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Christology after *Dominus Iesus*: the Early Panikkar As a Creative Resource

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IN a post-*Dominus Iesus* age, Catholic theologians are called to avoid christological proposals rooted in the context of inter-religious dialogue that radically revise the meaning of both the scriptural and conciliar traditions. It is no longer possible to avoid or explain away central texts and tenets of the faith because they are inconvenient for dialogue. There is a sense that canon and creed must be embraced if theologians wish to have any impactful future in shaping interreligious dialogue in the Church.¹ What to do, then, when one theologian is both an exemplar of christological revisionism as well as a resource for a fresh engagement with orthodoxy? That is what my article seeks to explore with the figure of Raimundo Panikkar.

It is truly fitting to honor Panikkar's bold creativity and to tread carefully when offering an assessment. Panikkar was a deeply complex thinker who throughout his almost sixty year career reveled in eschewing facile generalizations of his work by coining neologisms and other idiosyncratic categories. As a theologian mindful of the critiques leveled by *Dominus Iesus* however, I am also obliged to evaluate if his proposals meet the rigors of at least some of aspects of this document. Christian theologians familiar with his work have detected at least one significant and central paradigm shift that has great repercussions for his standing as a Catholic

theologian: his position on the uniqueness and centrality of Jesus. The problem is that most theologians have only focused on one side of that paradigm shift. Jacques Dupuis, for example, rightly distinguished between Panikkar's christology in the original and in the revised and enlarged editions of *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* in his *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*. But rather than exploring the early christology in some depth, he turned to Panikkar's formulations in the revised edition of *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* as the object of his attention (and critique).² Most theologians follow Dupuis and focus polemically on his later work rather than explore promising trends in his earlier writings, with Gavin D'Costa being one of the few exceptions.³ At the other end of the interpretive spectrum, Panikkar's christological paradigm shift is sometimes viewed as a liberation from the constraints of Roman influence, ostensibly suffered since the first edition of *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* was his doctoral dissertation at the Lateran. Such a dismissive reading of Panikkar's early career presupposes a bias for pluralism and is unable to appreciate his earlier, creative fidelity to the Christian tradition.

Contrary to these two hermeneutical options, I will argue that the early Panikkar's christology is worthy of serious attention. Given the ambiguous fate of his later pluralist

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project and the critiques of *Dominus Iesus*, it is time to re-examine Panikkar's early scholarship and carry forward trajectories that he later abandoned. Resources within the early Panikkar can be developed to offer a significant commentarial contribution, from within an interreligious context, to the Church's christological vision as articulated in Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes* 45, a text quoted by *Dominus Iesus*. The early Panikkar offers a new way for christocentrism to understand itself in the midst of inter-religious dialogue, particularly in light of the challenges set down by *Dominus Iesus*. In the process I will introduce a little known but important early text of Panikkar's entitled "*Meditacion sobre Melquisedec*" by arguing that it helps to resolve a christological tension present in the first edition of *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*.⁴

First, however, it is important to sketch some systemic problems in the later Panikkar's christology of religions to demonstrate why a turn to his earlier thought is so important.

Beyond the 'Jordan,' Beyond the 'Tiber,' Beyond Jesus

The later Panikkar wandered quite far from mainstream Christian theology but remained in many ways christocentric. Intuitively he seemed to understand the central role of christology in all theological reflection, though he would conclude that the Christian christological tradition should be transcended. The famous Panikkar axiom, "Jesus is the Christ, but the Christ is not only Jesus" looms large here.⁵ Nearly all of his subsequent major works contain a lengthy philosophical and theological apologia for this dictum, surely reflecting its controversial reception. What is it about this formulation that has proven so difficult for Christian theologians to accept?

At its root, this development in Panikkar's christology reflects the problem 19th and 20th century Hindu movements had with Christian claims about the unique personhood and mediation of Jesus. Panikkar later sympathized with this critique as emblematic of an authentic "Indian Christianity" positively informed by Hinduism. Panikkar's softened this radical christological agenda with a seemingly

innocent query as to why "Greek" and "Roman" modes of theologizing are the only options available for intelligibly expressing the Christian faith.⁶ Panikkar in actuality arrived at a much graver diagnosis; that these "Mediterranean" influences have had a deleterious and pathological influence on Christian spirituality and theology. He even includes the "Abrahamic" or Jewish heritage of Christianity as inherently problematic. Rather than illuminate understanding and enhance participation in the mystery of reality, Jewish, Greek, and Latin themes like chosen-ness and monotheism, forensic metaphors and the principle of non-contradiction, obscure and stifle it. The "rivers" that have informed Christian understanding to this point, the Jordan and the Tiber, are in need of radical correction by the Ganges, a symbol for a more mystical christology associated with Indian spirituality. This deep mystical awareness of being Christ, or "Christ-consciousness," is what Panikkar also calls "Christianness."⁷ "Christianness" is a pluralistic space-holder for any manifestation of the universal Christ-experience. The first two moments in Panikkar's river metaphor, that of the Jordan and Tiber, thus gradually move beyond provincialism and univocality to the pure universality, pluralism and depth-experience of the Ganges. Panikkar arrives at this pan-christic pluralism by appropriating certain features of neo-Vedanta. Methodologically, neo-Vedanta as a form of neo-Hindu thought operates by loosening or blotting out traditional Hindu mediatory channels in order to assert that the possibility of non-dual realization is a transcultural phenomenon, impartial in its breadth, and radically immanent. Panikkar develops this line of thought and talks of "Christ" as the symbol of this Self and the non-duality between God and world.⁸ In *Christophany*, Jesus is an exemplary and powerful realization of non-duality or the "christophanic experience," but by nature no different than any other human being. Jesus experiences Christ but is not solely the Christ. The experience of Jesus rather than the unique revelatory and salvific mediation of Jesus as the Christ becomes Panikkar's final christological word. It is the anthropological and

cosmological, or better “cosmotheandric” Christ-experience that is universal. Christ is merely Christian nomenclature for an experience that can be called by other names, such as Krishna, Isvara, Purusha, and Humanity.”⁹ In Panikkar’s view, transcending traditional, christological channels of mediation in favor of a radical cosmic immanentism opens the Christian tradition to a multitude of interreligious possibilities. Panikkar’s high anthropology allows for pluralism and a deep sense of the dignity of the human as essentially divine but ultimately compromises the center of Christian faith; the unique person and work of Jesus Christ.

These maneuvers were disguised by Panikkar’s frequent employment of traditional Christian language and authorities. Due to genuine affection for his intellectual and ecclesial forbearers, Panikkar’s break with tradition and authority was not blatantly obvious. The revision was delicately achieved, or better, made to look as if it were not a revision at all.¹⁰ Yet Panikkar’s rupture with the scriptural and conciliar tradition is quite transparent. Panikkar relied on a selective use of scripture that extracted or diluted the impact of Jesus from key New Testament texts. In *Christophany: The Fullness of Man*, he enlists 2 Peter 1:4 as evidence that Christians participate in the divine nature.¹¹ Yet, the preceding verses, 2 Peter 1:1-3, attribute this participation to the gracious, unexpected, mediatory power of the God and savior Jesus Christ. This text is bypassed and instead paired with a text from Psalm 110, “we are all gods,” to mean that Jesus can illuminate for Christians what all have by nature.¹² Like many modern Hindus who wrote on Jesus, Panikkar was very critical of distinguishing between sonship by nature and sonship by adoption, tempering any texts that mentioned the unique mediation of Jesus by supplementing others that could support his pan-christic agenda.¹³ This strained exegesis, which had to rely on side-stepping the soteriological centrality and uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the New Testament for coherence, is reminiscent of *Dominus Iesus*’ assertion that “the thesis which denies the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ...has no biblical foundation.”¹⁴

Canadian theologian George Sumner in his *The First and the Last: The Claim of Jesus Christ and the Claims of other Religious Traditions* asserted that the “existence of other religious traditions became a problem for the Christian tradition at the very time that Christianity became a problem to itself.”¹⁵ This manifests in what Sumner calls “theological externalism,” or using the norms of another tradition as the principle for Christian theological discourse.¹⁶ Although Panikkar’s project was not motivated by the assumption and dominance of modernist categories and norms as in Sumner’s main examples, the mechanics of his pluralism are formally the same. Since the tradition itself as a “Mediterranean” or even “Semitic” phenomenon was problematic, Panikkar found the norm for truth outside the tradition in his appropriation of a neo-Hindu christology. Sumner contrasts this pluralist method with that of “theological internalism,” which finds the norm of truth within the tradition itself.¹⁷ For Sumner, the narrative of the New Testament provides the ultimate norm in its witnessing to Jesus Christ as the culmination of God’s relationship with the world. Theologies of religions must follow the shape of this narrative, otherwise known as the pattern of “final primacy.” Sumner elaborates on final primacy in the following excerpt:

The pattern described above may be called the ‘final primacy of Jesus Christ. It consists in the fact that, in narratives generated from the scriptural narrative, by which theological constructions imagine alien claims and communities somehow grafted into the divine economy, Christ is the one toward whom the narratives run and from whom their truth (to the extent that they are true) derives.’¹⁸

Although the criterion for a truly Christian approach to the religion is its obedience to the narrativity of Scripture in regard to the “the final, hence norming, truth of Christ,” Sumner gives latitude for creative proposals that “maintain the dual goals of integrity to the gospel and openness to other truths.”¹⁹ The early Panikkar’s christology upholds the rule of final primacy represented by the “great

scriptural and conciliar tradition” while at the same time challenging it in new ways. Final primacy for the early Panikkar meets the scriptural test of Sumner; it is systematically embedded in the Christ/Melchizedek paradigm but with a deep humility and capacity for mutuality with other religions. Below, I will offer the early Panikkar’s christology as a gloss on an important text from Vatican II quoted by *Dominus Iesus* in its section on the “Unicity and Universality of the Salvific Mystery of Jesus Christ,” a section that sought to preserve the biblical witness to Jesus Christ. The text from *Gaudium et Spes*, 45 reads as follows:

The Word of God, through whom all things were made, was made flesh, so that as perfect man he could save all men and women and sum up all things in himself. The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the desires of history and civilization, the center of mankind, the joy of all hearts, and the fulfillment of all aspirations.²⁰

It is striking that Panikkar in his early christology takes up the very themes prioritized by *Dominus Iesus* in this *Gaudium et Spes* text; the origin and destiny of all humanity in Christ, the soteriological vehicle of the Incarnation, and Christ as the fulfillment of all peoples - yet does so in a way that supports deep and radical transformation in dialogue.

The early Panikkar and the Unknown Body of Christ

To properly understand the early Panikkar’s christological achievement, we must first understand it in its intellectual context. Panikkar’s treatment of the above themes of creation and eschatology, Incarnation and fulfillment, Christianity and the religions, was interacting with and responding to other theological options circulating in Europe and, in regard to the missions, India as well in the mid 20th century. Fulfillment theology was the preferred model for considering Christianity and the religions at the time, exemplified by Jean Danielou and Romano Guardini. The religions of the world were created as the first

act in a gradualist salvation history, meaning that their very existence should give way to the new acts of God in the world. The “tragedy of the precursor,” according to mid 20th century Catholic theologian Romano Guardini, “is to wish to persist once revelation has arrived.”²¹ For Guardini, the Buddha was a legitimate precursor to Christ but now stands as one of the Church’s greatest rivals. If the religious traditions of the cosmic covenant do not efface themselves in the mode of John the Baptist and allow their own proper fulfillment in Christ, they become the enemy of God. “There is a moment,” wrote Guardini, “when the precursor becomes the enemy.”²² It is within this context of supersessionism and asymmetry that Panikkar begins his first edition of *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* by stressing the need to re-think Christian universality in a way that does justice to the dignity and truth of other religions. As he develops this point, it becomes clear that Panikkar is injecting a startling and tense mutuality between Hinduism and Christianity “in Christ.” Hinduism is “in Christ” according to Panikkar by virtue of a basic theological axiom. Wherever God’s grace is, Christ is also there, since God’s activity in the world is always mediated by Christ.²³ Panikkar develops the implications of this axiom with a series of affirmations about Hinduism:

Hence, for Christianity, Christ is already there in Hinduism insofar as Hinduism is a true religion; Christ is already at work in any Hindu prayer as long as it is really prayer; Christ is behind any form of worship, inasmuch as it is adoration made to God.²⁴

This recognition of Christ in Hinduism is existentially realized through the participation of the Christian in the divine life of charity. Drawing on the tradition of the theological virtues and Christian mysticism, Panikkar asserts that in love, Christ recognizes Christ.²⁵ This communion in Christ is not a benevolent stasis as both the Hindu and Christian are fellow wayfarers toward eschatological perfection. Panikkar would agree then with fulfillment theology that this encounter with

Christ does not aim at mere preservation or maintenance of an existing identity but radical transformation into something new. However, quite unlike the fulfillment theology of his contemporaries, both Hinduism and Christianity become more truly themselves in Christ precisely through the other. *Gaudium et Spes* talks of Christ as “the fulfillment of all aspirations” but in the early Panikkar this is not a one-way transit from Hinduism to Christianity. The title *Unknown Christ of Hinduism* then has a double, and therefore mutual meaning even in the first edition. The paschal encounter with the sacramentality of the other plunges both the Hindu and the Christian deeper into the mystery of the Christ, discovering hitherto unknown aspects to each tradition. Panikkar describes this process in terms of a co-participation in the paschal mystery.

“If we were not afraid of paradoxes, we would say that Hinduism and Christianity meet in the depths of death, in the denial of ourselves and the acceptance of divine life deposited germinally at the moment of our rebirth, or rather, still deeper, at the moment of our death – and resurrection of Christ in the cross.”²⁶

Hinduism and Christianity must then die not to itself, but for the other in order to rise with Christ. Hinduism must die for the Christ of Christian tradition in order to recognize the uniqueness and identity of “Jesus, the son of Mary.”²⁷ Christianity must undergo “the stripping of all external garbs and forms,” all “categories and formula,” prejudices and judgments, in order to mystically recognize Christ where he is not obviously present, in Hinduism.²⁸ This is the original context in which Panikkar talks about being “converted” to Hinduism. Panikkar makes clear that he is not suggesting the “denial of orthodoxy” but an integration of orthodoxy with orthopraxy. Through a mystical participation with the naked and crucified Christ, kenosis becomes actualized in an existential and mystical way, giving access to the Christic world of the “non-Christian.” In this space, the Christian discovers aspects of Christ previously

unknown. Panikkar’s scriptural interpretation creatively locates the rationale for this task, unlike his later, selective exegesis, in major motifs of the New Testament. Panikkar skillful draws upon the cosmic Christ christology of John and the deutero-Pauline tradition alongside texts from Isaiah and Matthew that emphasize the hidden nature of God and scandalous reversals of discipleship.²⁹ The ironic, as it does in the Gospels, comes into play here: Christ is often unknown to those who profess to know him and yet is present by faith among those who were thought to know nothing. For Panikkar, the unknown Christ who is alive in Hinduism is not fully the known Christ of Christian worship.³⁰

Of course, the known Christ of Christian worship is Jesus Christ. Is Panikkar suggesting that there are aspects of Jesus, the Incarnate Word, unknown to Christians? What relationship does the cosmic Christ hidden in Hinduism have to Jesus of Nazareth, crucified and risen? These questions remain unanswered in the first edition. God’s activity in Hinduism through Christ was cosmicized by Panikkar to such an extent that its relationship to Jesus Christ was affirmed, but only sparsely throughout the text. There is a tension even in the first edition of *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* between the cosmic Christ of creation and the historical Jesus Christ of Nazareth.³¹ A little known article from around that same time however entitled “*Meditacion sobre Melquisedec*” articulates this connection in a different way and provides some direction toward resolving that tension. Although Panikkar speaks more broadly about the “religions” in this article, his encounter with Hinduism is undoubtedly in the back of his mind.³²

In “*Meditacion sobre Melquisedec*,” Jesus Christ, creator and redeemer, rather than simply the cosmic Christ, is at the foundation of how Christians are to think about and engage the religions. Panikkar’s christology in the article passes the test of Sumner’s suggestion that a Christian theology of religions follow the shape of the New Testament narrative. Panikkar’s preferred scriptural narrative for understanding Christ and the religions is the Melchizedek and Christ tradition found in Genesis 14, Psalm 110, and the letter to the

Hebrews. This scriptural paradigm furnishes the material that allows Panikkar to bring together the cosmic and the historical dimensions of Christ in a different way than was possible in the overly-cosmicized christology of *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*. Panikkar concretely develops this interplay between creation, history, and christology by focusing his lens on Christ's assumption of the Melchizedekian priesthood in the Incarnation. The Incarnation and Christ's assumption of Melchizedek's ancient, non-Abrahamic, sacerdotal office, discussed in Genesis 14 and Psalm 110, is the vehicle through which the religions are not only fulfilled but given a new value and dignity. Jesus Christ unites himself with the religions to ratify the value they already possess and to bestow more dignity upon them, analogous to the way in which the Incarnation lends dignity to the human person and confirms the fundamental goodness of its creation. The Word's assumption of the Melchizedekian priesthood therefore ratifies this Christic dimension proper to the religions as created in Christ and imbues the religions with the new value and dignity of being caught up in the Incarnation. The Incarnation gives to the religions a surplus value that Christians should pay heed to, in contrast to Danielou and Guardini's dismissive and even antagonistic attitude toward the religions engendered by reflecting upon the new acts of God. Panikkar's christological rhetoric in the article moves in a circular motion rather than the linear progression of fulfillment theology, which effectively leaves behind the religions as relics of a bygone era. The logic of the Incarnation brings us back to the religions and engrafted creation, and engrafted creation and the religions for the Christian lead to Christ and the Incarnation. There is a correlating ethical movement that accompanies this dynamic; the religions exist within the scope of the Incarnation and so Christians who are intimate with Christ should also exist with the religions in friendship and esteem. Panikkar creatively reinterprets the Parable of the Prodigal Son in the article and warns Christians that they should not respond to God's favor upon the religions with bitterness but with love.³³ Panikkar refuses to polemicize the condition of

the non-Christian religions, because the relationship between Christ and creation, even after the Incarnation, is not one of annihilation and enmity but of grace and continued transformation in that grace.³⁴

Can the religions mediate a deep and novel engagement with the person of Jesus Christ that Christians should pay heed to? In "*Meditacion sobre Melquisedec*," Panikkar doesn't quite arrive there explicitly, instead focusing on how the lineage of Christ's own person should inspire attitudinal, dispositional, and ethical stances toward the religions. Constructively, however, taking Panikkar's "unknown Christ" motif and the Incarnational model he develops in *Meditacion* together can point to some interesting possibilities. Panikkar in "*Meditacion*" introduces the idea of a "physical continuity" between Christ and the religions. Although Jesus Christ represents "something new and unknown," Panikkar also asserts that "history never commences newly and absolutely but is always marked by an intimate relatedness with what has gone on before."³⁵ This "relatedness" between Christ and creation is the vital link that enables Christians toward a deeper participation and knowledge in the mystery of not simply the cosmic Christ in the religions, but Jesus Christ. The relationality shared between the Incarnation and the Melchizedekian line is as integral to the hypostatic union and the work of redemption as the Word's assumption of Israel's history and destiny, for from the Jews Christ received his humanity, and from Melchizedek, his priesthood.³⁶ Just as it would be impossible for the Christian tradition to sever its understanding of Jesus the Christ from the Jewish tradition, it would be equally impossible as to sever the meaning of Jesus from the religions. Panikkar seems to be drawing Christians back to creation and the religions of the Word that 'illumines all things' to encounter Christ Jesus anew in the totality and integrity of the Incarnational event. As relative newcomers to God's story of salvation, Christians should be engrafted not only upon the tree of Jesse but also upon the tree of Melchizedek. Christians that ignore Melchizedekian religions, which Panikkar identifies with ancient religions like Hinduism,

are opaque to fundamental dimensions of Christ's person and work. Intra-religious dialogue and comparative theology in the early Panikkar thus take place within Christ's body, both in the sense of exploring more deeply the mystery of the Incarnation that "sums up all things" as well as the ecclesiological locus where this dialogue takes place; the wider, scandalously universal body created, called, and gathered in by *Dominus Iesus*, the Lord Jesus.

Notes

¹ This is a Catholic theological reflection pertaining to several important themes in the Hindu-Christian dialogue from that perspective; theological method, christology, and the legacy of an important Catholic figure in the dialogue, Raimundo Panikkar. While *Dominus Iesus*, written by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith as a response to trends in theologies of dialogue and pluralism, was controversial and had a heavy, imperious tone, it did have a positive function in the overall Catholic theological discussion that must be accounted for. This paper aims to realize that, without sacrificing anything on the side of inter-religious openness.

² Jacques Dupuis. *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue* trans. Robert Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 55-59.

³ Gavin D'Costa. *Christianity and World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 42-45.

⁴ Raimundo Panikkar, "Meditacion sobre Melquisedec." *Nuestro Tiempo* IX, no. 102 (1962): 675-695.

⁵ Panikkar introduced this distinction from the early 70's onward. Rather than wrestling with the particular criticisms made against the thesis, he distinguishes his position from others based on the epistemological difference between discerning the "identity" of Christ versus "identifying" Christ as merely Jesus. As just one example, see Raimon Panikkar. *Christophany: The Fullness of Man*, trans. Alfred diLascia (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 57-58.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85 as just one example, though there are many others throughout most of his major works.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁸ For the later Panikkar "Christ" is overwhelming understood as a symbol for the union of divine, human, and world, a kind of metaphysical conmingling. It is revealing that in the following excerpt, Jesus is not named at all: "In this book Christ stands for that centre of reality, that crystallization-point around which the human, the divine, and the material can grow," Raimundo Panikkar. *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany* revised and enlarged edition (Maryknoll: NY, Orbis, 1981), 27.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁰ Methodologically Panikkar sometimes identifies his work as emerging from a new hermeneutic of reality buttressed by a constructivist metaphysic, yet when it comes to using scripture as a theological source, he frequently projects his perspective into the text's contextual and historical meaning.

¹¹ *Christophany.*, 71.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹⁴ This statement is found in no. 13 of section III, where it opens the discussion of "The Unicity and Salvific Mystery of Jesus Christ." Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Christ and the Church*, 6 August 2000 in *Sic et Non: Encountering Dominus Iesus*, eds. Stephen J. Pope and Charles Hefling (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis 2002), 13.

¹⁵ George Sumner. *The Claim of Jesus Christ and the Claims of Other Religious Traditions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 44, citing the work of Ingolf Dalferth.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁰ *Gaudium et Spes* 45, cited in CDF, *Dominus Iesus*, 15 in *Sic et Non*, ed. Pope, et. al., 15.

²¹ Romano Guardini, as cited in Jean Danielou, *Introduction to the Great Religions*, (Notre Dame, IN: Fides, 1964), 22.

²² *Ibid.*, 23.

²³ Raimundo Panikkar. *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964), 16.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

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²⁷ Ibid., 24.

²⁸ Ibid., 25.

²⁹ Ibid., ix-2. Although embedded within the work and requiring a keen eye, the subtle scriptural allusions that open the book display this reciprocity and challenge for Christian readers.

³⁰ Ibid., xiii.

³¹ I disagree here with Edward T. Ulrich's position that Panikkar's thesis in the first edition of the *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* was that "Jesus Christ is active and present in the Hindu religion, even if this is not acknowledged by Hindus." See Edward T. Ulrich, "Convergences and Divergences: The Lives of Swami Abhishiktananda and Raimundo Panikkar," *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies* 24 (2011): 39. Although Panikkar does recommend that the Hindu should come to a recognition of the proper identity of Jesus Christ as a result of the Hindu-Christian encounter, he is actually very reticent about using the name of Jesus or referring to the historical Incarnation in the book, preferring a cosmic and sacramental notion of Christ and Incarnation. This impacts his comparative work as well. The entirety of the final chapter in the *Unknown Christ* is a comparison between Isvara and Christ as cosmic mediators between God and the world.

³² Embedded in Panikkar's "meditation" on Melchizedek are themes that he long dialogued with in Hindu traditions, such as sacrifice and priesthood.

³³ Panikkar, *Meditacion*, pp. 688-689.

³⁴ "The Christian attitude is not ultimately of bringing Christ *in*, but of bringing him *forth*, of discovering Christ; not one of command but of service," in Panikkar, *Unknown Christ*, first edition, 45.

³⁵ Panikkar, *Meditacion*, 683.

³⁶ Ibid., 692.