The narrative basis of Panikkar's scholarship is pertinently expressed at the conclusion of the 1960s when he offers a bold reflection on his Indian pilgrimage: "I 'left' (Europe) as a Christian; I 'found' myself a Hindu; and I 'return' as a Buddhist, without having ceased to be a Christian."¹ His writings throughout that decade are essentially a series of explorations on the interconnectedness of these three major religious traditions expressed in terms of his "multireligious experience." However, the more global horizon is never far from view. Accepting Guardini's aphorism that we are at "the end of the modern age,"² Panikkar insists that "human culture exhibits, for the first time in history, global dimensions."³

He perceives the challenge in terms of an *ecumenical ecumenism* in which all the so-called major and minor religious traditions meet as dialogical partners in the forward movement of human history.⁴ Being well aware of the christian

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⁴Panikkar's "ecumenical ecumenism" is not just an intra-christian affair: "Mais nous atteignons là une autre dimension de l'œcuménisme: les religions du globe, et, bien sûr, non seulement avec celles dites grandes religions mais même avec
claim to universality, Panikkar seeks to reinterpret Christian doctrines and symbols in a manner that is at once faithful to the tradition and yet open to new interpretative possibilities. In this way, his interreligious and cross-cultural hermeneutics are an extension of his interdisciplinary procedures insofar as they retain a fundamental 'belief' in the possibility of authentic conversation among diverse—and seemingly contradictory—worldviews.

Not that Panikkar is content with the metaphor of conversation. He speaks of the more primordial need for conversion that enables the interreligious conversation to be a genuine religious experience. The approach emanates from his foundational epistemology that highlights the significance of supernatural faith as the integrative faculty of knowledge:

The dialogue I speak of is no mere academic device or intellectual amusement, but a spiritual matter of the first rank, a religious act in itself which as such involves faith, hope and love. Dialogue is no bare methodology, but forms an essential part of the religious act par excellence: loving God above all things and one's neighbor as oneself.

Elsewhere, Panikkar claims that "ecumenical ecumenism does not mean cloudy universalism or indiscriminative syncretism, nor yet narrow, crude particularism or barren, fanatical individualism . . . but the awareness and assurance of utter relativity that makes us mere connections in the mysterious warp and woof of being." "Faith and Belief," 221f. In terms of his earlier studies, this amounts to an ontonomic understanding of religions and a theandric understanding of the human being.

In the context of interreligious dialogue, Panikkar states that "to understand is to be converted." "Faith and Belief," 225.

Ibid., 226.
Consequently, he refuses to accept the validity of a purely objective, merely rational or entirely theoretical basis for the meeting of religions. He specifies that interreligious dialogue is not a congress of philosophy or a theological symposium. Its goal is not theory, but "communication," "mutual fecundation" and eventually "communion". This is to say that "the true meeting of religions does not belong primarily to the essential, but to the existential sphere". As such, it is neither purely subjective nor totally objective, but the interblending of both. In opposing the purely phenomenological study of religion, Panikkar insists that "the self-understanding of religious consciousness belongs essentially to the religious phenomenon." Therefore, it is not enough to study religions from the `outside'; any real understanding requires that they also be experienced from `within'.

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8Panikkar, Religión y religiones (Madrid: Gredos, 1965), 14; English translations of this text are mine. This work was originally published in Italian as Religione y Religioni (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1964); and subsequently in German as Religionen und die Religion (Munich: Max Hueber, 1965).


12Panikkar, Mysterio y revelación: Hinduismo y cristianismo--encuentro de dos
Accordingly, Panikkar’s dialogical model of east-west encounter moves in two directions: the outer movement that seeks in some way to share in the religious experience of the `other'; and the inner movement that attempts to incorporate the new religious experience within a deepened appropriation of the christian mystery. The first, outer movement assumes a foundational distinction between faith and belief. We have already seen that, for Panikkar, faith is a constitutive human dimension, a "primal anthropological act." Although there is no such thing as "pure faith," since faith is always expressed through "particular beliefs," he insists that the experience of faith is a universal human phenomenon that transcends all historical, cultural and religious expressions (or beliefs). Moreover, credal formulae are actually a means of expressing this "faith

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14"Faith and Belief," 234.

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in a truth that transcends us.”15 Added to this, are the dimensions of change, growth, conversion and risk that are integral to the dynamics of any "living faith."16 Consequently, it is precisely faith--as distinct from belief--that propels one towards interreligious dialogue as a means of deepening that faith in the transcendent mystery that christians call the Christ.

This leads to the second, inner movement which, for the christian, consists in blending the "new religious experience . . . with belief in Christ."17 At this level, reflection on christian belief often reveals, for Panikkar, the pertinence of submerged, forgotten or ignored aspects of the full christian tradition. However, reflection may lead equally to a new moment of insight--or a new event of understanding--that deepens and expands one's appropriation of the 'otherness' of christian faith that is only now being revealed. Panikkar situates the interreligious dialogue within a dynamic, processive and evolutionary understanding of human history that is always open to new disclosures of the divine mystery. In the process, christian faith and belief are both transformed with the explicit intention of being fully inclusive of other religious traditions. Evidently, in this approach, the praxis of interreligious dialogue precedes the theoria of religious pluralism.

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15Ibid., 228. Panikkar adds (p. 232) that “faith's main business is to connect me with transcendence, with what stands above me, with what I am not yet. Faith is the connection with the beyond, however you choose to envisage the beyond.”

16Ibid., 228f.

17Ibid., 229.
On the basis of these dialogical principles, Panikkar proposes a number of ways in which the meeting of religions may be understood. Our aim in this chapter is to charter the three foundational ‘ways’ or approaches to religious pluralism which he develops throughout the 1960s and early 1970s as a result of his Indian pilgrimage. Heuristically, these may be described as the ways of philosophy, theology and spirituality. However, in using these categories, we need to be aware that Panikkar transposes his foundational interdisciplinary procedures to the field of interreligious encounter so that the ‘ways’ are understood as interrelated and dialogical. Accordingly, there are no watertight distinctions between philosophy, theology and spirituality: according to the "ontonomic principle," these disciplines are considered interdependent; each relies on insights and procedures from the other fields of enquiry. Moreover, our interpretation suggests the fundamental complementarity of these three paradigms in their respective approaches to interreligious understanding.

The philosophical path draws from the approaches of both east and west in seeking to come to terms with the unity-diversity problematic of religious pluralism. The theological enquiry focusses on christian-hindu encounter and seeks to understand the role or function of Christ within the non-christian religious world and culture. Here, the major problematic under discussion is that of the tension between concreteness and universality. The way of spirituality is a reflection on the mystery of the Trinity as the universal archetype for interreligious encounter. Here, our discussion focusses on the possibility of dialogue among irreducible spiritual attitudes including those of christian
theism and buddhist non-theism. Although it is not our intention to provide a theological critique of Panikkar’s views, we do indicate the relationship of those views with their christian sources.

We need to emphasize at the outset that these are Panikkar’s *foundational approaches* to interreligious dialogue and religious pluralism. In the main, we confine our discussion to his writings throughout the 1960s and the early 1970s. Where appropriate, we note elements of change and growth within the three approaches. In particular, we note a decisive change in the writings after 1965: prior to this time, the approach is more ‘objective’; afterwards, there is more emphasis placed on the ‘subjective’ dimension of religious experience. Nonetheless, with reference to Panikkar’s earlier interdisciplinary hermeneutics, we endeavour to show a fundamental consistency of principles, themes and methods that overrides elements of discontinuity and divergence. Moreover, we note that these three foundational ways of interpreting east-west religious encounter, especially after the mid-1960s, provide the fundamental pattern for his later and more extensive cross-cultural hermeneutics of religious pluralism.

**RELIGION AND RELIGIONS: UNITY AND DIVERSITY**

Panikkar’s early philosophical reflections on the unity-diversity dialectic of religions are presented as a series of proposals drawn from western and eastern schools of thought. In the first section, we show his application of western philosophical categories to the question of religious pluralism. We identify his understanding of the functional similarity of religions, their anthropological
foundations, and their eschatological convergence. Within this modern-western context, we also discuss his interpretation of the christian claim of universality which he interprets as a catalyst for religious unity. In concluding this section, we illustrate Panikkar's use of various metaphors to authenticate a place for the legitimate diversity of religions despite the western and christian emphases on the unity of truth.

In the second section, we follow Panikkar's attempt to found his notion of religious pluralism on the eastern principle of identity rather than the western principle of non-contradiction. Panikkar finds a meeting point between the eastern emphasis on religious diversity and the classical hermeneutics of truth in both eastern and western philosophy. Here, truth itself is understood as pluralistic and so legitimates a multiplicity of human paths to the one transcendent reality. Furthermore, it shows the need for a theory of understanding that blends rather than opposes the proper insights of religious subjectivity and philosophical objectivity. Christian self-understanding is also reinterpreted according to these hermeneutical principles. Finally, we provide a brief review of these writings with the aim of identifying points of convergence and divergence among his various proposals on the unity-diversity dialectic of religions.

The Western Approach

In *Religionen und die Religion*, Panikkar sets himself the task of formulating a coherent, intellectual basis for the positive encounter of the world's religions.
On the basis of his "philosophical dynamic thinking," he aims to identify the "underlying structure" and "functional unity" of religions. In this view, religions are understood as "evolving existences" rather than "static essences." They are seen as integrally connected to the flow of human history, culture and life. Moreover, without using the word, Panikkar considers religions as "cosmotheandric" realities insofar as they exhibit human, divine and cosmic dimensions:

Religion is neither a single essence nor a perfect existence. It is a complex human reality involving God and the cosmos as well, but in the temporal status of our itinerant being.

Effectively, Panikkar gives credibility to both the functional and substantive approaches to religion. He does not deny that religions are, in part, the results of historical processes. However, according to his theandric notion of the human being and society, he also recognizes that religions exhibit an ontological reality. Accordingly, he defines religion as the historical and ontological link between the human and divine worlds. Alternately, religions are described as the ways that human beings, in the concrete situation of their lives, transcend space and

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18 Religion y religiones, "Expoción dialéctica," 33-43, esp. 38ff. In line with his foundational philosophical works (see our discussion in the previous chapter), Panikkar states that the traditional mind is concerned with the "static structure" and "truth contents" of religions, whereas the modern mind is concerned with their "dynamic function" and "truth intentions."

19 La convergencia dinámica no significa identidad sustancial, sino una cierta equivalencia funcional. Ibid., 162.

20 La religión no es solamente una esencia ni tampoco una existencia perfecta. Es un hecho humano complejo que comprende a Dios y al cosmos en el estado temporal de nuestro ser peregrinante." Ibid., 37.
time in order to achieve their true goal and final destiny. Allowing for different understandings of the ‘way’ and the ‘goal’—and diverse conceptions of the Absolute—Panikkar stresses the commonality of purpose and function by which all true religions can be understood.

While emphasizing this functional similarity of all true religions, that ‘function’ is understood with reference to the real and complex interaction of the human and the divine. Consequently, it is not to be confused with the ‘functionalist’ approaches of social science that either ignore or deny divine revelation. For Panikkar, authentic religions are both human products and divine manifestations:

Our concept of religion cannot be irreligious; it cannot neglect the viewpoint of God, or put to one side the primacy of the Absolute, the initiative of the Transcendent; it is not able to forget that religion is not just a human manipulation, but a divine inspiration as well.

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21Ibid., "La dimensión inmanente-trascendente" and "La dimensión eterno-temporal," 118-141.

22See his short exposition on ‘true’ and ‘false’ religiousness. Ibid., 145-147.

23Representative samples of the functionalist approach are the following classics: Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion; Karl Marx, Early Writings; and Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life; selected extracts from these works in Jacob Needleman, A. K. Bierman, and James Gould, eds., Religion for a New Generation, 2d. ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1988), 51-71.

24"Nuestro concepto de la religión no puede ser irreligioso, no puede olvidar el punto de vista de Dios, no puede dejar a un lado la primacía del Absoluto, la iniciativa de lo Trascendente; no puede olvidar que la religión no es únicamente una manipulación humana, sino también una inspiración divina." Religion y religiones, 158.
For the unity of religions, Panikkar proposes an anthropology based on his theandric and multidimensional understanding of the human being. Briefly described, the human being is dynamic (being and becoming), temporal (in history), individual (possessing intellect, will and sentiment) and social (implying societal, telluric and cosmic dimensions). Religion mediates between these anthropological foundations and a reality of another order (traditionally called God) which is the end or goal of humanity (whether this end-point is called salvation, moksa, liberation or some other name). Any true religion will possess both immanent and transcendent dimensions, both internal and external aspects. While some religions stress immanence (eastern religions), others emphasize transcendence (the abrahamic religions). Nonetheless, according to Panikkar, religions can be characterized according to their mediation of the following anthropological foundations: ontic-mystical; dogmatic-doctrinal; ethical-practical; emotional-sentimental; ecclesiastical-sociological; corporeal-cosmological; angelic-demonic; immanent-transcendent; temporal-eternal.

In his early writings, Panikkar also proposes an eschatological basis for the unity of religions. This is fully in accord with his telo-theological reading of the

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25See our discussion of Panikkar’s foundational anthropology in the previous chapter.

26Religion y religiones, 60.

27“La religión tiene una estructura triple: 1. algo sobrehumano; 2. que es el fin; 3. del hombre.” Ibid., 15f.

cosmos and history that he now applies to all authentic forms of religious self-awareness. He perceives this eschatological dimension of religion in terms of both a divine orientation and an historical telos.\(^29\) Taking his eschatological thesis to its full conclusion, Panikkar perceives an eventual historical unity of religions which he expresses in terms of the "dynamic convergence of religions . . . towards the one and true religion."\(^30\) In this view, which he later moderates, the present plurality of religions is seen to be only a provisional state of affairs.\(^31\)

His early hermeneusis expresses an inclusivist and eschatological interpretation of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic religion. To begin with, he states that it is not the exclusive monopoly of any particular religion.\(^32\) Alternately, he is not satisfied with an ahistorical or purely transcendental interpretation that would amount to relegating "the one and true religion" to the realm of the pure platonic ideal:

This catholic religion cannot only be an idea, or an abstraction, a colourless and amorphous distillation of all existing religions, but it

\(^{29}\)Todas las religiones tienen un lugar en el desarrollo histórico de la humanidad o, en términos religiosos, en el plan de Dios que llama de nuevo a la humanidad hacia Él." Ibid., 19. Evidently, Panikkar assumes that the eschatological dimension of religion, although not explicit in all religious narratives, is an at least implicit aspect of all religious traditions.

\(^{30}\)Ibid., 166-188; citation, 184.

\(^{31}\)"La religión, en último término, es solamente Una . . . La pluralidad de las religiones sólo puede tener sentido provisional." Ibid., 205 & 210.

As we shall see with reference to his later writings, Panikkar moderates or reinterprets his view of the dynamic convergence of religions; and he actually abandons the notion of the provisionality of multiple religious traditions altogether.

\(^{32}\)Ibid., "La religión, una, santa, católica y apostólica," 205-209.
must be a living, definite and concrete religion, with sufficient vitality and sufficient historical and universal roots to assimilate all the traits of truth, goodness and beauty present in all religions.33

Consequently, Panikkar's initial hermeneutics is quite explicit in rejecting the notion of a purely mystical or transcendental unity of religions. To the contrary, he perceives the eschatology of religions in terms of a real and dynamic historical movement already taking place among the world's religious traditions.34

With particular reference to historical Christianity, Panikkar says that it has an important, albeit non-exclusive, role to play in the historical convergence of religions. Christianity's claim of universality is interpreted as a catalyst for religious unity.35 However, like other religions, Christianity is recognized as a transient reality: it is oriented towards--without yet being--the one, true, Catholic

33"Esta religión católica no puede ser sólo una idea, o abstracción, un destilado incoloro y amorfo de todas las religiones existentes, sino una religión viva, definida y concreta, con suficiente vitalidad y suficientes raíces históricas y universales para asimilar todos los rasgos de verdad, bondad y belleza diseminados por todas las religiones." Ibid., 186f.

34"La unidad de las religiones existe en las esfera humana de las religiones mismas; es decir, en la historia." Ibid., 211; also 16f., 173.

35"La pretensión de unidad del cristianismo es, en principio, un hecho histórico y una afirmación de la mayor importancia en un estudio filosófico de la religión." Ibid., 191.
religion. In other words, the relationship of historical christianity to its own claim of being the "one true religion" is a relationship of identity and non-identity.\footnote{This view is consistent with Panikkar's foundational ecclesiology that understands the church as a cosmic, theandric, sacramental and mystical manifestation of God's action in the world. See our discussion in the previous chapter where Panikkar presents this view as opposed to the "microdox" identification of the sociological, juridical, historical or physical Church with the full reality of the Mystical Body of Christ.}

This means that christianity, no less than other religions, is called to undergo a process of change, growth and conversion.\footnote{"Todos los espíritus religiosos de nuestro tiempo intentan en principio purificar las religiones existentes de las imperfecciones causadas por la debilidad humana y las limitaciones de su historia. . . . La palabra correcta para expresarlo . . . es con-versión que significa volver al centro y al ser propio cada uno, y de su propia religión." Ibid., 184f.}

Panikkar further specifies that the dynamic movement of religions towards eschatological and historical unity is, as yet, much more a mission than a fact.\footnote{"La unidad de las religiones es más una misión qu en hecho, más una meta que hay que alcanzar que un fin que ya se ha cumplido." Ibid., 159.}

In order to accomplish this mission--or this "theandric act"--there needs to be free cooperation between the divine and human orders of existence.\footnote{"La religión puede concebir solamente como vínculo entre Dios y el hombre . . . es en hecho teándrico." Ibid., 166.} In context of this discussion, Panikkar acknowledges that the forces of negativity and disunity are certainly operative in human and religious history. However, his evolutionary optimism--or theandric confidence in reality--maintains that the positive, unifying forces of history will be ultimately victorious precisely because
those forces are eschatological and transcendental as well as historical. He relates this explicitly to the unity of the ultimate reality, God.40

While Panikkar's early hermeneutics of religious pluralism place a stronger emphasis on unity than diversity among the world's religious traditions—a position which, we have already indicated, is moderated in his later writings—, he does not deny a significant role for religious diversity. He conceives the universe as a great cosmic spire made up of the unique, interconnecting spires of the world's multiple cultures and religions.41 Therefore, the eschatological-historical goal of religious convergence does not aim to eradicate the truth, goodness and individuality of the specific traditions in the name of some vague kind of amorphous world-religion.42 To the contrary, each religion will be led to deepen its individual essence and beauty by losing its marks of imperfection and incompleteness. Panikkar expresses the tension between unity and diversity in the following manner:

Unity signifies real and existential union in God, Faith and Communion, expressed and incarnated in a great diversity of rites, doctrines and cultures.43

40"Dios es uno y la humanidad es una unidad. . . . Esta unidad de la humanidad es, ante todo, trascendental y escatológica. Pero la unidad . . . es también histórica." Ibid., 184.

41"Esta espiral tiene su centro y ley de desarrollo, mantiene contacto con todas las esferas del ser humano y con todas las religiones del mundo, que forman a menudo algunas de las espiras de esta espiral cósmica." Ibid., 186.

42"Sólo intento probar que existe una unidad subyacente de carácter ontológico e histórico, no una quintaesencia y una evolución dinámica hacia la religión mundial, no el la forma de una religiosidad vaga y difusa, sino en la de una religión enteramente humana y católica." Ibid., 19.

43"Unidad significa uni existencial y real en Dios, Fe y Comunión, expresada y
The metaphors of the prism and the rainbow are used as illustrations of this religious unity-in-diversity. Whereas all religions are seen as emanating from the one, pure, white light—which christians name Christ—, individual religions represent particular streams of light or specific colors of the rainbow. According to Panikkar, these metaphors are not meant to imply the equality of all religions nor, for that matter, the priority of any particular tradition. Even the metaphors of the Mystical Body of Christ and the Trinity may be used as illustrations of the unity and diversity of religions without thereby privileging present historical forms of christianity.

**The Eastern Approach**

Moving from western to eastern philosophical thinking, Panikkar explores other possible ways of dealing with the unity-diversity dialectic of the religious traditions. According to his analysis, western philosophy is based on the principle of non-contradiction: it emphasizes that there is only one Truth underlying multiple realities. By contrast, eastern philosophy is founded on the

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44"Este rayo blanco sería el Cristo vivo que ilumina a todo hombre que llega a este mundo. Los diferentes colores aparecen sólo cuando esa luz blanca incide sobre el prisma de la naturelza humana y adopta diferentes lonitudes de onda." Ibid., 187.

45For example: "el cristianismo puede ser considerada solamente como la verdadera religión si acepta totalmente su catolicidad: es decir, si reconoce que está presente allí donde exista la verdad religiosa. Ello significa que Cristo . . . no es monopolio exclusivo de una religión particular." Nor are the Trinity and the Mystical Body of Christ to be monopolized by historical Christianity. Ibid., 20.

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principle of identity: it stresses that there is only one Reality expressed in many degrees of truth.46

Consequently, for eastern hermeneutics, the pluralism of truth is seen as more than an historical concession to deficient or imperfect reality. Rather, it is seen as emanating from the very nature of reality and the human condition.47 Panikkar perceives in this a rationale for religious diversity. He reminds us that the principle and presupposition of every religion is a transcendent reality which, precisely as transcendent, is ever `beyond' the comprehension of the human mind.48 The pluralism of religious doctrines, for example, stems from the transcendence of this reality-truth as well as from the imperfections of human knowledge.

With reference to diverse historical and cultural religious forms, Panikkar argues in Die vielen Götter und der eine Herr that there is need to move beyond the "pretension of the universal validity" of all conceptions of the Absolute.49 In

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47"Ce fondement du pluralisme, qui, pour être vrai, ne doit pas se baser sur un pis-aller de fait ni sur une concession à l'histoire, mais sur la nature même de notre condition humane." Ibid., 253.

48"La réalité (ou vérité) qui est transcendant, toujours au delà de notre capacité d'appréhension. . . . En effet, elle ne nous est jamais entièrement, donnée, étant toujours transcendant. C'est le principe et le présupposé de toute religion." Ibid., 254f.

49For example, Panikkar argues that the western identification of God and Being is incapable of expressing the African religious experience. Los dioses y el Señor (Buenos Aires: Colomba, 1967), 30f; this work originally published as Die vielen...
this work, he explores the wonderment of religious diversity among Eastern, Western and African traditions. If truth is only one, and religion is defined as an orthodoxy, then such diversity is unacceptable. However, when truth and religion are understood according to their existential and orthopraxic dimensions, there is room for a multiplicity of religious forms and expressions.\textsuperscript{50}

Panikkar also believes that, by turning to the classical sources of philosophy--both east and west--there emerges a richer notion of truth that can aid our understanding and justification of religious pluralism. He originally presented the findings of this research in the mid-1950s in an article entitled \textit{Die existensielle Phänomenologie der Wahrheit}.\textsuperscript{51} Here, truth is presented in its fundamental and primordial relationship to Being; truth, in fact, is "the manifestation or epiphany of being." Evidently, this notion of truth has more affinity with religious faith (which defies rational formulation) than with belief (the intellectual expression of religion):

\begin{quote}
Truth dwells primarily not in my intellect but in my being. . . . The intellect can grasp only what belongs to its level, the logical or essential aspect of truth, not its existential or ontological core. Truth is not something that we possess but something that possesses us or besets us, something in which we find our being.\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{50}See, for example, ibid., "Ortopraxis," 130-135.


\textsuperscript{52}"The Existential Phenomenology of Truth," 16.
\end{footnotesize}
This classical hermeneutic of truth identifies the only one-truth as the infinite divine Logos--or the ultimate reality (Brahman)--in which humanity participates without (yet) having achieved it.\textsuperscript{53} As the Ultimate Reality, truth is the goal of human life: to attain this goal is to achieve redemption, final realization and union with the divine mystery.\textsuperscript{54} From the perspective of human existence--our only perspective--, truth is inevitably relative (according to one's ontological position), pluralistic, unfinished and "as manifold as the things that are."\textsuperscript{55} Consequently, Panikkar says that truth cannot be reduced to the formula \textit{one}; its expressions are intrinsically \textit{multiple}, at least as long as the human journey is incomplete.

Moreover, with particular relevance to the question of religious pluralism, truth is said to possess purifying and cathartic powers that mediate unity and multiplicity, the absolute and the relative, the eternal and the changeable.\textsuperscript{56} In a word, pluralism is an innate characteristic of existential-religious truth. Without implying that there are many ultimate truths, pluralism does affirm that there are many paths to the ultimate mystery. These paths are ultimately true insofar as they reveal or manifest (divine) being.

\textsuperscript{53}Ibid. 14f. This is what Panikkar calls "The Upward Analysis."

\textsuperscript{54}This is what Panikkar calls "The Descending Way," or "this existential advance toward truth (which) does not reach its goal on earth, for here no one possesses the whole truth or is completely possessed by it." Ibid., 16-21; quotation 16.

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., "The Inexpressible Multiplicity of Truth," 18.

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., 20.
This classical-existential notion of the pluralism of truth raises important epistemological issues that need to be addressed. In Panikkar’s words, we need "a theory of understanding regarded as growth in consciousness rather than as an assimilation of an object by a subject." His foundational concepts of participative knowledge and theandric awareness are an attempt to formulate such a non-dualistic theory of understanding that blends "authentic subjectivity" with "genuine objectivity.”

Applying this theory to religious pluralism, Panikkar stresses that no hermeneutic of religion can ever be final or complete: there always remain inexpressible—or negative—dimensions of existential truth that transcend human intellectual powers. Moreover, such truth is a matter of religious witness rather than dry, rational argument. Consequently, the truth of any single religion is self-authenticating insofar as it brings freedom, enlightenment or salvation to those who believe in its power and follow its path.

Accordingly, Panikkar insists that one cannot know, let alone judge, the truth of a religion from the outside. However, he does not deny that religion needs the aid of intellectual analysis. In line with his interdisciplinary hermeneutics, he says that religion and philosophy need to inform each other lest the former turn into "blind fanaticism" and the latter into the "sheer analysis

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57"Philosophy of Religion," 235f.

58See our respective discussions in the previous chapter and in the introduction to this present chapter.

59"The Existential Phenomenology of Truth," 18f.
of a corpse."60 In this view, neither religion nor philosophy is exempt from the principles of hermeneutics: they are both servants rather than masters of truth:

Religion cannot be abstracted or severed from the faith of its believer. It cannot be objectified . . . Since philosophy is also a hermeneutical process, it cannot bypass the golden rule of any hermeneutics: the interpretation of a datum must be such that it is at least acceptable to those who are involved in such a datum.61

In religious terms, one must be humble in the face of the divine mystery. In philosophical terms, one does not and cannot know the fullness of truth. For Panikkar, this opens the door for a creative dialogue between religion and philosophy. As well, by focussing on the existential and pluralistic character of religious truth as "our growth toward being,"62 he is able to provide a coherent basis for an authentic diversity among the world’s religious traditions.

Of course, this does not entirely solve the historical or intellectual tensions that arise from the reality of religious diversity. This is especially evident with regard to the history and self-understanding of christianity which exhibits an innate bias towards historical unity and intellectual orthodoxy. In part, Panikkar explains this with reference to distortions in the western philosophical tradition

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60”Philosophy of Religion," 234. Panikkar argues that the relationship between philosophy and religion needs to be one of `ontonomy' versus `heteronomy' or `autonomy'.

61Ibid., 230.

62”Existential truth," states Panikkar, "must not be imposed from outside but witnessed to as the inner chronological law of our becoming, our growth toward being." "The Existential Phenomenology of Truth," 18.
resulting in what he earlier called a "microdox" theological interpretation of the Christian gospel.\(^{63}\)

In this sense, he calls on Christianity to retrieve its self-understanding according to the original priority of self-realization and orthopraxis rather than the more recent emphasis on universality and orthodoxy. As an aid to this retrieval, Panikkar points to the rich variety of philosophies and theologies that have been absorbed in Christian expressions of belief. From this, he deduces that Christianity contains an at least implicit acceptance of the pluralistic nature of truth and, therefore, witnesses to the reality that "the truth of a hermeneutic does not imply its unicity or monopoly."\(^{64}\) While it is clear that this admission does not dissolve the unity-diversity dialectic with respect to Christian self-understanding, it does open the door for dialogue with other religious traditions. This is a door which Panikkar opens through his engagement in Christian-Hindu and Christian-Buddhist dialogue.

* * * * *

From this survey of Panikkar's early philosophical proposals on the unity and diversity of religions, it is evident that there are consistent underlying themes. These may be summarized as follows. The authenticity of religions is

\(^{63}\)See our discussion of Panikkar's foundational theological writings in the previous chapter.

\(^{64}\)Panikkar refers to the different philosophical and spirituality schools within Christianity, as well as to diverse theological approaches which characterize distinct historical periods. He deduces from this that "la vérité d'une herméneutique n’implique pas son unicité ou son monopole." "Le pluralisme herméneutique," 259.
related to their dependence on some form of revelation even though the understanding of the divine mystery—of the ultimate reality—may be variously described in personal terms (such as in Christianity) or in non-personal ways (such as in Hinduism). Religions are also understood as human paths to this mystery of ultimacy. Consequently, religion is perceived as a complex interaction and mediation of the human and divine orders of existence. This means that, despite different and even opposing truth-claims and variable forms of religious orthopraxis, religions exhibit a functional similarity insofar as they lead humans to their suprahuman goal.

However, not all Panikkar’s proposals are consistently applied throughout his early studies on the nature of religion. Notably, his eschatological understanding of the unity of religions is first of all presented in terms of an eventual historical unity and is later interpreted as a transcendental or mystical union without the expectation of arriving at the one, true, historical religion. Certainly, Panikkar maintains an eschatological and evolutionary reading of religion that is not without significant implications for human religious history and interreligious dialogue. Nonetheless, in his developing hermeneutics of religious truth, he places increasing emphasis on the justification of religious diversity based on the pluralistic nature of truth itself. This latter emphasis on pluralism does not eradicate the ultimate unity of religion or truth, but that unity is no longer seen as reducible to any single, historical, religious expression. To the contrary, its expressions are necessarily multiple. Accordingly, Panikkar’s eschatological understanding of religions is fittingly described in terms of a shift.
of emphasis from historical unity to transcendental unity (that is, however, not entirely unrelated to some form of historical convergence).

The foundation of Panikkar’s thematic change of emphasis is a methodological shift from the Western principle of non-contradiction to the Eastern principle of identity. The former approach, which attempts to be more ‘scientific' or ‘objective', emphasizes the structural unity of religions. However, it is not so ‘objective' that it distances itself from the requirement of religious ‘belief' which, Panikkar consistently maintains, is the sine qua non of any real religious understanding. The latter approach represents a more conscious turn towards ‘subjectivity' and religious experience without thereby denying the need for philosophical analysis. He accepts the reality of religious diversity as an historical fait accompli and then seeks to understand that reality according to the hermeneutics of religious ‘faith'. Accordingly, he is concerned to develop an epistemology or theory of understanding that focusses on the inner dynamics of consciousness in the context of its relationship to divine mystery. This move in Panikkar's approach to religious pluralism had already been preempted in his foundational anthropology with its emphasis on "interdisciplinary hermeneutics," "participative knowledge" and "theandric awareness." From this point onwards, it is this second approach that remains pivotal for Panikkar's developing understanding of the nature of religion.

Finally, we have seen that Panikkar relates his understanding of religious pluralism to christian belief. He accepts the ‘scandal' of the christian claim to universality by accepting a privileged role for christianity in the historical
encounter of religions. However, in line with his foundational Christian theology, he reinterprets aspects of Christian history and self-understanding. In particular, he insists on the need for Christianity to constantly renew itself and return to its prior commitment to self-realization and orthopraxis. Moreover, with reference to the richness of the Christian tradition, Panikkar retrieves its implicit acceptance of pluralism that is interpreted as a humble recognition of the inexpressibility of ultimate truth as well as being an expression of the creative historical tension between diversity and unity. By now turning our attention to Panikkar’s theological reflections on Hindu-Christian dialogue, we resituate the problematic in the explicit terms of the dialectics of concreteness and universality.

CHRIST THE MEETING GROUND

*That* Christ is the one and only mediator between God and the world, and therefore the ultimate meeting ground for interreligious dialogue, is Panikkar’s most consistent theological principle which he espouses throughout his writings during the 1960s and early 1970s. *How* Christ is understood is a matter of ongoing question, interpretation and reformulation. Panikkar’s early thesis, evident in his doctoral dissertation on Christian-Hindu encounter and other writings prior to 1965, is the starting point of our discussion. We provide an overview of his theological position which establishes an understanding of functional similarity between aspects of Christ’s role in Christianity and the role of Isvara in Vedantic Hinduism. We then proceed to investigate his notion of Christian-Hindu dialogue as a religious act in which both religions are called to
conversion. At this point, we ask two seminal questions with reference to Panikkar's early work on interreligious encounter. What is his understanding of the relationship between christianity as an historical religion and other religious traditions? How is Christ's mediatorship exercised in these various religions? Our answer to these questions suggests that Panikkar's early interreligious thesis is similar to that of Karl Rahner's "anonymous christianity."

In the second part, we overview Panikkar's changing christological perspectives in the period after 1965. We note initial ambivalence as he strives to reinterpret the christian mystery in a manner that is not only fully inclusive of other religions but also totally respectful of their historical concreteness. Recognizing that Panikkar's christology then takes a decisive "turn to the subject," we present his new understanding of Christ as a symbol of transcendent faith manifested in a multiplicity of different names. Such a breakthrough in christic consciousness is methodologically grounded in Panikkar's understanding of christian history according to five kairological moments of consciousness. This leads to our consideration of his attempt to formulate an "authentically universal christology" for today in which Jesus in understood as one of the names of the "cosmo-theandric principle." Overall, our presentation aims to show how Panikkar's christology changes from a prior emphasis on first order language--the `objective' language of `belief'--to a latter emphasis on second order language--the `symbolic' (objective and subjective) language of `faith'. In the process, prior understandings of non-christian
religions according to notions of a "fulfillment theology" or "anonymous christianity" are overturned.

The Unknown Christ of Hinduism

What we have termed Panikkar's initial, more 'objective' approach to interreligious understanding is most systematically presented in his seminal work, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism. Although reflecting on comparable aspects of hindu and christian belief, Panikkar clarifies that the basis of such an investigation must be the existential encounter of christianity and hinduism without which doctrinal comparisons reveal very little understanding. In other words, interreligious dialogue implies a genuine meeting-in-faith that transcends the intellectual or doctrinal sphere:

The meeting of religions is not merely an intellectual endeavour, not a simple practical problem; it is in itself a religious experience and a religious task; it is a meeting of God in my friend who follows another path and perhaps even denies God or at least my conception of God--for though I cannot help having a conception of my own, the living God I worship is not an ideal of my mind, a concept, but transcends all understanding. Religions meet where religions take their source. Religions do not meet merely in ideas or in ideals. Religions meet in religion.

With respect to hinduism and christianity, this meeting-in-faith is considered possible because both religions proceed from the same

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65 Panikkar states that "the comparative study of religion will not yield any lasting fruits unless the doctrines are merely considered as starting points for reaching the reality underlying them. It is not mainly a doctrinal affair but . . . a religious problem." Unknown Christ, 4.

66Ibid., 10.
anthropological situation and proceed towards the same ‘ontic’ goal of union with the Absolute.\textsuperscript{67} There is no denial that these religions take different paths to the Absolute. Panikkar stresses that their coming together is "not in agreement, but in tension, and perhaps opposition."\textsuperscript{68}

Nonetheless, he believes that there is a transcendent, \textit{ultimate ground of encounter} that is ontologically prior to doctrinal considerations and historical differences.\textsuperscript{69} This meeting-point may be characterized according to both hindu and christian theological perspectives. In line with the central thrust of Panikkar's early thesis in \textit{The Unknown Christ of Hinduism} and other writings prior to 1965, we will concentrate on presenting his understanding of christian-hindu encounter according to the tenets of christian doctrine and spirituality.\textsuperscript{70}

Panikkar proposes that hinduism and christianity can only meet in Christ who is the unique mediator between God and the world.\textsuperscript{71} As such, Christ's

\textsuperscript{67}\textit{Ibid.}, 5.

\textsuperscript{68}\textit{Ibid.}, 13.

\textsuperscript{69}\textit{That this ultimate ground of encounter is, for Panikkar, a transcendent ground is evident when he states that "there is no (ultimate) link from below, but only from above, but in such a way that the real transcendent call appears as an immanent urge." \textit{Ibid.}, 63.}

\textsuperscript{70}\textit{In brief, Panikkar proposes two possible understandings of the ground of encounter from the perspective of hindu understanding: the first would see hinduism and christianity as sister-religions striving towards the same end; the second would characterize the meeting of these religions in terms of the sacrifice of individual ways in the mystery of our origin and end. \textit{Ibid.}, 14-16.}

\textsuperscript{71}\textit{"We all meet in Christ, because he is the ontological meeting point of any religion as well as of any positive ultimate value"; and "salvation comes exclusively through Christ." \textit{Ibid.}, 16, 51.}
mediatorship cannot belong only to christianity. Intending to rescue Christ from all provincialisms, Panikkar explicitly states that "Christ does not belong to christianity, he only belongs to God." 72 This same Christ, which christian faith identifies with the historical Jesus, is also the ontological goal, true inspirer and hidden presence within hinduism. 73

At the doctrinal level, Panikkar establishes a functional similarity between logos christology and the role of Isvara in vedanta hinduism. The notion of functional similarity is distinguished from the concept of substantial identity since "the Christ in whom christians believe cannot be totally equated to the Isvara of the Vedanta." 74 Panikkar summarizes his study on "God and the World according to Brahmasutra I.1.2" (Pt III) as follows:

We could formulate our thesis like this: the place made in Vedanta for Isvara, that is, the postulation of Isvara for a role which the philosophical mind finds necessary in order to explain the world and connect God and the World, without compromising the Absoluteness of the former and the Relativity of the latter, that place is filled by Christ in Christian Philosophy. 75

Consequently, this study on the functional equivalence of Christ and Isvara needs to be understood in terms of making "christian philosophy . . . speak of Christ in a way that might make sense for the other (vedantic-hindu) partner in

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72Ibid., 20.

73Ibid., 24, x.

74Ibid., 132.

75Panikkar, "Isvara and Christ as a Philosophical Problem," Religion and Society (Bangalore) (Oct. 1959), 8; summary presentation as "The Isvara of Vedanta and the Christ of the Trinity as a Philosophical Problem," Eighth International Congress of Philosophy Florence 12-18 September 1958; see, also, Unknown Christ, 133.

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the dialogue."\textsuperscript{76} Panikkar perceives the process of interreligious dialogue in terms of revealing the "presence of `christian' truths within other religions," truths which, once `un-veiled', may be ready to receive the `re-vealed' fullness of Christ.\textsuperscript{77} In this way, he proposes that hinduism is able to be `converted', that is, become more fully itself, transformed into a higher form of hinduism, since "conversion does not mean destruction, but sublimation, transcendence, realisation."\textsuperscript{78}

However, it is not only hinduism that is called upon to experience interreligious conversion. Christianity, too, must be in some way `converted' to hinduism both as a means of `under-standing' hinduism and as a way of being fully converted to Christ. Again, this is not a matter of changing `over' to `another' religion, but:

\begin{quote}
\quad a changing `in', a changing into a new life, a new existence, a new creation, which is precisely the old one--and not another--but transformed, lifted up, risen again.\textsuperscript{79}
\end{quote}

From the christian perspective, Panikkar indicates that the call to conversion is fundamental to christian self-understanding according to the twin mysteries of the incarnation and the redemption.\textsuperscript{80} For the christian partner of the dialogue,

\textsuperscript{76}\textit{Unknown Christ}, 133f.

\textsuperscript{77}Ibid., xi.


\textsuperscript{79}\textit{Unknown Christ}, 11, 18.

\textsuperscript{80}In context of this discussion, Panikkar states: "I repeat that the meeting of
this means embodying a "special kind of asceticism," a "real mysticism," a preparedness to live in "naked faith," "pure hope" and "supernatural love" in order to be so "completely empty" that the fullness of Christ is in some way revealed through the encounter with hinduism. Panikkar proceeds to offer a rationale for his interreligious interpretation of christian conversion.

Through the integration of Indian philosophy into Christian thought, hinduism is said to exercise a double theological function. First, it re-awakens latent and neglected ideas from the christian tradition. Second, it offers new ideas which a mature christian faith integrates into its ongoing life. Pre-empting criticism, Panikkar states:

Integration is not an addition of altogether new and foreign elements, but an organic enrichment, a new synthesis, a recovery or discovery (or redemption) of fragments of truth (which therefore are Christian by definition, if Christianity is the whole truth) which are 'incorporated' in this growing of the Mystical Body.

By way of historical precedent from the christian tradition, Panikkar refers to the Thomistic integration of aristotelian thought. Aquinas' process of integration is distinguished from the approaches of `adoption' and `adaptation' of religions is a religious act--an act of incarnation and redemption." Or, again, with reference to both hindu and christian metaphors, Panikkar says that these two religions "meet in the depths of death, in the denial of ourselves and the acceptance of divine life deposited germinally at the moment of our rebirth or rather, still deeper, at the moment of the death--and resurrection--of Christ in the Cross." Ibid., 16, 18.


82 Le mystère du culte, 13.

in which `foreign' ideas are never fully assimilated into one's religious or cultural system. According to Panikkar, Aquinas' method fully enters into and assumes as its own the ideas of aristotelian philosophy so that such ideas are no longer `foreign'.

Panikkar also provides three integrative principles--homogeneity, profundity and tradition--which, if followed, are said to overcome the respective dangers of syncretism, superficiality and staticism. With particular reference to the integrative possibilities of hindu philosophy, Panikkar proposes that its existential character enhances its ability to relate to modern christian experience.

From our perspective, two fundamental questions emerge from this brief overview of Panikkar's initial attempt to develop a theological basis for hindu-christian dialogue. First, what is his understanding of the relationship between christianity and hinduism--and, by implication, christianity and other authentic religions? Second, what is his understanding of the mediational role of Christ with respect to hinduism and other religions?

With respect to the first question, Panikkar makes it quite clear in The Unknown Christ of Hinduism that he espouses a fulfillment theology. He states explicitly that the relationship of hinduism to christianity is expressed according to the dialectics of "potency--act, seed--fruit, forerunner--real presence, symbol--

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84 "The Integration of Indian Philosophical and Religious Thought," 64-66; see also Unknown Christ, 134ff.

85 "The Integration of Indian Philosophical and Religious Thought," 67f.
-realty, desire--accomplishment, allegory--thing-in-itself." Later, in his positive assessment of hinduism, he reiterates this same understanding:

Hinduism because it is a kind of Christianity in potency, because it has already a Christian seed, because it is the desire of fullness, and that fullness is Christ, is already pointing towards it, already contains, indeed, the symbolism of the Christian reality.87

Christianity, on the other hand, is portrayed as the "fullness" and "perfection" of every religion because it is "the concrete religion established by Christ."88 As our analysis has shown, this does not imply that historical christianity is itself `perfect' or `complete', at least "so long as that unity has not been realised."89 In this sense, christianity needs hinduism in order to be achieve its fullness and perfection. Nonetheless, corresponding to Panikkar's initial interpretation of the historical convergence of religions, his early ecumenical theology gives to christianity a highly privileged--indeed superior--role in the interreligious task of advancing towards the "one and true religion." In contrast to christianity, hindu and other religions are considered important albeit inferior manifestations of divine truth and supernatural grace. Evidently, this fulfillment-model of theologizing is founded on Panikkar's initial understanding of the mediational role of Christ with respect to the various religious traditions.

86 Unknown Christ, 35.
87 Ibid., 59f.
88 Ibid., x, 34.
89 Ibid., 22.
Christ is interpreted as the universal and constitutive way to salvation. Consequently, Christ is not only the meeting ground of interreligious encounter but also the *alpha* and the *omega*, the beginning and the end, of all religions. Through Christ alone are religions brought to their true goal. In Panikkar's christocentric and eschatological universe, "the ontological growth of all things in time is nothing but a fuller and fuller realisation of their being in Christ".\(^90\) However, Christ's "hidden and unknown" presence in hinduism and other religions is contrasted to his unique, historical presence in christianity. Whereas, Christ is truly present in hindu religion, "hinduism is not yet his spouse."

For christianity, Christ is historically real and uniquely identified as "Jesus the son of Mary."\(^91\) So, while "Isvara . . . points towards what we would like to call the Mystery of Christ,"\(^92\) the relationship between Isvara and Christ is more one of non-identity than identity. The relationship between Christ and the historical Jesus does not suffer from the same disparity: it is the *same Christ* who is the unique Son of God and the Second Person of the Trinity as well as being the historical redeemer. Moreover, it is this identity between Christ and Jesus that is "the ultimate reason for this universal idea of christianity."\(^93\)

Clearly, in this initial phase, Panikkar's "ecumenical theology of salvation" is similar to the *anonymous christianity* of Karl Rahner: Christ is truly present in

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\(^90\)"Isvara and Christ as a Philosophical Problem," 8.

\(^91\) *Unknown Christ*, 17, 24.

\(^92\)Ibid., 129.

\(^93\)Ibid., 51.
other religions, including their ‘sacraments’ and their ‘saviour-figures’, but the fullness of divine revelation is reserved for christianity which, alone among the religions of the world, has historical continuity with the living Christ through his incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth and the Church which he founded. From the mid-1960s onwards, Panikkar moves to moderate these views which uphold this sense of the automatic superiority of the christian saviour-figure and, therefore, the christian religion. He will later say that these earlier writings were an attempt to put new wine into old wine-skins; and that subsequent experience “burst the old skins and spilled the new wine.”

The Christ-Symbol

The tension between objectivity and subjectivity, between the particularity of belief and the universality of faith, leads Panikkar towards different expressions of the interreligious problematic. Already in 1965, reflecting on the "total and unique" mediational role of Christ, he appears to change his position with respect to the Christ-Jesus identity: "the Christ, which all religions in one way or another acknowledge (Isvara, Tathagata, Lord . . . ), finds his full or at


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least his central *epiphany* in Jesus, the son of Mary.96 Likewise, overturning an earlier position, he now tells us that "Christ did not come to found a religion, and much less a new religion, but . . . to bring to its fullness every religion of the world." 97

This turn in Panikkar's christological and ecclesiological thinking is a major feature of his writings from the mid-1960s until the early 1970s. Maintaining his belief in the universality of Christ's mediatorship, he seeks to reinterpret the christian mystery in a way that no longer implies an *indiscriminate* identity between Christ and Jesus nor the *automatic* superiority of christianity as an historical religion.

In the mid-1960s, there is still considerable ambivalence in Panikkar's position. On the one hand, he explicitly overturns the notion of the superiority of the christian religion: "it is arbitrary to make of one religion the center of reference." On the other hand, he appears to affirm a certain christian epistemological superiority by stating that the christian is "a conscious collaborator with Christ in his threefold function of creating, redeeming and glorifying the world." 98 The dilemma is one of mediating the *concreteness* of christian belief (stressing the identity of Christ with Jesus) and the *universality*

96The Relation of Christians to their Non-Christian Surroundings,'' 164.

97Ibid., 168f.

98Ibid., 145, 147. Panikkar often turns to the ambivalence of the subjunctive mood: "The christian might have a fuller awareness of what he is striving for or called to; and even might have better tools for this mission" (p. 165, emphasis added).
of faith (implying a dimension of non-identity between Christ and Jesus). Attempting to solve this dilemma without either absolutizing or relativizing christian faith, Panikkar turns to a critical reflection on Christ as the unique symbol of transcendent faith whose concrete, historical manifestations are intrinsically multiple, diverse, unlimited.

For the christian, Jesus is the supreme Christ-symbol as is manifest in the christian faith-affirmation: "Jesus is Lord." However, by the end of the 1960s, Panikkar was warning against any simplistic inversion of this statement: "christian faith does not say that the Lord is Jesus so as to exclude any power, manifestation and reality of the Lord outside Jesus." In other words, christian faith does not proclaim that "the Lord is only Jesus." By way of explanation, Panikkar states:

What a Hindu may like to call `Siva or Visnu, atman or muktidata, what a Moslem Allah, a Jew Yahweh (without pronouncing the tetragrammaton), a Marxist the Future of Humanity, a humanist Truth, a philosopher the Absolute, Absurd, Nothingness, Being and the like is what traditional religious parlance calls the Lord, i.e. that supreme principle, not so much as it is or may be in itself, but as it is with reference to us.

Here, Panikkar links the `objective'-universal principle of faith with its `subjective'-historical expressions of belief. The mediation of object and subject-the supreme principle in its reference to us--is effected through the symbolic power of the name(s) since "names are not mere signs, but real symbols,

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99Panikkar, "Christianity and World Religions" in Christianity, collective work (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1969), 100, 108.

100Ibid., 100.
epiphanies of the things so named."\textsuperscript{101} Consequently, he concludes that the Christian faith-affirmation—"Jesus is Christ and Lord"—does not preclude other possible ways of naming the saving mystery. It simply means that "this Lord whose Lordship can appear in innumerable forms has taken for me an ultimate form which is indissolubly connected with Jesus of Nazareth."\textsuperscript{102}

Panikkar believes that his thesis is defensible in Christian theological terms once there is serious reflection on the understanding of the Christ-mystery that is not so tied to the "mediterranean world-view."\textsuperscript{103} He considers that this requires a breakthrough in Christian consciousness, a matter of liberating Jesus from the myth of history without being satisfied with a purely mystical interpretation of the Christ.\textsuperscript{104} Commenting on the "third hypothesis," he states:

\begin{quote}
Jesus would here be considered not only as the Jesus of history (first alternative) and the human manifestation of the cosmic mystery (second hypothesis), but as the concrete anthropological symbol through which Christians come to experience the fullness of reality and the fulfillment of human life. Here Jesus is understood as disclosing the saving Supename, which in each case is known as naming the saviour of the particular believer or believing tradition. . . . Jesus relates thus to those outside the Western-Christian area not by means of the history of
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{101}Panikkar, \textit{Salvation in Christ: Concreteness and Universality--The Supename} (Privately published, Santa Barbara: University of California, 1972), 19; hereafter, \textit{Salvation in Christ}.

\textsuperscript{102}Ibid., 64.

\textsuperscript{103}Panikkar complains that "there has hardly been any serious attempt at understanding the mystery of Christ in a context other than . . . the mediterranean world-view." Ibid., 68.

\textsuperscript{104}Panikkar comments: "Neither the purely mystical discovery of Christ nor the merely historical approach will do. The principle of growth underlying this method is as distant from mere continuity as from sheer discontinuity." Ibid., 69.
another people or by means of a general cosmic experience but by means of their own human traditions.105

Whereas the former interpretations of Jesus focus respectively on the Incarnation (the Jesus of history) and Resurrection (the cosmic Christ), Panikkar understands the third alternative arising from the Pentecostal symbolism of the Spirit of Jesus through whom every individual person, particular tradition and specific culture is invited to speak the saving name in its own language.106 This, he submits, flows from the inner-dynamism of christian faith as that "universalizing faith in Christ" which began in Israel and developed through Israel, but must now be realized apart from Israel.107 Just as christian self-understanding has changed in the past owing to the challenges of particular historical circumstances, there needs to be a further horizon-shift in response to the historical situation of the world today.

In fact, according to Panikkar, it is possible to delineate five historical periods in the unfolding of christian self-interpretation. In each period, Jesus Christ is reinterpreted according to the "primordial concern of the times."108

105Ibid., 71.

106Ibid.


108“Christianity and World Religions,” 85-98. With regard to these five historical ‘moments’, Panikkar stresses (p. 97) that they are "neither dialectical nor strictly chronological but kairological. One moment does not exclude the other but complements and eventually corrects it."

For a more recent reading of christian history and interpretation along similar lines, see Panikkar, "The Jordan, the Tiber and the Ganges: Three Kairological Moments of Chrostic Self-Consciousness" in J. Hick & P. Knitter, eds., The Myth of

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During the first epoch, from the beginning until the Arian controversy, christianity does not consider itself over and against other religions. Jesus is Lord, Christ, the Pantocrator, the epiphany and new manifestation of the hidden mystery that is at work everywhere. The christian is a witness to the fulness of revelation in Jesus Christ, but there is no sense of a dichotomy between christianity and other religions because christianity does not even perceive itself in terms of being a religion.

In the second period, from Arius until the clash with Islam, christology becomes divorced from the doctrine of the Trinity, and christians begin to interpret their identity in terms of what distinguishes them from `other' faiths. Conversion becomes the keynote of the follower of Christ. From the clash with Islam until the discovery of America--the third epoch--, christian identity is established through political and even military struggle. Christianity now sees itself as the only true religion in contrast to the false religions and false gods of the `others' (now considered as the `enemy'). With religion and politics so closely identified, the christian becomes a crusader for the imperial Christ.

During the fourth period, lasting from the discovery of America until the end of the modern age, christian self-identity is defined in terms of being missionary. No longer able to justify its identity and behavior with reference to an external enemy or the building of the christian empire, christianity perceives itself as spiritually superior to other religions and civilizations and so seeks to conquer their hearts and minds in the name of the spiritual Christ. At the end of Christian Uniqueness (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 89-116; hereafter, "The Jordan, the Tiber and the Ganges."
the Modern Age, signalling the beginning of the fifth epoch, Christianity and other religions find themselves in a situation where there is radical change in almost every sphere of life. A new attitude emerges in which there is a "common search for truth." The new password is dialogue: only in communication and communion with the `others' will the full mystery of Jesus the Christ be revealed.

Whatever else one may say about these kairological moments of Christian self-interpretation, Panikkar maintains that such a sense of history reveals two principles: the principle of `continuity' or development; and the principle of `transformation' or revolution. According to this "law of growth . . . (which) does not exclude mutation," both religious consciousness and religion itself are dynamic, changing realities. This means that one cannot talk only of "doctrinal development" since a religion is much more than its intellectual expressions.

With particular reference to the contemporary situation, Panikkar states:

There is an expansion of the whole universe. In a word, there is real growth in man, in the world, and, I would also add, in God, at least inasmuch as neither immutability nor change are categories of the divine. The divinity is constant newness, pure act, as the scholastics said. There is not only development of dogma, there is also a real development of consciousness, of man, and of the whole of reality.

Panikkar develops these principles in a number of places in his writings from the late 1960s. See, for example, "Christianity and World Religions," 81; Salvation in Christ, 69; and especially, "The Category of Growth in Comparative Religion: A Critical Self-Examination" (hereafter "The Category of Growth"), Harvard Theological Review 66 (1973): 135-139.

Panikkar asserts that "religious consciousness belongs essentially to religion itself, and thus the development of such consciousness means development of religion itself."

Panikkar underlines his observations with reference to "the physical theory of an expanding universe (which) may furnish us with a fair image of what happens
According to this understanding of a dynamically changing universe, Christianity is called upon to expand its horizons especially with reference to its experience and interpretation of the mystery of Christ. While maintaining essential fidelity to the Christ-mystery (continuity), Panikkar’s reformulation of that mystery is consciously a movement beyond all prior interpretations (transformation).

In line with this reformulation, Christ becomes the *cosmo-theandric principle*. In his revised version of *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, Panikkar expresses this by saying that "Christ stands for that centre of reality, that crystallization-point around which the human, the divine and the material can grow."¹¹² In the early 1970s, he introduces his notion of the cosmo-theandric Christ according to the historical concreteness and universal symbolism of Jesus:

> Jesus in this case would be one of the names of the cosmo-theandric principle, which has received practically as many names as there are authentic forms of religiousness and which at the same time finds a historically sui-generis epiphany in Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is here the Man, the *purusa* or whatever symbol opens us up to the mystery.¹¹³

Only in this way does Panikkar believe it possible to develop an "authentically universal christology" that is neither a "kind of neutral christology also in the ontological realm of the universe." Ibid., 136.


¹¹³ *Salvation in Christ*, 71.

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(nor) a universal and utopian common religion."\textsuperscript{114} He is dissatisfied with the substitution of more neutral symbols such as \textit{God} or \textit{Spirit} (too disincarnate), \textit{Truth} (too abstract), \textit{Logos} (too apollonian), or \textit{Lord} (too generic). By contrast, he claims that the \textit{Christ-name} expresses that unique blend of transcendence and immanence, universality and historicity, which allow room for diverse theologies and different religions.\textsuperscript{115} Indeed, asks Panikkar, from the perspective of the christian tradition, is not "every being a \textit{christophany}, a showing forth of Christ?"\textsuperscript{116}

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The shift of focus in Panikkar's theological exposition of Christ's mediatorship with respect to the religious traditions resembles his philosophical movement from `objectivity' to `subjectivity'. Throughout, Panikkar maintains his belief in Christ as the unique and only-one mediator between God and the world.

However, prior to the mid-1960s, his understanding of Christ's mediational role stresses the `objective' identity of Christ with the historical Jesus and, through Jesus, with the christian religion. Far from denigrating the role of other

\textsuperscript{114}The Category of Growth," 127f.


\textsuperscript{116} The Trinity, 54. Elsewhere Panikkar states: "If every being `qua' being is a christophany: there is no real relation independent or outside of Christ; there is no communication without Christ and, in consequence, no `human relation' from which Christ is absent." "The Relation of Christians to their Non-Christian Surroundings," 160.
saviour-figures and religions, Panikkar's careful analysis of the role of Isvara in vedantic hinduism shows the real if hidden presence of Christ at work through that religion's own expressions and self-understanding. In this respect, Panikkar develops his notion of "functional similarity" between aspects of the respective roles of Christ and Isvara.

Moreover, through christian-hindu dialogue, Panikkar shows that each religion is called to ongoing conversion and deepening understanding of its religious calling and christic vocation. In particular, christianity is not threatened by this procedure since its own history has been one of 'integrating', and assuming as its own, insights from non-christian sources.

Nonetheless, Panikkar's initial expressions of interreligious encounter assume an essential superiority of christian belief. At this juncture, he espouses a "fulfillment theology" that understands hinduism and other religions as inferior expressions of the christian mystery. We have suggested that his position is similar to Karl Rahner's notion of "anonymous christianity." The ontological identity of Christ with Jesus is contrasted with the partial and inferior identities of Christ with Isvara and other saviour-figures. By the mid-1960s, Panikkar was beginning to modify these views by placing increasing emphasis on the `subjective' appropriation of the Christ-symbol according to different names and with respect to the particularity of other religious traditions.

In this reformulation between the mid-1960s and early 1970s, Christ is identified as a symbol of transcendent faith that can be authentically expressed according to a plurality of names. In this development, the relationship of Christ
to the historical Jesus becomes one of ‘identity’ and ‘non-identity’. Panikkar expresses this by saying that the Christian faith-affirmation—"Jesus is Lord"—is not the same as saying that "The Lord is only Jesus." Consequently, Jesus becomes one of the names of the Christian mystery.

This does not imply that the name of Jesus is arbitrary, nor that other names are necessarily equal. However, it accepts the principle of the possibility of other names being (equally) authentic names for Christ. Here, Jesus is understood not only in historical and cosmic terms, but also as the "concrete anthropological symbol" that discloses the "saving Supersign" according to the particularity of each religion's concrete path to the Absolute.

Accepting that such a position represents a transformation in the Christian interpretation of Christ, Panikkar reminds us that the history of Christianity witnesses to other breakthroughs in Christic consciousness. He calls these kairological moments of Christian self-interpretation and understands the post-modern period as the time for dialogue among religious traditions in their common search for truth.

The interreligious dialogue, in Panikkar's post-mid-1960s view, cannot presume a priori the superior knowledge of any single tradition. The post-modern context of the dialogue is one in which religious consciousness and religion itself are undergoing profound challenge, transformation, even revolution. Panikkar's dynamic conception of the universe touches upon all dimensions of reality, not excluding the divine. By the early 1970s, Christ is said

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to be the *cosmo-theandric principle* in whom all these dimensions of reality are drawn together.

During this same period in which Panikkar was reformulating his understanding of the mystery of Christ, he was also intent on reconnecting the Christ-reality to a more integral understanding of the mystery of the Christian Trinity. We now turn our attention to a discussion of his emerging understanding of the Trinity as the universal archetype for the meeting of the religious traditions.

**THE TRINITY AND WORLD RELIGIONS**

In his foundational work, Panikkar had expounded a trinitarian reading of the cosmos. In the second half of the 1960s, he makes the additional move of interpreting world religions according to the symbol of the Trinity. The move reflects his shift of focus from objectivity towards subjectivity, from the prior emphasis on belief to the latter emphasis on faith. Panikkar expresses this in

**THE ANDRIC SPIRITUALITY**

117See our discussion of "The Trinitarian Symbol" in the previous chapter.


119We need to re-emphasize that, for Panikkar, there is "a positive and direct correlation between authentic subjectivity and true objectivity." "Theandric Spirituality," 109. As we have seen, Panikkar understands the *symbol* as the prime expression of both subjective truth and objective reality. See our discussion above on "The Christ Symbol." In his preface to *The Trinity* (p. ix), he states:

"Myth and logos meet in the symbol. No man can live without symbols. The
terms of his concern with fundamental human attitudes or spiritualities that are reflected in the three dimensions of the Christian Trinity.

His focus on spiritualities rather than doctrines—on the inner `cores' of religions rather than their outer `forms'—is an attempt to provide a ground for interreligious dialogue at the level of mythos without needing to assume that religions can or do share at the level of the logos. This distinction is especially significant when it comes to considering grounds for dialogue between theistic and non-theistic religious traditions. Panikkar's Christian-Hindu and Christian-Buddhist dialogues emerge as the fundamental narrative basis of these studies.

In the first part of our exposition, we explore Panikkar's conception of the Trinity as the universal archetype for the meeting of the world's spiritual traditions. After some introductory remarks on his understanding of the relationship between Christology and the theology of the Trinity, we outline his notions of iconolatory, personalism and advaita which are said to represent the three fundamental human approaches to the Absolute. On the basis of this phenomenology of spiritual experience, we introduce Panikkar's concept of the Trinity as a Christian framework in which to situate and reconcile these diverse and irreducible spiritual attitudes. The trinitarian proposal is further investigated.

symbol is the true appearance of reality; it is the form in which, in each case, reality discloses itself to our consciousness, or rather it is that particular consciousness of reality. It is in the symbol that the real appears to us. It is not reality (which never exists naked as it were) but its manifestation, its revelation. The symbol is not another `thing' which is-not without some symbol—because ultimately Being itself is the final symbol. Any real symbol encompasses and unites both the symbolized `thing' and the consciousness of it.
with specific reference to growth in christian awareness, interreligious understanding, and the theandric notion of the human being.

The second part of our presentation deals with Panikkar's understanding of the silent God of buddhism and the question of its compatibility with the revealed God of christian faith. We follow Panikkar's two-sided approach to the issue. First, we outline his understanding of the Buddha's silence with regard to the nature of the Ultimate. The approach is shown to have points of contact with christian spirituality. Second, we investigate Panikkar's analysis of the evolution of theistic religions as the progressive divinization of Being. Such analysis focusses on the problematic dimensions that arise from the identification of God and Being. Third, we explore Panikkar's hermeneusis of the atheistic dimension of religion. He proposes a three-stage `deontologization' of God: modern atheism; mystical apophaticism; and the buddhist path of "radical relativity." In particular, Panikkar's reformulation of the christian trinity is shown to have marked points of similarity with this fundamental buddhist intuition.

**A Trinitarian Spirituality**

Panikkar perceives his reflections on the christian Trinity as intermeshing with his christological reflections. As we shall see, he believes that the separation of these two branches of theology has resulted in the impoverishment of christian spiritual experience. Moreover, he suggests that this state of affairs has had negative ramifications with regard to christianity's
attitude toward other religions.\textsuperscript{120} In his attempt to reconnect christology with the theology of the Trinity, Panikkar states:

\begin{quote}
Were the Absolute not Trinity, then Christ could only be an \textit{avatara}, but not the \textit{alpha} and \textit{omega}, the beginning and the end, the only mediator, he through and for whom all has been made and in whom all things subsist.\textsuperscript{121}
\end{quote}

However, as indicated, Panikkar's major concern is not doctrinal. His efforts are directed towards reinterpreting the Trinity as a symbol of pluralism in the Godhead that is reflected in the diverse human and religious experiences of humanity. While the approach has significant doctrinal or theological implications, the underlying issue is a question of spirituality: "Can we today envisage a spirituality capable of managing the weight of more than one religious tradition . . . ?"\textsuperscript{122} Panikkar says that he chooses christian terminology not on account of "sectarian bias," but because christianity is able "to `suffer' this transformation."\textsuperscript{123} Again, his perceptions are based on the premise that all living religions, including christianity, grow through the assimilation of `otherness'. This openness towards otherness, assimilation, growth and transformation is

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{120}Panikkar dates the separation of christology from the doctrine of the Trinity at the time of the Arian controversy when "Christ became somehow the God of the Christians". See "Christianity and World Religions," 91f.
\item \textsuperscript{121}"The Relation of Christians to their Non-Christian Surroundings," 164.
\item \textsuperscript{122}"Theandric Spirituality," 509. Here, Panikkar also defines "spirituality as a way by which a certain human group handles its ultimate `humanness' or, in simple words, its bare human condition."
\item \textsuperscript{123}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
considered imperative for the contemporary experience of interreligious dialogue.

According to Panikkar, it is possible to delineate three fundamental types of spirituality or three distinct human attitudes in relation to ultimate Reality. He calls these the ways of iconolatry (or idolatry), personalism and advaita. While there are aspects of each spirituality in every religious tradition, religions tend to emphasize one form of spirituality over the others. Panikkar notes, for example, that the religion of ancient Israel was essentially an idolatrous spirituality. Admitting that there were evident excesses that the Israelite prophets themselves condemned, Panikkar defends the essential validity of "true idolatry" insofar as humans need idols, symbols, icons, gestures and rituals lest the divine reality remain impassible and inaccessible. Idols or icons become falsified only when they lose contact with the divinity, that is, once it is forgotten that they are representations of divine transcendence.

Panikkar contends that much of christian spirituality consists in converting the divine form into an accessible object of worship without thereby falling into "false idolatry"—historical aberrations notwithstanding. In Indian religion, this form of spirituality is known as the karma-marga, the way of ritual action.

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124Ibid., 509-513.

125Panikkar defines idolatry as "the projection of God under some form, his objectification, his personification in some object, mental or material, visible or invisible, but always reducible to our 'human' representation. . . . In the final analysis, idolatry stands for the homogeneity between God and creature which is the condition for religion, 're-ligation'. If God were totally other there would be no place for love, for knowledge, for prayer, for cult or even for him—as Other." Ibid., 511.

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Iconolatry witnesses to the fact that the act of religious worship cannot be based on purely abstract or philosophical notions of the Absolute.

Whereas iconolatry is characterized by the human desire for `incarnation', *personalism* represents the human thirst for `immanence'. Here, the supreme religious symbol is not the God-icon but the God-person; God, the divine `I', calls the human `Thou' into a personal relationship of love. Evidently, this personalist spirituality is present in the Judaic notion of Yahweh and reaches new heights of expression in Christianity and Islam which are, after all, the religious offspring of Israel. In this historical sense, personalism is a "purification of idolatry" and corresponds to "different degrees of its evolution." However, Panikkar is careful to add that he is not attempting to adjudicate on the respective merits of either idolatry or personalism since, by themselves, neither is capable of "exhausting the truth and richness of the experience of the Absolute." In Indian religion, personalism corresponds to the *bhakti-marga*, the way of devotion and love.

The great danger with a personalist spirituality, according to Panikkar, is not false idolatry but anthropomorphism. Its strength is precisely its ability to conceive the divine reality in personal-intimate terms. Nonetheless, the suggestion is that there are other conceptions of the Absolute, in both east and west, that do not fit well into a personalist framework.

This leads to his consideration of *advaita*, described as the way of *jnana-marga*, the path of knowledge, ignorance, detachment and pure

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126Ibid., 513-515.

127Ibid., 514.
contemplation. The advaitic form of spirituality does not perceive the divine as an `other' with whom one can enter into interpersonal relationship. As developed in the religion of the Upanishads, God is the supra-personal Spirit that inspires rather than enters into dialogue with humanity. This is the God of inaccessible light and abounding presence, at once irreducibly transcendent and yet constitutively immanent--the `one' with all that `is'. In this conception, "God and the world are neither one nor two." Such non-dualistic knowledge requires a mystical apprehension of the nature of ultimate Reality corresponding to the pre-reflective, pre-conscious dimension of religious experience.

If there is a danger with mystic or advaitic experience, it is that one runs the risk of losing one's identity by being totally absorbed into the divine mystery. Panikkar suggests that this danger can only be avoided through a trinitarian

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128 Ibid., 515-522.
129 The Upanishad are witnesses of a super-rational experience of a `Reality' which in some way `inhales' us. The God of the Upanishad does not speak: he is not Word. He `inspires': he is Spirit. In the schema of the Upanishad the main place is not given to call and response, as in the personalistic one, but to knowledge and ignorance. The Absolute is discovered in the experience in which it is attained. This meeting is not situated on the level of the dialogue. The dialogue is transcended and we are carried to the sphere of union." Ibid., 517.
130 Elsewhere, Panikkar speaks of Hindu religiosity in terms of "the natural and spontaneous development of a chthonic existence." He adds that "the first element of religion is not consciousness, but being, be-ing, contingency. . . . Religion, in consequence, is neither an act of reflection nor the fruit of a conscious decision." "Contemporary Hindu Spirituality," Philosophy Today 3:2-4 (Summer 1959): 124.
131 Panikkar also attempts to show that an advaitan spirituality does not necessarily lead to the loss of identity where the Absolute itself is identified as Love. "Advaita and Bhakti: Love and Identity in a Hindu-Christian Dialogue," Journal of Ecumenical Studies 7:2 (1970), 300-309.
conception of the Absolute. Moreover, he argues, the Trinity is able to provide a framework in which these three irreducible forms of spirituality can be reconciled.

Panikkar's trinitarian reflection begins with the acknowledgement of "the progressive abandonment of the trinitarian mystery as the practical and existential basis of Christian life." Consequently, his retrieval and transformation of the trinitarian mystery moves in two directions: it seeks to deepen Christian self-awareness by opening up new dimensions contained within the respective spiritualities of Fatherhood, Sonship and Spirit; and it attempts to provide a new basis for interreligious understanding that is grounded in these distinctive spiritual attitudes without violating their fundamental intuitions. We turn now to a brief resumé of Panikkar's trinitarian proposal before investigating his applications with respect to Christian spiritual awareness and interreligious dialogue.

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133 Summarizing these two thrusts, Panikkar states: "The Trinity is not only the theoretical foundation-stone of Christianity but also the practical, concrete and existential basis of the Christian life. . . . (Moreover, the Trinity) may also be considered as the junction where the authentic spiritual dimensions of all religions meet." The Trinity, 42.
The silent, apophatic spirituality is said to be represented by the Father whose name is literally `beyond' every name.\textsuperscript{134} This is the Absolute brahman in whom there is no plurality, who is simply, constitutively, absolutely transcendent and, although the source, "is not . . . has no ek-sistence, not even that of being." The christian conception of the Trinity recognizes this in the Father's absence of self-expression because "everything that the Father is he transmits to the Son."\textsuperscript{135} The buddhist experience of nirvana or sunyata (emptiness) corresponds most fully to this central religious intuition.\textsuperscript{136}

By contrast, the abrahamic religions (christianity, judaism and islam) are perceived primarily as spiritualities of the Son or the Word because they emphasize the cosmic mediation between God and the world.\textsuperscript{137} The Son is the Son of the Father (Trinity `ad intra') and the Word through whom all created things exist (Trinity `ad extra'). From a phenomenological perspective, this relational and personal dimension of the Godhead may go by many names such as Christ, Isvara, Tathagata, or even Yahweh, Allah, Logos, Lord.

Beyond the apophatic spirituality of the Father and the personalist spirituality of the Son, there remains the spirituality of the Spirit understood as

\textsuperscript{134}Ibid., 44-50.

\textsuperscript{135}Ibid., 46.

\textsuperscript{136}We provide a more extensive discussion of Panikkar's understanding of the relationship between buddhist and christian spiritual experience in the section below.

\textsuperscript{137}"Theandric Spirituality," 526-528; The Trinity, 51-58.
"the revelation of the immanent God." According to Panikkar, this third religious dimension is most clearly identified in the cosmic religions. Its most advanced formulation is to be found in the Hindu *advaitic* doctrine. The emphasis on the non-duality of the self and the Absolute corresponds to the trinitarian mystery of the Spirit in whom the Father and the Son are both united (not *two*) and yet distinguishable (not *one* either).

With reference to growth in christian awareness, Panikkar's trinitarian proposal seems to be especially aimed towards the retrieval of the 'forgotten' Spirit-dimension of spirit-uality. Nonetheless, he is also intent on reintegrating an approach to the Spirit within the doctrine of the Trinity since, by his own admission, "if the spirituality of the Spirit is not anchored by being integrated in the Trinity it falls into the doctrinal error of *pantheism*.

With these goals in mind, Panikkar suggests that he is treading a path that is at once faithful to traditional christian teaching while also alluding to a new self-awareness that can effectively respond to the religious needs of our time. He 'defends' his trinitarian proposal by suggesting that it follows "the more

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139 "If the Father and the Son are not *two*, they are not one either: the Spirit both unites and distinguishes them. He is the bond of unity; the *we* in between, or rather within." On a more practical level, Panikkar comments: "One cannot have 'Personal relations' with the Spirit. One cannot reach the Transcendent, the Other, when one is directed towards the Spirit. One cannot pray *to* the Spirit as an isolated term of our prayer. One can only have a non-relational union with him." Ibid., 62.

140 Ibid., 82.
dynamic thrust" of the Greek patristic tradition and bonaventurian scholarship.\footnote{Ibid., 45. For a review of the "profoundly dynamic concept" of the Trinity in the Greek patristics (Gregory Nazianzan, Basil, Pseudo-Dionysius, John Damascene) and Bonaventure, see Ewert Cousins, "The Trinity and World Religions," \textit{Journal of Ecumenical Studies} 7:3 (1970): 495-498.}

In contrast to Augustine’s `psychological' conception of the Trinity--"the Father, Being; the Son, Intellect; the Spirit, Love"--, Panikkar’s proposal follows the eastern-patristic formulation of "the Father, Source; the Son, Being, the \textit{Thou}; and the Spirit, Return to Being (or Ocean of Being), the \textit{we}."\footnote{The Trinity, 68f. Here, Panikkar suggests that Augustine’s formulation, founded on the triad "we are, we know, we will (or love)," is `inspired' and `valid' but, for all that, "its anthropocentricity is obvious." Moreover, Panikkar claims that his formulation follows "Paul’s trinitarian formulation of God as 'above all, through all and in all' (Eph. 4:6)."} On this basis, Panikkar believes it is possible--and necessary--to develop a more thorough and integral \textit{trinitarian spirituality} that effectively incorporates the richness of the spiritualities of Father, Son and Spirit.\footnote{With reference to the traditional christian interpretation of the Trinity, Panikkar reminds us that "neither the actual words nor the concepts of \textit{nature} and \textit{person} are ever used in the New Testament to express the mystery of the Trinity." The notion of an evolving understanding of the Trinity is also forcefully expressed with reference to "the first generations of christians (who) lived out their faith in the Trinity without ever knowing (those concepts)." Ibid., 41.}

His move to reconnect christian spirituality with the doctrine of the Trinity has other modern parallels

Cousins also notes that "unlike the Latins, the Greeks did not distinguish between the divine nature and the three persons." "The Trinity and World Religions," 495.
in western theology--for example, Karl Rahner's exposition on the essential identity of the `immanent' and `economic' Trinity. 144

Applied to interreligious understanding, Panikkar's trinitarian proposal follows the `universalizing' tendency in the history of the christian hermeneutics of the Trinity. 145 He extends and radicalizes the approach by nominating the Trinity as the universal archetype for interreligious encounter, the meeting-point where all authentic spiritualities find their inspiration, their source, and their goal. 146 Being sensitive to the accusation that this proposal privileges the christian tradition over other religions, Panikkar says that he prefers the term `theandric' to `trinitarian' in order to characterize the synthesis of the three spiritual attitudes. 147 He maintains that even though theandrisms is a classical christian term, it is not an a priori category of christian faith. 148 By way of explanation, he states:

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145 See Ewert Cousins, "The Trinity and World Religions," 484-492. Cousins argues that Panikkar's `universalizing' thrust--linking the Trinity to the universe--has antecedents in the `vestige' doctrine of medieval augustinianism, the `trinitarian' doctrine of creation in the Greek Fathers, and the `appropriation' doctrine of the western Fathers and the scholastics.

146 See The Trinity, 42f. The question of whether the trinitarian archetype works for religions beyond the First Axial Period or outside of the Indo-European world is raised by Beverly Lanzetta, "The Godhead as a Theological Foundation of Interreligious Dialogue" (Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 1989), 126-131 (notes).

147 The Trinity, 71.

148 See our exposition of Panikkar's earlier use of this term in a christian context.
Theandrismon is a spirituality which combines in an authentic synthesis the three dimensions of our life on earth as well as in heaven. In it are to be found contemplation that is something more than thought, action which does not limit its purview to the building of an earthly city, God who is not solely a judge or a scrutinizing Eye, love that surpasses all sentimentality, prayer that is not limited to petition or even to praise but also silence that does not fall into indifference, apophatism that does not get bogged down in nihilism, super-naturalism that is not antinatural—in short, a sense of the Spirit that is not disincarnate combined with a sense of Incarnation that does not neglect the Spirit, an affirmation that is not exclusive and a negation that is not closed in upon itself. This is a spirituality whose most simple expression would say: Man is more than ‘man’; he is a theandric mystery.\textsuperscript{149}

While all spiritualities and religions tend to emphasize different dimensions of the divine—apophaticism, personalism or immanence—, Panikkar contends that these dimensions are not only compatible but, in a sense, they require each other if they are to reflect the full life of the trinitarian God and express the full mystery of the theandric human being.

The Silence of God in Buddhism

From a christian perspective, it has been suggested that the most ‘problematic’ aspect of Panikkar’s trinitarian proposal is his extrapolation on the apophatic spirituality of the Father.\textsuperscript{150} More generally, the question touches upon in the previous chapter.

\textsuperscript{149}The Trinity, 82.

\textsuperscript{150}Ewert Cousins asks if the "silence of the Father" is finally compatible with the traditional christian notion of the Father generating the Word and the Father as dynamic power? His analysis of Christian sources reveals that there is a "firm foundation" in the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, Augustine, the Greek Fathers, Pseudo-Dionysius and Bonaventure. See "The Trinity and World Religions," 492-498.
the possibility of grounds for dialogue between theistic and non-theistic religions. Panikkar’s most extensive and systematic approach to these issues is in the specific context of christian-buddhist dialogue. Although the experience of God’s silence is not a new theme in Panikkar’s works, the question is raised to a new level of profundity once he is confronted with the apophatic spirituality of the Buddha.

At the outset of this study, Panikkar states that any attempt to "build a religio-cultural bridge" between buddhism and theism requires a "special language." He also admits that his approach is `philosophical' rather than `historical', which does not imply a retreat into an `objectivist' stance. Rather, he sets himself the task of bridging east and west in a manner that is "faithful both to Buddhism and to Christianity." 

151 See our discussion of Panikkar’s notion of "The Hidden God" in the previous chapter.


153 Panikkar, The Silence of God, 3-6. Here, Panikkar reiterates his "elementary rule of methodology (which) proscribes formulating a judgment on anything in categories foreign to it." He also admits that his investigation assumes the essential "unity of human nature" such that "it must be possible to elaborate the intellectual coordinates needed for grasping a religious and cultural phenomenon distinct from one’s own."

154 Ibid., 4f.
Essentially, Panikkar's dialogical method consists in a double ‘reconstruction’: on the one hand, he seeks to interpret the Buddha's silence in a `positive' light that will be accessible to both theist and non-theist alike; on the other hand, he shows that the western identification of God and Being has reached such a problematic stage of evolution that it too reaches for a new experience and expression of God's Nonbeing. In this sense, neither theism nor non-theism is considered `ultimate' or, as Panikkar argues, there is an atheistic dimension within all religious faith.

In Panikkar's interpretation, the Buddha's `apophatic' silence is carefully distinguished from other possible interpretations such as cynicism, nihilism, agnosticism, pragmatism, problematicism and dialectics.\footnote{Ibid., 7-15.} It is an `ontic' silence that is attributable neither to the limitations of the human subject (`epistemological' silence) nor to the mysterious nature of reality as such (`metaphysical' silence). The Buddha's apophaticism is the deeper "silence (that) not only clothes the reply, it invades the question."\footnote{By way of further comment on this `ontic' silence, Panikkar states: "The ultimate reason for the silence of the Buddha resides precisely in the fact that this ultimate reality \textit{is} not. . . . Ultimate reality is so supremely ineffable and transcendent that, strictly speaking, Buddhism will be constrained to deny it the very character of being. Being, after all, is what is; but what is, by the very fact of being, is in some manner thinkable and communicable. It belongs to the order of manifestation, of being. And therefore it cannot be considered to be ultimate reality itself." Ibid., 14f.} In this sense, "the Buddha's revolution" goes `beyond' the speculative questioning of God's existence or non-existence to challenge the anthropocentric assumptions inherent in both

\begin{quote}
\footnote{Ibid., 7-15.}
\end{quote}
traditional theism and contemporary atheism. The Buddha’s silence on God represents the *vía media*, not on account of the lack of ‘hard logic’, but because it refuses to absolutize any worldly reality or to push anything, including the capriciousness of human thought, to an extreme.\(^{157}\)

Despite the evident incongruity of theism and non-theism, Panikkar finds significant points of contact between buddhism and christianity. Specifically, he finds meeting-points in their distinctive emphases on spiritual awareness (the call to total renunciation of the ‘self’), mystical experience (silence as the path to ‘God’ who transcends all ‘thought’ and is beyond all ‘being’), and ‘orthopraxis’ (as distinct from orthodoxy or orthopoeisis). However, Panikkar argues that there are still deeper cultural and religious reasons for suggesting that the Buddha’s call to ‘silence’ the question of God is pertinent in today’s milieu, both east and west.

Panikkar notes that religious traditions in the west, and in much of the east as well, are associated with the progressive “divinization of Being.”\(^{158}\) The advantages of such a process are readily acknowledged: it frees the divine from its previously limited identification with tribal religions; it overcomes the radical dualisms between the divine and the human, faith and reason, matter and spirit,

\(^{157}\) According to Panikkar, “the Buddha has neither affirmed God, but neither has he denied God.” Moreover, “he is unconcerned whether or not we satisfy our speculative quest” since our “idea of God is not God.” Ibid., 174f., 151. Also, see Panikkar’s discussions on such topics as “The Buddha’s Revolution,” “Religious Atheism,” “To Dare to be Silent,” and “The Silence of God in God,” in *The Silence of God*, 90-100, 148-156, 170-173.

\(^{158}\) Ibid., “The God of Being (Divinization of Being),” 107f.
the sacred and the profane. In brief, once "Being is God most high, Reality is one, and the world is a kosmos--an ordered, regulated whole." In this context, "the will of God" becomes "the very expression of the intimate law of Being." Nonetheless, Panikkar suggests that the identification of God and Being poses a whole new set of problems. Not least among these are the following: the personal character of the divine becomes obscured; the absolute power and/or infinite goodness of the divine seems compromised in the face of evil and suffering (the theodicy problem); the implied coercion of the divine liberty to provide a mediator, such as Christ or Isvara, which in turn appears to breach the divine self-sufficiency.

While admitting that various theological systems provide ingenious responses to the God/Being problematic, Panikkar attends to the personalist response that identifies God as a 'personal' Being with intelligence, will, consciousness and love as well. However, even here, in Panikkar's analysis, "the Person known as God is still problematic." Either God becomes the Supreme Being, in which case there is a fricture between God and the

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Panikkar adds: "If God is Being, religion holds the key to all problems, human and cosmic alike." Moreover, "the whole of a certain Christian, Hindu and Muslim spirituality is founded on this premise: knowledge of the truth means religious fulfillment." See Panikkar's discussion of Ontomorphism in The Silence of God, 111-114.

Ibid., 114-117.

Panikkar says: "This would seem to be a happy synthesis. . . . Now we have neither the pure anthropomorphism that leaves the God of the philosophers and the demands of reason altogether out of account, nor the simple ontomorphism that ignores the rights of the heart and the need for loving dialogue. Now we have personalism--that is, the conceptualization of Being itself as personal." Ibid., 117.
universality of Being, or we take the more radical step of releasing God from the strictures of Being altogether.

In favoring the second option, Panikkar wants to avoid the fruitlessness of much philosophical discussion on the ‘nature’ of God. Most philosophical discussion, he suggests, is quite inadequate with reference to the living God of revelation-theologies. In his view:

The moment God is transformed into an object of philosophical reflection, no list of cautions will be adequate to prevent the reification, or at least the objectification of this subject, with the attendant evacuation of its character as the living God of the religions.

For Panikkar, this amounts to an invitation to turn to the buddhist notion of God's "nonbeing" even though, as he readily admits, this has "yet to be traversed by the modern western world." 

In the attempt to describe this "atheistic dimension of existence," Panikkar does not want to identify himself with modern atheism’s "overhasty denial of

\[\text{162Panikkar says: "God is no longer Being tout court, but only the Supreme being: God is no longer Esse, but primum Ens." In this situation, he maintains that "it will be difficult to explain the bond between this God and nonpersonal beings." Moreover, "by forcing the process of the personification of Being to its ultimate limits . . . personalists have had to sacrifice God’s creation." Ibid., 118f.}\]

\[\text{163Ibid., 123.}\]

\[\text{164Panikkar maintains that while "the history of God’s being has largely been written," the history of God’s ‘nonbeing’ has neither been written nor contemplated in the history of western religion. Ibid., 122.}\]

\[\text{165In his understanding of a non-dialectical relationship between theism and atheism, as between faith and doubt, Panikkar refers to the writings of Johannes Baptist Metz, "Unbelief as a Theological Problem" in Concilium 6:1 (June 1965): 32-42; and Karl Rahner "The Teaching of the Second Vatican Council on Atheism" in Concilium 3:3 (March 1967): 5-13. See also, John Coulson who argues from both a literary and a theological point of view that ‘modern’ religious faith necessarily involves a dimension of unbelief. Religion and Imagination (Oxford: Clarendon}\]
God." Nonetheless, he recognizes within atheism a possible `purification' of the concept of God that is not unrelated to the Buddha's silence. Essentially, Panikkar reads atheism as the "denial of the character of Being to God." Consequently, "God, for the atheist, is the great Absent One: God is nowhere, God is not." In this, he suggests, "we are not far from mysticism." This leads to the consideration of "mystical apophaticism" wherein God is beyond both Being and Nonbeing, "at once the ever-present absence and the ever-absent presence." At most, God's Being is considered as God’s first veil or epiphany, but not God in person. In turn, mysticism's recourse to 'nothingness', the 'void' and 'nonbeing' leads to the consideration of a "third approach."

Panikkar characterizes this third attempt to `deontologize' God according to the buddhist notion of pratītyasamutpāda which is translated as the "radical relativity," "total reciprocity" or the "constitutive interdependency" of reality in


More precisely, Panikkar states: "God `is'-not for the simple reason that God is neither Being, for there is `no such thing' (for some), nor supreme Being (for others). God is toppled from the throne of Being; thereby, for some, God is eliminated; for others, on the contrary, the dethroning comports a purification of the very notion of God." The Silence of God, 129.

Ibid., 129.

See Panikkar's discussion on "Negation of Nonbeing: Apophaticism" in The Silence of God, 129-134. Among the authors he most consistently cites from the christian tradition is Meister Eckhart. In this context, Panikkar sees the essential distinction between atheism and apophaticism in terms of the former's incompatibility with any theistic assertion, whereas the latter is tolerant of the most diverse affirmations concerning the divinity--providing none of these is absolutized.
all its dimensions." In this vision, "every being is nothing but relatedness."\(^{170}\)

Panikkar explains:

Radical relativity explains how there can be an atheism that denies God as a separate substance, as a supreme Being, as the projection of unsatisfied human desires. Radical relativity likewise understands and shares the claims of apophaticism: the total ineffability of the absolute and hence the negation of all nonbeing, in view of the fact that any human affirmation is a negation and a limitation, and not a positive positing of anything. In this third conception, God is not (as things are, and we have no other criterion at our disposition), and yet God neither is nothing nor is-not nothing (seeing that the negation of being is vulnerable to the same criticism as its affirmation. . . .).\(^{171}\)

This means that if one is to think or speak of God at all, then such thought or speech must point 'beyond' all categories of Being or Substance since the Ultimate is-not being or esse, but radical relatedness. In this view, God can only be truthfully considered in terms of "genitival relationship" or the "divine radicality" that touches every dimension of reality.\(^{172}\)

\(^{169}\)Ibid., "Pratītyasamutpāda" and "Radical Relativity," 53-60, 134-144.

\(^{170}\) "Confrontation between Hinduism and Christ," 197.

\(^{171}\) The Silence of God, 137.

\(^{172}\) Ibid., 137. Panikkar does not mean to imply that the Buddha would accept a God of this formulation which would be, in any event, an historical impossibility. Panikkar's 'purpose', the understanding of his 'mission', is different. Noting a certain irony in his proceedings, he states (p. 173):

Sakyamuni is more discrete, more consistent, more prudent. He has not expressed himself in my terms. He has not spoken of God at all, not even to say that God corresponds to Silence, or that God is the unfathomable abyss of Nothingness. . . . To speak of God, even for the purpose of denying God's existence, is to 'transform' God into the order of creatures, and so is tantamount to destroying God. All that the Buddha has said, all his striving, regards humankind. If for my part I have sought to interpret his silence through an application to the problem of God and have taken up that problem directly, it has been because my position in history comes centuries and millennia later that his. It is no longer possible for us to preserve the innocence that the genius
Now, according to Panikkar, this conception of the Ultimate is not so far removed from the Christian doctrine of the Trinity which, he states, "ought to suffice to banish any substantialistic interpretation of the divinity." The Trinity, reinterpreted according to divine radicality, and in fidelity to the 'vestige' doctrine of Creation, does not surrender to relativism, agnosticism or pantheism; yet neither does it leave God to hide behind Being or Substance and severed from the contingent reality of our earthly existence:

The Trinity is radical relativity *par excellence*. . . . God's radical relativity *ad extra* is a mirror image of the same radicality *ad intra*: that is to say, the whole universe, as image or 'vestige' of the Trinity, is endowed with the trinitarian character of radical relativity. The idea of the Trinity maintains an openness in human existence, vouches for infinite possibilities and while accepting atheistic criticism, offers the possibility of hope and the guarantee of freedom. The Trinity in fact, reveals that there is life in the Godhead as well as in Man, that God is not an idol, nor a mere idea, nor an ideal goal of human consciousness. Yet he is neither another substance nor a separate, and thus separable, reality.

of a Siddhartha would have wished for us. After all, for centuries, the problem of God has consistently occupied a central place not only in the life, but also in the thought, of diverse peoples. A refusal to name God would be at least suspect on my part. And so I have spoken of silence, and I have undertaken to specify it as a silence of and in God.

According to Panikkar's hermeneusis, the Trinity is neither one substance (modalism) nor three substances (trithesim) but "subsistent relations." Moreover, he finds that the concept of *epextasis*, used by Gregory of Nyssa, is an "implicit synthesis between a static, substantialistic vision of reality and a dynamic, temporal conception of it" and so represents a kind of *via media* between traditional Christian theology and Buddhism. Ibid., 141-143.

The Trinity, xiii.

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Evidently, this trinitarian `reconciliation' of Buddhism with Christianity requires a radicalized reading of both spiritual traditions. While Panikkar stresses that the meeting of these religions is only possible at the level of orthopraxis and spiritual realization, his interpretation also shows the need to speak of that experience in conceptual and non-contradictory terms. He does this with reference to the philosophical language of Being, Substance, Nonbeing and the theological language of God, the Ultimate and the Divine. More primordially, he provokes an understanding of language as symbolic discourse that discloses the `otherness' of human existence and religious experience.

Panikkar's Christian-buddhist dialogue is essentially a study of the dialectic of `identity' and `otherness' in each spiritual tradition. He states at one point that "the path we have been following is a spiral."\(^{176}\) The implication is that the spires of each tradition can and do meet, not by abandoning their respective self-understandings, but by expanding their horizons and finding therein hitherto unknown dimensions of their own beliefs and symbols. What is disclosed is not a simple unity but a celebration of diversity--or radical relativity--that discovers the `otherness' within. Panikkar is not saying that the Christian Trinity and the buddhist Pratityasmutpāda, nor for that matter the hindu Advaita and what he now calls the Cosmotheandric Reality,\(^{177}\) are the same `thing'. However, neither

\(^{176}\) The Silence of God, 119.

\(^{177}\) Panikkar's transformation of his prior notion of theandrisim into cosmotheandric reality is intended to emphasize the `trinitarian' pattern of the `whole' in its divine, human and cosmic dimensions. The new term is systematically employed in all his writings on religious pluralism from the mid-1970s. We will further discuss the meaning and significance of this term.

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can they be fundamentally opposed as each, *in its own way*, symbolizes the ‘whole’ divine, human and cosmic reality that discloses itself with infinite possibilities for new life, freedom\(^{178}\) and hope.

*      *      *      *      *

Panikkar’s christological foundations for interreligious dialogue lead rather naturally into his consideration of the Trinity as the universal archetype for the meeting of religions. However, methodologically, Panikkar does *not start* with the Trinity, but with a phenomenology of human approaches to the divine reality. His analysis reveals three categories or spiritual attitudes that he calls *iconolatry, personalism* and *advaita* or, according to the oriental traditions, *karmamarga, bhaktamarga* and *jnanamarga*. From here, he argues that only a trinitarian understanding of reality provides a synthesis among these otherwise irreconcilable conceptions of the Absolute.

The Father reveals the silence of God, the Son mediates God’s presence to the created world, and the Spirit shows the reality of the divine immanence within creation. Religions are distinguished according to these primary orientations: buddhism represents the apophaticism of the Father; abrahamic

\(^{178}\)The notion of *freedom* becomes increasingly important in Panikkar’s understanding of religion as our investigation into his "Hermeneutics of Secularization" will show in the following chapter. Here, Panikkar notes that "God is here not so much the free Being as the very freedom of Being." "The God of Silence," 116. He also connects the notion of God’s freedom from Substance and Being with the Trinity as non-ego centeredness: "There is no room for egoism in the Trinity. It has no *Ding an sich*, selfhood as such." *The Trinity*, 61.
religions the spirituality of the Word; and hinduism the immanent-transcendence of the Spirit. Panikkar’s notion of the Trinity is founded on the eastern tradition which, in his view, overcomes the anthropomorphic tendencies of western hermeneutics typified by Augustine. Beyond christian theology, Panikkar claims that his *theandric* approach is conducive to interreligious understanding because it is essentially open towards the diversity of spiritual attitudes represented by the major world religions.

Dealing more specifically with the problem of the meeting-ground between theistic and non-theistic religions, Panikkar turns to the arena of christian-buddhist dialogue. The `ontic' or `noble' silence of the Buddha regarding the nature of the Ultimate is contrasted to a metaphysical stance or a methodological nihilism. The Buddha’s challenge, to theists and atheists alike, is to transcend both being and thinking in order to enter into the heart of reality. As such, there are spiritual parallels between the buddhist path and the christian way. Nonetheless, the buddhist notion of *nirvana* and the christian understanding of *God* do not easily correlate. At this point, Panikkar takes the dialogue in a different direction by noting a three-stage evolution in western approaches to the divine: *anthropomorphism, ontomorphism* and *personalism*. Variations notwithstanding, all three ways assume a close affinity between God and Being that Panikkar challenges with reference to modern forms of atheism, mystical apophaticism and buddhism’s "radical relativity." Panikkar then proposes a hermeneusis of the christian Trinity that correlates with God's `Nonbeing'.
We have noted Panikkar's `mission' of reconnecting the doctrine of the Trinity with christian life and spirituality. We have also adverted to christian foundations especially, but not solely, in the eastern patristics that are perceived to support a `deontologized' notion of God. In this way, Panikkar is not unaware of the importance of orthodox christian doctrine in his hermeneusis of the christian Trinity. Nonetheless, with particular reference to interreligious understanding, he moves beyond dogmatic formulations to the arena of spiritual experience that cannot be so easily conceptualized. At this level, we have suggested that Panikkar moves into *symbolic discourse* in order to elicit an appreciation of the `otherness' of christian existence that may be experienced as a new revelatory moment. The goal is not an undifferentiated unity among the world religions but a celebration of diversity and difference that is contained within the foundational insights of each religious tradition's symbol-systems.

*Summary of Chapter Three*

Our interpretation of Panikkar's three foundational approaches to interreligious encounter needs to be seen in terms of fundamental continuity with his initial hermeneutics of christian revelation. At the conclusion of the second chapter, we indicated five central features that were prevalent in his dialogue between classical christian writings and modern existentialist thought:

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179Although it is beyond our scope in this chapter to adequately address this issue from a theological perspective, we do note the "firm foundations" of Panikkar's interpretation of the Trinity in the christian tradition. This view is also supported by Ewert Cousins, "The Trinity and World Religions." We further address this matter in Chapter Six.

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its self-conscious hermeneutical character; the ontonomic principle; the search for a non-dualistic methodology; a telo-theological vision of the universe; and evolution in human experience of the divine. In the context of east-west religious encounter, these principles, themes and methods take on a distinctive 'interreligious' turn. Moreover, they continue to form the basis of his ongoing hermeneutics of religious pluralism.

First: the self-conscious *hermeneutical character* of these writings. The plurality of sources has increased so that Panikkar's dialogue now includes significant reflection on three major religious traditions—Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism—and utilizes three fields of enquiry into religious phenomena—philosophy, theology and spirituality. If this sounds like a cluttered conversation-table, the unifying point is the expanding religious consciousness associated with Panikkar's own narrative. Seemingly unperturbed by radically different 'belief'-systems, he displays unbounded confidence in an interreligious meeting-point at the level of 'faith' and shared religious experience. Not that 'objective' grounds of comparison and similarity are absent among the religious traditions; in fact, these emerge from the interreligious encounter itself. However the meeting of religions also requires that dialogic partners enter into, and assume as their own, experiences of the religious 'other'. This 'subjective' appropriation of 'otherness' is deemed to expand one's horizon of meaning without contravening the essential 'identity' with one's religious tradition. In this manner, interreligious dialogue leads to a "new event" of religious experience and understanding.

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Second: the ontonomic principle which, in the context of interreligious dialogue, affirms the validity and mutual interdependence of the various religious traditions and the respective fields of religious enquiry. Consequently, Panikkar’s multidisciplinary approach to interreligious encounter—withstanding elements of change and growth—represents distinct but mutually related paradigms for understanding. The philosophical approach is itself pluralistic, exploring religions according to both the western principle of non-contradiction and the eastern principle of identity. The former approach stresses the ‘objective’ or functional similarity of religions and their dynamic ‘historical’ convergence; the latter emphasizes the ‘subjective’ appropriation of religious truth according to the dynamic diversity of all truth-expressions and their ‘transcendental’ unity. Theological enquiry into Christ’s mediational role complements these philosophical approaches and accounts for Panikkar’s movement from a "fulfillment christology" to an "authentically universal christology." His trinitarian approach, focussing on the area of spiritual experience rather than doctrinal formulations, relies on the eastern philosophical insight into the pluralism of truth and the theological premise of Christ as one of the names of the cosmo-theandric mystery.

Third: the search for a non-dualistic methodology. Here, Panikkar turns to classical eastern and western hermeneutics of truth and especially to the hindu doctrine of advaita. The advaitic insight stresses the non-dualistic relationship between the ‘self’ and the ‘Absolute’, or between God and the world. Transcendence and immanence are neither two nor one, but distinct
manifestations of the one and only Reality. Panikkar's interpretation of the
catholic Trinity and the buddhist *pratityasmutpāda* provide further grounds for
transcending the dualism of thought associated with many philosophical and
theological enquiries into the unity and diversity of religious truth. This enables
him to approach the question of Christ's universality and concreteness in non-
dialectical terms: Jesus becomes the "concrete anthropological symbol" of the
universal-saving Supername. Similarly, the distinction between theism and non-
theism is readily acknowledged but, with reference to the atheistic dimension of
all religious belief, this distinction is not considered 'ultimate'. The Ultimate,
disclosed as symbol of otherness 'within' and 'beyond' all religious expressions,
also transcends the categories of Being and Substance. Consequently, a non-
dualistic methodology leads to the 'deontologization' of God.

Fourth: a *telo-theological vision* of the universe. Panikkar's eschatological
motif is ever-present in these writings. With reference to his early philosophical
and theological studies of religion, we saw that his eschatological vision
contained the notion of the dynamic convergence of religions that gave
privileged place to the mediational role of Christ in the historical Jesus and,
through Jesus, in historical christianity. From the mid-1960s onwards, this telo-
theological vision changes: the unity of religions is understood in terms of
historical interrelatedness and dynamic orientation towards transcendence
rather than eventual historical unity; and the relationship between Christ and
Jesus takes on a dimension of non-identity allowing for other, equally valid,
christic incarnations. These radicalized views actually enhance Panikkar's telo-
theological vision that he now variously describes as trinitarian, theandric, cosmotheandric, advaitic or non-dualistic. In buddhist parlance, it is the vision of the "radical relativity" of every dimension of reality--cosmic, human and divine.

Fifth: the evolution in the human experience of the divine. The evolutionary thrust in Panikkar's interpretation of religion is evident throughout these studies with reference to the history of christian self-interpretation, the phenomenology of spiritual attitudes towards the divine mystery, the three-stage project of 'deontologizing' God, and in his very perception of the cosmotheandric project. By 'evolution', we do not imply a simple chronological unfolding of human attitudes. In the first place, Panikkar specifies that he is talking of kairological moments that are associated with the forward movement of history but are never universal. In the second place, he does not describe the evolution of human attitudes in qualitative terms such as would be associated with a liberal "history of progress." In the third place, he does not subscribe to the idea of the mere development of ideas or attitudes; he speaks, rather, of 'break-throughs' in human consciousness and spiritual attitudes. His metaphor for describing these 'interruptions'--or perhaps 'eruptions'--in human awareness is the "law of growth" that includes elements of evolutionary continuity as well as moments of revolutionary transformation. Panikkar evidently believes that such a kairological break-through of human consciousness is at the basis of contemporary religious experience in which the divine reality is being
manifested anew through the dialogical interaction of the world's religious traditions.

While Panikkar was developing his cosmotheandric vision of reality, he began to reflect on the 'otherness' of western culture disclosed through the experience of secularization. Although such experience is not normally described in 'religious' terms, Panikkar is aware that its implications for religious consciousness are immense. He had already introduced this discussion with reference to the atheism within theism. In this sense, his interpretation of the "silent God" of Buddhism becomes a catalyst for investigating the increasingly "hidden God"--or, indeed, the "absent God"--of modern western experience.