



---

## To Call to Return to the Original Church

**Francis X. D'Sa SJ**

*Professor (Emeritus), Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune*

**Abstract:** Pope Francis' pontificate has signalled openness to different cultural approaches. This is being exploited differently by different cultures and power groups. The theologians in India inspired by R. Panikkar's Christophany have opened up to the Revelations in the Indic Religions. Regarding the Church, Panikkar has shown that the Church was understood in the New Testament and the Church Tradition till the Reformation as always existing and came to be on earth along with Creation. Today however the Church as an institution has replaced the original intuition so completely that the original now sounds strange.

**Keywords:** Pope Francis, Raimundo Panikkar, Christophany, Church.

He [the Christ] is the image of the Invisible God, the first-born of all creation,  
for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth,  
visible and invisible,  
whether thrones or dominations or principalities or authorities  
all things were created through him and for him.  
He is before all things, and in Him, all things hold together.  
He is the head of the body, the church;  
he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead,  
that in everything he might be pre-eminent.  
For in him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell  
whether on earth or in heaven,  
making peace by the blood of the cross. Col 1:15-20 (RSV)

## Introducing the Theme

After the time of the Vatican II Council, some of the discussions among Indian theologians centred mainly on degrees of ‘belonging’. Behind this loomed the picture of concentric circles. The circles nearer the centre signified a deeper degree of belonging while the peripheral circles indicated a weaker link.

Undergirding this was the concern for our sisters and brothers from other [faith] traditions. It was a time when the question of identity (person, nature, culture, religion) was becoming gradually thematic. ‘Third-world’ nations had already become or were soon to become politically free from colonial rule.

Today, there is a much greater political self-consciousness among India’s theologians and also a certain inner theological freedom (thanks to Pope Francis), compared to the times when Cardinals Joseph Ratzinger and Gerhard Mueller headed the Office of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF). We have come so far that even Cardinals do not hesitate to criticize the Pope in public, as do Cardinals Mueller, Burke and Sarah, what in their own time as centres of power was unheard of!

Mueller claims he can be of service to Pope Francis in warding off potential schisms in the Church, schisms he sees looming on the horizon thanks to Pope Francis' ambiguous formulations due to his lack of theological background. Burke gives the impression that as a canon-lawyer he can clearly discern exactly where Pope Francis is going off the beaten doctrinal path, and Sarah is sure neither liturgy nor Vatican II is Pope Francis' cup of tea. There is a lot of .

Furthermore, all three of them have gone on record that they are willing to help the Pope to overcome the chinks in the different aspects of his theological armour. With friends like these, Francis will be well protected against doctrinal, moral, liturgical and other shortcomings. All this shows how the times they are a-changing!

However, there are other Cardinals like Walter Kasper, who support the Pope. Kasper is impatient with people who have been accusing the Pope of heresy. He insists that there is no sign of any heresy here. Kasper was a longtime Professor of Theology at the University of Tübingen, Germany. Later on, as a Bishop (and then as Cardinal) he was President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Pope Francis considers him "a good theologian", his kind of theologian; the Pope is impressed by his insistence on mercy in the guidance of divorced couples.

Some of the clergy and laity (in reality a small group) opposing the alleged new doctrine of the Pope on divorce in *Amoris laetitia*, seem to lack awareness of the nature of theology. Even some who are teaching (moral) theology take their subject as a collection of (juridical) propositions that over the years the Church has formulated "once and for all time". They forget that the Church's teaching is living guidance to concrete people of a particular time and culture who understand things in a definite manner, and differently from the way their ancestors did.

Take, for instance, the phenomenon of divorce and the simple, yes, almost simplistic, way our ancestors understood it and the

complex system that *we* are entangled in! There is a chasm of a difference between their pre-understanding and ours. We cannot overlook historical differences such as these, especially when discussing familiar matters. Faggioli is absolutely right when he insists, “Catholic teaching is not a mineral. It is an animal”. Everything is under the sway of the historical process, even the mineral (*pace* Faggioli). The pragmatic popular eye may be blind where the historical process is concerned but not necessarily the trained, discerning eye of the seasoned historian. Everything is registered in a person’s DNA. However, it requires a researching historian to bring out the processes hidden therein.

In addition to the overwhelming group that supports Pope Francis that Cardinal Kasper stands for there is a third group, the group (of Bishops) from Africa that has severe cultural reservations regarding gays, lesbians and transgender people. This African group, if it is to be taken seriously, needs to work out how this is connected with African culture specifically, and show how much of it is culture and how much cultural prejudice, and how much of it is doctrinally derived, etc. We from the outside have to wait, listen and observe – not only what African bishops and theologians say and assert, but also what their creative thinkers, writers and poets say in their traditions and in the literature they produce.

Having said this, we now proceed to the main theme of this contribution. There are two important reasons why the discussion on “belonging” has not reached even today the shores of relevance. The first is because the Christ of these discussions was ‘limited’ to the Christ of the Christians in spite of the fact that the Christ of the New Testament is a comprehensive and holistic Christ through whom this world and all that is, came into being and remains in being. This is the Christ that Raimon Panikkar highlights in his *Christophany*, the Christ who is open to and builds bridges with the cultures and Revelations of other religions as also with those who believe that they are outside the world of Revelation.

Secondly, the Church that was at the centre of the controversial reflections on the Church arising from the time of the Reformation were probably not derived from the world of such a Christophany but were, to a great extent, a product of doctrinal developments.

## **1. The Mystery, Hidden from the Beginning ...**

Panikkar spells out in nine Sūtras the specificity of Christophany, i.e., the Christic Experience! As is usual with Panikkar, he rarely goes into details, leaving it to us to work them out with the help of his other writings.

### ***a. “Christ is the Christian Symbol for the Whole of Reality.”***

The first and most important statement of Panikkar’s comment on Christophany can be treated as: (a) Christ as Symbol; (b) Christ as Christian Symbol and (c) for the Whole of Reality. From these themes a larger Christian understanding of the Christ should emerge, on the one hand; on the other, such a Christic understanding should make it unmistakably clear that it is only a Christian understanding that we are talking about and that the approach does not subsume all the other traditions regarding the Absolute Mystery!

In this context, it is necessary to clarify Panikkar’s approach to the symbol. For him, a symbol *makes present* that reality of which it is a symbol. Straightforward as the statement seems to be, it means more than meets the eye. Here a symbol, unlike a sign, works on the ontological, not on the epistemological level because “symbolizes” says, “makes really present”, not represents, what it symbolizes. A face, e.g., really makes present a person. When one sees a face, one sees the person whose face it is. Where the face is, there is also the being whose face it is. A symbol makes present the being it symbolizes. “Makes present” is indeed very different from “stands for” or “represents”. Makes present is ontological, stands for is epistemological.

Thus, for instance, when we state that Christ symbolizes the whole of Reality it refers to makes present as a certain face makes a certain body present to one who knows a certain person. Our Sūtra insists that Christ is the face, the symbol, of all Reality. But the face is not the whole of Reality; it is the symbol for the whole of Reality. In Panikkar's words, it is *pars pro toto*, the part standing for the whole. Besides, it is only the Christian symbol, not the universal symbol for all believers. Other traditions have their own approaches to, other symbols for this Mystery. In our times, Christians need to affirm this belief because its nexus with Reality was not and is not always proclaimed thus. Sacred secularity is very relevant for our age. It is the functional equivalent of finding God in all things.

### ***b. "The Christian Recognizes Christ In and Through Jesus."***

The First Sūtra *might* put off believers from other traditions. The purpose of the Second Sūtra clarifies the place of Jesus with regard to the Christ for Christians. Their door to the Christ is different, not separate, from that of other traditions. The Christian door, so to say, is Jesus. There is no doubt about the historical nature of Jesus. But this historical character as such has been important for some cultures where history has played a dominant role. But the colonial powers that brought Christianity to the "colonized" countries used it as an argument against countries where history is not an important category and hence was not considered a positive factor in their respective cosmovisions. This turned out to be a real hindrance in the work of mission and evangelization. It hindered the growth of a positive attitude towards Christianity among the native religions because the Christianity they came in touch with was a colonial Christianity that pretended to speak for all Christians. Moreover, they [over-]stressed the historical character of Jesus

of Nazareth, which the others found hard to accept. And this overstress has come in the way of its interaction with Asian cultures. Speaking generally, Asian cultures have a different stance on time and history. Understandably, western Christian missionaries couldn't appreciate the specific contribution of Asian cultures with regard to time and vice versa. The transhistorical consciousness of their cultures has evoked a negative reaction from Christian missionaries, and the historical consciousness of the Christian traditions have hampered a free and open dialogue right up to our times. Actually, this Sūtra is a stepping-stone towards dialogue by stating where Jesus stands. Historical consciousness and transhistorical consciousness are two different kinds of time-experience.

### ***c. "The Identity of Christ Is Not the Same as His Identification."***

The Third Sūtra introduces a clarification that is as profound as it is philosophical. Identity has to do with the "who", whereas identification focuses on the "what". Identity is neither logically deducible nor is it externally perceptible to the senses. Identification refers to the articulation of the experience of a certain individual, but that is not to be confused with the identity of the person. We know so many individuals in the course of our lives (work, profession, etc.) that there will not be much difficulty in locating the differences between their identifications. However, in a deep relationship of friendship, we might get some "intimation" of identity. Coming to know the identification of Jesus as done by different Christian, Hindu, Muslim and other historical groups is a different kind of task. These descriptions are more of an external kind. However, coming to know the identity of a person like Jesus of Nazareth is possible, if at all, through meditative and ascetical practices, and this is a never-ending, life-long process. What the present Sūtra is

drawing attention to is the fact that even for Christians, it is far from being a cakewalk to the identity of the Christ!

**d. “Christians Do Not Have a Monopoly on the Knowledge of Christ.”**

This is one of the more fundamental Sūtras of Christophany. The Name Christ may lead Christians to imagine that Christ is exclusively theirs. Christophany makes it clear that this is not so. Christ is the Christian Name for, the Christian door to, the Absolute Mystery. One of the major tasks of Christophany from the Christian perspective is to confirm that Christ symbolises that Mystery to whom all belong and in whom all exist.

Furthermore, each Tradition has its own Name for this Mystery! To confirm this, the Sūtra explicitly asserts that Christians do not have a Monopoly on the Knowledge of Christ. Even to Christians, Christ remains a Mystery! It is to the Christians that he proclaims, I am the way, the truth and the life. He is not asking the followers of other religions to give up their religion and its teaching. But if anyone follows him (in both the senses of the word), then for that person too he is the way, the truth and the life.

**e. “Christophany Transcends Tribal and Historical Christology.”**

Sūtra Five is aware of its roots in “Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, a tribal God, one among many others, often more powerful or in any event equally cruel.” It was the merit of the prophets of Israel to convert the Hebrews’ tribal God into the God for all and of all. With prophetic insight Panikkar adds here: “The task of Christians – perhaps our *kairos* – may be *the conversion – yes, conversion – of a tribal Christology into a Christophany less bound to a single cultural current.*” The Christology that India has inher-



ited mostly from the West is ‘historical’ Christology. It has not only overstressed the historical aspect and is therefore somewhat of a misfit in the Indic context where the sense of history is not better but very different indeed. “Christophany does not contest the historicity of Jesus. It merely affirms that history is not the only dimension of the real and that *Christ’s reality is thus not exhausted with Jesus’s historicity.*” Panikkar asserts that the historical overstress is clear even in Vatican II. “The cosmovision of the council thereby effectively forgot the angelic and cosmic dimension of reality and ignored the perspectives of other cultures.” The concern here is about connectivity with other cultures – to be enriched by their insights and their critique. Very few refer to Panikkar’s diatopical hermeneutics – the effort to relate *topoi* of different cosmovisions!

**f. “The Protological, Historical, and Eschatological Christ Is a Unique and Selfsame Reality, Distended in Time, Extended in Space, and Intentional in Us.”**

We can paraphrase this thus: The Christ that always existed, the one who lived in history and the one whom we shall encounter at the end of time is the selfsame reality. This Sūtra is best understood on the backdrop of the cosmotheandric experience. Time is a constituent of Man who experiences continuity of time in the events of life (*distended in space*), not discrete moments. Man, also experiences things as *extended in space*; here there is continuity of space. However, Man does not stop with what he experiences in time and space but longs to follow this up. Man yearns for “more”, wants the narrative to go on beyond (*intentional*).

**g. “The Incarnation as Historical Event Is Also Inculturation.”**

Admittedly the language of the Sūtra vis à vis Panikkar’s comment might be somewhat confusing: “As a historical act

in time and space, the incarnation is also a cultural event, intelligible only within a particular religiocultural context, that of a specific history. The divine incarnation as such is, however, not a historical event but a divine trinitarian act.” I make sense of all this thus: The incarnation as a divine trinitarian act is *in* history but it is not *of* history. Our acceptance of this happening as a divine trinitarian act is an act of faith. The act of faith is not the product of a logical or rational process but as something that makes sense. We do this in so many cases without finding this to be irrational. Furthermore, the incarnation is intelligible, if at all, in the particular context of the prophets who opened up the people to God’s larger world of mercy and salvation. The uncritical acceptance of the world of history Panikkar calls ‘historiolatry’. His contention is that with the acceptance of the heliocentric system “not only was the earth no longer considered the center of the universe, but the angels, demons, and spirits, which constituted parts of that cosmovision began to vanish and Christ began to lose his cosmic function - which had been obvious in the canonical scriptures as centre of the entire universe (Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 2:10).” After that, the Church’s [implicit] surrender was to colonial thinking – “one single culture is sufficient to embrace and understand the whole spectrum of human experience”. Basically, Sūtra Seven intends to integrate traditional Christology (“in history”) with Christophany (“not of history”) - “the quintessence of Christ’s mystery – *totus Deus et totus homo* (‘the whole God and the whole man’).” To understand the Sūtra we have to recall Panikkar’s distinction between *mythos* and *logos*. Their exigencies on the trinitarian level are different and we must be aware of them especially when Panikkar speaks of non-duality. As a further help he suggests: “We should distinguish *experiential Christianness* from *cultural Christianity* and *doctrinal Christendom*.” These distinctions are essential today for theologizing cross-culturally. What should be common to all Christians is *experiential Christianness*. This unites Christians and at the same time,

this will help keep them faithful to their cultural specificity and open to doctrinal diversity. The other really important point in the commentary on this Sūtra is about inculturation. One aspect of inculturation is the attempt to enter into a world of meaning that is not one's own, it is the endeavour to understand the world that one is trying to enter. Though the incarnation is a unique phenomenon, Panikkar considers the Judaic background a suitable site for the incarnation (obviously *a posteriori*) because the coming of the Divine into the Judaic world of meaning had been well prepared by their prophets for quite some time in its history - despite the unrelenting resistance of the Jewish leaders to Jesus in the Gospels; *and* despite the brave struggles of the early Councils to work out trinitarian and christological formulations to unite the Greek and the Latin faithful. As a historical note one may add that none of the trinitarian formulations has really found resonance among the faithful, resonance that is born of theological understanding.

#### ***h. "The Church Is Considered a Site of the Incarnation."***

*Pace* the modern mentality which considers the Church primarily as an *institution*, this Sūtra reminds us that from early tradition (*ecclesia ab Abel*) its prime understanding and role is that of an *organism* that expresses the Mystery of the Reality of the Cosmic, the Human and the Divine. In Panikkar's words:

In the first fifteen centuries, in contrast [to the 'image of the church as something similar to a civil institution' created by the Reformation clash], Christians were virtually unanimous in believing in what today is called 'the cosmic church' (*mystērion kosmikon tēs ekklēσίας*)-although immersed in secular affairs that it considered sacred.

He holds that Vatican II returned to the ampler understanding of the church as *mystērion tou kosmou* or the *sacramentum mundi* - that is, the mystery of the universe, not the mystery of the church! What was lost in translation from *mystērion* to *sacramentum* was “the global nature of the church’s sacraments”. That is why the ancients spoke of the church as existing from the time of Abel (*ecclesia ab Abel*). “The idea that God created the world out of love for the church was considered virtually synonymous with the idea of the mystical body. This meant that God created the world for the purpose of divinizing his creation by making it become his own body, with Jesus as head and we the members.”

Here Panikkar quotes a number of church fathers: Clement of Alexandria spoke of the church of the first-born – *ekklēsia prōtotokōn*. Panikkar goes on to quote Tertullian: “wherever the three are, that is to say the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, there is the church which is the body of the three”. *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* was formulated by Origin and Cyprian and accepted by all. There *ecclesia* meant the “place of salvation”. St. Ignatius of Antioch said similarly: “Where Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic church.” Panikkar reminds us that the primary meaning of the Greek word *katholikē* is cosmic and soteriological. Already Pope Pius XII had warned against identifying this church directly with an institution.

With a fresh critical consciousness, Christophany returns to these fundamental truths: the place of the incarnation is Man, indeed ‘the flesh’. The place of man is the earth, indeed the church in its journey. The goal of this pilgrimage is plenitude, not nothingness (not to be confused with emptiness). It is this, which constitutes Christian hope. The human adventure is ecclesial, cosmic, and divine.

Apart from Panikkar’s theology of hope that is clearly at work here, implied in the larger perichoretic process are

*creatio continua* and *incarnatio continua*. The former refers to the creative cosmotheandric dance of the Cosmic, the Divine and the Human, and the latter to the constant divinizing of all that is known as Man. It is good to remember that when we speak for heuristic purposes like this, we are converting theological poetry into prose and with that we are changing the focus from the moon to the finger that points to the moon.

***i. “Christophany Is the Symbol of the Mysterium Coniunctionis of Divine, Human, and Cosmic Reality.”***

The ninth and last Sūtra is about the Sacrament of Networking of the whole of the cosmotheandric process. Panikkar, who was fairly familiar with the Texts of the Greek and the Latin Fathers of the Church employed polysemic words. The church was the *mystērion tou kosmou*, in Latin *sacramentum mundi*. Thus, *sacramentum mundi* was not so much or primarily the Sacrament of the World but the mystery of the universe. We too are part of this Mystery, this Sacrament, this holistic vision called Christophany. Man as poet is primarily tasked with making [sense] (=poēsis) of the universe around us through networking. This networking has to do with appropriating or, more precisely, realizing our ontic relatedness. True, for the Western Church, Christianity is a historical religion but its historicity is neither primary nor originary. It has exposed multiple negative historical developments, e.g. its rigorous defense of monotheism at the price of its trinitarian uniqueness; its claim of one centre of intelligibility at the service of colonialism where other independent centres have been made subservient; its acceptance of the historical monopoly of truth as if presence were necessarily and always of a historical nature, etc. Whatever its merits one needs to be made aware of the pernicious and perilous effects of historicity on transhistorical consciousness. Temporality, not historicity, is a basic characteristic of reality. Temporality

shares in Christophany, but it does not exhaust Christophany's essential transhistorical reality. What the last Sūtra sums up is this: Christophany *brings into being*, that is, *brings together* what it brings into being and *holds together* what it brings into being. Far from being a collection of dead objects, Man realizes, the universe is an organic living being. Treating this universe as a collection of dead objects will gradually spell the beginning of *our* end.

## 2. The Church of Reality

The First Sūtra spoke of the Christ as the Christian symbol for the whole of reality. That means that *outside of* and *apart from* [the cosmotheandric] Christ there is nothing. That is the reason that Panikkar asserts "that the Christian tradition does not separate the understanding of Christ from that of creation". This is obvious from Panikkar's foundational thesis of the cosmotheandric constitution of all reality. Every single being is real because of its cosmotheandric constitution.

From here Panikkar argues:

Precisely because religion, in the best sense of the word, is the most profound human dimension that 'binds' (*religa*) us to the rest of reality through its most intimate constitutive bonds, it is not reducible to an exclusive belonging to any particular human group. On the contrary, It is precisely the conscious belonging to reality that makes us Christians and happens precisely through a very concrete bond by means of which we are not only fully human but also fully real, although in a contingent and limited way. It is within and through this concreteness that we are able to realize, to the extent of our limitations, the fullness of our being-as microcosm and *mikrotheos*.

It is of paramount importance to understand the significance of these reflections and realize their consequences.

The threefold bond of the Cosmic, the Human and the Divine binds every single being, without exception - all of which constitutes the Real. Accordingly, the Reality of the Church includes every single being though obviously not in a univocal manner. This requires a twofold comment: The poetic task and the practical task of the Human. The first has to do with the task of meaning in life that all religions and philosophies have constantly and continuously struggle to provide; included in which are the pastoral and pedagogical concerns. The second focuses on the life-styles that societies develop, their efforts to respond to the patterns of meaning in life put forward, the question of whether Governments and institutions provide enough opportunities to implement them and the doubts and discussions of the public regarding all this.

Thus, the idea of Church far from being churchy harks back to the Mystery of the Christ who is the head of the body, the church. Here is a *paraphrase* of the Letter to the Colossians quoted at the beginning of this article (Col 1:15-20).

We look at the Son and see the God who cannot be seen. We look at this Son and see God's original purpose in everything created. For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank after rank of angels – everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him. He was there before any of it came into existence and holds it all together right up to this moment. And when it comes to the church, he organizes and holds it together, like a head does a body.

He was supreme in the beginning and – and leading the resurrection parade – he supreme in the end. From beginning to end he is there, towering far above everything, everyone: So spacious is he, so roomy, that everything of God finds his proper place in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe – people and things, animals and atoms – get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood poured down from the Cross.

### 3. The Reality of the Church

Whatever one's stand *vis à vis* this argument may be, it should give us pause to think. The juridical-and-institutional approach that has prevailed in the Church in the last centuries of its history is neither the favourite nor the favoured way of the ancient traditions of the Church. More importantly, it is abundantly clear that in some, if not in most cases, the mystical dimension, the main constituent that authenticates the Church, have been minimized if not lost. It has to be urgently retrieved if it is to be the Church of Jesus the Christ.

More: If the Church is to become the *agora* of and for all peoples, then it has to be founded on Reality, which is the common foundation stone of all cultures and religions. No being, no group, no tradition can afford to neglect a foundation other than the cosmotheandric foundation. That is the commonality that every single being shares with every other being. That is the logic that has to be followed in the revision of our rights and duties. The perspective cannot anymore be anthropocentric or anthropic. Indeed, this was the root cause of the ecological crisis, making Man the centre of our concern. This mistake cannot be repeated. Henceforth all creative efforts, no matter in which field, have to be cosmotheandric. This is the path to wholeness and recovery.

Cosmotheandricism is not a school of thought or a direction of work or an area of spirituality. It is to be the background of all thinking, work and spirituality. Or to be more precise, cosmotheandricism is the structure of Reality. We do not construct it, it is always and already there as our basic structure. One has gradually to become aware of it and make it thematic.

Awareness is a short form for self-awareness; one cannot produce it on one's own. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Any one practising the Buddhist vipassana exercise knows how long it takes just to 'get into it'! Battling distractions, one does not know whether one will ever reach a point, that will be distraction-free!



Be that as it may, even self-awareness like every reality is cosmotheandric. This may seem far-fetched but it is not so. The *expressing* of this issue is the cosmic dimension as this makes us aware of what we are talking about. Our *awareness* itself is the human dimension. And what it embodies and points to is the *depth-dimension*, the inexpressible.

Awareness, the Christian word is discernment, is the secret of life. It heals all separations not by artificially juxtaposing things but by turning polarizations into polarity. “Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors; only so can you be children of your heavenly Father, who makes his sun rise on good and bad alike, and sends the rain on the honest and the dishonest.” Even the sun and the rain follow this love-commandment as it belongs to his Father’s order of the day, Jesus says, on the cosmic level! And in Jesus’ final commission, we are instructed: “Go forth to every part of the world and proclaim the Good News to the whole creation.” The mission-command appears to embody the *process* of the beautiful metaphor of the *anakephalaiōsis* of Ephesians 1:10.

## Notes

1. See the same in contemporary [American] language, Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message* (Colorado Springs/Colorado: Navpress Publishing, 1993, footnote 42).
2. See Kurien Kunnumpuram, *Ways of Salvation* (Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth Publications, Pune, 1971).
3. Recently the Emeritus Pope has sharply criticized those who believe Pope Francis has no theology.
4. Critics of Pope Francis forget the resonance he is producing in secular circles. See [James Carroll](#), “The Transformative Promise of Pope Francis, Five Years On.” How the Leader of the Catholic Church became a hero of the secular world. *The New Yorker*. The Daily. March 13, 2018.
5. See *La Croix International* March 7, 2018: Stop accusations of heresy, says Cardinal Kasper. Pope Francis’ views on allowing the Sacraments for those who remarry not heretical — criticism of ‘Amoris laetitia’ misplaced.
6. As Villanova University’s theologian Massimo Faggioli puts

it, “Francis is not interested in reformulating church doctrine... Catholic teaching is not a mineral. It is an animal. It moves and adapts, it grows”. See Peter Feuerherd’s report on the dialogue between Ross Douthat (“the skeptical conservative and columnist for the New York Times”) and Massimo Faggioli (“an unabashed Francis booster and Villanova University theologian”) at Fordham’s Lincoln Center. See Peter Feuerherd’s report on the dialogue on Jan. 31, 2018 between Ross Douthat and Massimo Faggioli in *National Catholic Reporter*, Feb 2, 2018.

7. I have no numerical evidence to support all this, except to report what we read in the media. The head of Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Asia, Cardinal Oswald Gracias, a canon lawyer and member of the Pope’s G-8, when asked in an interview on a national television programme about his position regarding catholic gays and lesbians replied that, like Pope Francis, he too held that they were legitimate members of the Catholic Church.
8. Like e.g. cultural prejudice against blacks and coloured people in some first-world countries.
9. See Keshub Chunder Sen, “That Marvellous Mystery– The Trinity,” in: *Keshub Chunder Sen’s Lectures in India* (London/ Paris/New York/Melbourne: Cassel & Company, 1904), 32: In the midst of this large assembly I deny and repudiate the little Christ of popular theology, and stand up for a greater Christ, a fuller Christ, a more eternal Christ, a more universal Christ. I plead, for the eternal Logos of the Fathers, and I challenge the world’s assent. This is the Christ who was in Greece and Rome, in Egypt and India. In the bards and the poets of the Rig Veda was he. He dwelt in Confucius and in Sakya Muni. This is the true Christ whom I can see everywhere, in all lands and in all times, in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in America, in ancient and modern times. He is not the monopoly of any nation or creed. All literature, all science, all philosophy, every doctrine that is true, every form of righteousness, every virtue that belongs to the Son, is the true subjective, Christ whom all ages glorify.
10. Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany: The Fullness of Man* (Maryknoll/ New York: Orbs Books, 2004).
11. *Christophany*, 141.
12. *Christophany*, 144ff.
13. See Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics. Cross-Cultural Studies* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), *passim*, esp. 4-6.
14. Panikkar, A Self-Critical Dialogue, in: Joseph Prabhu (Ed.), *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar* ((Maryknoll/Ney York: 1996), 244-245.
15. *Christophany*, 149ff.

16. See my Time, History and Christophany, in: Peter Phan/Youngchan Ro (Eds.), *RAIMON PANIKKAR. A Companion to His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., U.K., 2018), 171-193.
17. For a brief general discussion on this see R. Panikkar, "Time and Sacrifice: The Sacrifice of Time and the Ritual of Modernity," in *The Study of Time III: Proceedings of the Third Conference of the International Society for the Study of Time, Alpbach, Austria* (New York: Springer, 1979),
18. Panikkar *The Cosmotheandric Experience. Emerging Religious Consciousness*. Ed. by Scott Eastham (Maryknoll/New York: Orbis Book, 1993). Also, Panikkar, "Concepts of Time: Ancient and Modern - Kalasakti: The Power of Time," in: Kapila Vatsyayana/Côme Carpentier de Gourdon (Eds.), *Raimundo Panikkar: A Pilgrim Across Worlds* (New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2016), 222-247.
19. *Christophany*, 153.
20. *Christophany*, 39-140.
21. *Christophany*, 156.
22. *Christophany*, 161ff.
23. *Christophany*, 162.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid. My italics.
26. Ibid. My italics.
27. *Christophany*, 163.
28. Raimon Panikkar's Diatopical Hermeneutics: Meister Eckhart's World of holistic Thinking and the Bhagavadgītā's Experience of the World of Wholeness, in: *Jnanadeepa. Pune Journal of Religious Studies*. Befriending the Other. Vol. 20/1-2. Jan-Dec 2016, 107-128.
29. *Christophany*, 165ff.
30. Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness* (Maryknoll/New York: Orbis Books, 1993).
31. *Christophany*, 170ff.
32. *Christophany*, 170.
33. We smile back when a child smiles at us, we laugh when we hear a joke, we cry when we share in the sorrow or pain of a friend, we rejoice when our team wins a game, etc., etc. The Rational is only one level of our being! There are many other levels of our being where things make sense without the Rational.
34. *Christophany*, 170, Panikkar writes: "...I have often criticized the implicit 'historiolatry' of a certain kind of theology".
35. *Christophany*, 170.
36. *Christophany*, 171.
37. *Christophany*, 172.

38. *Christophany*, 175.
39. *Christophany*, 176ff.
40. *Christophany*, 177.
41. *Christophany*, 177.
42. *Christophany*, 177.
43. *Christophany*, 178-179.
44. *Christophany*, 180ff.
45. *Christophany*, 176.
46. In such a cosmovision only the historical is taken to be real, to be true!
47. *Christophany*, 167: "Our experience of the world shows that everything of which we are conscious is temporal, etc." See footnote 43.
48. Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience, Part Two: The End of History*. The Threefold Structure of Human Time-Consciousness, 79-137. Most thinking on history, whether Indian or Western has been partial and one-sided. Panikkar, "Time and Sacrifice: The Sacrifice of Time and the Ritual of Modernity," in *The Study of Time III: Proceedings of the Third Conference of the International Society for the Study of Time, Alpbach, Austria* (New York: Springer, 1979). Also, his "Concepts of Time: Ancient and Modern - Kalasakti: The Power of Time," in: Kapila Vatsyayana/Côme Carpentier de Gourdon (Eds.), *Raimundo Panikkar: A Pilgrim Across Worlds* (New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2016), 222-247.
49. *Christophany*, 165.
50. *Christophany*, 169.
51. Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message* (Colorado Springs/Colorado: Navpress Publishing, 1993), paraphrase of Col 1:15-20. See the RSV translation of the same text at the head of this article.

Article Received: Jan 11, 2019

Article Accepted: April 19, 2019

No of Words: 6126