on “anything distinctly Christian” or trinitarian. This, however, is not the only way of reading Heim’s theory. By connecting Heim’s theology to Panikkar’s Trinitarian paradigm (which we explored in our first chapter), Gavin D’Costa, in fact, does see these three categories of the experience of God in Heim as rooted in the distinct persons of the Trinity. This assessment is a likely interpretation of Heim’s thought because of the inspiration Heim draws from Panikkar. Thus, these patterns of relating to the divine need not be seen as an ‘alternative Trinity’, but can be read as the fruits of sharing the divine life that are found in varying degrees among different religious traditions. However, Heim attempts to avoid this because he envisions the last relation of communion (salvation) as the unique achievement of Christianity. And, if one were to connect these ways of relating to God strictly with distinct Trinitarian persons and claim that one is present in a particular without the others, then one would be dividing the Trinity too strictly into separate powers/entities. This is exactly what D’Costa finds as he draws the logical conclusion from this proposition:

The third relation, characterized by the Spirit, transforms external relations into internal communion, mutual indwelling, perichoresis. Heim, unlike Panikkar, fails actively to employ this category in relation to other religions, but sees it as the balancing function that establishes all three persons as equality in difference.

This failure could lead to radical division of the Trinity, creating a form of tritheism, whereby different divine entities relate differently to humanity, creating distinct

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163 Ibid.
165 Ibid.
religious traditions. Only if one is to say that each manner of relating is possible in any authentic religion (as Panikkar does) can one avoid this tri-theistic danger. Such a statement need not even say that each of these ways of relating to the divine is equally present in authentic religious traditions, but only that they are possible. This is the extreme danger of interpreting Heim’s relationships with the divine as corresponding to the divine persons of Father, Son, and Spirit. This danger is much more serious than the opposite danger, which Tanner detects. Nonetheless, Heim must remain between these extremes. It could be helpful to discuss these relations as ‘appropriate’ to particular divine hypostases because they pertain to characteristics that identify certain divine persons. Yet, the key to utilizing the classical notion of appropriation is to point to and highlight particular hypostases without completely separating the three from each other. However, if one is to take this approach and locates the religious ends of various religious traditions within a Trinitarian worldview, then one must acknowledge the accessibility, albeit in a more or less ‘hidden’ form, to all of these ways of relating to God in every authentic religion and wherever the Triune God is encountered. Heim, however, seems unwilling to entertain this option because it would not enable him to exclusively identify communion with Christian soteriology.

One could even take this line of criticism to the extreme that John G. Flett takes it. Flett sees Heim’s theology as a “classically modalist” view, in which the real God stands above and beyond the “three moments of Father, Son and Spirit” as “a higher being” that “is not Father, Son and Spirit.”¹⁶⁶ He worries that the three divine hypostases as such “have no bearing in Heim’s proposal” and consequently “make no systematic

Flett concludes, “Given this distance from the trinitarian persons, it is difficult to understand how Heim’s project qualifies as trinitarian.” This is a serious charge, but not one that is completely unwarranted. It is doubtful that Heim intends to present his theology modalistically, but nonetheless, this is an implicit danger that Heim has not completely avoided. After all, one way to avoid the danger of tri-theism presented above is to hold a modalist interpretation of these distinct relations with God, whereby the distinctions in the Trinity simply become the product of our relations with God. Interestingly, Flett also asserts, “Ironically, this departure [from traditional Trinitarian thought] results in him [Heim] also failing to describe the world religions in their own particularity, that is, as they would describe themselves.”

Thus, Heim’s Trinitarian pluralism is charged not only with not being ‘trinitarian’ in the final analysis, but also with not being sufficiently ‘pluralist’. In this vein, many critics question whether or not Heim accomplishes his goal, namely, to account for other religious traditions “in terms of their own self-description.” For instance, D’Costa points out that “Advaita, in terms of its own self-understanding, eschatologically radically negates the category of ‘relation’.” While Heim is aware of this, D’Costa insists “it is difficult to see the telos of Advaita being eternally preserved within a trinitarian framework.” The question here is whether or not Heim’s attempt to locate every religious end within a Trinitarian worldview is reductionist. Terrance Tiessen laments the inconsistency he finds in Heim’s thought, “Sometimes, it appears to me that

167 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid., 74.
171 Ibid.
172 Ibid.
Heim's position is simply another stimulating presentation of a ‘fulfillment’ theory but at
other times, I hear him wanting to not diminish or relativize the intrinsic value of the
other religions.”173

Kärkkäinen also echoes this sentiment. In fact, he argues that Heim is mistaken to
appeal to both Panikkar and D’Costa because Panikkar does not seek a solely Christian
conception of the Trinity, but a more ‘generic’ one, while D’Costa is critical of pluralism
and sees the activity of the Trinity as aimed toward the Church.174 Kärkkäinen is also
critical of Heim’s use of the Trinity as the ground of diversification because the original
concern behind the development of the doctrine of the Trinity was not to discuss divine
diversity, but actually to emphasize the divine unity, particularly between the Father and
the Son.175 Furthermore, like Tiessen, Kärkkäinen ‘doubts’ that Heim’s theology is, in
the final analysis, pluralistic at all. Because he takes the Christian vision of God ‘for
granted’ as normative and seems to simply read other traditions into the Christian
economy.176 This does not enable him analyze them on their own terms. Kärkkäinen
explains, “At best, it is inclusivism in a new form.”177 The point that Kärkkäinen is
making is that Heim cannot ignore questions about the nature of God, the answers to
which seem to differ amongst the various religious traditions. He thinks that Heim has
gone “too far”, or concluded too much, about the multiplicity of religious ends.178
Coming from a purely Christian perspective, one cannot conclude that another tradition’s
conception of a religious end is identical with any aspect of Christian theology. For

173 Terrance L. Tiessen, Review of The Depth of the Riches: a Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends, by
175 Ibid., 146.
176 Ibid., 149.
177 Ibid.
178 Ibid., 150.
instance, Heim is not on sure enough ground to conclude that Buddhist emptiness is the same as the emptiness referred to in apophatic Christian theology.\textsuperscript{179}

This critique may also be problematic for Panikkar as well. However, Panikkar deftly avoids a sharp identification of the concepts found in different religious traditions. He does this, as we saw in our first chapter, by describing similar concepts across traditions as non-interchangeable, but functional, equivalents. We discussed this earlier as ‘homology’. The advantage of such an approach is that it enables commonality to be discussed, but does not reduce differing theological systems to each other, preserving their integrity. As we have seen, using this notion of homological equivalency allows Panikkar to find Trinitarian sentiments in both Hinduism and Buddhism. Perhaps such a vision can enhance Heim’s efforts.

However, not all of the problems with Heim’s thought can be so easily reconciled. As Kärkkäinen points out, the hierarchical arrangement of religious ends in Heim’s thought “is problematic for the hope of the unity of humankind and the integrity of God’s final victory.”\textsuperscript{180} There are really two interrelated issues here. First, one of the great Christian hopes is universal salvation. However, as Heim points out, this has often been articulated as a hope, but rarely upheld dogmatically.\textsuperscript{181} Nonetheless, Heim’s proposition of distinct religious ends dims the hope of a final, united destiny of all of humanity.

Closely allied to this criticism is the second point that Kärkkäinen makes here. The notion of distinct forms of human fulfillment could easily lead one to conclude that these ends fulfill some natural yearning in humanity. And, since there are distinct ends, different humans may in fact have distinct natures that have these ends as their ‘final

\textsuperscript{179} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{181} S. Mark Heim, \textit{The Depth of Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends}, 244.
cause’ (to use an Aristotelian notion). This leads to a natural division of humanity. Couple this with the fact that these ends are hierarchically stratified and it is not a huge stretch to conclude that some humans are by nature higher or more supreme than others because they possess the capacity for a higher or more supreme end than others do. This is quite a problematic prospect. Anticipating such a contention, after disavowing a de iure universalist (or apokatastasis) eschatology, Heim asserts:

This also bears on the question of a common human nature. If the possibility of eternal loss exists, then that loss must constitute a distortion and constraint of the potential in created human nature, or the complete annihilation of that nature. This does not deny human solidarity, for without a common nature there would be no measure to allow talk of “loss” or “fulfillment” at all. To entertain a hypothesis that adds variety to this binary saved/not saved picture raises no new question in principle about our shared humanity. People who reach an ideal fulfillment of their humanity do not thereby become identical. And persons who do not realize the fullest potential of their created nature do not live less than human lives. Belief in our common humanity does not require the belief that there is no human variety within salvation, or the belief that there can be only one, entirely negative alternative to salvation.\(^{182}\)

Heim has not completely defused the issue, however. He has in fact raised another problem. If his account here is taken to its conclusion, namely that those who choose other religious ends besides communion are not realizing the “fullest potential” of their humanity, then we must question in what sense other religious ends are in fact “ends”. There is, then, only one true ‘end’, and then there are a few other end-like aspects of other traditions; but it then becomes unclear how these relate to each other, if at all.

\(^{182}\) Ibid.
As Kärkkäinen argues, maintaining the “radical differences” among religious ends winds up making interfaith dialogue “fruitless” because “the possibility of a few individuals, or even a few groups, changing their allegiance is afar too meagre a goal for interreligious dialogue.”¹⁸³ For this reason, it seems that Panikkar’s approach (and the approach of other pluralists), which seeks to find commonalities among various soteriologies, is preferable. Simply put, Heim is unable, in the end, to reconcile Christian soteriology with the multiplicity of religious ends and successfully maintain both unity and distinction. At times, he discusses an underlying unity, but is unable to completely fit distinction within it.

S. Mark Heim and Panikkar begin their respective projects similarly, that is, with an assessment of the variety of religious traditions found across geographical and cultural divides. Heim, however, envisions greater distance between the various religious traditions in world than does Panikkar. Heim formulates this distance in terms of a multiplicity of religious goals or ends. These goals are not ultimately incompatible, yet they are also not ultimately the same either. Both Panikkar and Heim insist that salvation consists of communion. Heim claims that this is the Christian religious end, while Panikkar sees this same end as present in the religious aspirations of other traditions as well. Both authors have the Eastern traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism in mind.

With Panikkar, however we see that, despite the differences of expression, all three of these religious traditions envision union with the divine, that is, with that which is at the center of all reality. Christianity, generally speaking, prefers to discuss this communion in interpersonal language. Both Hinduism and Buddhism prefer to not ascribe personal attributes to the divine. Buddhism prefers to not ascribe any attributes to

¹⁸³Velti-Matti Kärkkäinen, The Trinity: Global Perspectives, 151.
the divine (even divinity). Nonetheless, both envision a way by which humanity can unite itself to the Ultimate (or ultimate emptiness). Thus, the goal of humanity in these traditions can be thought of as a form of communion.

So what accounts for this variety of formulations of the Ultimate human end? Perhaps the real diversity among religious traditions is not in their religious ends, but in their description of the human condition. This conditions the way in which human liberation is spoken of. For both the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, for instance, the central human problem is that of *samsara*, the beginning-less and endless cycle of death and rebirth. Consequently, human liberation (*moksha* in Hinduism; *nirvana* in Buddhism) involves release from this cycle. Yet both of these conceptions of liberation are (at least to some adherents of their respective traditions) formulated as forms of union, either the union of Ātman and Brahman (*moksha*) or as the union of the self (or the ‘no-self’, as it were) with Ultimate emptiness. In all three traditions here (Christianity being the third), humanity is headed toward a goal and that goal includes the realization of one’s true identity. Panikkar brings this commonality among religious traditions out in his work. Thus, the shared experiences of communion that are expressed variously in the spiritualities of the religions point to a common primordial religious stratum of humanity that is not easy to define yet is certainly palpable.

Another aspect where Panikkar’s theology transcends that of Heim is with regard to the ethical implications of this communion. Communion is not simply something to be pondered and thought about. Rather, such meditation leads implicitly to action. This action is *praxis*. As we have seen, the realization of communion through praxis is the mark of authentic self-realization. In this way, only through kenosis and self-giving can
one truly come to know oneself. The self is only realized in relation. However, wherever
the praxis of communion is lived out, the reality of communion subsists. This may
certainly take imperfect forms. Nonetheless, these forms are real manifestations of
cosmotheandric unity. Even the professed atheist may come to ‘know’ God through
praxis, not in an intellectual form which, as we have already mentioned in our third
chapter, is a secondary abstraction from a more primordial encounter with the divine in
mythic substratum of faith, but in a manner that is nonetheless real and efficaciously
leads him/her to the realization of the fullness of human identity. It is for this reason that
there are many stories in the Christian tradition of atheists who have come to explicit
faith through the persuasion of praxis. Through praxis, they came to explicit knowledge
of God, whom they already knew.

5.8 Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus

One of the most (if not the most) famous ecclesiological axioms is Extra
Ecclesiam Nulla Salus, that is, ‘outside the Church there is no salvation’. This axiom
dates back to Ignatius of Antioch’s second century condemnation of schismatics and was
most famously taught by Cyprian of Carthage in the third century.¹⁸⁴ In many places in
the Christian tradition, this attitude has found ‘official’ acceptance. For instance, Canon
1 of Lateran IV (1215) reads, "There is one Universal Church of the faithful, outside of
which there is absolutely no salvation."¹⁸⁵ It is also found in Pope Eugene IV’s bull

¹⁸⁴ Jacques Dupuis, Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books,
1997), 86.
¹⁸⁵ See DR 430. Denzinger, Henry. The Sources of Catholic Dogma, Transl. Roy J. Deferrari. of Thirtieth
Cantata Domino (February 4, 1441) from the Council of Florence (1438-1445). After listing several Christological heresies, Eugene IV states:

It [the "sacrosanct Roman Church"] firmly believes, professes, and proclaims that those not living within the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics cannot become participants in eternal life, but will depart "into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels" [Matt. 25:41], unless before the end of life the same have been added to the flock; and that the unity of the ecclesiastical body is so strong that only to those remaining in it are the sacraments of the Church of benefit for salvation, and do fastings, almsgiving, and other functions of piety and exercises of Christian service produce eternal reward, and that no one, whatever almsgiving he has practiced, even if he has shed blood for the name of Christ can be saved, unless he has remained in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church.

The general thrust of the axiom is still present in more contemporary ‘official’ documents. For instance, in Lumen Gentium, we find: "They could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it, or to remain in it." It is notable that there is a change of tone here from previous incarnations of the axiom. The notion that such and individual ‘knowingly refuses’ is a telling addendum to the axiom. This qualifier leaves room for those who are ‘ignorant’ or ‘improperly informed’. This represents an embrace of ‘inclusivism’ vis-à-vis the attitude of ‘exclusivism’ that seems to be the tenor of the axiom itself.

Despite such inclusivist qualifiers, many contemporary theologians still condemn the axiom. For instance, Jacques Dupuis insists upon the need for a "true purification of

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186 See Jacques Dupuis, Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue, 59. Cantata Domino is ‘A Decree in Behalf of the Jacobites [a monophysitic Syrian church]’.
188 Lumen Gentium, 14.
the memory" because of all the hostilities between the religions, particularly in light of all of the evils of the past century.\(^{189}\) This includes a purification of our vocabulary.\(^{190}\) For example, the use of terms like ‘non-Christian’ is condescending to those outside of Christianity.\(^{191}\) Dupuis explains, "What people are called should be based on how they understand themselves, not on a foreign and often prejudiced understanding."\(^{192}\) Dupuis points to the fact that the New Testament expanded the concept of ‘people of God’ outside of Israel to potentially include all people. Thus, the Church extends this assembly, it does not replace it.\(^{193}\) For Dupuis, this is the way to understand the Church, not extra ecclesiam nulla salus.\(^{194}\) Like Panikkar, Dupuis insists on the need for ‘mutual conversion’, ‘sym-pathy’, and ‘em-pathy’ between Christians and others.\(^{195}\) Towards this end, the Church should accept others in their difference not condemn them based upon that difference.\(^{196}\) Thus, Dupuis insists that we must purify our theological language. For instance, there is a "certain ambiguity" that is discomfuring in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.\(^{197}\) Thus, when rereading the work of the council in our present context we experience "a certain disillusionment and dissatisfaction."\(^{198}\) Dupuis insists that we must move even beyond the notion of one true religion that "subsists" in the Catholic Church, as found in Dignitatis Humanum:\(^{199}\)

First, the council professes its belief that God Himself has made known to mankind the way in which men are to serve Him, and thus be saved in Christ and come to blessedness.

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\(^{189}\) Jacques Dupuis, Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue, 5.
\(^{190}\) Ibid., 6.
\(^{191}\) Ibid.
\(^{192}\) Ibid.
\(^{193}\) Ibid.
\(^{194}\) Ibid.
\(^{195}\) Ibid., 7.
\(^{196}\) Ibid.
\(^{197}\) See Ibid., 67.
\(^{198}\) Ibid., 66.
\(^{199}\) Ibid.
We believe that this one true religion subsists in the Catholic and Apostolic Church, to which the Lord Jesus committed the duty of spreading it abroad among all men.¹⁰⁰

But is exclusivism the intent behind the axiom? This most famous proponent of this axiom is Cyprian of Carthage, who included it in his Letter to Jubaianus. This letter was written in the context of dealing with schismatics. For Cyprian, since the Novatians separated themselves from the Church, their baptism was invalid. Just as the Novatians rebaptized Christians entering their sect, so Cyprian insists that Novatians (or any heretics) coming back into the Church should also be rebaptized. While stating that even martyrs need to be in communion with the Church in order to be saved, Cyprian states:

But if not even the baptism of a public confession and blood can profit a heretic to salvation, because there is no salvation out of the Church, how much less shall it be of advantage to him, if in a hiding-place and a cave of robbers, stained with the contagion of adulterous water, he has not only not put off his old sins, but rather heaped up still newer and greater ones! Wherefore baptism cannot be common to us and to heretics, to whom neither God the Father, nor Christ the Son, nor the Holy Ghost, nor the Church itself, is common.²⁰¹

Many commentators say that Cyprian’s directive for rebaptism is one of discipline, not doctrine; Consequently, while it was influential to later generations, it did not gain widespread acceptance.²⁰² For instance, Augustine argues the exact opposite. He takes up consideration of Cyprian’s ideas in the context of the Donatist controversy. The Donatists were in the habit of re-baptizing those baptized by traditores (traitors), Christians who committed apostasy. Augustine insists, contra Cyprian (although he

¹⁰⁰ Dignitatis Humanum, 1.
thought that, at least in intent, Cyprian was on his side), that what is shared among
heretics is valid because it belongs to the Church. However, one’s baptism (by heretics)
is not truly effective until one lives in union with the Church because one at one and the
same time joins the Church, but persists in schism. Thus, the Spirit which animates the
Church, is in the heretics but is also lost because of schism. Regarding Cyprian,
Augustine states:
"Salvation," he says, "is not without the Church." Who says that it is? And therefore,
whatever men have that belongs to the Church, it profits them nothing towards salvation
outside the Church. But it is one thing not to have, another to have so as to be of no
use. 203

Thus, the imperfect union through baptism by a heretic can only find its
perfection in the Church. Yet, despite the imperfections, there is still real union. Dupuis
further explains that for Augustine, the Church exists where Christ’s salvific influence
exists. 204 Thus, for Dupuis, with Augustine’s broader notion of Church, the problems of
the axiom, extra ecclesiam nulla salus are solved. He points out that some (we are
arguing here that Panikkar generally fits into this category) even suggest a broader notion
of the Church, which identifies it with all humankind. 205 However, he notes that what is
meant by the axiom hinges upon what one means by the term ‘church’. 206

It is important to note that, for Panikkar, as for Dupuis, ecclesiological
considerations are outcroppings of Christological considerations. As we have already
mentioned numerous times, in Panikkar’s theological schema, Christ is the manifestation

203 Augustine, De Baptismo Contra Donatistas, transl. J.R. King, in A Select Library of the Nicene and
204 Jacques Dupuis, Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism, 81.
205 Ibid., 85.
206 Ibid., 86.
or revelation of the cosmotheandric unity that already underlies all of reality. Salvation consists, then, in accepting this identity and involves acting accordingly. By living this salvific revelation out, the Christian him/herself becomes a christophany. The Church, then, is the community of this revelation. Thus, the Church is a christophany as well. This ‘church’, however, is not limited to the institutional church. As we have seen in our third chapter, for Panikkar identity is based upon unity and not distinction. Consequently, it may be acceptable for Panikkar to say that the Church of Christ is identical with the Catholic Church, although he would probably rather approach the topic from the opposite angle: the Catholic Church is identical with the Church of Christ. It is the Church, in its earthly, human character that seeks identity. However, this identity is not exclusive. The Church then is a microcosm because the world as a whole seeks this cosmotheandric identity. Better said, the church is the world, insofar as the world has realized its identity, or experienced salvation.

In his eighth sūtra of Christophany, Panikkar asserts that “The Church Is Considered a Site of the Incarnation.” This is one of Panikkar’s clearest ecclesiological moments. What is clear is that Christology and ecclesiology are pieces of the same whole. Essentially, Panikkar argues that the Church is a continuation of the incarnation, a ‘making-present-of-Christ’ in the world. However, he does not reduce the Church to the visible institution. Rather, he says that there is a ‘universal’ [the true meaning of ‘catholic’] Church that extends beyond this. Panikkar contends that “salvation consists in reaching our plenitude—that is, in sharing the divine nature, since

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207 In this sense, Panikkar would say that it is appropriate to say that every christophany, because it manifests this unity is a microcosm, but also a microanthropos and a microtheos.
208 Raimon Panikkar, Christophany: The Fullness of Man, 178.
209 Ibid.
nothing finite can ever satisfy the being that is *capax Dei.*” Panikkar insists that this process occurs in the church. Perhaps, however, it would be more consistent with Panikkar’s general train of thought to say that those going through this process are the Church. The Church is the locus of this cosmotheandric union. The Church is a christophany. Thus, the Church is present where Christ is present. Thus, where Christ is, there is the Church. In this way, to complement the oft-cited notion of *creatio continua,* Panikkar proposes an ecclesiology of *incarnatio continua.*

With this understanding of ‘Church’ in mind, Panikkar insights on Cyprian’s axiom are novel. He argues, “If it be true that ‘outside the Church there is no salvation’, this ‘Church’ should not be identified with a concrete organization, or even with adherence to Christianity.”

He continues, “Church, as the sociological dimension of religion, is the organism of salvation (by definition), but the Church is not coextensive with the visible christian church.” Indeed, as we have proposed above, Panikkar’s ‘cosmic Christology’ demands a corresponding ‘cosmic ecclesiology’. Panikkar explains:

> The assertion that “there is no salvation outside of Christ” is almost a tautology.
> Salvation means full realization, or, in traditional terms, divinization, and divinization occurs only in union with the divine—whose symbol in Christian language is Christ.

Note that, in the way Panikkar utilizes the famous axiom, he provides an ecclesiological interpretation, substituting ‘Christ’ for ‘Church’. This is no accident.

Where there is union with Christ, there is the Church. Thus, for Panikkar, extra

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210 Ibid.
211 Ibid.
212 Raimon Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany, Revised and Enlarged Edition,* 82.
214 Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany: The Fullness of Man,* 147.

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ecclesiam nulla salus is not problematic. In fact, it is a statement that says very little, serving best as a definition of ‘Church’. The Church is the community of salvation. And, salvation is none other than the realization of cosmotheandric unity.

5.9 Synthesis: Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Identity

Komulainen insists that Panikkar exhibits an “existentialist” understanding of contemplation.215 Because contemplation leads to insight about human existence, contemplatives “pave the way for dialogue.”216 They can even up the door to “ecosophy,” a dialogical attitude toward the Earth, by which one finds union with the anima mundi.217 In this way, Panikkar’s “cosmotheandric vision,” the “crystallization of his thinking,” brings varying elements together.218 So, the cosmotheandric vision involves a ‘new innocence’ by which one comes to greater awareness of the present, that is, of the context in which he/she finds him/herself.219 He/she sees the world around him/her, perhaps for the first time. Komulainen insists that this ‘new myth’, which is based upon Panikkar’s theological anthropology, discards Western individualism and proposes a conception of the person understood holistically and relationally.220 Komulainen notes that this realization of mystical, cosmotheandric unity requires a certain “mutation” of the traditions that lead one along the religious path.221 He explains:

The mutation he envisioned thus seems to mean that human kind advances through a change of consciousness to a new innocence. Historical consciousness will end, albeit through a catastrophe. In any case, a new transhistorical consciousness will emerge on

216 Ibid.
217 Ibid., 173.
218 Ibid., 178.
219 Ibid., 179.
220 Ibid., 180.
221 Ibid., 181.
the contemporary scene. Panikkar understands this to be represented already in
cosmotheandric spirituality, and in the lives of those committed to a spiritual life.222

While Komulainen’s assessment is mostly correct, he seems to miss the major point of Panikkar’s theological project. This ‘new myth’ is not a ‘new myth’ at all. Rather, it is the common ‘myth’ that underlies all other true myths. It is the truth about reality, which Panikkar has not simply posited, but which he has uncovered not despite, but through the authentic religious traditions that he has encountered. In this process, Panikkar has highlighted the importance of mystical insight. Thus, for Panikkar, mysticism is the key to soteriology. Salvation is found in mystical union with all of reality, cosmotheandrisrn. This also has ecclesiological ramifications. For Panikkar, the saint, Paul of Tarsus’ ecclesiological ‘building block’, is the mystic, the one who has realized or is realizing this salvific cosmotheandric union. In this way, as we have seen, Panikkar’s ecclesiological outlook leads away from the emphasis on who or what is ‘within the church’ to a new emphasis on ‘the church within’. The Church is the community of salvation, those in union with Christ, finding its fulfillment in the realization of the Reign of God. Those who find this mystical union have found Christ. And, where there is Christ, there is the Church.

This account of ecclesial identity may seem somewhat glib and flippant. At face value, to speak of the ‘church within’ seems more like mystification than mystery. The church, then, it seems, has no borders. What then is the use of speaking of ‘church’ at all? However, we must point out that the purpose of such reflections is not to limit the usefulness of speaking of ‘church’ at all, but rather to temper the confidence with which we speak of those ‘outside the church’. If there is an inward ecclesiology, then this does

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222 Ibid.
not thwart the corresponding outward ecclesiology. Such outward ecclesiology finds its clearest expression in the explicit Church of Christ which, as *Lumen Gentium* tells us, ‘subsists in’ the Catholic Church. However, this same paragraph of *Lumen Gentium* echoes Pius XII in his insistence that the mystical body of Christ and the institutional Church are not separate, distinct realities, but aspects of the same reality. Thus, those who possess this inward ecclesial identity belong to the same body of Christ that those who profess membership in the Church outwardly. After all, it is the Church’s mission to make visible the presence of Christ and so to inform all of their true identity as it awaits its fulfillment in the Reign of God. The visible Church is a herald of identity and, consequently, salvation.

What consequence does such an understanding have for those who identify themselves explicitly as Christian? How is this self-appellation different in light of such a vision of ecclesiology? In a sense, such identity is radically modified. The member of the church (the saint, the mystic) can no longer erroneously envision the ‘holiness’ that is the hallmark of his or her identity as signifying a status ‘over and against’ the world. Rather, holiness, in this new conception, involves solidarity with the rest of creation and brings with it a missionary call to manifest the holiness, that is, the union with the Holy One, which is already present in all of reality. However, in another sense, there is nothing ‘different’ about this ecclesial paradigm. As we saw in our second chapter when we discussed the traditional roots of the concept of the activity of Christ outside the Incarnation, the presence of Christ has always been active in the world. This logically

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223 *Lumen Gentium*, 8.
224 Ibid.
225 See Ibid., 6.
implies that there is some form of ecclesial identity that has always been operative in the world. Where there is union with Christ, there is the Church.

5.10 Conclusion

As we have seen, Panikkar’s cosmotheandric theology leads to a soteriology of identity. Human destiny is to realize the identity that is already present at the core of one’s being. This realization is that which Christians have traditionally called ‘communion’. The principle of this communion is Christ. Christ reveals the cosmotheandric unity of all of reality. Salvation then is the actualization of this communion, which is reached through worship and praxis. In this sense, all humans are called to monasticism, that is, to the ‘blessed simplicity’ of cosmotheandric communion. Only through such ‘single-minded’ devotion can humans find their true identity, which is most properly defined by that to which the human unites him/herself. By demonstrating this, we have brought together several of Panikkar’s soteriological allusions to articulate Panikkar’s soteriology systematically.

Above, we have also brought out the ecclesiology implicit in Panikkar’s thought, which shows us that the Church is the community of this communion. It is the body of those united to Christ. Christ, however, extends beyond institutional parameters. This does not mean that the Church of Christ exists apart from the visible Church. Rather, the two are united. The visible Church makes this invisible reality present. The Church is a sacrament. To go a step further, utilizing Panikkar’s language, the Church is a ‘christophany’, that is, the Church makes Christ present. The clearest manifestation of this comes in our elaboration upon Panikkar’s usage of the famous axiom extra ecclesiam nulla salus, which has been treated above in this chapter. For Panikkar, who is devoted
to his own brand of pluralism, this axiom is not problematic. Of course there is no
salvation outside the Church because the Church is precisely the community that has
realized and actualized cosmotheandric communion.

One question that can be raised regarding Panikkar’s vision of the confluence of
soteriology and ecclesiology in identity is whether he has given due consideration to the
distinction between nature and grace (supernature). After all, it seems to be Panikkar’s
contention that human fulfillment consists in realizing the identity that is already present.
This would seem to collapse grace into nature. This is the root of questions regarding the
significance of Jesus the Christ in the economy of salvation. On the contrary, Panikkar
would wonder about the motivation behind such a question and marvel at the need for
such a clear demarcation. He would criticize this as a peculiarly Western drive for
clarity, rooted in the law of noncontradiction. Panikkar would contend that if all of
reality is called to fulfillment in Christ and the offer of salvation is ubiquitous, then grace
too may be ubiquitous. As we have seen, this grace is communicated through Christ,
whose ‘parameters’ extend beyond the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth.

Furthermore, the question remains as to whether Panikkar’s theology, filled as it
is with idiosyncrasies, can be useful to Catholic theologians. Panikkar’s theology is very
idiosyncratic in that he frequently coins new terms and amends the meaning of existing
terms. These idiosyncrasies are difficult to communicate and ‘translate’, yet they often
appeal to something that is central to, but often lost in, theological discourse: the Mystery
of the Divine. Panikkar’s reworking of terms like ‘monk’ or coinage of terms such as
‘cosmotheandrisation’, ‘tempiternity’, etc. have a common denominator. This common
denominator is their tendency toward unity. This unity is the result Panikkar’s mystical
intuition. Ultimately, what Panikkar aims to communicate in these instances is the limitation of human reason. Even the quite clear distinctions that we posit are not as absolute as we would like them to be. Thus, human concepts are valuable yet finite and limited. Not only does God surpass the concepts with which humans attempt to grasp the Divine, but so too does the rest of the world surpass the concepts with which it is grasped by the human. This Mystery is more adequately grasped at a level prior to and presumed by reason: faith. Faith finds its object in the Divine Mystery and its fulfillment in communion.

Therefore, the concepts of identity and Christ are the hermeneutical keys to establishing the soteriological and ecclesiological implications of Panikkar’s christophanic cosmotheandism. While for the Christian theologian, Panikkar’s soteriological and ecclesiological thrust may need to be contextualized in a fuller soteriological and ecclesiological vision, it is certainly not incompatible with this. Furthermore, as the many theologians, including Gavin D’Costa, Peter Phan, and others, who have been inspired by Panikkar demonstrate, Panikkar’s reflections provide fruitful soil for genuine interreligious dialogue that can transcend doctrinal impasses. This soil is the soil of communion and identity. Both the soteriological and ecclesiologial implications that we have noted here may then best be paraphrased by Augustine’s Eucharistic reflection: “Estote quod videtis, et accipite quod estis.”

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226 Augustine, *Sermo* 272. “Become what you see and receive what you are.”
Conclusion

Throughout the preceding pages, we have examined Raimon Panikkar’s thought in detail. In that space we have attempted to remain, for the most part, within his thought in order to systematize it and deduce some of the resulting theological consequences that it holds. If we take his theological vision seriously, as we propose here, then we must seriously consider its effects on other theological concepts that are only glimpsed or given occasional attention within his literary corpus. In this sense, our theological task in the preceding pages has been to systematize the thought of a mystic.

We began by introducing Panikkar’s theological vision, which is best described with his own term, ‘cosmotheandrism’. As we saw, ‘cosmotheandrism’ is essentially a Trinitarian paradigm that extends beyond the divine realm and penetrates all of reality. Thus, the three poles of reality, which Panikkar identifies as the cosmic (cosmic), the divine (Theos), and the human (Aner), are ultimately bound together in a unity that, at least for the cosmic and human poles of this relationship, permeate the very core of being. This Trinitarian insight is further expounded upon by the notion of advaita (or non-dualism) found in the Hindu tradition. Panikkar’s metaphysical paradigm is the foundation for the rest of his theology and the soteriological and ecclesiological schema that we set forth in our fifth chapter.

In our second chapter, we defined the term ‘Christ’ and discovered that, for Panikkar, ‘Christ’ is the principle of this cosmotheandric union. This principle is made know through ‘christophanies’, that is, manifestations of the communion of all of reality. The Incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth is one such christophany, but not the only one. In our examination, we found that Panikkar’s insistence on the activity of Christ outside of
the Incarnation is not a concept that is alien to the Christian tradition. Rather, it has been operative in Christianity from a very early time.

In our third chapter, we examined Panikkar’s use of the concept of ‘identity’. We found that identity is a somewhat fluid term. However, there are some particular elements that contribute to the formation of one’s identity. For instance, identity typically includes both self-designation, on the one hand, and communal acceptance, on the other. Panikkar also prefers to discuss identity in terms of that to which one unites oneself (the ‘Eastern’ view) rather than that from which one distinguishes oneself (the ‘Western’ view). However, as we pointed out, both of these aspects are necessary to a holistic vision of identity, particularly one that is ultimately rooted in a Trinitarian (cosmotheandric) worldview.

In our fourth chapter, we synthesized the insights that we uncovered in the previous two chapters by examining the identity of Christ and Christian identity. Along the way, we reinforced the insistence that ‘Christ’ extends beyond Jesus of Nazareth, yet, Jesus of Nazareth is identical with Christ. Christ’s identity as the principle of cosmotheandric communion enables a broadened notion of ‘Christian identity’. The Christian is the one who is united with Christ, and, consequently, all of reality. Christian identity is found in communion. But, as we discovered in our first chapter, this communion is at the root of all reality. It is a communion that is already present, although often lies dormant and unrealized. Christian identity, then, is none other than the true human identity found in the union that Christ enables and that the christophany reveals.
In our fifth and final chapter, we gathered the ecclesiological and soteriological fragments scattered throughout Panikkar’s literary corpus and assembled them into a, more or less, coherent whole. We then made key deductions as we systematized them. Panikkar’s reflections on these topics are fragmentary because they are peculiarly Christian concepts. He instead prefers to focus on those topics that intrigue the multiple audiences for which he is writing. In this analytical and deductive process we discovered a soteriology that is based on identity. Salvation consists, ultimately, of the realization of an identity that is ‘already there’. This identity, as we saw in chapter four, is the identity that is achieved through cosmotheandric communion. Thus, the human goal is to realize the self. This is not a purely hypothetical and conceptual exercise. Neither is it sought in isolation (because the goal itself is not isolation). It is realized communally (ecclesially) and exercised in praxis. True communion, then, is not merely conceptualized, but lived out in reality.

We also discovered a new ecclesiological paradigm that can inform the spiritual and missionary practice of the Christian community. If salvation is the realization of identity, and if this identity consists of the realization of cosmotheandric communion, of which Christ is the principle, then this ought to affect the way that we conceive of Church. One of the central insights that Panikkar provides in this regard is the insight that the famous axiom extra ecclesiam nulla salus is really tautological. That is, it really functions as a definition of the Church rather than a limitation on the parameters of the Church. The Church is the community of salvation. It is the community of those who have found their salvation in the identity that is cosmotheandric communion mediated by Christ and which reaches fulfillment in the coming Reign of God.
The Church, then, is the community of those united with Christ. We must recall here the insight arrived at in our second chapter. ‘Christ’ extends beyond the Incarnation. Thus, we have concluded that if we are to take seriously Panikkar’s insistence on a ‘cosmic Christ’, then we must be prepared to account for some form of a ‘cosmic Church’. A cosmic Christology demands a cosmic ecclesiology. If the Church extends the presence of Christ in a visible manner throughout history, then the Church functions as a ‘christophany’ and may appear in forms that we, as Christians are unaccustomed to acknowledging. If those outside the traditional, institutional lines that we have become used to using to demarcate the ‘Church’ act in accordance with and in union with ‘Christ’, then they too, perhaps in an undeveloped manner, are in some sense acting ecclesially. Where there is union with Christ, there is the Church.

We may then, perhaps, be able to speak of some kind of ‘inward’ ecclesial identity that is distinct from, yet never separate from, one’s ‘outward’ ecclesial affiliation. This ‘inward’ ecclesiology can be glimpsed in the single-mindedness of the monk, who, for Panikkar, is not necessarily the cloistered monk of the classical tradition, but any ‘centered’ one who focuses on realizing true identity in cosmotheandric communion. Thus, there is a monastic element in each of us that needs to be realized. So too there is an ecclesial element in each of us that must also be realized.

This cannot be overstated, however. This ‘inward’ ecclesiology cannot be understood as the mystification of the Church. Rather, it ought to be seen as an enrichment of the Church. In our missionary activity as Christians, we are not seeking to make allies where there were once enemies. Rather, we are seeking to find the Church that is already present in the other, and so to realize the alliance that is already there so
that together we can come to the realization and actualization of who we truly are as humans. Salvation is open to all and, so too, the Church is open to all. This ecclesiology is not a threat to the institutional Church, but a reminder of our call to evangelization, that is, our call to act christophanically.
Bibliography


