

COSMIC THEOLOGY

by Rev. Dr Geoffrey Cheong PhD

© 2024

Contents

THE INTEGRAL WORLD.....	3
The First Axial Period of History.....	3
The Evolutionary Influence.....	5
An Alternative Paradigm.....	6
Mutational Shifts in the Evolutionary Story.....	6
Transition from the Mental Rational Era to the Integral Era.....	7
The Integral and the Knowledge Revolution.....	8
The Challenge of Finding a Way Forward.....	8
Deep Structural Change in the Mind of Humanity.....	9
Translation and Transformation.....	10
The Post-Conventional and Trans-Personal.....	10
The Cosmotheandric as Symbol.....	12
Wilber’s Symbol and Panikkar’s Mythos.....	12
The Inter-Relatedness of God, Humanity and Creation.....	13
THREE ALTERNATIVES.....	15
Life is a Spiral.....	15
Eternal Witness.....	17
Evolution.....	17
SUBTLE WORKINGS OF THE LORD CREATION AND EVOLUTION.....	19
RELATIONAL SPIRITUALITY.....	22
The Summary of the Way of Love.....	24
An Archetypal Question.....	24
Cosmotheandric Intuition.....	25
Creator-Creation Polarity.....	25
Creator-Creature Polarity.....	27
Creature-Creation Polarity.....	29
A Contemporary Review of the Summary of the Law.....	30
Tripolar Spirituality.....	30
Three Interacting Relationships.....	32

The Self - God Relational Axis	32
The God - Neighbour Relational Axis	36
The Self - Neighbour Relational Axis	38
The Cosmotheandric Vision as Relational Spirituality	42
CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION	43
ENERGY OR SPIRIT-IN-ACTION.....	45
HOLY SPIRIT	47
OWNING JESUS THE INTERFAITH WORLD.....	48
ETERNAL PRESENCE	52
THE SECOND COMING THE PAROUSIA OR THE RAPTURE	56
Summary	63
A SPIRITUAL WAY OF JOHN	66

THE INTEGRAL WORLD

In the deep realms of the mind an intuitive picture of history is stirring that points to a major change taking place. If people had become disillusioned with the spirituality associated with religious institutions, it did not mean that all were no longer interested in spirituality. Many sought other realms of life in which to find spiritual nourishment. The concern in the Church has been significant and many questions have been asked and addressed as to how it can reposition itself as a significant guardian of spirituality in society. I present the argument that a major shift has taken place within the human mind and consequently, we are increasingly able to portray a far broader awareness of the relationality of all things. Spirituality needs to be understood in this way. This inter-relational, inter-in-dependent reality, with non-dual awareness is the nature of that which integral scholars are noting as the emerging integral era of history.

Integralists claim a mutational-like shift in the evolutionary process has been taking place in human consciousness in recent centuries. Its implication is that increasing numbers of people in society are awakening to an integral awareness of reality. The consequence is great, for it challenges humanity to speak in fresh ways of its understanding of the world. However, it is also necessary because the challenges facing humanity are such that dualistic models of awareness, which have served humanity well in the past, will no longer serve humanity adequately for guiding all people forward into the technological and globalised world. In this chapter, I will present an understanding of the non-dual integral awareness.

The First Axial Period of History

Jaspers speaks of two great 'breathes' that took place in shaping the story of human history. Supporting Jasper's observation, *Karen Armstrong and Ewert*

Cousins have referred to the ‘first great breath’, as causing the mutational shift in humanity’s consciousness appearing across the known world during the middle of the millennium prior to the Common Era, a shift in consciousness they refer to as the First Axial Period of History. The three authors refer to the emergence of the lives and insights of people like the Buddha, Confucius, Socrates and the Old Testament prophets, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, as testament to this development through the period 800 to 300 BCE. The significance of this axial-like shift marked a development in the way people perceived the world. This shift in consciousness saw a development from a primarily mythic, outwardly actioned domain approach for understanding life, to a new state of consciousness, a self-reflective propensity emerged, characterised by the birth of that which Wilber and Gebser referred to as the mental-rational perception of life.

The broad impact of the influence of the above-mentioned cultural leaders was seen in the increased respect for human life evident in the records of their writings. One common example, was encapsulated in their various formulations of the call to love as a primary value of life. Each indicate a version of the Golden Rule of love. Such development had a profound effect on shaping the new societies. With this advance in understanding came a complicating effect, the dualistic perception of life, the inner and outer, spirit and matter, heaven and hell, and so on. The changes are comparatively slow yet not imperceptible.

It is Jaspers’ belief, that through the past two centuries, we are transitioning through the second of the ‘breaths’ of creation to create the Second Axial Period of History. Such a figurative ‘breath,’ provides an important explanation of the broad panoramic view of history necessary to define the current story of humanity that lay behind the surface change we are commonly aware of taking place in our times. This deep mutational shift in consciousness points to being a catalyst for the present state of crisis. While Jaspers speaks of a new creative

‘breath’ to mark the transition, it correlates with Heidegger’s question, ‘Are we on the brink of a new night leading toward a new dawn? ... Or are we at the same time the early arrivals of the dawn of an entirely new age which has already left behind our present conceptions of history?’¹ The second Axial Period of History is emerging in our day.

The Evolutionary Influence

The integral state of consciousness is a concept that has become more apparent through the theory of evolution. Along with the physical descriptions of the evolving world, Gebser has made significant contributions to the story of the evolving mind. Aurobindo Gosh, is an example of such thinking from the Eastern world.

Because humanity is in an era of transition it needs to be noted that, while many across society are awakening to time-free integral awareness, only some have begun to reshape their approach to life accordingly. Much new and good work is undertaken across society, but still characterised by the models of the passing mental-rational era. In effect, it is a continuation of past practice and is what Wilber identifies as a ‘sideways’ movement within the broader context of human evolutionary development. I argue that much work of the Church’s general life and mission is still shaped by this mental-rational approach. As such, many examples of its work display characteristics typical of a ‘sideways’ movement, that is, behaviour that is different from past practice but still of a dualistic nature.

¹ Gebser, *Origin*, 402.

An Alternative Paradigm

The development of the scientific world in the past two centuries has been one of the most significant factors shaping the way humanity understands its perception of reality. Gebser speaks of the declaration by Nietzsche that ‘God is dead’ combined with the French revolution encouraged the liberal movement in many parts of the world. One prominent example of this new knowledge was understood in Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution.

Mutational Shifts in the Evolutionary Story

Gebser has identified a specific pattern of this evolving world. Rather than a steady evolving trajectory, he identifies times of critical development. This is what Cousins refers to as ‘periodic mutational shifts in consciousness’,² which mark the unexpected appearance of significantly new capacities of the mind which reshape the way the world perceives reality and subsequently behaves. Such new capacities emerged unexpectedly from the common trend of gradual development of the former functioning. Such mutational shifts are spoken of by integralists, as occurring in the transitions from one era to the next, that is the archaic or primitive, the magic, the mythic, the mental rational and eventually the integral. With each mutational adjustment Gebser spoke of the passing conventional practices of that society, practices which had developed to the point that the existing mode of viewing life could no longer sustain the growing needs of people for their society. The passing mode of the mind’s functioning displayed signs of inadequacy to the point of redundancy for the emerging era. The search for newer solutions led to the breaking down of the old,³ confusion reigned, and a time of crisis ensued. The evolutionary process led to the appearance of new capacities of the mind. These capacities were necessary for

² Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being : The Gifford Lectures*, xxi.

³ Gebser, *Origin*, 294f.

finding new solutions to society's challenges and new forms of societies appeared. In time, the new emerging ways of life became the conventional and the steady process of the evolving mind once again continued enabling societies to develop in new and orderly ways. It is this experience of a relatively sudden transition that Gebser said differed from the general trend.⁴

Transition from the Mental Rational Era to the Integral Era

The character of the mental rational, was its ability to particularise, divide, analyse and logically connect. The early signs of transition were most apparent in the middle centuries of the millennium before Christ.⁵ Within this new world, Christianity was born and developed. With the passing of time, the mental-rational era reached great heights through the fifteenth and early sixteenth century of the Renaissance Period, notably with the work of minds like that of Leonardo da Vinci.⁶ By the Age of Reason in the late seventeenth century and the Enlightenment period of the eighteenth century the capacity of the mental-rational had reached great heights, with the emergence of the Industrial Revolution. But this also marked the beginning of a most extraordinary development across time with the move forward with the next great step with the cyber revolution. As with the ending of all previous eras of time it was becoming apparent that it's limits were appearing.⁷

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, it is argued by integralist Gebser, the dominance of reason had taken that era of society as far as it could, and signs of a new era began to appear.⁸ Through the remainder of that century, the world of the twentieth and now the twenty-first century, indications of new capacities of the mind have emerged to shape the world with which we are becoming

⁴ ibid., 36f.

⁵ ibid., 294.

⁶ ibid., 303.

⁷ ibid.

⁸ ibid.

increasingly familiar today. The characteristic of the newly-emerging society is spoken of as 'integral' - the capacity to understand how all things are inter-related. Such perception marks the distinctiveness of our present approach to life with its most challenging concept being the non-dual awareness of reality.

The Integral and the Knowledge Revolution

Through the last two centuries information has grown exponentially. In his book *Critical Path*, Buckminster Fuller developed the 'knowledge doubling curve'. It indicated knowledge had previously doubled approximately every one hundred years. By the middle of the twentieth century, it doubled at least every twenty-five years and with the development of computer technology and the internet, by the beginning of the twenty first century IBM predicted that it would be as little as every half a day by 2020. The internet has changed life so dramatically that with this proliferation of knowledge no one can really know much more than their own scant body of information. The availability of knowledge has now overwhelmed the human mind. Consequently, the present era is now referred to as the era of Post Truth. According to Gary Bouma and Charles Taylor, sociologists of recent times, truth is seen by many as relative, and very dependent upon people's own perspective. This transformation is impacting the mind on its evolving transition into the integral era. In its response the mind is challenged to awaken to new ways of perception.

The Challenge of Finding a Way Forward

As a result of history poised in the heart of this mutational time of transition, there are various possibilities. Two examples would be to cling to the past and the conventional way of life, or to explore alternatives and pursue new ways of living. This leads to an unsettled society wondering how to respond.

Gebser is clear. To fulfil the goals appropriate for the new world, it will require an attitude of hope, lest we settle for the ways of the past which, he argues, are no longer adequate for meeting the new challenges humanity is facing in the globalising society.

Gebser's message of hope is built upon the experience of many before our time. Humanity has previously taken such mutational steps in development and successfully transitioned to a positive outcome. There is no reason this cannot be the same in our time. There may very well be a great time of confusion and maybe even crisis but there is no reason we cannot overcome this crisis and find a new and positive age. He determines, 'our sole concern must be with making manifest the future which is immanent in ourselves.'⁹ This attitude which he calls for, must reflect the new integral vision of global consciousness with appropriate values.

Deep Structural Change in the Mind of Humanity

When it comes to addressing the existing mutational period which humanity is traversing, Wilber identifies that which I have ultimately referred to as a 'symbol of meaning', for he describes them as the symbols that transform us from one level of consciousness to the next higher level. He understands such symbols to be foundational in shaping the deep structural levels of the mind, and subsequently when we are awakened to such deep innate awareness, they are the way we establish meaning and the shape of our surface life.

Growth may take place by movement to new domains of experience on that same level. Such movement he speaks of as 'translation.' This he referred to as a sideways movement. Development that witnesses one moving to the next higher level of consciousness is spoken of as the process of 'transformation'. It is this second movement of transformation that Wilber is equating to movement to a

⁹ *ibid.*, 296.

new level of consciousness in the structure of the mind. This requires a new ‘symbol of meaning’ or ‘transformation’ to facilitate the mutational shift.

Translation and Transformation

Only some ‘symbols which encapsulate meaning’ will challenge people to move forward from the current conventional operative level of functioning to the further-developed post-conventional or transpersonal stage of experience. In other words, some ‘symbols of meaning’ will be part of the ‘translation’ experience. In such a circumstance where the symbols reinforce the existing level of consciousness, Wilber prefers to call these people, following signs rather than responding to new symbols that beckon one forward.

Symbols which may move people to the more developed level of consciousness are referred to as ‘symbols of transformation’.¹⁰ It may involve the breakdown of the value of previous ‘symbols of meaning’. A simple example may be the discovery that wealth, which may have been a person’s ‘symbol of meaning’, does not bring comprehensive human fulfilment. Such a person might begin to explore different approaches to life. In time, something of particular significance typical of the higher level of consciousness impinges upon that person’s mind and beckons he or she to view the world differently.

The Post-Conventional and Trans-Personal

Wilber concludes that as the broad mass of population gradually evolves and moves forward, there are ever-increasing numbers of people discovering this more deeply developed state of trans-personal consciousness. Examples that may be used to describe what to expect from the subtle trans-personal life are

¹⁰ Wilber, *The Atman Project*, 43.

limited because society is still in its early stages of such development. Nevertheless, some characteristics of such ‘symbols of meaning’ can be noted.

Such symbols would consist of a universal nature.¹¹ They would perceive the inter-relatedness of all that is; hence speak of an integral spirituality.¹² They would describe a wholistic vision.¹³ They would be no less rational than the previous modern era. However, they would be far more cognisant of a comprehensive approach that recognises that even the past perceptions of magic and mythic consciousness are to be examined for what they contributed in the past and how such a mentality may operate within the whole. Of great importance to understanding this new level of consciousness is the concept of a non-dual reality.¹⁴ The dualistic perception was once the vital - and necessary - means of operation for the challenges of the previous history of the world, for example, it led to the highly developed field of western medicine and its pharmaceuticals. While it will remain vitally important, it will only make a valuable contribution within the broader context of non-dual consciousness. In fact the archaic, the magic, the mythic and mental-rational are all part of the integral world. They all contribute to the mind operating as a unity.

In the following section, I will speak more thoroughly of one ‘symbol of meaning’ that I propose is universal, integral and wholistic. I will discuss specifically the work of Raimon Panikkar whose trans-personal insights are captured in his term ‘Cosmotheandric’.

¹¹ *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, 30.

¹² Wilber, *Integral Spirituality : A Startling New Role for Religion in the Modern and Postmodern World*, 29.

¹³ *Up from Eden : A Transpersonal View of Human Evolution*, 13f.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, 308f.

The Cosmotheandric as Symbol

Raimon Panikkar, mystic, theologian, philosopher and scientist of the twentieth and twenty first century, speaks of his vision of the non-dual reality by way of his ‘Cosmo-the-andric’ vision. This is the human non-dual vision that emerges from the ‘The-anthropo-cosmic’ concept of reality. The terms ‘Cosmotheandric’ and ‘Theanthropocosmic’¹⁵ are compilations of the three prime notions of reality in which we live: God or Theos, Cosmos or Creation and Man or Anthropos. Their inter-in-dependent relationality is the foundation of Panikkar’s non-dual, integral whole. It becomes his ‘symbol of meaning’ and thereby, transformation. He writes of the current challenge,

Our age has problems with all three centres of reality: God, World, and Man. Science ignores God; Man does not care for the world; and now the world is fighting back. And our solutions are at best piecemeal and at worst cosmetic. It is on this background that Christophany: the fullness of Man as a christophany undertakes a full-scale revision of our understanding of these three centres; this fullness is to be experienced, if at all, at the *adhyatmic* level. It is a mission statement for the new millennium – a statement that can be understood only when read with the third eye!¹⁶

Wilber’s Symbol and Panikkar’s Mythos

Panikkar does not use the word ‘symbol’ to speak of the transforming agent as used by Wilber. For Panikkar it is mythos, the overarching story that holds all things meaningfully together. It is the story that reaches beyond the minutiae of the description. It unites the, seemingly, fragmented strands of knowledge.¹⁷ Panikkar highlights the importance of getting our mythos right for he believes

¹⁵ Theoanthropocosmic refers in general to the inter-relational reality of creator, creation and creature. Cosmotheandric refers to the intuitive awareness of the inter-relational reality of creator, creation and creature from the creature's perspective. Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being : The Gifford Lectures*, 304f.

¹⁶ Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany the Fullness of Man*, trans. Alfred DiLascia, Sixth Printing, October 2010 ed. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), xvii. Adhyatmic is a reference to spiritual

¹⁷ Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being : The Gifford Lectures*, 68.

the failure to do so is contributing to crisis in our time related to the massive change taking place across the globe.

The Inter-Relatedness of God, Humanity and Creation

Panikkar explores more deeply the inter-relational nature of the three: God, Man and Creation. This is the primary ground for his discussion. It is in the trifold, trinitarian nature of reality that he finds direction. He refutes the common contemporary trend that people turn to, either monotheism or atheism. His explanations will present a way forward, however, not without an interesting turn. He sees the notion of trinity as a valuable contributing definition.

In this entire problematic, the trinitarian symbol is enlightening. The Divine is real, a real but different dimension of the universe, neither independent nor separable. This dimension pervades everything, because no thing is without this dimension. ... Consciousness as well as Matter pervades everything, and nothing is without these dimensions. They are not always directly detectable, and yet we cannot get rid of them, as we tried to explain before.¹⁸

In the next section, I will examine Panikkar's explanation of reality in greater detail but, suffice to say, that it is in the inter-relatedness of reality, Creator, Creation and Creature, the cosmotheandic reality, that the new mythos to lead us forward is emerging,

There is a *perichoresis* between the three. The Divine contains, and is everything, but so are Man and the World as well. Each is the Whole, and not just in a particular mode. The three are not merely modalities of the real...What we have is a "complex" reality...The point is to understand this *fluxus quo* of reality itself, as the very rhythm of Being. If we look at reality in this dynamic way, we may say that every being is an 'I', a Thou, and an It, that the speaker is not the spoken to nor the spoken about, but all speech demands the three together.¹⁹

¹⁸ ibid., 403.

¹⁹ ibid., 404.

If for Wilber, it is a ‘symbol of meaning’ that is necessary for leading humanity forward into the newly-emerging integral era, for Panikkar it is *mythos*.

Different terms - but in essence similar realities. From his experience Panikkar concludes,

The new *mythos* will certainly contain elements from all the strata of humanity, but it will need a glue, so to speak. I believe that the Cosmotheandric insight may have sufficient traditional elements, and just enough of a revolutionary character, to serve as that catalyst for hope.²⁰

Prabhu emphasises that the potency of Panikkar’s work is heightened by the knowledge that he was a man who not only spoke insightfully of this new world but who lived fully within it as well. He writes,

In calling Panikkar one of the pre-eminent thinkers of the dawn of the Second Axial Age, Ewert Cousins was claiming both that we are living in a mutational moment in human history, a moment of inter-religious convergence, and that Panikkar is a spiritual mutant, “one in whom the global mutation has already occurred and in whom the new forms of consciousness have been concretized.”²¹

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *ibid.*, xxi (Cousins, *Christ of the 21st Century*. 73).

THREE ALTERNATIVES

The mutational move of history to introduce the integral era sets the scene for a revision of theology. It challenges one to set a new context for understanding. It introduced a new picture of timelessness, unity, non-duality and integral perception. This had not been done before in all of history, hence we are very much in the realm of speculation.

To define what is meant by a mutation in the mind of these writers is difficult to be precise. We do not conclusively know the relationship of spirit, mind and matter. We do know that they are related. Panikkar has tried to express his explanation in his writings,

Scientifically the notion of 'out of nothing' is really a questionable explanation. The statement still poses the question of time. An alternative theory is presented by V F Bedogne who speaks of the beginning as coming from consciousness. This begins from that which he calls emptiness, or consciousness in its simplest form, and grows from its need to reach fulfillment, repeating this quest time and time again until it reaches that state that gives rise to the Big Bang. This is an explanation that arises in some forms of the Asian mystical traditions and is referred to as involution, which predates the journey of evolution.

Life is a Spiral

To give further explanation to Bedogne's theory I propose that the integral solution is better described by picturing the entire creation as a sphere.

Diagrammatically, we need to speak of creation as a sphere to break the time strangle hold on the problematic that the statement out of nothing presents. The sphere is spoken of as the symbol of the integral. The symbol can diagrammatically set up the three-way axis of a sphere. This indicates an array

of time concepts, with the centre of the sphere timeless, and the outer rim time bound. The multiple axes of the sphere complete the structure, North, South, East, and West in its multiple forms. The concept of the sphere is then established to depict time from time free. In the centre it is depicted as time free, while progressively toward the outer rim it is time bound. The movement from the centre of the sphere becomes increasingly time conscious as it moves toward the outer rim with progressively time bound characteristics.

This movement diagrammatically pictured signifies the process of involution and evolution. The movement of creation starts from the singularity of unity depicted by the centre of the sphere then increasingly moving toward the outer rim of the sphere. This is the movement of involution. The movement turns to movement around the rim which is time bound and called evolution.

The point of singularity is the purity of being. The movement from this singularity is the story of incarnation, that is, the story of 'God in his becoming'. St John the Evangelist wrote,

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God. All things were made through him and without him nothing was made.

In simplistic form, God and the Word were one, from the centre point to the rim of the sphere, increasingly time bound as they progress outward to the rim.

The sphere has been deemed the symbol of the integral. It is a unity from the centre to the perimeter. 'All that is' is non-dual, integral and universal. It is the foundation of all reality. We are awakening to this reality in our day. Reality has always been such in the Becoming of Being, but the becoming of being has been progressively becoming.

While this has been one explanation of the very beginning, it is a concerted effort to address the subjects that have remained a mystery.

Eternal Witness

Using different language, the centre of the sphere is the Eternal Witness, it is the purity of being, or unity of being. It is the ground of consciousness. It consists of intelligence and energy, word and spirit in the perfection of harmony. In its becoming the two increasingly become identifiable without separation. The eternal witness spreads its wings as it spirals into being. The eternal witness proving eternal. This involutory movement identifies intelligence and energy, word and spirit. In adequate form to cause a 'big bang'.

Evolution

Having addressed three of the arguments that address the beginning of time, the scientific, the theory presented by Bedogne as consciousness, and the spherical, they all come together in general agreement around the scientific explanation.

From the Big Bang, and inflationary period, the story passes through the gaseous period, the formation of stars and galaxies, the emergence of a cell and multi-cells to form life and homo sapiens, and homo sapien sapiens, eventually reaching the story of Jesus, the Messiah, the redeemer, the Universal Christ and the Cosmic Christ as progress is made in understanding. All is eternal witness, incarnational, God in becoming or as Panikkar has expressed, 'being in becoming'

God is the source of all that is. God is a spiral and creation is merely part of the journey that circulates around and around the circumference returning in the fullness of time to the singularity of the spiral. Each part of the circle suggests the transition to the next stage of life and the process continues perfecting the quality of life. The singularity is timeless and draws one to perfection until one shares the oneness, unity, and singularity of being.

This story is arguably the story of reincarnation, which out of respect for Asian religions is legitimate. But the Story of crucifixion and resurrection is a vital part of the complete story. The process of dying and rising again completes the story of the progressive climb toward the singularity by introducing a step-by-step progression of the climb. Whereas crucifixion resurrection is a definitive concept of the end of life, it is also a process of living. We must die to oneself daily so that we may rise to a greater life in the here and now.

SUBTLE WORKINGS OF THE LORD

CREATION AND EVOLUTION

With popular affirmation of a good deal of the population spread across society the theory of the big Bang, more accurately called inflation, began the story of evolution and the history of reality. Richard Dawkins and Cristopher Krauss are popular advocates that this story began from nothing. With mathematical formula Krauss calculates how this is possible, emanating from the Planck Epoch, that infinitesimal timeless moment, the four prime forces, sprang into being and began the long journey of 13.8 billion years to the present day. They are adamant that this is the only logical explanation of evolution.

Despite their confidence there are others who are not quite so sure. While such scholars are equally convinced about the story of evolution, they differ in their belief about the way it began as outlined in the essay about the creation as sphere. St John captures the alternative, 'In the beginning the Word was with God, and the word was God. All things were made through him and without him nothing was made that was made.' This is Johns speculative conclusion, the initiating force being the Word. It is the unseen intelligence that sets evolution on its course and remains so. Teilhard de Chardin is one such scientist and mystical priest of the Catholic faith who explains this story as such. His story begins under the title of 'Cosmogogenesis' (Cosmos is the Greek word for the whole Universe). While he sees the commencement with the same explosive beginning, he reads the causes and processes differently. He looks deeper to speak of the emerging power of love, that is, the Word, as being with the causal intent. The power of love ensures there is purpose to the process of evolution. It remains a process of unifying transformation destined to fulfilment. It is important to recognise that love is the story 'within' the more obvious story of

the 'without' to use his terms. The journey of the formation of gases, the stars, and the planet earth are to be read as the story of the scientists like Krauss, but this is not to be mistaken for the whole story, for love is the abiding purpose. Love is the unifying force that moves the whole dynamic as one continuously forward, as whole joins with whole to ensure the unity of construction. Teilhard determines that the movement of evolution follows the process of attraction, connection, complexity, and consciousness. This is the intelligence of the unseen Word. It is the story of incarnation, the innate Word that emerges from the unity of God

This means that one is to view the reality of creation from two perspectives, (the within and the without to use Teilhard's expressions). The concrete vision of the outer reality is only partial vision for the quantum world has expanded our vision to open the way to see more deeply into the inner reality. Consciousness is another matter still. The minute vision of quantum reality casts a great range of sight from the smallest quanta particle to the external whole. For Teilhard consciousness is the inner reality, the foundation of the creative force which is love. It is the foundation of the incarnation reality and drives the evolutionary story. This incarnational reality is the story of creation and continues the subtle power of love to mould the shape of creation down through its almost 14 billion years of time. The challenge is to be able to see this inner story over and above the outer story that is made famous by the common scientists.

Vincent Bedogne is a forty-year student of de Chardin and has elaborated upon Teilhard's thesis by describing the evolutionary story as the emergence of consciousness. It begins in the purest of simplicity, that he calls emptiness. From emptiness, consciousness progresses out of the need for fulfilment. It repeats this cycle until the necessary formation is achieved. The fulfilment is the inflationary process that eventuates with the Big Bang. While seemingly random it is instead a story of intent, firstly, creating the physio-sphere (or in the

words of de Chardin, physio-genesis), then the bio-sphere (biogenesis). It is important to note that consciousness accounts for the emergence of the biosphere from the physio-sphere. There is no real reason for the emergence of the biosphere without consciousness. Likewise, the story continues to be moved by consciousness as the evolutionary story crosses the threshold of life, then human life, then the Noosphere and the story of the ultrahuman.

Love, as the unifying force of all creation, it is the subtle presence of evolution. It is the balance between the dynamic of the myriad of forces of evolution and the sustaining presence of the good will of love. Love is never so bold as to interfere with the evolutionary forces, yet ever so sustaining in its presence. It is the guarantee that the story will reach fulfilment. It is the ever-present story of the incarnation.

Cosmogogenesis is the universal word that de Chardin uses to describe the beginning of the creative process of evolution. However, he replaces it with Christogenesis when speaking of the same process from a Christian point of view. The same truths apply. The beginning of the creative force of love was a subtle one. The unseen humbling of self is the incarnational process of the subtle presence that is never seen but always present and active. The Christogenesis, which began even before time, continues as the story of evolution, and it comes to a display of fulfilment in the Christ of history, the person of Jesus. It is the Word as foreseen in the work of John

RELATIONAL SPIRITUALITY

Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the Life'. He could have said the way of love, of moral and ethical behaviour, and the way of the spirit. These would all have captured the essence of what he intended. It was a significant advance from the first major code of behaviour as recorded in the early scripture of the 10 commandments given by Moses after coming down from the mountain top. The commandments became explained by just over 600 rituals and separate behaviours as the Jewish faith became extremely complex and codified. It robbed the Jewish people of the spirit of life and tied them up in a complex ritualised institution. It overlooked the spirit of forgiveness.

A major change came across the faith when in the latter years of the millennium before Christ, along with the same movements witnessed in Buddhism, Confucianism, and the Greek philosophers, the emergence of the Golden Rule of Love was formulated. In Hebrew it was, 'You shall love the Lord your God and your neighbour as yourself'. By the century before Jesus it was common for Jewish theologians to debate what was the greatest commandment. This divisive approach to the law revealed the dualistic mentality still prevalent across the community. It was a long time across the known world for things to change.

In the last few centuries another major transition has been taking place. Right through to the 21st century the world is grasping the notion of the non-dual perspective of life. The world of quantum has led the way to reveal that everything is interrelated. Raimon Panikkar was a Roman Priest, Mystic with doctorates in Philosophy, Science and Theology who has written profoundly on the non-dual way of life.

Panikkar's vision is highlighting that reality is relational, i.e. there is no primal centre, for the heart of reality is the relationality of all that is. We might say that the heart is the relationality, and relationality is the nature of all. Reality is *perichoresis* of Being or Being in Becoming. Panikkar describes 'now the Cosmotheandric insight does not displace the centre from Man back to God (or 'ahead' to matter) rather it eliminates the centre altogether.'²² There is no centre for there is only totality in relationality. Relationality may be experienced in countless ways from the sensate through the myriad states of the mind's consciousness. Integral relationality is far more complex than any previous era of the mind's functioning for it is aware of all levels of experience. This relationality is described as 'polarity' (to use Panikkar's term) to refer to the greater experience of two relational poles interacting. In reality's complexity of relationality, reality is in constant process, rhythm in harmony, (again to use Panikkar's term). Cousins goes further, to magnify the potency of Panikkar's work by speaking of him as a "living mutant" who has displayed the qualities of the new consciousness of which he speaks. Herein, lays a special contribution of Cousins' work in his book *Christ of the Twenty First Century*. Cousins asks an even more vital question: how can we live the new mutational Cosmotheandric vision of Panikkar? More specifically, can we become living mutants of the new consciousness like Panikkar?

Relational Spirituality is a dynamic model for navigating this journey of transformation into the integral era of consciousness. To explore this way of life two templates of knowledge are insightful i.e. (a) initially, what was known in Judaism as the Shema, the ancient summary of the way of love, affirmed by Jesus and (b) the more recently developed body of knowledge, the theory of personality described by Carl Jung.

²² Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being: The Gifford Lectures*, 144

The Summary of the Way of Love

Relational Spirituality addresses the first template, the traditional teaching of scripture to love God and one's neighbour as oneself. In detail and context, it reads,

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live. (Lk 10:25-28)

An Archetypal Question

Luke's version of this way of love, sets the teaching in the context of the lawyer's question, 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?' The question is to be treated as an archetypal question, for it comes close to capturing the innate longing of humans for that which is one of life's ultimate questions, i.e. to know of a quality of experience generally spoken of as eternal life. It finishes with the simple affirmation by Jesus, 'Do this and you will live.' (Lk. 10:28) To further pursue his questioning, the lawyer asks for a definition of "neighbour", to which Jesus responds with the profoundly regarded parable of the Good Samaritan. (Lk 10:29f) This is understood to mean that the lawyer must learn that theory is not the essence of eternal life, but that it is a comprehensive living experience. He must discover his own interior attitude of neighbourliness to recognise his neighbour. He must know himself. David Augsburger has articulated, what many have done before, that in this union one will also encounter the Divine.

This ancient wisdom of the dynamic of love and recorded in similar forms in other cultures, has continued to retain its status through history as the Golden Rule of Life. It is Relational Spirituality which illustrates the inter-relational

reality of God, neighbour and self. It is further clarified when viewed through the profound Cosmotheandric awareness described by Panikkar.

Cosmotheandric Intuition

Panikkar postulates the ultimate context of all reality by establishing the three ultimate poles: (i) the mystical (which Westerners have traditionally spoken of as God), (ii) Creation itself and (iii) Humans (as the focus of consciousness). His objective is to have readers understand that they are not three separates interacting with each other, but rather, three inter-in-dependent realities in relationality. He consequently coined the word 'Cosmotheandric', to represent the reality of all that is from the generic concept theanthropocosmic²³ the general trifold description of reality: Creator, Creation and Creature as one interacting whole.

This Cosmotheandric vision is the human perception emanating from the intuition which Panikkar calls the reader to pursue beyond the current conventional dualistic perception which tends to understand reality in terms of subject and object, 'this' or 'that'. The Cosmotheandric vision is non-dual in that it understands that all one perceives is merely different perceptions of the one reality, for all is one without losing any aspect for the particular identity. By entering into the perceived reality of each, one is entering more fully into the other. Panikkar develops his concept by dealing, in turn, with the relationality of each polarity in turn.

Creator-Creation Polarity

Panikkar addresses the issue of the Creator and the Created to explain his non-dual awareness. Initially, he points out a primary issue confronting faith traditions of our day by drawing attention to a major concern of some theologians of the

²³ Like Cosmotheandric, theanthropocosmic is a compilation of the three words, theos, anthropos and cosmos.

medieval world. He speaks of their concern to preserve a separation between the divine and creation, lest the nature of God be reduced to a similar status as the creature. Panikkar emphasises the medieval intention which was to:

... “safeguard” the transcendence, immutability, and thus perfection of God, (*that*) the human mind is bound to defend (*so*) that the relation between God and his creation, is real from the side of the creature, but is unreal for God. Otherwise, if there were a two-way relationship, God would then be “dependent” on his creatures. The link, therefore is only from the side of the creature. ... The exclusive absoluteness of God demands the total relativisation of the creature ... says the medieval world.²⁴

This duality of God and creation is no longer meaningful to Panikkar who seeks an explanation of the non-dual for the Creator and the creation, for he speaks of them as both ‘contemporal’ and therefore ‘coexisting’. ‘The Cosmotheandric vision, affirms that there is a real relationship from both sides....Between time and eternity there is no common measure, and yet, they belong together as the two inter-in-dependent sides of one reality.’²⁵

The implication of the co-existence of God and creation is a significant point in understanding the non-dual nature of creation. Creation is to be understood beyond the notion of chronological or historical time. Herein lays an extraordinary challenge for the human mind. Human perception reaches the limits of rational perception when addressing such fundamental notions of reality. If we speak of God as before creation, we can only do so within a dualistic perception which is subject to time and space. Dualism has contributed to the philosophical notion of God as primarily transcendent and ultimately, struggles with the notion of God as immanence. Christians have had to cross the divide between the dualistic understanding of transcendence and immanence by describing the life of Jesus as the incarnation of God, hence the bridge between God and humanity.

²⁴ Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being : The Gifford Lectures*, 285.
²⁵ *ibid.*, 286.

But then the challenge continues in understanding the relation between Jesus and creation. The non-dual does not diminish the nature of Jesus, as Christians have defined him, but releases the limits that dualistic perception places upon the incarnation. Similarly, it is the integral approach which is breaking this pattern by removing the limits of understanding that dualism places upon the transcendence and therefore God. Non-duality opens our perceptions of God to broader understandings which are so necessary in the dramatically new world being perceived by humanity in recent times. Such new understandings include examples like the ‘presence of God’, to be known in all realms of being, for God is the totality of Being in Becoming. We have traditionally faced the danger of reducing God, on the one hand to only that which we know, or on the other hand, that which we don’t know.

Creator-Creature Polarity

We can now turn our attention to the second of the three ultimate polarities. As Panikkar moves to describe the Cosmotheandric experience, he turns his attention specifically to the God-human relationship, that is the creation. Again, he speaks of this relationship through the reality which opens our mind to the reality of the polarity created by the two poles (God and human). Already, I have described much relevant information through the Creator-Creation inter-dependent relationship. However, Panikkar makes clear the creature is not separate from creation but rather the point of conscious meeting. The creature carries the gift of knowing and making meaning of that knowing. As Creation is not separate from the Creator, neither is the Creature. The Creature is an expression of Being in its Becoming. The Creature has opportunity to grow in its’ knowing within the time-space reality of existence. This knowing of the Creature is matured through the interactive relationality existing within the Creature-Creator polarity. Panikkar elaborates:

We are not isolated beings. Man bears the burden, the responsibility, but also the joy and the beauty of the universe. “He who knows himself knows the Lord” goes a traditional saying of Islam that is constantly repeated by Sufis. “He who knows himself knows all things”; so Meister Eckhart completed the famous injunction of the Sybil of Delphos: “Know yourself”. The three are here brought together: God, the World, Man. I call this the Cosmotheandric experience.²⁶

Panikkar describes further how this inter-relational, or conjoint knowing of self and knowing God, is a universal reality. He elaborates upon this by reference to the insights of great minds from numerous traditions:

... “The way to ascend to God is to descend into oneself,” said Hugh of St. Victor, echoing Plato, the Upanishads, Sankara, Ibn ‘Arabi, and the entire tradition that urges us to cleanse the mirror of the self, the icon of the Deity. Richard of St. Victor seems to complement this thought by recommending, again in tune with the Orient, “let Man ascend through himself above himself.”²⁷

The various ways we speak of God in this relationship presents its challenge. We are speaking of knowing in ontological terms. The Divine as the creating dynamic gives expression to that part of creation that shares consciousness. Vincent Bedogne develops Teilhard de Chardin’s notion that creation, its big bang and subsequent evolution begins with the notion of consciousness, hence mind shapes matter. Speaking of the human as the ‘image of God’ is the common expression of the Judeo-Christian tradition. So, just as creation cannot be divided from the Divine, neither can the human be divided as if an independent and a separate expression of existence from creation. Panikkar elucidates by discussing the use of various pronouns as the means of clarifying and identifying the dimensions of experience in the Cosmotheandric reality.

We cannot properly speak of the Divine in the third person as if it were a thing, an object. We are obliged by language to use the word “it”. ... The Divine, if at all, can only be said to be an *am* and not an *is*. ... The Divine Mystery is the ultimate *am* – of everything. Yet we also experience the *art*

²⁶ Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being : The Gifford Lectures*, 34.
²⁷ *ibid.*

and the *is*. This is the Cosmotheandric experience: the undivided experience of the three pronouns simultaneously. Without the Divine, we cannot say *I*; without Consciousness we cannot say *Thou*; without the World, we cannot say *It*. The “three” pronouns, however are not three’ they belong together. They are pro-nouns, or rather pro-noun; they stand for the same (unnameable) noun There are not three Names. It is only one Name in three pro-nouns. The noun is in its pronouns. Each pronoun is the whole noun in its pronominal way. One could speak here of three dimensions which totally inter- and intra-penetrate each other. This is the *perichoresis* repeatedly referred to.²⁸

To complete the understanding of this perichoresis between Creator, Creation and Creature I move to the relationship of the Creature and Creation polarity.

Creature-Creation Polarity

To reflect upon the third of the three ultimate polarities, I recall Panikkar’s discussion of the part and the whole, in particular the example of Isabel as an example of the part. The part is simply a sample of the whole, yet it is unique for it focuses on the consciousness of the whole. We can note Panikkar’s words concerning this:

Isabel is not an independent part of humanity and ultimately a piece, an atom of the universe, but the concretion of her universe in her - a spark of the Divine says a certain mystic.²⁹

The contrasting vision between the rational and the integral is clear in his description. Here I recall his words already previously quoted:

The advaitic intuition ... It does not look first at Isabel and then at her environment, trying afterward to relate the two. The advaitic intuition sees primordially the relationship that “makes” the “two,” sees the polarity that makes the poles. It can discover that the poles are neither one nor two. Only by negating the duality (of the poles) without fusing them into one can the relationship appear as constitutive of the poles, which are such only insofar as they are conceptually different and yet existentially or really inseparable.³⁰

²⁸ ibid., 191.

²⁹ ibid., 31.

³⁰ ibid.

Panikkar takes a moment to turn to another field to affirm his philosophical perceptions. He turns to a similar insight described poetically by William Blake: ‘To see the world in a grain of sand and heaven in a wild flower, holding infinity in the palm of your hand and eternity in an hour.’³¹

A Contemporary Review of the Summary of the Law

In this chapter, I have introduced the subject of the relationality of all reality as a foundation for an understanding of Relational Spirituality. It is now the task of drawing these threads together to illustrate how the dynamic of love provides an inter-relational paradigm for integrating all such contemporary knowledge of experience. This model is the essence of Panikkar’s Cosmotheandric vision, the ‘symbol of meaning and transformation’, I will navigate the human journey more fully into the integral consciousness. It addresses the question, initially asked by Cousins, as to how we might understand and live Panikkar’s vision. By extension, this explanation endeavours to place spirituality as a living experience at the forefront of life as the ultimate ‘symbol of meaning.’

Tripolar Spirituality

David Augsburger writes:

I come to know myself truly as a spiritual being by knowing God. I come to know who I truly am by being known by God. I come to know others by seeing in them the reflected image of God, the other. I come to know this other when meeting God in others, sister, brother, neighbour, stranger, friend, or enemy.³²

These words by Augsburger express the essence of Relational Spirituality which must go beyond a simple notion of law, as a guide - or instruction manual - for living. It requires a deeper grasp of the essence of life that all is inter-related. It

³¹ ibid.

³² Augsburger, *Dissident Discipleship : A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God, and Love of Neighbor*, 22.

calls for a sensitivity to inter-relatedness, whereby a person perceives life with its three fundamental perspectives, Creator, Creation and Creature, simultaneously and continuously. In this way, Relational Spirituality is an attitude that provides a navigational awareness for the spiritual life.

To explore how contemporary insights, assist in helping us understand more deeply the inter-related nature of all things, as Augsburgers has alluded to, I turn to an analysis of the summary of the way of love. Through the perspectives of the three contemporary trends, mysticism, psychology and social responsibility, I highlight how it can be a model for life which captures the inter-related, non-dual, nature of all things. I will reflect upon its three couplet relationships; self and God, God and neighbour and self and neighbour. Panikkar speaks of each of these entities as “poles”. He highlights that, as we perceive the relationality of each pole with the other, we become aware of the fuller perception of their inter-dependent reality. This relationality is referred to by him as the “polarity” that the relationships between each pole creates and illustrates the non-dual integral awareness. This is beautifully illustrated in Jesus’ profound saying, ‘For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them.’ (Matt 18:20). The experience of polarity raises the involved into the more profound realm of reality that truly exists but rarely seen by others outside the experience.

Meister Eckhart wrote;

If all that is in God is God and if all of creation is in God, then surely we are to love God in all things equally. Christ’s admonition to love our neighbour as ourself is more than an ethic – it is a way of life that is not only a commandment but a gift and a way in which we see the world.³³

Augsburger seeks to hold the three relationships of love together. When reflecting upon the experience of life that we call spiritual, he refers to three approaches; monopolar, bipolar and tripolar spirituality. It is this latter that Relational

³³ Matthew Fox, *Breakthrough: Meister Eckhart's Creation Spirituality in New Translation* (Garden City, New York: Image Books, A Division of Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1980), 74.

Spirituality represents as integral and based upon the trifold way of love. Augsburg further writes,

Tripolar spirituality sees all three as interdependent. No single one of these is fully valid apart from the other two; no single one can be truly experienced without the other two; no one can be extracted as primary or as actually present without the other two.³⁴

Three Interacting Relationships

We will now see through the insights of contemporary fields of knowledge and experience just how interrelated our modern knowledge can reveal reality to be. I will correlate these insights with the wisdom of the scriptural words of Jesus, to show that his affirmation of the traditional and ancient wisdom found in the summary of the way of love and expressed to the lawyer, is still relevant today, ‘You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart and soul and strength, and your neighbour as yourself’.

The Self- God Relational Axis

I see the Spirit having moved over the face of the ‘mythical ocean waters’ of life carrying a great gift from the Asian religious traditions to the Western world, with a reminder of the tradition of silent prayer which seems to have been deeply buried within the hidden closets of Christian institutionalism. The visibility of public personal prayer in the Western world has brought a new interest in this spiritual pursuit for countless people both within and beyond, the membership of the church. Possibly it has become the doorway to the mystical mindset for many

³⁴ Augsburg, *Dissident Discipleship : A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God, and Love of Neighbor*, 13.

for whom the doors of the church are seemingly closed. For many, it has become a primary point of contact to engage with the spiritual reality of life.

The two traditions of the East and West can now be seen to encourage a more accessible and comprehensive approach, and I would argue, a greater means of awakening to the non-dual reality of spirit. The aspirational approach of the West and the accessibility of the East provide a diversity that enhances the reality of the sacred in the midst of all.

Holding these two great traditions together I return to the work of Panikkar to seek an understanding of the Divine Absolute. Panikkar's thesis is that we must turn to the notion of Being that is the ground of all that is. Being itself, is beyond definition for it is beyond form. It is reflective of the notion of the Eastern 'emptiness' while for the Western faith it may be spoken of as 'ineffable or incomprehensible.' The history of much dualistic Christianity has thus tended to create anthropomorphisms for a point of meaning and relational connection.³⁵ The non-dual perception finds its meaning in the ever-present notion of Being whereby Panikkar's Cosmotheandric vision presents the created existence of Being as the relationality of all that is. Our very existence participates in this relationality.

In the work of Jung, the heart of our relationality is the flowing movement of the spirit through ego, unconscious, both personal and collective, self-archetype and beyond. The ego encounters all experience of consciousness from the most concrete form through to the infinite mystical which transpersonal psychologists call the 'causal' nature of consciousness. The non-dual integral model believes that humans are encountering the divine in all experience yet through the different experiences of our human consciousness.

³⁵ Eastern Christianity is less prone to long periods of dualistic thinking.

The quality of conscious awareness does change through life's journey, from moment to moment and through the transitional stages of life. With the expanding orientation of the mind its capacities grow, yet this does not minimise the authenticity of the notion of Spirit in the less developed stages, going right back to the earliest call to trust by a child as highlighted by Erik Erikson. Developmental psychologists make a valuable contribution in aiding our understanding of this journey. Wilber draws attention to Gilligan's work in her book *In a Different Voice*.³⁶ Gilligan is very conscious that the female perspective is set in a relational context. Reflecting such relationality in the field of developmental psychology, Gilligan speaks of the development of the ego through four stages of life – i.e., the ego-centric (or selfish); the ethnocentric (or care); the world-centric (or universal care); and divine-centred (or integrated). Gilligan lists these progressive stages as human development, particularly displayed through the feminine model.³⁷ Males must learn to embrace their feminine within to aid their developmental journey and move beyond their purely rational approach.

While developmentalists seek to understand the spiritual paradigm shaped by many streams of experience Fowler is of particular value. He has studied the stream he refers to as faith development. Fowler's six stages proceed from the first stage, the 'Intuitive-Projective' stage in which the earliest experience of the child picks up the most basic ideas about God from parents. Stage two is the 'Mythic-Literal' stage, common for young school age children in whom they begin to understand the world in more logical and literal ways yet accept stories in trust. Stage three is referred to as the 'Synthetic-Conventional' stage and is typical of the teenager experience. Social circles have developed, and with this, an awareness of different approaches to life which need to be shaped into some all-encompassing belief system. Stage four is typical of the young adult and

³⁶ Wilber., *Integral Psychology*, Wilber 29.

³⁷ K Wilber, *A Sociable God* (Boston: Shambala Publications, 2005), 32.

Fowler refers to it as the ‘Individuation-Reflective’ stage. The individual freedom of the young adult means they frequently encounter other belief systems and go through the challenge of re-evaluating their system in the light of other approaches. Stage five is the ‘Conjunctive Faith’ stage, a period that commonly might appear in midlife when life’s mystery is re-engaged in the search for much more from the less - uniformly determined world of merely the rational and logical capacities. The sixth stage is the highly-matured journey of which Fowler speaks and which he identifies as the ‘Universalizing Faith’ stage. The few who arrive at this perspective see the importance of valuing and serving all people irrespective of their background and condition.³⁸

To hold Fowler’s model up against Gilligan’s model and the Jungian personality theory, we can note how the relational journey replicates the call to ever broader relationality. Jung’s structure is a template for a journey from ego persona to shadow and personal unconscious, to collective unconscious and ultimately, self archetype, highlighting that the call of life is an ever-expanding call to infinite relationality.

The non-dual perspective values the life-time journey built upon incremental steps of ‘mindfulness.’ God is present in all things, from the minuscule to the infinite and we live continuously in the dynamic relationality of Being in its Becoming. Mindful of our materialistic, scientifically-described and technologically-organised world, Panikkar sees beyond the surface with the third eye to speak of created reality as a sacred secularity, in an endeavour to open our minds to the non-dual reality of all that is. Replicating his advaitic vision of the Cosmotheandric relationality of Creator, Creature and Creation, the relationality of self and God presented here from my contemporary model of life under the title of Relational Spirituality, adds clarity to a contemporary review of the ancient words of the summary of the law and affirmed by Jesus, ‘You shall love

³⁸ Wilber., *Integral Psychology*. Chart 6A 209

the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind...’ (Lk.10:22). Contemporary insights enhance our vision of such a relationship and so enlighten us with a non-dual integral understanding and encourage us to boldly walk into the future in the sacred dance of Being in its Becoming. The mystical journey is fundamental to an ever-maturing relationship between Creator and Creature.

The God- Neighbour Relational Axis

To expand the picture of relationality captured in the dynamic of love, the contemporary development in the social responsibility and social justice movements are insightful. For just under two thousand years Christianity has developed within a predominantly dualistic perception of reality. Such a perspective lends itself well to a metaphysical world which is inclined to separate the spiritual from the material. The recent broader awakening to the non-dual has presented a new picture that enlightens the mind to the unity found in the relationality of all.

To expand our understanding of a non-dual perspective presented by Panikkar’s Cosmotheandric vision - with its Creator-Creation polarity - I return to the personality theory of Jung, where the Creator-Creation relationship is integrally one. The self-archetype is representative of the collective unconscious, yet it is also representative of the dynamic totality of the full relationality of all other archetypes and hence, becomes a window to the Absolute Divinity of Being. Regarding the dynamics of love, of God and neighbour, the divine and creation, we see that both God and neighbour are inseparable. They are not two separates but a perichoretic unity. Can there be a point in reality where the Divine is not present?

The Cosmotheandric ‘dance of life’ is captured in Panikkar’s notion of sacred secularity. The social responsibility and social justice call of Wilber’s ‘spirit-in-

action' articulates the dynamics of this realm of relationality. The quality of such dynamics depends upon the sacred vision one holds of the world. As an expression of the Divine in time and space, we perceive its infinite value in the scheme of all things. The integral theorists, (eg. Gebser) speak of its diaphanous luminosity, where all past, present and future is transparent as time-free. The quality of social responsibility and social justice are fundamental to our mission as stewards of care. Our respect for the world around us - whether the sacredness of the galactic system in macro-panorama or micro-vista of the microscopic - the quality of our relationality reflects the degree of our respect for the Divine, our neighbour and our very self.

From the collective unconscious, we intuit the Spirit of the Cosmic Christ who intercedes for creation on our behalf with sighs too deep for words as it groans in its Being in Becoming, to recall the image of St Paul (Rom. 8:26-27). The Spirit-in-action is ever actively seeking to move creation forward, to fulfill its purposes of which humanity is an integral part.

Scientifically, the quantum world has opened our eyes to the inter-relationality of the world of matter. But this is not only relevant in the physical state. Sociologically, theories like systems theory speak of the inter-related reality of all forms of community. Senge has highlighted these insights for the business world by seeking models that engage all people as essential components of the whole. Technology has crossed so many boundaries of communication that our lives are dependent upon its systems for functioning. Health and wellbeing are treated with the most extraordinary scientific professionalism and technological equipment and systems incorporating the domain of statistics, trends and environment to further diagnose and prognose. For Jesus, the healing of body and mind were at the forefront of his inauguration of the Kingdom. His declaration to his listeners, 'know that the kingdom is very near' (Lk 10:9), amplifies non-dual awareness that all is one: the kingdom of God is both within

and amongst us. Creator and Creation are in a relational dance. For Panikkar secularity is graced by the sacredness of Being. The law of love calls people to love God and one's neighbour as oneself, as a sacred inter-relational whole.

The Self- Neighbour Relational Axis

Panikkar presents the inter-dependent relationality of Creator, Creation and Creature in the vision he refers to as Cosmotheandric. While each is engaged in the other and none can exist, or meaningfully function independently of the other, one is no more central than the other two. Human consciousness functions as the junction point for human awareness for, without consciousness, we cannot know of anything. Consciousness of the human mind is the great gift of human experience. An understanding of the self remains intimately connected to our relationship with Creator and Creation, God and neighbour. The most immediate relationship is that which we experience in our created environment.

In 1969 humans landed on the moon, crossing new boundaries of the outward horizon, at a time when the psychological movement was encouraging people to cross new interior boundaries of the mind. Perhaps these trends were reflective of a new attitude and impulse within the human to understand the expanding vista of the world both externally and interiorly?

In the Carl Jung personality template, we can turn our attention to the ego-unconscious mind relational axis as a starting point. We can identify the connection between both the internal and the external experience of our life. By extending the axis beyond the ego, into the externally perceived world and in like manner, tracing the same axis internally, we can see that our relationship with the collective unconscious is interactively engaged with, and mirrors, the world around us. While a dualistic perception of life will see these two vistas as separate, the non-dual integral perception through Relational Spirituality presents the understanding that the movement in both directions needs is to be understood as

inter-dependent. Herein lies the crux of the call to love one's neighbour as one's self.

We react to our perception of the world around us, either positively or negatively, depending upon the state of our mind. If the astronomer was determined to peer far into outer space, the psychologist was equally inspired to peer deeply into the soul of humanity. For this reason, the self-awareness, self-acceptance movement across significant domains of Western society, so greatly enhanced by the insights of psychology, was a significant response to the call of new internal impulses requiring attention. From the more traditional study of the psyche, such as in the form of psychological studies, through to the great range of counselling therapies, the field of counselling grew significantly to trace pathways into the soul. Client-centred, reflective listening, gestalt, bioenergetics, primal, rational emotive, dream, art, neuro-lingual, reality, transactional, systems, were all typical approaches which have developed to deal with mental health, wellbeing, self-actualization, marriage and family, business or even sporting goals.

What is most significant from this new movement is the increased understanding of the interconnection people have with one another and the world beyond. On the one hand, we are products of our environment, so greatly influenced by the personal relationships we experience with those we are most directly connected with. We are molded by our social and cultural mores and shaped by the era of our history. On the other hand, we are also shaped by the archetypal unconscious mind upon which our human propensities are established. We are influenced by our interior memory of family patterns, we are shaped by our own past memories and ultimately, we are shaped by the story of humanity from its origin. As humans we are relational beings, the broad psychological field has greatly enlightened our understanding.

To speak of the developing picture of Social Responsibility we can see its close connection with psychology. One particular contribution of the psychological

movement saw that a person's interior quality of life was connected with its surrounding world. Therapies developed that examined the quality of relationships and the subsequent impact upon people involved in the family, group or community. These therapies often analysed the way people caused others to behave, for example, specialists might map a graph of the family system of interacting relationships. Concerning health or behaviour they might examine how the style of behaviour of one family member might negatively impact upon others in the family relational system. Through the work of family therapists 'the problem child' might turn out to be the victim of other family member's less than admirable behaviour. Transactional Analysis was an example of a relational system that was developed through the work of advocates such as Eric Berne. Virginia Satyr was known for her work in this field of relationships such as *People Making*, the title of one of her well-known books.³⁹

Murray Bowen was a leading exponent in the development of systems theory for marriage and family life, well known for its comprehensive view of human behaviour and problems within the family system. Peter Senge is important in this field through his significant contribution to developing systems theory beyond the family into broader organizations, in particular the business community. From a systems perspective, he makes some pertinent statements when he writes: 'Business and other human endeavours are also systems. They are bound by invisible fabrics of interrelated actions, which are part of that lacework of ourselves ...it's doubly hard to see the whole pattern of change.'⁴⁰ He follows up, 'You can only understand the system of the rainstorm by contemplating the whole, not any individual part of the pattern.'⁴¹ Further still he

³⁹ V. Satir, *Peoplemaking* (Palo Alto, California: Science and Behavior Books, 1972).

⁴⁰ Senge. Peter M., *Systems Theory the Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (1990), 7.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

amplifies, ‘Business is the only institution that has a chance, as far as I can see, to fundamentally improve the injustice that exists in the world.’⁴²

The Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:30-37) is an illustration of the way one is called to approach the relationship of oneself and one’s neighbour. Rather than simply identify a neighbour by external description, by way of Jesus questioning, ‘Which of the three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ (Luke 10:36) - Jesus highlights the deeper interaction of the people involved - by turning attention to the sense of neighbourliness the lawyer must discover within himself. It is a profound insight of the inter-connectivity of two people from a significantly past time of history 2000 years ago and years before the development of modern psychology. The ability to perceive the world around us is dependent upon our internal state of mind. Jung identified this as contributing to our individuation. The transformation is accomplished through the interaction of the Spirit working within us, in conjunction with our interaction with the world in which we live. Augsburg highlights the individual-in-community as the proper unit of humanness.⁴³ Insights from the field of psychology have helped us understand the dynamics of our interaction with our neighbour and highlighted particularly transformative behaviours. While this is a natural process of life, the Christian faith has come to its understanding of how the deepest realms of the Spirit engage with our inner life for transformative purposes. St Paul puts it this way, ‘... be transformed by the renewal of your minds.’ (Rom. 12:2) Psychological insight has enlightened the human mind to clearer processes and pathways.

⁴² *ibid.*, 5.

⁴³ Augsburg, *Dissident Discipleship : A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God, and Love of Neighbor*, 76.

The Cosmotheandric Vision as Relational Spirituality

The knowledge and insights from the above three trends of human endeavour as part of the human endeavour to enhance life through the past century, are important to an understanding of Relational Spirituality. The polarity that the three generate when known with integral awareness, challenges us to comprehend how no one entity - God, neighbour or self - can ever stand alone for they are truly integrated. Each is integrally inter-related with the other two. The integral journey of life draws us more deeply into the perichoretic dynamic love of the three. As we mature in such love our attitude is transformed to a greater comprehensive awareness of Being in Becoming. This is Panikkar's Cosmotheandric vision aroused through Relational Spirituality. Cousins' question, 'how do we live Panikkar's Cosmotheandric integral vision?' has been answered. The Relational Spirituality vision of the summary of the way of love, provides the schema for drawing together the contemporary insights of three trends that are shaping the quality of human life; the mystical, the self-knowledge and social responsibility and justice, movements. When perceived integrally they provide pathways into our emerging non-dual, realm of consciousness.

Panikkar has described the emerging human perception that illustrates integral consciousness by drawing upon the inter-relatedness of Creator, Creation and Creature to create a tripolar spirituality. I have elaborated his philosophical perspective through the way of love as Relational Spirituality, to provide a model for living within the emerging integral era. Panikkar uses the notion of rhythm and harmony to capture the integrated inter-relational nature of this emerging perception of our world. Consequently, he speaks of life spoken of as a sacred secularity.

CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION

When it comes to modern day spirituality the story is the same. Love is never so bold as to interfere with the way we live, yet never so absent to leave us abandoned. It is the unseen active participant. Unfortunately, the modern spirituality sees it the other way round. We reach up to the dualistic Lord as if beyond in our attempt to achieve goodness to secure the Lord's favour. We then expect the unusual appearance of the Lord to help us through the day. Instead, the subtle presence of the Lord expects us to get on with the faithful caring of our neighbour. To see with eyes of faith the presence of the Lord in the ordinary secular reality is the common spiritual way. But it is an incarnational God who manages the balance between not interfering out of trust in our ability to cope and the subtle hand of empathy when we have hit the bottom of our endeavours.

It is summarised in the Crucifixion which illustrates that the Love of the Lord is always present in the darkest of times ready to raise us up, to open a new door of possibilities, when and if we fail, no matter how dramatically. The crucifixion is the assurance of a loving hand waiting to restore the fallen no matter how deeply their troubles have become. Then it becomes the story of restoration or resurrection, the light that shines in a dark place when all seems lost. It is the power of the spirit that liberates us when cooperating with the incarnational God. It is the story that reveals an even deeper truth than that which humanity had awakened to in previous times. This new awakening transcends the prior level of sight. The life of Jesus came at a time when mostly perception was externally and dualistically comprehended. The disciples interpreted the resurrection as an external event. It has taken till the last few centuries to begin to assess the resurrection as also an internal event. The progressive, integral era has taken us a step further. The external reality to the depth of the quantum and

the eternal consciousness is awakening us to a fuller reality of resurrection. This is the ever-expansive reality of the Cosmotheandric vision, or the Christophanic truth. The Christ that permeates the whole of creation with its glory. This is resurrection.

The story of the incarnational God is the story of evolution. The real but subtle story of love ever abiding to bring to fulfilment the story of creation. The patient persistence to move the whole onto greater wholes is the story of greater and greater levels of consciousness. It is the domain Teilhard speaks of as noosphere and the journey toward the Omega point, the fulfilment of global consciousness.

ENERGY OR SPIRIT-IN-ACTION

Returning to the story of creation it is Vincent Bedogne who presents that creation began with consciousness, in its primary state of emptiness, *whatever this may mean*, but it proceeds to generate a movement forward out of the need for fulfillment. So, the story of creation continues, summarised by a primal concept of love it generated the four primary forces of nature. Speaking religiously this movement forward is spoken of by Ken Wilber as Spirit-in-Action, leading evolution ever upward to the life we declare as of the high purpose and its witness to the grand qualities of beauty, truth, justice, and compassion. Of all the possible outcomes of evolution this high quality is safely assumed to have arisen by a purposeful intent of a loving Spirit-in-Action, for want of a better term, as the unseen subtle workings of the Lord.

The story of evolution is a complex one mixing the steady compilation of building blocks, that de Chardin describes as coming about by a process of “attraction, connection, complexity and consciousness”. The contrary picture is set up by the ‘second law of thermodynamics and its story of ‘entropy’, that truth that all within creation, expels a form of energy in every action. This story suggests that there is an innate sense of friction in all reality. If it was not the case then it would be an unliveable reality. In a simple illustration we would not be able to walk for we could not experience the necessary friction necessary for gripping the surface on which we attempted to walk. All would be more like walking on ice. We would not be able to grip things to handle, for they would be like wet soap. The second law of thermodynamics is a necessary part of creation to provide a living world.

To extend this point further this law effects far more than the surface of objects. It is fundament to all reality, even to the point of ‘a social dissonance’. There is

a psychological friction in the way we live. The world is a world of complex social interactions even affecting life in the collective unconscious, with developed consciousness the good and the bad, the aspirational and socially conflicted, the highest of ideals and the lowest are all a necessary part of the liveable domain of life. Life is dynamic caught between the life forming and the life squandering. The natural journey is always one for aspiring to the higher level of consciousness but it is not guaranteed because of the social dissonance. This form of social dissonance is the cause of suffering and has often been called sin, but it is more rightfully recognised as a necessary part of the equation that makes living a meaningful pursuit of the ever-higher forms of life possible. Evolution is a complex arrangement of *Creatio Continua*, to use Panikkar's term', to refer to the incomplete nature of creation in a process of *becoming*. The struggle between the aspired to and the disarrayed

HOLY SPIRIT

The explosion of energy in an energy constructed creation has been, as indicated above, referred to as Spirit-in-Action by Wilber. The birth of consciousness continued this story with different references to spirit across the planet depending upon one's tradition. The story of Jesus introduced the notion of the Holy Spirit. This was equated with the break-through of a new level of consciousness in his resurrection. This new level of consciousness, identified with the former Spirit-in-Action, was now open to the term Holy Spirit when associated with the high level of this new consciousness. Humans can now communicate with the absolute depth of the mystical and the deeper notion of love that was ever present moving with the unifying intent toward the fulfillment of life. This is the reality Jesus made manifest in his earthly life but now as ever expanding in the name of the universal Cosmic Christ, and as understood in the integral realm.

OWNING JESUS

THE INTERFAITH WORLD

Has the Christian faith taken control of Jesus identity? Jesus never really aligned himself with the Jewish faith exclusively, although he was a Jew, and for that matter, neither did he align himself with the Christian faith, although his first followers were spoken of as following “The Way” and in time called Christian. It is true that he did involve himself with the Jewish faith in that he sought baptism, attended the synagogue and temple. He both respected that the Jewish faith was of the National identity he was attached to and that one should meet the basic requirements. He certainly knew the faith intimately and put the religious leaders to shame with his wisdom. His confrontations with the Jewish authorities were direct and pointed. He lived his life as a Jew and died long before he was expected to by his disciples.

A question I ask, was Jesus really a universalist who would have embraced the faiths that he engaged with? The most notable example was when he met with the Samaritan woman at the well. In conversation with her he declared that the time would come when they would neither worship in Jerusalem nor ‘this land’, but in Spirit and truth. These are universal concepts and speak to a universal approach to faith.

As a Christian Jesus had no opportunity to instruct his disciples other than his regular teaching to the Jews. He taught the sermon on the mount, the golden rule of love, the Lord’s prayer, that you must love your enemies, forgive 70 times 7 those who sin against you, give your coat to those who went without, etc. All are universal concepts that can apply to most faith traditions.

He saw faith in the Syro-Phoenician woman, and the Roman Centurion. He praised them for their faith without demanding anything in return. These small

signs of a universal attitude are enough to ask the question. Did Jesus intend to be captured exclusively by the Jewish faith and then by Christianity. There is no reason to doubt that the Christian faith was rightfully the witness to his life. The clearest example was the commemoration of the eucharist, the telling of the story of his death and resurrection and to preach the gospel. But the dualistic attitude, always believing there is an opposite, that characterised the exclusive way of life of Christians meant that its history is riddled with war, the crusades, harshness in its teachings, excommunications, etc. These were clearly in contrast to the compassionate teachings of Jesus and his tolerance of all faiths.

In this globalising world, that faces supreme challenges for survival, new opportunities present themselves. Change is possible. All may change with people of all faiths living in neighbourhoods alongside one another. The challenge is that humanity may understand that we cannot live any longer with an exclusive attitude. We need to grow in tolerance and understanding, respecting one another for our differences but acknowledging that the teachings of Jesus are universal, for he has always been a universalist. The Christian faith has ever so slowly grown to understand this truth in the proclamation of the cosmic Christ, that Christ is 'all and in all'. Every faith has the potential for acknowledging the universal without giving up their traditional ways, some may take longer than others but the future well-being of all people depends upon it as we learn from one another.

The interfaith world must be considered from a whole of creation perspective. This takes us back to the beginning of time, the notion of all life beginning from consciousness, that gave birth to the inflationary – Big Bang period, where there was a vast unity of all that was. Unity is the foundation of love, for all things work harmoniously as one and continues to progressively do so. The word for this all-embracing love that infiltrates all that is, as the primary force of evolution, is described as incarnation. Once this process of life is set it remains

consistent for all time. It is purposefully intent for bringing about fulfillment, the pleroma mentioned in scripture, as the omega point of all creation. The incarnational beginning continues its work down through the history of evolution with purposeful intention to reach fulfilment. It is the unseen primary force of creation.

With the emergence of the human species, we also saw the emergence of tribal life which in time correlated with religious practice. As many tribes as appeared, the same number of religious practices emerged until eventually they consolidated into broad movements. Today these have consolidated into broad general movements of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Daoism, Shintoism, and Christianity to name some significant examples. There are still many variations of native religious practices representing some of the more primitive. What is distinctive is the variation of belief systems, yet there are qualities that stand out to indicate that they are religious. The belief in God, the practice of worship, some forms of spiritual practice are usually supported by an ethical code.

For a considerable time, religion divided people. Christianity was a strong movement with a belief it was called to convert the world to its ways. This was particularly strong in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries with a strong colonial bent. Others used religion to consolidate their identity in war but this was a perversion of purpose. The movement of people world-wide, has meant the picture has changed. The dilemma of mixed background living in the one neighbourhood has demanded one revisit this notion. The general population is learning to respect one's differences.

The gradual globalisation of the planet has dramatically changed the picture. At the beginning of the 19th century there were approximately one billion people on the planet. At the commencement of the twentieth century the world population was approximately two billion. And now in the early years of the twenty first

century there are approximately eight billion. The growth in the short period of time has been exponentially dramatic. The movement of people seeking a better home has compounded the issue. We live in a global society where people are having to live amicably with difference. This trend is slow but it is paramount for conflict is threatening the survival of the planet. It is against this background that in the same period a major transition has been taking place concerning the deeper understanding of life. Since the year 1800 the second Axial period of history slowly emerged with the first signs of a new perspective of life. In the 19th century the theory of Darwinism, along with the advent of perceptions of the mind introduced by Freud forged new perspectives. In technology the first signs appeared in the telephone, and in the twentieth century the discovery of the theory of quantum physics meant the world was significantly transitioning into an integral world. Everything was understood to be inter-related. We are now living in the Integral world.

Revisiting the initial notion of the origin of creation being the work of love as the primary force shaping creation, we are reminded that the work of love once in play, must continue on eternally working with purposeful intent to bring about all to fulfillment. While this story is one of varied progress it is consistent in its intent. Love never fails. The Long history of division is possibly coming to an end. The integral era is challenging all to revisit their intention. The Christian belief as superior needs to be questioned. Can the prime mission of Jesus be read differently without losing his honoured place. To understand that the love which emerged at the beginning of time was a comprehensive love for all creation, must continue purposefully working for the fulfillment of all creation even through to our current day.

Raimon Panikkar speaks of the unknown Christ of Hinduism. He intends for us to find the work of the incarnate love working in Hinduism as the incarnate Christ, perhaps differently, but of the same spirit as Christianity. In the same

way he would ask the same quest of Buddhism, Islam, Shintoism etc. The incarnate Christ is fulfilling the divine purposes in each tradition as is seen fit. The challenge is to find the same homeomorphic equivalent in each tradition, from the most sophisticated to the most primitive. The journey has a long way to go to reach the final omega point, but a major threshold is being encountered. The transition to the integral is the most significant in history. Out of necessity the world must deal with Globalisation. This era is the first time the solution is to be found in unity. The unity of the first moments of creation are now being replicated in our day.

ETERNAL PRESENCE

Across the known realms of creation, there is one conclusion for all beings. It is the inevitability that all must die. To understand this experience, the dualistic perception of life and death as understood through the past few millennia has been characterised by the restrictions of time and space. To explain the reality of such experience covering both a known and yet-to-be-experienced future beyond the grave, humans have developed a range of dualistic narratives. Each narrative has reflected features common to the world we presently live within. Imagination stretches into realms we do not know of other than projecting concepts we have come to know from our earthly experience. Some believe that there is nothing other than this world and that once we die our existence ceases. Others picture our body decomposing as the cells return to the earth only to be reconstituted in some other form of physicality. Ancient civilizations were known to fill tombs with earthly goods so that the deceased would be well endowed with an abundance of earthly supplies for the presumed afterlife. More commonly embraced across some major religions is the notion of reincarnation with its belief that we return to the world as we know it, save for a different time and circumstance of history. The purpose is the continuation of one's growth until there is no need to return to this earth for one to arrive at the ultimate spiritual goal of nirvana. For Christianity belief is in resurrection following the recorded historic account of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus is spoken of as the 'first fruit' of a resurrection experience, his disciples to follow a

similar path beyond earthly death to enter greater union with the Father. Once again growth is the stand-out characteristic, imagined to include a time in paradise before the completion of the journey in heaven.

Throughout history, these concepts have commonly been explained through dualistic terms and bear many characteristics derived from the way we have come to describe earthly life. Other obvious examples which illustrate this approach include the interpretation of the return of Jesus in the Parousia or Second Coming. This event is assumed to come in a future time in history. Another example would be the concrete interpretation of Jesus' words that in his Father's house are many dwelling places.[\[1\]](#) Heaven takes on a glorified special interpretation of our present world. It is worth noting the interpretation of Jesus' reference in parables to hell which is assumed to refer to a specific place and consequently led to many theories of a location for eternal punishment. The parable of the sheep and the goats Mtt.25:1f has the King sitting on a throne and calling all races together and separating the sheep from the goats before welcoming the sheep to stay in his company while cursing and casting out the goats into a place of eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. While this is a parable, once again it is commonly interpreted with time and space dimensions. Such common dualistic interpretations of life are shaped by these notions of space and time and as we know of in life in this present realm of creation. Such limits impact the essential message. The integral perspective seeks different interpretations for a wholistic world of unity, time free, and beyond space.

The emerging integral era has encouraged increasing numbers of people to speak of life beyond the grave, free of such dualistic traits. With regard to the question of death an examination of the scriptural passages involving Jesus' conversation with his disciples concerning death enables one to perceive of experience time-free and aperspectively, that is without the strictures of time and space. I present the notion of 'presence' as the common thread that applies to such experiences as core to both earthly living and the essence of existence beyond the grave. I am using 'presence' to capture the substantial essence of a person's sense of being and the quality of knowing one another that enables a person to live in a relational way, characterised by presence with other beings.

Personal 'presence' is a way of speaking of the essence of community that arises out of the notion of Raimon Panikkar's 'Being in Becoming.'

One particular example illustrates Jesus' difficulty in teaching his disciples about such a non-dual integral perception. It is found prior to his pending death in his conversation with the disciples led by Peter, Thomas, and Phillip, as recorded in John chapters 13 and 14. Having indicated to the disciples that he is only with them for a short while longer it describes the three men questioning Jesus on where he is going. A little later a related question from Philip to Jesus is his request to show them the Father. To both questions they struggle with Jesus' response for the truth of such issues can only be found outside answers which depend upon the dualistic notions of time and space which characterises the disciples' mentality at this stage of their life. Jesus emphasises that the answer to the first question lies in loving one another. From Jesus' point of view to follow him is to emulate the life of love that Jesus displays. It is the way of discipleship. Peter is determined he can follow Jesus. Jesus rejects Peter's brave declaration by predicting his forthcoming denial. Peter's love of Jesus falls far short of the love that Jesus will display. Peter's love is still young and he is far from ready to display love by approaching Jesus' example. In his former stage of life, Peter has so often followed the call of the fish into the sea of Galilee even if it meant into a treacherous storm. He is presumably still perceiving that following Jesus is a physical journey characterised by bravado. This is not the journey that Jesus will take 'in a little while'. His journey is one of journeying into the depths of a love requiring obedience to one's internal integrity. For several years Jesus has been teaching his followers of this qualitative journey, the way of faith and trust in one's being. Such a way of love stretches far beyond a journey shaped by the measures of space and time, but speaks of a human attitude, more precisely a sense of the quality of one's 'presence' within the context of life's circumstances. To Peter, he declares, 'I give you a new commandment: love one another; as I have loved you.' In 13:34. Philip persists with a similarly formed dualistic question. He beckons Jesus to show them the Father. It implies one might be able to see the Father in physical form. Jesus again emphasises that to see the Father is to know him in the quality of life as Jesus lives, notably in his way of loving. He declares I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except by me. These are qualities that shape a sense of the

persons 'presence.' Could Philip not see Jesus with an awareness that aroused his own deeper spirit, for if he had, he would have at least glimpsed the Father as 'presence'?

To further deal with their limited perception Jesus calls them to trust. He then uses dualistic imagery (for this is necessary for the dualistic mind of humans of the time) to paint a picture of the experience beyond the grave by describing that in his Father's house are many rooms/dwelling places. He uses such imagery to focus their thinking but emphasises the sense of Jesus' presence within all that they will experience once they die. Jesus declares that he is going to prepare a place for them, that he will come again to greet them so that where He is, they may be with him also and his way there is known to all. The heart of the illustration is not the space-time earthly image of rooms but the realm of Jesus' all-encompassing 'presence' on their journey to the goal of the ultimate purpose of life, the fulness of union with the divine which is not lost in physically dying.

The central message of the journey through earthly living, death, grave, and beyond is living an increasingly refined quality of love in the way of Jesus' example where one will increasingly know the eternal 'presence' of the divine. It is the presence of a love expanding into time-free companionship in which one will encounter the 'presence' of the divine grounding of all that is. It is a journey that shares one's presence with the time-free aperspectival Jesus, whom Christians refer to as the Christ, as the ever-present companion known through ever-deepening love. The journey is of a maturation, ever opening to greater realms of being. Jesus declares, 'Unless a grain of wheat dies and falls into the ground it will remain a single grain, that is dualistic, but if it dies it bears much fruit. Those who love their life will lose it and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.' Jn 12:24, 25. The journey from life to death is not merely a physical and time-oriented event, but part of a growing path of ever-expanding creative expression into the fulness of being. Death which concludes our earthly life is one earthly event, however, it is a relatively unique event in a continuous process of dying and rising. For Jesus, it will be encountered in embracing the command to love as he has loved. The love we encounter in each moment is a love that is known in the process of dying and rising. It cannot be ultimately understood through dualistic

imagery shaped by time and space but rather by integral awareness which opens one to the loving 'presence' of the divine, in this realm of experience or beyond the grave which is the essence of all consciousness. Presence is that which nests in the notion of 'being in its becoming'. In John Jesus declares, I am the resurrection and the life. The process of living and dying is a gradual and continuous process.

THE SECOND COMING

THE PAROUSIA OR THE RAPTURE

A popular belief in some sections of the Christian community is the second coming of Jesus, commonly called the 'parousia' or the rapture. The story is that at the appropriate time the Lord Jesus will appear in the same way that he departed. The faithful will be raised into the air to meet him and the non-believers will remain rejected by the Lord and left to fend for themselves. The literal interpretation leaves many unanswered questions.

The context is the puzzle. The history of the universe is reported to be 13.8 billion years old, yet the history of humanity is approximately 400 years with barely 70 years bearing some semblance to modern humanity. Humanity has only been in a significantly organized state for about ten to six thousand years and been able to write significantly some two and half thousand years ago. In all this time the history of man is infinitesimally small when compared to the history of the universe. One must ask, what is the purpose of this brief appearance of humans in the unimaginable long story of the history of the universe.

Returning to the beginning of time, from the Christian perspective, love is considered to be the prime determinant of the story of evolution. Humanity is

called to work toward the reconciliation of its ways and grow in understanding the meaning of the story and the fulfillment of its purpose of love.

The reconciliation of its ways has turned a major corner with the emergence of the integral vision of life. The integral vision has become the contemporary way because of the arrival of the quantum world and the exponential growth of world population.

If love be the story, then the literal meaning of the second coming is hard to make sense of. It is set on the expectation that the Lord will return at any moment. On the other hand it has been presented as the story of judgement from the time of the first disciples through to the present time. But with the story of Christianity being taken over by culture it leaves the story short. It leaves the harsh judgment apportioned to other traditions without merit. Many Christians are Christian in name only. In current times the clearest example is the evangelical wing of the church in the United States of America. Put simply their political connection to the gun lobby, where there are more guns than people is clearly not Christian. The Roman Catholic failure to protect children from sexual abuse is of epidemic proportion and is another clear example of being Christian in name only. The Orthodox Church stands resolutely beside the invading armies of the Russian army into Ukraine. These examples are the tip of the iceberg.

Jesus' parable of the sheep and goats highlights that 'whoever does it to one of these little one, does it to me,' This includes those that care for others without knowing. Being Christian in name only is insufficient. Judgment is determined by care of the most vulnerable or most needy. The conclusion one must draw from this is that the church has arguably concluded the first stage of its life, the cultural stage. It is time to embrace the integral or the global era when the deeper understanding of what the Lord requires is made from the harmonising

of the best of the many faith traditions that represent all people. This is a deeper form of the body of Christ. It has clearly come to the stage of the Cosmic Christ.

The world is entering a new era. People are moving around the world almost at will. Refugees are fleeing situations of hopelessness in the hope of finding new homes and work. Millions travel the world exploring the farthest corners of the earth as tourists. Increasingly we are living in multifaith communities. This cross-cultural form of society is casting the world anew. We live our different religious traditions as neighbours. The world is figuratively one and it is time to live it.

The journey from national living to the fulfilment of love in a melting pot of a society, is an arduous trip. Several considerations make it complex. There is the original determination that one must be a Christian. However, Jesus never made reference to any religious identity yet the Christian tradition has become completely attached to him. Raimon Panikkar has spoken of the Spirit of Christ, that is, the cosmic Christ, or a homeomorphic equivalent, working in its own way within each tradition as he chooses. The dream of love is so much bigger than that determined to be by the Christian tradition. The next stage of growth is the journey to appreciate what each one really brings to the table. The solution is found in the search to bypass the rhetoric that causes conflict and discover an appreciation of the genuine contribution that stands at the centre of each faith. Working together in the way of love is enhanced greatly. Far more advanced than the self-importance of a culturally superior Christian faith.

We must ask how are we to interpret the Parousia. Two opposing ways are to be considered, the way of judgement and the natural way. The way of judgement is by the intervention of Jesus at a time of his choosing. The natural way is for the planet to burn up by climate change or by radiation caused by nuclear war.

Again, I refer to the Parable of the sheep and the goats. It is explicit in its description of a divide between the righteous and unrighteous, but what is unclear is who this applies to, Christians or more than that. The message is one of genuine love for the least, for the Christ like. But that does not mean exclusively the cultural Christian. Many proclaim the message of Jesus but are far from living in the spirit of that message. A proportion of people who live in prison are there because they have had such a poor start in life. Others are caught living lives of necessity due to poverty. Some are rich and develop admirable lives of philanthropy while others are full of greed yet remain adamant that they are people of faith. Others have embraced the name of Christ but hardly follow in his footsteps.

I return to repeat that the time difference between the whole story of evolution and that part that involves the story of mankind is significant. The reason for creation is part of the overall story and must include the story of the Christ. Whether that story goes on for millennia seeking to fulfill some divine purpose it will certainly be no accident. While humanity is on this planet it will continue to evolve.

The unexpected closure to Jesus' life, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension, took the disciples by surprise. In their confusion they had to process so much. As their world of confusion proceeded, the records of the gospel and epistles were written. With the gradual emergence of persecution, the focus of their mission moved from love to self-protection. The duality of their world moved their thinking toward, those who were in the community to those who were outside. So certain were they with the ultimate victory of the Lord that they soon shifted their focus to his return and the proclamation of his Kingdom. The mission of love was a minimized dualistic love.

Matthew and Luke have written after the initial destruction of the temple by the invading Romans. Matthew 24 has inserted a major message with references to

Old Testament prophecies. In his version of scripture, he has made such a feature of the return of the Lord, that the question must be asked if it be a latter insertion, or from a church deeply under persecution. Luke's reference to 'staying awake at all times and praying that you may have strength to escape these things that are going to take place' is appropriate for someone who is caught in persecution. John's reference to being raised on the last day comes from the discussion with Mary and Martha surrounding Lazarus' death. It is appropriate when speaking of the last days. Matthew's reference to 'two men will be in the field when one will be taken and the other left, or two women grinding at a mill when one will be taken and the other left,' could equally be applied to the coming of the spirit than the second coming.

A good number of the epistles refer to the second coming, although this is usually in the form of a greeting. Ephesians 4:30 quotes 'And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. A majority of references are of this kind. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 expands the image, 'For the Lord himself will descend from Heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then all who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.' This can be equally applied to be a colourful image that refers to an imaginative end of history that does not know of evolution, a global planet and universe. Jude 14 and 15 writes, 'It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied saying, Behold the Lord comes with ten thousand of his holy ones, to execute judgement on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.' This is a quote from a time that it was thought that the Lord instructed the Jews to slaughter their enemies. Let us not

forget that the disciples were Jews who carried Jewish theology. Revelations extends the image in 20:11. 'Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown in the lake of fire.' All these references are equally reflective of a community caught in a period of great persecution and greatly divided from those that oppose them. They speak to a time when people believed in a flat earth, when life was short, when people hardly understood the notion of history. It was a time when magic and mythology was still very much understood as historical fact. It was a time when people thought dualistically.

This leaves a dilemma. The persistent claim that the end is nigh has been a constant cry of certain sections of the church for two thousand years. Literal interpretation has been taken seriously and was the way of the earliest disciples. It has continued to be the perennial claim. Dates have continually been offered for the return of the Lord to no avail. It tends to be proclaimed when the world has been seen as evil and disposable and the non-believers dispensable. But what if the story of evolution is part of the evolving story of love. I reiterate that the world appears to be coming to a new era. With the movement of people world-wide we are moving into a multi-cultured neighbourhood, hence we are moving from a nationalistic world into an integral world where people are each learning to live according to a new Christian way or a way that best emulates

that “Christic” way according to the faith tradition they have been brought up in. This new movement challenges even Christians to discover a more genuine display of their faith. If this be the case, then there is an enormous period of faith seeking ahead of us.

It is hard to imagine that humanity can survive indefinitely. When the world is expected to burn itself up in nothing less than an infinite number of years it is impossible to think of humanity lasting the distance, another solution is required. The integral era speaks of an era where all must live together where the cosmic Christ must play its part in moving humanity toward fulfilling the dream of love. The colourful imaginative harsh language of the church was written at a time when the early church struggled against great adversity. The end of the world is arguably far from done with for the many non-Christians have not been given a chance to assimilate the story of Jesus from their Christic roots. The divine love that began the journey of evolution as the primary shaping force, some 13.8 billion years ago, has come a long way, but how do we know how far it must go... indefinitely or perhaps just to the end of the next century? No one knows. Evolution moves forward with ever so much change that we can just speculate what form it does take. Maybe a world totally different from that which we are presently encountering. The Omega point, that point of pleroma or fulfilment, that de Chardin uses to mark the end of time, is arguably some time off, but it will surely come with love the dominant force. With every thousand years of evolution humanity changes. The past thousand years has indicated that the mind has developed dramatically. The rapture was imagined in a very ‘flat earth’ way at the time of scriptural writing. It could very well be that this primitive way of speaking of the end needs to be applied to the ever-advancing universe in a new way. Whether that is sooner or later the story of evolution shaped by love cannot be changed. God cannot stop being God, the story of love must triumph.

Summary

In summary there are two basic approaches that speak of the Parousia fitting the evolutionary story. The two stand together. There is one developed by Raimon Panikkar, the other described by Vincent Bedogne.

Panikkar's model is captured as a time free experience, an instantaneous or momentary experience that is part of the ordinary journey of life. That which Panikkar calls tempiternity. Bedogne sees the journey is toward the ultimate point of fulfillment. Evolution continues the long journey toward completion, the omega point of history.

Panikkar sets as his model, the truth of being as rhythm. The reality of living constitutes the blending of God, creation, and creature. The three are blended as inter-in-dependent. He summarised them as being in rhythm. Rhythm is life. The purity of heart is obtained by entering this state of life that captures the unity of being without losing the connection with the particular. This is a sacred secularity.

The explanation by Bedogne is a comprehensive one. This is a direct quote from his book.

As with the threshold to reflection, meaning will unfold within the individual and spread to bring forth a new order of humanity. He speaks of the universe undergoing a fundamental evolutionary transformation. Humanity is crossing the threshold to the level of awareness he calls meaning. As with the threshold to reflection, meaning will unfold within the individual and spread to bring forth a new order of humanity. Our top level of consciousness will be different. We will look the same but will be sentient of the universe as an evolution of consciousness. We will internalize the universe's origin. Guided by the wisdom of transcendence, humanity and the universe will share common intent.

Endowed with the power of meaning, humanity and the universe will look back at their origin in emptiness. And as they do, they will see and accept their need to create fulfilment, and we will seek to do it with the vision of it being done through the perfection of life on earth. Science, religion, economics, and environment, will all be significant but, in the future, they will look very different. The existence of human consciousness beyond life and the consequence such holds for the universe's future in a joyous outcome of the evolution of consciousness view.

The threshold imparted the recognition of death. It also imparted the ability to maintain the essential awareness that constitutes existence beyond life. Death is a transition, a breaking away of the essential self from the physical self. Afterlife is an aspect of the human ability to reflect, a dimension of who we are. To deny an afterlife is to deny the uniqueness of our being. On death, our link to the physical world ends but our link to the framework of human consciousness remains. Death marks a profound moment in our evolution. Death forces us to re-evaluate our deepest notions of who we are and for what purpose we came into existence.

With death banished to obsolescence and humanity unified in an existence unfettered by the limits of the physical, the uncertainty associated with another, still more profound evolutionary transformation will grip the human experience. Stagnation will increase, and the dark side of the creative force will mount its last onslaught. The creative process will mass the energy needed to propel the universe to its ultimate state of existence. Aligned with humankind, the universe will achieve the awareness to cross the threshold to its final evolutionary form.

Empowered by this awareness, we set forth into the universe's evolutionary era, the age we call fulfilment, an era where wisdom and creative growth define the human experience, and our awareness of who we are and of where we are headed, aligns our creative energy to the task of perfecting life on earth.

We will each become as the universe, and the universe will become as each of us. We will each perceive the universe and all other human beings as the object of our need. Consciousness will have reached its potential.

We will exist as hyper-unique beings, entities on a level equal of consciousness equal to all others and to the universe. Ultimate autonomy will sustain ultimate unity. The universe will have perfected itself. It will have reached the level of awareness Teilhard called the “Omega Point”. Together, humanity and the universe will have created the consciousness necessary to sustain their fulfilment.

The story of the Parousia, or the second coming as it is referred too, has been described as an event that had little to do with creation. It has been assumed that it would come at a time in the near future. Failed predictions have been made time and time again. But new serious evidence has to be considered. With the study in recent times of the history of cosmology and evolution, and with speculation about the Christ being seen as intimately connected with the process of the big bang, the link between the story of evolution and the Parousia has been made. The mystery remains, but the connection must be considered. That connection involves the new interfaith stage of history which is just beginning. The purpose of that stage whereby all is moving to a unity of being pushes the Parousia into the distant future. The solutions of Panikkar and Bedogne must be seriously considered. As I have said the story remains a mystery but humans are required to speculate as part of the search for meaning.

A SPIRITUAL WAY OF JOHN

TEXT

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God

All things were made through him and without him nothing was made that was made

We come **forward the 13.8 billions years** of evolution to just 2000 years ago when John wrote

From Creation to humanity the word was the **catalyst for all life.**

In him was life and the life was the light of the world, the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it

WORD THE CATALIST

And the word became flesh and dwelt amongst us full of Grace and truth. We have beheld his glory

We have **beheld his glory** is the **heart** of the coming of Jesus.

THE BOOK

The glory implies seeing the essence of his nature.

All through the gospel **we get glimpses** of this glory.

John displayed a wide range of knowledge, from understanding the deep dynamics of human life, witnessed in the **peoples meeting with Jesus** through to probing the deep truths of the universe

Here we find the two coming together to unveil the **mystery of life.**

Sometimes referred to as an **enchanted life.**

METAPHORS

And the Word became flesh ... and we beheld his glory.

Amidst his many encounters he declares **7 metaphors of life.**

They are known as the 7 I AM sayings.

They are the **crux of the glory** we observe in his life

I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

I AM the bread of life.

Following the **feeding of the five thousand** Jesus concluded I am the bread of life

I AM is the essence of his being

His spirit nourishes the partaker in all ways. We feel nourished in body mind and Spirit.

I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

I AM the light of the world.

Following the **healing of the blind man**, the long discourse concludes, with his declaration, **I AM the light of the world**. Physical light is one thing, but the **light of knowledge** is another. He enlightens our knowledge in all ways.

I AM THE DOOR TO THE SHEEP FOLD

I am the door to the sheep pen

Next comes as we might say **a couplet** in two ways.

The **door to the sheep fold** signifies the **awakening to the spiritual way of life**. We keep coming back and forth, entering and departing. Regularly we are called to come back in to the fold. He welcomes us incessantly.

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

I AM the Good Shepherd.

The second saying in this couplet is **a golden truth**, where Jesus declares **I AM the Good Shepherd**.

The shepherd **goes with us in all life**. He travels with us whether we know it or not, intimately nourishing and guiding us.

I AM THE WAY THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE.

I AM the way the truth and the life.

Following Jesus comprehensive discussion with the disciples on **the way of love** , he declares, **I AM the way the truth and the life.**

This seems like the comprehensive way for the Christian to live, **the moral; ethical and compassionate** way of living.

I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

I AM the resurrection and the life

Following the long discourse with **Mary and Martha** on the **death of Lazarus**, Jesus declares **I AM the resurrection and the life**

Life and death is **one seamless process** united in the way of Jesus living and departing

It is the fulness of the vision of life.

I AM THE TRUE WINE

I AM the true vine

The final sight of glory is **a unique teaching** by Jesus because it comes at **the end of the I AM sayings**, but it is ever so important.

All the sayings up until this point could be applied to our **individual journey of life**, but this stands out differently. It depicts that life is not an individual pursuit. It is a **collective endeavour**. A journey we pursue together.

Where one goes, we all go .

BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS I AM

Jesus declares **Before Abraham was, I AM**

Summarising these sayings is that **they are one**. They stand alone as one. Jesus declares **Before Abraham was, I AM**

This **breaks through the deep reality** of the eternal nature of Jesus.

The word was in creation, the word was the archetypal human, the word remains with us to the end of time.

THE LIFE STYLE

Taken together, I am the bread of life, I am the light of the world, I am the gate to the sheep fold, I am the good shepherd, I am the way the truth and the life, I am the resurrection and the life, I am the true vine, and before Abraham **was I am, provides a clear and precise summary** of the Christian life.

CONCLUSIONS

And the word became flesh and dwelt amongst us full of grace and truth, we have beheld his glory.

Beholding his glory, 'is a **unique type of Knowledge**'.

It is a comprehensive knowing that enables one to **see with the spiritual reality** in the everyday realm of life.

John built his gospel around these I am sayings.

They are the window of perceiving the glory of Jesus.

The meditating upon these lifts us to a realm that is beyond the normal. It is to see the glory of God in Jesus

John was a truly unique mind to perceive these truths.

We are invited to grow in this way.