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THE ECO-PNEUMATOLOGY OF RAIMON PANIKKAR

Spiritual Life in the Suburbs

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1. Introduction

Throughout the centuries, Christian theologians have been simultaneously perplexed and inspired by the doctrine of the Trinity. Countless philosophical attempts have tried to balance the Trinity in a complex metaphysics that is static enough to provide meaning but fluid enough to maintain at least an appearance of monotheism. Unfortunately, nearly all of these formulations leave us with an attenuated Spirit and many of them seem to forget the Spirit altogether. Raimon Panikkar, however, has introduced a uniquely *advaitin* Christian perspective to the Trinitarian enigma which takes the role of the Spirit seriously. In the context of a diversified discussion on religion and ecology, this article turns our attention to the role of the Holy Spirit in Panikkar's theology and the promise that such a pneumatology holds regarding ecology.

Inherent in this effort is a more immediate critique of dualism and modernism. The Trinity simply cannot fit into a metaphysical dualism without an imbalance. Modernist ideologies are largely to blame for the environmental crisis confronting our global community. This article is structured with these issues in mind. I begin with Panikkar's 1993 book, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*.[1] These sections demonstrate how logic and reason have gradually devalued *lived* experience, in general, and *religious* experience, in particular. This depreciation of experience has been concurrent with the attenuation of the Holy Spirit in Christian theology as well as in ecology. Because Panikkar emphasizes the

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[1]Raimon Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993.

importance of religious experience balanced with reason and logic, the last portion will focus on the importance of direct experience of the Spirit from the vantage of myth, mystical experience, and prayer. This should provide a basic presentation of Panikkar's eco-pneumatology and his *advaitin*[2] (or, perhaps, *atraytin*) Trinity. To provide us with a contextual grounding, I shall begin with a brief introduction of several of Panikkar's key concepts, principally ecosophy.

2. Ecosophy

Raimon Panikkar is a truly gifted linguist. More often than not, his theology and philosophy resemble poetry more than prose. Unfortunately, this tends to make his writings quite challenging for readers who are not at least somewhat familiar with Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit language and literature. Rest assured, though, that his elucidations are well worth the effort.

One example is his coinage and use of the word *ecosophy*. *Eco* is derived from the Greek *oikos*, meaning house. *Sophy* comes from the Greek *sophia*, meaning wisdom. The term ecosophy, then, carries a double meaning. In one sense, it is the *wisdom* that we have about the Earth (our house). Panikkar, however, employs another meaning of the term. Ecosophy is the *wisdom of the Earth*. This is not a wisdom that we possess, it is a wisdom from which we learn and appreciate, or, at least, we should. If ecology is an active discipline of study and involvement in nature, ecosophy is a passive discipline of listening to nature and recognizing that we are always already involved in nature. Ecosophy is prayerful, meditative, and reflective. This Earthly House in which we live, move, and have our being is wise and has much to teach us, if only we are quiet and patient enough to listen.

As we listen for this eco-Sophia to impart her wisdom, we should learn what we can from both our successes and our shortcomings in the past. In his *Cosmotheandric Experience*, Panikkar identifies three *kairological moments* in our theological history. In Greek, there are two words to designate time: *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos* is quantitative and divides time into consistent, measurable divisions (minutes, years,

[2]*Advaita* is a Sanskrit word meaning not-two. Essentially, it refers to the philosophy that even though we experience life as self and not-self, these are not-two different things. *Atraytin* means not-three, referring to the Trinity.

decades, etc.). *Kairos*, on the other hand, is qualitative and refers to eras or epochs in time (Ancient, Baroque, Renaissance, etc.). For Panikkar, the first kairological moment is best represented by St. Augustine. The second moment is the modernist period, beginning with Descartes and Kant. The third moment is well underway, but it depends upon us. For this task, we need both the wisdom of the Earth and the movement of the Spirit.

3. The Ecumenic Moment

First, we encounter the *ecumenic moment*, where the entire cosmos is interpreted to be a living organism. In these philosophies and theologies, St. Augustine, St. Thomas, and others wrestle with the notion of *anima mundi*, or the Spirit/Soul of the World. Although this term hints at a blessed eco-pneumatology, we quickly learn that the Spirit spoken of here is barely a spectre or penumbra. It is a presence devoid of power or influence. The *anima mundi* lures us in with promises of unity and connection, and yet it becomes stifling because it limits the Spirit within the temporal bounds of material creation. This presents us with a cosmological difficulty. The Spirit, conceived as an inner-cosmic principle (*anima mundi*), only vivifies the existing material world, and always in the same way. This limits the creative power of God. Panikkar observes that this makes

> God totally this-worldly – but also stunts any open possibilities for the World to develop and evolve along new and uncharted pathways – [thus,] making the World into a docile instrument of its animating principle or soul, instead of allowing the World to run the risk of creatureliness.[3]

Animated by *anima mundi*, the Earth not only grounds us in reality, but she also yields reality to us. The Earth is the fertile womb of life, but not its source: "She is the womb of beings. She receives the seed of the divine and transforms it into abundant life. The Earth is where – and how – the divine manifests its bounty and its power to Man."[4] This is the power and blessing of the first kairological moment of consciousness, but the reality of the Spirit is too easily conflated with the realness of the Earth. The two must remain interwoven, lest *terra firma* be mistaken for a substance: a wall which separates us from God rather than drawing us into an intimate

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[3]Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, 31.
[4]Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, 138.

connection with God. This is the purpose behind the subtitle of this article, "Spiritual Life in the Suburbs." We must not build a wall, as Augustine has done, by pitting two cities against one another. To live in the *civitate Dei*, or City of God, is to forsake the blessedness and sacred nature of the City of Humanity.[5] Conversely, to search for salvation only in the mind or only in the Earth is equally damaging, particularly if we forsake the presence *and activity* of the Spirit in either.

We are called to rejoice and enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit of God here in this natural world. By the immanence of the Spirit, we do not live in the city of materiality or in the city of spirituality; our *advaitin* life is lived between these dualities. In terms of Indian philosophy, *Purusa* and *Paakriti* are not-two. Similarly, the Spirit and Earth are not-two. We cannot say that they are one, because this would be tantamount to pantheism. Instead, by advocating that Spirit and Earth are not-two (*advaita*), we identify God's presence *in* all things (pan*en*theism). We need only to recognize the immanence of God in and through God's created world. Hence, our relationship with Nature is part and parcel of our relationship with God. Indeed, this is what we mean by the term eco-pneumatology, it is what Panikkar means by the term cosmotheandric, and it is precisely what is missing from Augustine's *anima mundi*.

4. The Economic Moment

If the ecumenical moment has imprisoned the Spirit in creaturely immanence, then the economic moment has imprisoned Her in humanity. Panikkar explains: "After Copernicus, the Earth ceases to be the cosmological centre of the universe… Man [*sic*] then steps into the vacuum and becomes the centre."[6] At the same time, Descartes and Kant begin to interrogate the knower of knowledge and question his/her credentials. Descartes initiates for the West what the East had been considering for centuries: that reality is, quite possibly, an imaginative construction of the mind. The result is a slip into a radical Platonic mind/body, subjective/ objective dichotomy. During the ecumenical moment, each person was viewed as a microcosm of the universe;

[5]Actually, Augustine used the term *civitas diaboli*, or City of Demons, by which he meant our Earthly abode. Panikkar notes that these "have ceased to be viable human paradigms." Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, 42.

[6]Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, 36.

Descartes, however, confuses us into thinking that the human person is actually the *macrocosm.* Truth becomes the prisoner of reason and the result is an anthropocentric vision of reality.

Panikkar enlightens us with his playful deconstruction of the word economy. The *nomos* (law) of humanity, becomes its *eco* (house); "his [sic] home is no longer the Earth, which he now exploits for his own purposes, but the ideal world of his mind."[7] The Spirit, once fully incarnate in the *anima mundi*, becomes fully disincarnated. No longer is the future of humankind at the mercy of the Spirit; it is now believed to be fully within the hands of the human person. Philosophers such as Spinoza, Feuerbach, Nietzsche, and others begin to recognize the considerable philosophical and pragmatic problems with anthropomorphic conceptions of God. As we begin to discover the natural and physical properties of nature, God's role and place in human activity is eroded and even replaced by human activity itself. The Holy Ghost is simply another casualty among the apparitions which evaporate into an ethereal mist.

Just as the Copernican revolution left a void at the scientific centre of the universe, the Cartesian revolution left a void at the conceptual centre. For Augustine, the challenge was to reconcile the presence of the Holy Spirit in the *anima mundi* with the transcendence of God. But after Descartes, "reason becomes the Spirit and the Spirit the supreme reality, God… Idealism reigns and the dignity of Man lies in sharing this very movement of the Spirit."[8] But this movement of the Spirit is attenuated; mystical experience is dismissed as intellectual illusion; matter and praxis become enslaved to the limitations of human reason. So long as *anthros* is at the centre, we remain prisoners inside Plato's cave. But, as damaging as such a tear in the cosmic fabric might be, it is also an irreversible fact. Richard Dawkins may find the anthropomorphic God to be a pathological delusion, but this does not mean that the Spirit has lost her place; it simply means that we had mis-placed Her to begin with.

For Panikkar, modernism is not wrong, but the concreteness which we have attributed to it is misplaced and we must move beyond it. Postmodern simply means *after* the modern, but this is not *after* in the chronological, but in the kairological or qualitative sense. This distinction is at the very core of his eco-pneumatology. His postmodernism is a

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[7]Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, 36.
[8]Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, 35.

reaction against subjectivism and scientific determinism, which Descartes called *practical philosophy*. It is primarily this philosophy that has led the world into a state of environmental crisis. One can read the excitement in Descartes' words as he envisions the possibilities of scientific advancement:

> …knowing the force and the action of fire, water, air, the stars, heavens and all other bodies that environ us, as distinctly as we know the different crafts of our artisans, we can in the same way employ them in all those uses to which they are adapted, and thus render ourselves the masters and possessors of nature.[9]

Doubtless, when he imagined the force of the stars, Descartes did not have in mind an atomic mushroom cloud. Postmodern thought is not opposed to "knowing the force and action" of nature, and for such knowledge we are indebted to science. However, we should not seek to "render ourselves the masters and possessors of nature," but regard ourselves as members of nature who are in communion with nature, with love and respect of God's precious creation, which is filled and fulfilled by the immanent presence of the Holy Spirit.

It is important to clarify, here, that Science, as-such, is not under attack. Panikkar, himself, holds a PhD in Chemistry and, I would imagine, holds the same fascination and enthusiasm for scientific discovery and innovation that most of us do. Neither is logic or reason, strictly speaking, under attack. What is being sharply criticized is the modernist tendency to prioritize logic above human experience and the belief in an objective worldview. What is being sought is recognition of the limitations of logic and science to fully express the nature of the human condition, particularly the nature of the human relationship with the Earth and its inhabitants.

5. The Ecological Interlude

But scientific humanism is only the first movement of Panikkar's second kairological moment. In fact, he feels that signs abound that this modernist period is reaching its end. The human community has grown weary of its alienation from heaven and earth. Humankind has severed itself from an

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[9]Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason in the Search for Truth in the Sciences*, trans. E. S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross, cited in Jürgen Moltmann, *Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992, 28-29.

unacceptable God. At our Genesis, God began to separate (*bereshit bara Elohim*),[10] and humans have completed this separation with notions of intellectual absolutism. But this is not the end of our economy. We continue to discover the laws of this house.

Modernism has not only damaged Earth and God, it has also damaged the human soul. The Trinitarian balance is more than just a theological construct, it is an *advaitin* sense of holism. Humanism severs humanity both from the transcendent, liberating God above and from the harmonious World below.

> Man [sic] becomes increasingly lonely. He has spread the net of his intelligibility like DDT and killed all the intermediary beings he cannot master with his mind – the spirits, once his companions, are no longer credible, the Gods have flown, and a solitary and ever more superfluous God fades away. Even Nature, on which Man seems to have such an iron grip, now slips from his grasp, both intellectually and physically.[11]

We witness this slipping grasp in numerous postmodernist formations, even at the peak of the modernist movement. Panikkar offers as examples Gödel's theory of *incompleteness*, Einstein's theory of *relativity*, Heisenberg's principal of *indeterminancy*, Freud's and Jung's *unconscious*, Bergson's *élan vital*, Heidegger's *Angst*, and Sartre's *absurde*. These examples represent glimmerings of mystery[12] and the promise of liberation from dualism and absolutism.

During this *ecological interlude*, the optimism so readily identifiable in Descartes' *Discourse* gives way to the sobering realization that humans are not dominators of Nature, but are, in fact, a part of Nature. To dominate Nature with technology is to dominate ourselves. A vital appreciation of ecosophy, the wisdom of the Earth, is needed. We cannot expect God's wise Creation to simply tolerate our perpetual abuse without exacting some price from us in return. The depletion of natural resources, the pollution of rivers, and the dramatic loss of biodiversity are but a few effects of our terrorist attack on Nature's Spirit. For Panikkar, however, this is symptomatic of an underlying crisis of a dualistic worldview.

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[10]Genesis 1:1. *Bara* is traditionally translated as "create;" it also carries the meaning "to cut or divide." See 2 Sam. 12:17; Ez. 21:19.

[11]Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, 41-42.

[12]I am grateful to Catherine Keller for this poetic phrasing.

Patriarchy, objectivism, and domination are symptoms of this dualism. The Augustinian notion of the City of God and the City of Man is a paradigm that has run its course and the course is leading towards self-destruction.

The Cartesian revolution has resulted in a desacralizing of Nature and a disembodiment of the Spirit. This out-of-body experience coincides with a scientific humanism which casts doubt and suspicion (if not outright dismissal) of anything ethereal. Dawkins' *God Delusion*[13] is simply one of countless examples. For many in our society, this spiritual void has been filled with a deeply personal sense of spirituality that seems completely disconnected from this world. The *me-and-my-god* sensibility continues to deny communion with nature or any involvement of the Spirit in this city, the City of Man. Dawkins is right to criticize and Christians should recognize that in our Theandric devotion that we are missing something; in fact, we are missing the World.

For Panikkar, the Trinitarian construction of World-God-Man includes a perichoresis in which humans are invited to the dance. This is well represented in the celebration of the Eucharist. It is through our physical, mental, and spiritual devotion that we are transformed through the work of the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). Trinitarian theology is not a passive and transcendent exercise for the sake of sheer academic debate. We are called to be actively and intimately involved. "The whole universe is called to share in the Trinitarian perichoresis."[14]

Before we examine the third movement, we must examine the problems associated with the logic of this household (eco-logic). Panikkar is not only critical of modernism and environmental usury, he is also critical of the ecological movement as it is practised by many environmental activists today. Such ideologies rarely call for a radical reformation of our approach to Nature. Instead, they seek to manipulate and manage Mother Earth more humanely and more rationally. This is, indeed, a welcome change, but the underlying idea remains the same: Earth is not a companion, but a tool. It remains wild and unruly. Such ecologies seek to protect the Earth instead of dominating it, but fall far

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[13]Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*. New York: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 2006.

[14]Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany: The Fullness of Man*, trans. Alfred DiLascia, Milan: Jaca Books, 1999 (also, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 147.

short of recognizing God's Creation as a fellow creature of Humanity. That is, the Earth was created *for us* and *entrusted to* us, but this is quite different from recognizing that the Earth was created *with* us. The modernist subject/object paradigm persists.

Panikkar identifies the inherent patriarchic attitude of the ecological movement as one aspect of the problem. *Man* still has dominion over *Mother* Nature, but attempts to practise this dominion in a more *responsible* manner. The tendency is to reformulate the style in which we seek to control and manipulate the planet in a way that is more harmonious with nature. This is a vital, if long-overdue, adjustment, but at its core, it is simply a different version of the same approach. A gentle emperor is certainly preferable to a tyrannical one, but both are a far cry from peaceful cooperation and mutual enrichment.

The problem with ecology is simply the complement to what is wrong with anthropomorphic theologies. Subject-object, spirit-matter, transcendent-immanent, mind-body, and other such dichotomies, which are at the core of modernist epistemology, have resulted in the desacralizing of nature and the loss of theological grounding. Ecology and theology have both become so dominated by the human logic, that *Sophia*, the wisdom that only comes from experience, has lost Her place. The challenge that Panikkar proposes is to liberate ecology from the suffocating logic of modernism and to once again prioritize mystical experience. This is certainly not to suggest that we adopt an *il*-logical approach, but rather that we need to adopt an approach that is not dominated by human logic alone. This *ecos* has been here far longer than we can comprehend and it is filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit. Our ecology will be forever enhanced if we simply make room in the discussion for Earth to share her wisdom. Our ecological voices should not be silenced, but they should pause long enough to listen for the ecosophical song.

6. The Catholic Moment

This brings us to the third kairological moment of consciousness, which Panikkar calls *the catholic moment.* This pertains to a consciousness that has neither been attained nor is it fully attainable. However, given the urgency of the global ecological crisis, "futuristic dreams are not enough to save those who will die in the meantime… nothing short of a radical *metanoia*, a complete turning of mind, heart, and spirit will meet today's

needs."[15] So long as policies and praxis approach the situation as Man *toward* Nature, the end cannot be reached. What is called for, instead, is a fully integrated approach towards a new innocence. This is not to be confused with a futile quest to recapture innocence lost, for once innocence has been disturbed, it is lost forever. The innocence that Panikkar intends is an innocence of self.

In the ecumenical moment of consciousness, the knower is concerned only with the known and the unknown. During the economic moment, the knower becomes known and everything becomes suspect while simultaneously becoming enslaved to reason. The third moment now seeks an innocence of self in which the knower is able to focus neither on what is known nor on the *whom* who knows what is known, but beyond both. As Panikkar describes in some detail, to know an apple *qua* apple is to be able to say a great deal about an apple without actually being able to say what an apple *is*.[16] The innocence we seek is not a return to the naivety before the first bite, but instead to be able to see both created and Creator in the apple. For such a *metanoia*, we need the assistance of the Spirit.

7. A Myth and a Mystic

Neither monism nor dualism is adequate to describe such innocence. In fact, nothing is sufficient to describe naivety; for any such description would obviate the ignorance required for such innocence. What we need is either a myth or a mystic. Only a mystic is able to grasp the true value of a myth and anyone who finds enlightenment *through* a myth is a mystic. The *cosmotheandric experience* is nothing less than a myth, and this myth is nothing less than the Spirit. But what is meant by the Spirit? Countless metaphors and descriptions have attempted to answer this question and while all of them may be correct, none of them is complete, even in amalgamation.

To understand the myth of the Spirit and its relationship to consciousness, we must first understand the notion of myth. This, of course, is an inexhaustible concept and one upon which tomes have been written. To glimpse Panikkar's understanding of it, though, we find insight in his *Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics* (1978). Here we find a helpful metaphor: "You cannot look directly at the source of light; you turn your

[15]Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, 46; original emphasis.
[16]Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, 48-50.

back to it so that you may see it – not the light, but the illuminated things. Light is invisible. So too with the myth… it is a *sui generis* form of consciousness."[17] We find at the beginning of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* an interesting insight: The myth-lover is a lover of wisdom (philosopher).[18] A living myth cannot be separated from the meaning of the myth anymore than the meaning of *love* can be separated from the experience of love. Similarly, while all myths deserve and require reflection, we can never argue that any particular interpretation is the correct one. In fact, a myth or mystical experience may hold one meaning for me at one time in my life, and hold quite a different significance at another time. Mystical experience neither needs nor accepts intermediaries. The experience itself is the meaning.

Likewise, the *cosmotheandric* experience is a mystical myth. It is *sui generis* and deeply personal while at the same time being universal and inter-relational. What is missing from both monistic and dualistic constructions of consciousness is the mystical and Spiritual union of World (*cosmos*), God (*theos*), and "Man" (*andros*). Only when one is able to see *through* the myth is one able to understand it. In this sense, a myth is like a pointing finger. To see the finger is to miss what it is pointing at. Only when we see past or even through the finger are we able to understand its purpose. To see *through* the myth is to see past oneself and even forget oneself. This forgetting is the innocence of the cosmotheandric experience.

Augustine's twin cities paradigm is not without its merits. The result, however, is nothing short of material reductionism if not material contempt. To foster contempt or fear for Creation is to undermine the wisdom of the Creator and, thus, the wisdom of the Creation (ecosophy). But to move from one city to the other is at least as damaging.

> Spiritual reductionism is as deleterious as material reductionism. Our task is to overcome any and all of these overbearing reductionisms which threaten to confine reality to but one of its constituents… this can only be done if we pierce through our own

[17]Raimon Panikkar, *Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics*, New York: Paulist Press, 1978, 4.

[18]ὁ φιλόμυθος φιλόσοφος πώς ἐστιν.

anthropocentric perspective in the ongoing conquest of the new innocence.[19]

8. Christ as the Manifestation of Spirit

Having examined Panikkar's more philosophical description of the cosmotheandric experience, we have better insight to examine the role of the Spirit in its eco-pneumatological application. Six years after publishing *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, Panikkar offered *Christophany: The Fullness of Man.* At the risk of oversimplifying his purpose, we might say that *Christophany* is a uniquely Christian approach to the earlier thesis. It is a direct challenge to the classical approaches to Christology and a simultaneous proposal to view Christ as a myth of microcosm and a vessel for the cosmotheandric experience.

In the preface to his work, Panikkar explains: "The first task of every creature is to complete, to perfect, his [*sic*] icon of reality."[20] He is careful to distance himself from theologies that attempt to universalize Christianity through such paradigms as *anonymous Christians* or fulfilment theory. He writes: "I am not saying that Christ is the fullness of life but that this fullness, effective since the beginning, is one that the Christian tradition calls Jesus the Christ."[21] With these assumptions in mind, we can delve more deeply into his concept of *Christophany*.

In keeping with his earlier commitments to social and ecological justice, Panikkar identifies another aspect of our task. Our hermeneutical circle must consider the lived experiences of men and women of all cultures. This is not to suggest that it must attempt to formulate itself in a way that is acceptable by all people, or even in a way that includes all people; but it should not be deaf to the cries of the oppressed or blind to the Truths found beyond its scope.[22] Essentially, Christophany differs from Christology because it is open to the experiences of humanity and the experiences of the cosmos. It is, indeed, a mystical experience of Christ. "Christophany takes nothing away from Christology but is open to the reality of the Spirit, which, without separating *logos* from *pneuma*, does

[19]Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, 58.
[20]Panikkar, *Christophany*, xx.
[21]Panikkar, *Christophany*, xx.
[22]Panikkar, *Christophany*, 5.

not subordinate the latter to the former."[23]

The experience of Christ is irreducible to logic and reason. Logic can only reflect upon experience or upon reason itself, which is ultimately rooted in experience. But life is much more than reflection upon life; it is also about the lived experiences that flourish both before and after reflection. In Heideggerian terms, to whatever extent life is about Being, it is always already about Being-in-the-world. The hermeneutics of experience, of religion, or even of logic and reason, is always limited by language itself. Language can never be anything more (or anything less) than symbolic. However universal our language might be, logic can only approach universal problems in a concrete and, therefore, limited way.[24] Symbols and myths are the very language of faith.[25]

Christophany does not replace or supplant logic. Quite the contrary, it approaches the *logos* in a presence that is open to the activity and influence of the Spirit. It seeks not only to reflect upon Christ in a philosophical manner, but to be receptive to the actual manifestation of Christ. The Greek *phaneros*, manifestation, concerns the direct appearance of Christ to the human consciousness. The word comes from the Greek root, *phos* meaning light. This represents the *new innocence* of the cosmotheandric experience.

Prior to the moment of reflection is a moment of complete and naïve union. For example, in the instant that a person sees an apple, the person and the apple are one. The apple is not first experienced as something other; it is first experienced within the mind and is only then reflected upon and determined to be something other. Similarly, when Christ is first considered, prior to reflection, Christ and devotee are one. Christ is the light, the *phos*, which acts upon the person in a prehensive union: an *advaitin* experience. At this moment of innocence, the devotee becomes not simply a knower of Christ, but a manifestation of Christ… a Christophany. But is such an innocence lost the moment it is gained?

9. Prayerful Openness to the Spirit

It would seem from this description that Christophany can only be a passive experience. In a sense, this is true, as it is true of mystical union in

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[23]Panikkar, *Christophany*, 10.

[24]Panikkar, *Christophany*, 9.

[25]Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, New York: Harper & Row, 1957, 58.

general. Reflecting upon Anselm, Panikkar notes that Christology is *fides quaerens intellectum*; it is faith seeking to understand. Christophany, on the other hand, is better described as *fides petens intellectum*, faith praying for understanding.[26] Initially, this is a passive experience, in the same way that mystical experience tends to call for an openness of self, a self-withdrawal. But passiveness is not to be confused with inaction. It is a contemplative attitude in anticipation of the *pati divina*, or "impact of the divine factor."[27] It is an active withdrawal or projecting-opening of the self and a welcoming of the Spirit.

Through this lens, we can better understand the activity of the Spirit in John 14:6. In the Christophanic experience, Christ is not merely an historical person that revealed to us the way, the truth, and the life. Because Christ is eternally manifest, Christ *IS* actually the way, the truth, and the life. Such an understanding, which happens to be a much more literal interpretation of the text, is a hermeneutic which takes into account the lived experiences of men and women of different cultures or traditions. This Christophany also takes the divine incarnation and the Spirit of Christ more seriously than, perhaps, some other interpretations which seek a broad notion of salvation, because Christ *is* the way, the truth and the life; the way and the truth and the life *is* Christ. Jesus, as an historical figure, can only be *venerated* as the fully incarnated Spirit of God. But, when we allow ourselves to be open to this same Spirit, then we are able to experience the manifestation of Christ and receive the Spirit of Truth within ourselves (John 14:17). What Panikkar offers cannot properly be called a Pneumatological Christology, it is a Pneumatological Christophany. That is, it is an openness to the Spirit (*pneuma*), which manifests (*phania*) Christ and invites meaning-giving reflection (*logos*) upon that experience.

From this vantage point, we see that Christophany is concerned with both the *manifestation* of God (in Man) and the *divinization* of Man (in God). It is an experience of mutual enrichment and *advaitin* mysticism. But this is not an ontological change; it is an ontological revelation. Further, this revelation is hardly complete if we stop at this juncture. The Christophanic experience is certainly not modernist, in the manner that it was described earlier, but it is quite subjective, nonetheless. The missing

[26]Panikkar, *Christophany*, 11.
[27]Panikkar, *Christophany*, 11.

element is the *tatva*, the *that-ness* of manifestation.

In the *advaitin* tradition, into which Panikkar is certainly well placed, there are several great sayings, or *mah□v□ky□ni*. One is *Aham Brahm□smi*, which is well represented, I think, in the Christophany as it has been described here. But the *advaitin* (non-dualist) cannot and must not stop here, and Panikkar certainly does not make such a mistake. Another of the great sayings is *Tattvam asi*. This reminds us that this great Creation, this material world, both fully animated and seemingly inanimate, are manifestations and signs of God. Panikkar reminds us that this material world is both restored and redeeming, if not by virtue of Creation, then certainly by the resurrection of the flesh.[28] We cannot isolate the moments of the Cosmotheandric experience anymore than we can isolate the persons of the Trinity. Through the work of the Spirit, every experience of Christ is a cosmotheandric experience as is every authentic Being-with the Natural world. Such an experience cannot be reached through *ecumene*, economy, or ecology, but such innocence is the very essence of eco-pneumatology.

Christ is, at once, creator, redeemer, and glorifier. We must not allow these concepts to become separated in our understanding of them because to do so would not only damage our doctrine of Christ's unity, but would also undermine the role that *we* have to play and isolate the involvement of the Spirit. We cannot simply admire Christ from afar or venerate and pray to an ancient symbol. Instead, we are called to recognize the very manifestation of Christ in all persons and in all things, including and especially ourselves. Such a manifestation, such a divinization is, in no way, an egoistic deification; it is a death of ego and a withdrawal of self as an invitation for the Spirit to manifest. To whatever extent we share love, sympathy, suffering, and joy with our neighbours, be they rich or poor, near or far, Christian or non-Christian, to that extent we discover the true face of Christ that is in all of us.[29] We are reminded of Matthew 25:40: "just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." From the Christophanic perspective, this is not a metaphorical or symbolic statement; it is a literal and ontological statement concerning the very nature and manifestation of Christ in this world and our responsibility thereto. Ours is an eco-pneumatological responsibility.

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[28]Panikkar, *Christophany*, 181.
[29]Panikkar, *Christophany*, 168.

10. Conclusion

The quest for a responsible environmental ethic and an in*Spiring* eco-pneumatology is perpetual and multifaceted. Hence, as we arrive at the end of this dialogue with Panikkar, we are reminded of the need to return, once again, to the beginning of our endeavour. We examined three aspects (moments) of the *logic* and *reason* of the Spirit. Next, we examined three methods to *experience* the Spirit. Prior to both of these efforts, though, we recognized the need to prayerfully listen and open ourselves to receive the ecosophy, the wisdom of the Earth. We have recognized our role as caretakers of this household, but the time has come for a radical *metanoia* in which we begin to recognize the Earth as caretaker of us and of the countless organisms that are equally cared for by this Mother Earth. This is not a call to abandon the logos of Christology, Pneumatology, Theology, and the other-*logies*, but it is a call to recognize their limitations and embrace the wisdom of this *oikos* in our daily experiences of the Spirit. It is not a call to abandon "the City of God" or "the City of Man," but to experience Spiritual life in the suburbs. Ultimately, this house belongs to *Sophia*.