

Trinity: Unity and Pluralism in the Thought of Raimon Panikkar and Bede Griffiths

Bede Griffiths and Raimon Panikkar came to India at approximately the same time in 1955 and remained close friends until Bede's death in 1993. They came for roughly the same reasons: to discover and to experience at first hand the spiritual wisdom of India. Panikkar, as the son of an Indian Hindu father and a Spanish Catholic mother, had up to that point studied some of the Indian philosophical and spiritual classics, but his training had primarily been in Western philosophy, theology, and science. Prior to 1955, when he was already 37 years old, he had not been for any length of time in India. Intuitively, he felt a strong desire to discover the world of his father and to deepen his own identity. Bede, as we know, was around this time getting increasingly restless with his Western Christian heritage. In his well-known words:

I had begun to find that there was something lacking not only in the Western world but in the Western Church. We were living from one half of our soul, from the conscious, rational level and we needed to discover the other half, the unconscious, intuitive dimension. I wanted to experience in my life the marriage of these two dimensions of human existence, the rational and intuitive, the conscious and unconscious, the masculine and feminine. I wanted to find the way to the marriage of East and West. (1)

Although their subsequent paths in life took them in different directions, Panikkar to an academic career in India, the US, and Europe, and Bede to the establishment and sustenance of monastic communities in India, their friendship remained deep. And yet it was the friendship of two quite different temperaments and personalities, a difference perhaps best captured in Indian terms. Panikkar was and is a jnana yogi, a visionary, a contemplative, and a thinker, whose entire life has been devoted to elaborating and deepening a vision that he had at a relatively early age. The very first article he published in 1944, at the age of 26, bears the title, "Sintesis: Vision de Sintesis del Universo," and it is no exaggeration to say that the subsequent years have largely been spent in a broadening and development of that synthesis of the cosmic, the divine, and the human. Bede, I would describe, as a bhakti yogi, a person whose style and idiom were devotional, experiential, and practical. He too was in the grip of a vision, but a vision that he sought to realize in his person in both senses of the word "realize." Panikkar was quick to understand this. As he remarked at a memorial service for Bede in 1993, "The importance of Fr. Bede, which we should never forget, for us, was his person . . . was his being there." (2)

These differences in style are reflected in their accounts of the Trinity, a doctrine and a mystery that was central to their thought and life. As I will try to show, Panikkar's key notion of "cosmotheandricism" is an alternative way of expressing his trinitarian thinking. Bede in an article written in 1986 says:

What Panikkar has said [in his book on the Trinity] represents in principle what I have come to discover over the years. I think I realized the centrality of the

Trinity even before coming out to India, but the depths of the intuition only unfolded in the Indian context. Over the past 40 years, there has been a continuous development of my ideas on the Trinity. The way in which I would formulate the trinitarian insight now differs from how I had previously understood it through my Western education. Today I am seeing the Trinity in Oriental terms and in this am reacting against Greek theology. (3)

What I shall do in this paper is to expound on some of Panikkar's Trinitarian reflections, first in a philosophical and then in a theological key. I will then take up some of Bede's ideas on the Trinity in order both to show the parallels with those of Panikkar, but also to demonstrate Bede's more experiential and devotional emphasis.

I. Panikkar's Cosmotheandrisms

Pluralist

Panikkar is an epistemological pluralist in the sense that he attempts to fuse three different and irreducible modes of thought, sensibility, and consciousness, what Panikkar calls *mythos, logos, and pneuma*. Their mutual relation in his thought can be succinctly expressed: *mythos* is the unthought, *logos* is that which is thought, while the *pneuma* is unthinkable. *Mythos* is the unthought because it is the background, the source and origin of what is thought, and therefore, cannot itself be made the object of thought. *Logos* covers the whole range of thought from sensibility at the "lower" end of the cognitive spectrum to speculative ideas at its "higher" end, what the tradition of German idealism designates as *Verstand* and *Vernunft*, and what the medieval Latin tradition calls *ratio* and *intellectus*. The *pneuma* is the ever new, the unpredictable, the wind that blows where it will. As Panikkar expresses it, "The unthinkable does not exist in itself as a fixed dimension; at any given moment it is the provisional, the historical, that accomplishes itself in the future, in hope... Receiving the *pneuma* is a permanent passage, a *pascha*, a pilgrimage; the procession from *mythos* through *logos* to *pneuma* is endless. Precisely this pneumatic dimension guarantees the constant openness into which we may take a step forward." (4)

As one observes reason in its operation and intentionality, it becomes clear that its creative sources lie beyond itself in myth and the *pneuma*. This, of course, has not been completely denied by the mainstream tradition. The polarity of reason and intuition, philosophy and art, rationality and faith has long been recognized, but the usual tendency to master and contain the tension in the polarity has been to give reason pride of place. Panikkar expresses this well:

The challenge consists in doing justice to this polarity – that is, in overcoming dualism without falling prey to monism. This is the proper function of *advaita* or non-dualistic approach, which is the hermeneutical key for everything I am going to say. *Advaita* overcomes the strictures of the *logos* integrating the spirit in our approach to Reality, or as a western classic... says: "reflectens ardor" (rebounding love) belongs to the ultimate nature of the Whole. In fact, the attempt to master the just mentioned polarity by the *reason* alone is at the origin of the dialectical

method: *sic et non*. *Advaita* amounts to the overcoming of dualistic dialectics by means of introducing love at the ultimate level of reality. In other words, the holistic attempt tries to 'reach' the Whole not by a dialectical synthesis, but by means of an immediate contact with the Whole, defying the dualistic subject/object epistemology. (5)

At the other end of the scale from the rationalist tradition of philosophy are those thinkers like Sankara, who espouse non-dualism by claiming that Brahman or the Absolute and the world are not two, because Brahman alone truly is, the world being a mere appearance (*maya*). Alternatively, if one takes the manifestations of the world as a starting point, one can conceive Brahman as the ground of such manifestation and therefore in its essence beyond all multiplicity and differentiation - - the qualified non-dualism of Ramanuja. In both these versions reason is seen as intrinsically dualistic because of the duality of the knower and the known. The unity of knower, known, and knowledge must be sought in a mode of consciousness that transcends reason altogether - - a mode variously called "intuition," "mystic awareness," "pure consciousness," and the like.

Panikkar's *advaita* in a sense is a *via media* between the rationalistic dialectic of a Spinoza or Hegel tending to monism, and the non-rational *advaita* of a Sankara or a Ramanuja. Like the former Panikkar regards the world as fully real, and reason as an essential instrument in our engagement with it. Unlike them, however, for Panikkar reason is only an aspect, crucial and essential as it is, of a wider dance or procession of consciousness that also incorporates the mythic and the spiritual. Like the latter, he wants to overcome the dualism of knower and known without on the one hand, postulating the "self-thinking Thought" (*noesis noeseos*) of Hegel (who follows Aristotle here), or on the other hand, wanting to transcend reason completely. Furthermore unlike Sankara, Panikkar does not see the world as mere appearance. The world is taken with full seriousness and reason is seen as an essential "moment" of consciousness, which provides us with a rational awareness of the world and invites the full scope of dialectical complexity. And yet this is not the whole story - - there is something both "prior to" and "beyond" reason with which it stands in creative tension.

Panikkar's epistemological pluralism is, as one would expect, closely connected with his ontology and specifically with his cosmotheandricism. Just as there is a procession from *mythos* through *logos* to the *pneuma*, there is likewise a *perichoresis* of the Divine, the Human, and the Cosmic, the three irreducible dimensions of reality.

"There is a kind of *perichoresis*, 'dwelling within one another, 'of these three dimensions of Reality, the Divine, the Human, and the Cosmic.'" (6)

And then again:

"There is no matter without spirit and no spirit without matter, now world without Man, no God without the Universe, etc. God, Man, and World are

three artificially substantivized forms of the three primordial adjectives when describe Reality. (7)

Panikkar's use of the theological term *perichoresis* taken from the discussions about the Trinity by the Greek Fathers and paralleling the three moments of the eternal dance of Siva Nataraja - - creation, destruction, and preservation... is deliberate and is designed to grasp three closely related aspects of reality: a) its "trinitarian" structure, b) its differentiated unity, and c) the open-ended character of reality, and its essentially rhythmic quality. Let me say a few words about each.

a). The "Trinitarian" Structure

The main thesis that Panikkar wants to proffer here is the triadic structure of Reality comprising the Divine, the Human, and the Cosmic in thoroughgoing relationality. In saying that "God, Man and World are three artificially substantivized forms of the adjectives which describe Reality," Panikkar is pointing to his own version of the Buddhist *pratityasamutpada*, the espousal of what he calls "radical relativity." There are no such things or beings as God, or Man, or World considered as independent entities. Not only are they dependent on each other but this dependence is not just external, but rather internal, i.e. constitutive of their very being

As to the appropriateness of taking a Christian theological symbol to describe what is essentially a philosophical and poetic vision, Panikkar makes at least three responses. First, the symbol of the Trinity is not a christian monopoly but is in fact common in many other traditions. Second, the relationships and movements within the Trinity provide a precise and vivid model for the dynamism of the different dimensions of Reality that Panikkar wants to articulate. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, and a significant theologian in his own right, has captured this dynamism well, in a perceptive essay on Panikkar entitled, "Trinity and Pluralism," he writes,

"For Panikkar, the trinitarian structure is that of a source, inexhaustibly generative and *always* generative, from which arises form and determination, "being" in the sense of what can be concretely perceived and engaged with; that form itself is never exhausted, never limited by this or that specific realization, but is constantly being realized in the flux of active life that equally springs out from the source of all. Between form, "logos," and life, "spirit," there is an unceasing interaction. The Source of all does not and cannot exhaust itself simply in producing shape and structure; it also produces that which dissolves and re-forms all structures in endless and undetermined movement, in such a way that form itself is not absolutized but always turned back towards the primal reality of the source. (8)

Third, even for Christians Panikkar feels that the doctrine of the Trinity should not be treated, as it often is, as a recondite teaching about the inner life of God cut off from the rest of life and experience. Rather, so potent and rich a symbol is it that it

invites further deepening and development, by participating in it and realizing its ever fresh and new manifestations. Panikkar is by no means alone in wanting to articulate the logic of the Trinity philosophically, and with reference to the whole of reality. Thus, Hegel likewise saw the Christian Trinity as the *Grundstruktur* for his entire dialectic and conceived of his philosophy as a translation of the doctrinal core of Christianity. (9) Of course, as already pointed out, Panikkar's is a quite different philosophical style than Hegel's, but the aim in both cases is the same - - to "expand" and articulate Christian doctrine as a model of Reality.

b) Its Differentiated Unity

Pluralism, as Panikkar construes it, mediates between sheer plurality and multiplicity on the one hand and the monism of the One on the other. Reality is neither one nor many but rather non-dual. What from one perspective looks plural is from another perspective a unity expressing the interdependence and the interrelatedness of all things and the co-arising of all processes. This marks a significant shift from the way pluralism is metaphysically thematized in the western philosophical tradition, as the problem of the "One and the Many" (*hen kai polla*), and the attendant difficulties of construing the "and." Is the One above the Many (Plato)? In the Many (Hegel)? The source of the Many (Plotinus)? The real ground of the Many (Spinoza)? Beyond the Many (Kant)? Panikkar, who inclines to the Buddhist ontology of relations and processes rather than of substance, sees the One as emerging in and through differences and being radically relational.

Again, Rowan Williams captures the particular cast of Panikkar's thinking well:

"The heart of this ontology could be summarized by saying that *differences matter*. The variety of the world's forms as experienced by human minds does not conceal an absolute oneness to which perceptible difference is completely irrelevant. If there is a unifying structure, it does not exist and cannot be seen independently of the actual movement and development of differentiation, the story of life-forms growing and changing." (10)

c) The Open-Ended and Rhythmic Character of Reality

Like Whitehead Panikkar stresses the unfinished, continually developing and ever new character of reality:

"I am not only saying that everything is directly or indirectly related to everything else: the radical relativity or *pratityasamutpada* of the Buddhist tradition. I am also stressing that this relationship is not only constitutive of the whole, but that it flashes forth ever new and vital in every spark of the real." (11)

Panikkar's thoughts here evoke the famous hymn to the freshness of life of the 19th century literary critic, Walter Pater:

“The service of philosophy, of speculative culture towards the human spirit is to rouse, to startle it to a life of constant and eager observation. Every moment some form grows perfect in land or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood or passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive to us - - for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself is the end... How should we pass most swiftly from point to point and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy? To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life.” (12)

This is the recognizable anthem of an aesthete. While endorsing this aesthetic attitude, Panikkar provides a philosophical ground to it by his idea of *creatio continua*, the radical newness of each moment and phase of reality as it unfolds in unpredictable ways. Panikkar's 1989 Gifford Lectures soon to be published are entitled “The Rhythm of Being: The Unbroken Trinity.” He develops the theme of rhythm at great length there, but perhaps I may be permitted to quote a small passage which gives a taste of his thinking:

“Life is a dance... This choral dance is a combination of harmony and rhythm, Plato says. It reminds us of the trinitarian *perichoresis*, the cosmic and divine dance. Siva is Nataraja, the dancing god. The dance is his creation. Dance is practically for all popular religions the most genuine human sharing in the miracle of creation... We all participate in rhythm because rhythm is another name for Being and Being is Trinity.” (13)

Given this brief sketch of Panikkar's ontology, it is clear why he needs a matching epistemological pluralism. The movements of Reality are too complex and subtle to be captured only by reason. The epistemological attitude that best corresponds to myth and the lure of *pneuma* is faith. The fact is that we are forever called by *pneuma* to an “existential openness,” that far transcends (though it does not necessarily negate, *a la* Tertullian) reason. This existential openness is what Panikkar calls faith and it operates at two levels, first as a constitutive human dimension that serves to render a person receptive to the intimations of spirit and second, the act of believing in which this receptivity is actuated. Both of these are to be distinguished from belief as such, which is the concrete expression of the act of faith. Thus, Panikkar writes:

“Myth, faith, and hermeneutics then might represent the three-fold – cosmotheandric – unity of the universe, that unity which neither destroys diversity nor forgets that the world is inhabited, that God is not alone, and that knowledge is based on love.” (14)

II. Theological Implications of Panikkar's Advaitic Trinitarianism

In his book, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man*, Panikkar asserts:

The Trinity . . . may be considered as a junction where the authentic spiritual dimensions of all religions meet. The Trinity is God's self-revelation in the fullness of time, the consummation both of all that God has already "said" of himself to man and of all that man has been able to attain and know of God in his thought and mystical experience. In the Trinity a true encounter of religions takes place, which results, not in a vague fusion or mutual dilution, but in an authentic enhancement of all the religious and even cultural elements that are contained in each. (15)

There are at least two assertions being made here: first, about a possible interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity as such, and second, the fact that as an ontological structure it allows "the authentic spiritual dimensions of all religions" to meet, and therefore enables and facilitates a true inter-religious encounter. Before I expound on these claims, a word of explanation about the title of this section may be in order. Why do I call Panikkar's trinitarianism "advaitic," even though, as I've indicated above, his idea of "advaita" deviates in important respects from some classical Indian accounts of the doctrine? I do this for two reasons. First, there are in fact in the Indian philosophical tradition not just one but several different versions of "advaita." Panikkar's interpretation of nondualism is closer to some (like Ramanuja's qualified nondualism) than others. What is important for Panikkar is that while there are essential distinctions within the divinity, and between the divinity and the world, these distinctions by no means imply separations or dualisms. Rather, reality is radically relational and organically interconnected. What is more important still is that while the unity underlying these distinctions may be conceptually explained, the unity itself requires a nonconceptual "intuition" to go beyond the subject-object dualism of thought. Panikkar here draws on the rich meditative experience of Hinduism and Buddhism, which have significantly, but by no means exclusively, explored the experience of total silence and radical apophatism.

With that preliminary explanation, let me cite a central passage in Panikkar's book on the Trinity:

In spite of every *effort* of the Father to "empty himself" in the generation of the Son, to pass entirely into his Son, to give him everything that he *has*, everything that he *is*, even then there remains in this first procession, like an irreducible factor, the Spirit. the non-exhaustion of the source in the generation of the Logos? For the Father the Spirit is as it were, the return to the source that he is himself. In other, equally inappropriate

words: the Father can “go on” begetting the Son, because he “receives back” the very Divinity which he has given up to the Son. It is the immolation or the mystery of the Cross in the Trinity. It is what Christian theologians used to call the *perichoresis* or *circumincessio*, the dynamic inner circularity of the Trinity. (16)

Panikkar, like the Greek Fathers, links the substratum of the divinity with the Father: “the Nicene Creed, as also the Greek Fathers and even Tertullian, affirms that the ‘substratum’ of the divinity resides in the Father.” (17) This might give the appearance of subordinationism, but that is not the case. The “non-being” of the Father acquires form in and through expression in the Son. The Son may therefore be conceived as the divinity as expressed by the Father:

We may say: the Absolute, the Father, *is not*. He has no *ex-istence*, not even that of being. In the generation of the Son he has, so to speak, given everything. In the Father the apophatism (the *kenosis* or emptying) of Being is real and total. Nothing can be said of the Father “in himself,” of the “self” of the Father.

Here Panikkar makes a connection with Buddhist insight:

Is it not here, truly speaking, in this essential apophatism of the “person” of the Father, in the *kenosis* of Being at its very source, that the Buddhist experience of *nirvana* and *sunyata* (emptiness) should be situated? One is led onwards towards the “absolute goal” and at the end one finds nothing because there is nothing, not even Being. “God created out of nothing” (*ex nihilo*), certainly, i.e., out of himself (*a Deo*)—a Buddhist would say. (18)

The Father is best approached through a radical silence, for “any attempt to *speak* about the Father involves a contradiction in terms, for every word about the Father can only refer to the one of whom the Father is Father, that is, to the Word, to the Son.” (19)

Panikkar turns next to the Son, who alone of the three “persons” is strictly speaking a person:

Only the Son is Person, if we use the word in its eminent sense and analogically to human persons: neither the Father nor the spirit is a person.” Relating this to the spirituality of personalism, he says: “Correctly speaking, then, it is only with the Son that man can have a personal relationship. The God of theism, thus, is the Son, the God with whom one can speak, establish a dialogue, enter into communication, is the divine Person who is in-relation-with, or rather, is the relationship with man and one of the poles of total existence. (20)

The property of silence which characterizes the Father stands in dialectical complementarity to the Son as speech, just as the non-being of the Father is complemented by the determinate form of the Son, which serves as the ontological ground of his personhood.

In the spirituality of the Spirit, Panikkar sees a correlation with *advaita*, the non-dualistic insight proffered by a part of the Indian tradition:

If the Father and the Son are not *two*, they are not one either: the Spirit both unites and distinguishes them. He is the bond of unity: the *we* in between, or rather within . . . There is no doubt that hindu thought is especially well prepared to contribute to the elaboration of a deeper theology of the Spirit . . . Indeed what is the Spirit but the *atman* of the Upanishads, which is said to be identical with *brahman*, although this identity can only be existentially recognized and affirmed once 'realization' has been attained. (21)

This realization of the unity of one's deepest spirit with the Divine is sometimes expressed imagistically in the literature of *advaita*: we are the waves of the divine ocean and have no reality apart from it.

Having articulated some theological dimensions of Panikkar's account of the Trinity, let me finally come to Bede's interpretation of it.

III. Griffiths' Trinity of Love

Judson Trapnell has suggested that Bede's spiritual journey can be organized around three phases, which he describes as God in nature, God in Christ and the church, and a Christian *advaita*. In accordance with the theme of this paper, exploring the connections between Panikkar and Griffiths, I shall focus on Bede's third phase and his reflections on the Trinity within it. In order to get at some of the affinities and differences between Panikkar and Griffiths, it might be worth quoting at length from Bede's most sustained account of the Trinity, written in 1986 and published in *Monastic Studies*:

Here in this life, we are already involved in the Trinity. The whole creation arises eternally in God . . . each one of us exists eternally in God in our eternal idea that He has of us . . . Tauler actually says that every creature in God is God. Of course, this statement has to be understood mystically and not ontologically as pure identity, as is sometimes said in Hindu *advaita*. So there we have this coming forth of the Word from the Father, and the Word comes forth as distinct from the Father. All the distinctions in creation are found in principle in the Word. This is important because in the Hindu view you often hear that all differences disappear in the final state. We would say that those differences are eternally in the Word. (22)

It is significant that in this passage Bede distinguishes between the "mystical" and the "ontological" in a way in which the *advaitic* view does not. If *atman* is identified with *brahman*, and we are waves of the divine ocean, we are in our deepest selfhood divine. The mystical awareness is only the progressive realization of it. As Panikkar says, "Faith in the Spirit cannot be clothed in personalist structure. It does not consist in the discovery of Someone, and even less in dialogue with him. It consists rather in the 'consciousness' that one is not found outside reality." (23) Furthermore, Bede seems to

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make the *advaitic* view a monistic one, when he claims that “in the Hindu view . . . all differences disappear in the final state.” They do not disappear, but rather are held together in unity. That’s exactly the difference between monism and non-dualism.

Next, when Bede comes to the explication of the three persons or moments of the Trinity, he says:

Now, as the Son emerges from the Father eternally and differentiates Himself, and distinguishes the world or creation from the Father, so He returns to the Father in the Spirit. The Spirit is the Love that unites Father and Son. The entire creation comes forth in all its differentiation in the word, and it returns in the Spirit to the One. The Spirit is the energy in God, the *sakti* or power in Hindu terms, that is the uncreated Energy of Gregory of Palamas. The Word or Son as the *Logos* is the exemplary Form of all creation, the principle of all forms in nature, while the spirit is the *sakti*, the energy in creation, what makes it to be and to operate. (24)

Here, there is substantial agreement between Griffiths and Panikkar. The Trinity is not primarily some recondite doctrine about the life of God set apart from our own spiritual life. Rather, it is the ground of our spiritual being and the three moments or persons express different aspects of that ground and therefore of our being: the silence of the Father, the determinate form and speech of the Son, and the indwelling energy of the Spirit. In the traditional Greek view, a distinction is made between the so-called “immanent” and “economic” trinities, the former referring to the inner life of the Divine and the latter to the incursion into time and history of the Divine, and the doctrines of the Fall, Redemption, and Final Judgment. Both Panikkar and Griffiths maintain that distinction but considerably soften it, insofar as time is not dualistically separated from eternity but seen a la Plato as its “moving image.” The inner life of the Godhead is not only one that we all participate in, but that life would in some sense be incomplete without our participation. As Meister Eckhart provocatively put it, “The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me. If God were not, I would not be. If I were not, God would not be.”

Bede, however, differs from Panikkar in the *personal* dynamism that he makes central to the Trinity:

It is essential for us all to know that the Trinity is not some sort of mathematical problem of how the Three and the One are united, but that it is a mystery that is personally involved with us and in us. Instead of the abstract scholastic theology, in this understanding we have something concrete, a definitely personal connection . . . Furthermore this reveals that God’s being is essentially interpersonal relationship. That is what the Trinity signifies . . . that the ultimate reality of the Godhead is interpersonal relationship. is personal communion in love, I think is a distinctly Christian insight, and reveals the inner depth of the whole mystery. (25)

As we have seen before, Panikkar confines the personal aspect of the Trinity, strictly considered, to the second moment, the Son. Neither the Father nor the Spirit are best

conceptualized according to him in personal terms. He too speaks often of “love” as the defining quality of the Trinity, but it is love seen as much in impersonal as in personal terms. As Panikkar explains:

→ *Jnana-marga*, the way of knowledge, of pure contemplation, of ontological *theoria*, is the way par excellence of *advaita*. For the *advaitin* it is not a matter of transforming the world or even himself, as it is with the *Karma-yogin*. Nor for him is it a matter of worshipping God by loving him to the utmost, after the manner of *bhakta*. It is sheerly a matter of forgetting himself, of yielding totally to God, thus even of renouncing loving him—renunciation of love which does not proceed from a lack of love but is, on the contrary, most profoundly the sign of a love that is purer and ‘carried further’, a love which, having disappeared into the Beloved, has no longer any memory of itself. (26)

Love, in other words, demands its own renunciation. The conditions of the possibility of mutual love are separation and distance, which in turn ground the distinctness of persons. On the other hand, however, it is love that pushes toward a complete identification in the process destroying the separateness and reciprocity which are its structural conditions. This is the existential paradox of love.

The differences between a *jnana-yogi* like Panikkar and a *bhakti-yogi* like Griffiths are, I think, vividly expressed here, at least in conceptual terms. I think Bede saw clearly the logic of the *advaita* position, but drew back from its final consequences. To that extent, he saw the tensions involved in the very notion of a “Christian *advaita*.” As early as in his 1954 autobiography, *The Golden String*, he writes:

The divine mystery is ultimately a mystery of love, and it reveals itself to love alone. It is only if we are prepared to give ourselves totally in love that Love will give itself totally to us. (27)

And in *Return to the Center*, published in 1976, he continues:

† In this [Christian] revelation the mystery of being reveals itself as a mystery of love, of an eternal love ever rising from the depths of being in the Godhead and manifesting itself in the total self-giving of Jesus on the cross and in the communication of that love to men in the Spirit. The organization of the Church, with its doctrine of Trinity and Incarnation and its Eucharistic ritual, has no other purpose than to communicate this love, to create a community of love, to unite all men in the eternal Ground of being, which is present in the heart of every man. (28)

|| His experience of Indian *advaita* and of other religions and philosophies deepened and broadened the mystery of love, but love in its different modalities remained for him the key to encountering both unity and plurality.

Notes:

1. Bede Griffiths (hereafter BG), "The Transcendent Unity of Religions," *DownsideReview*, 1954, cited in Shirley Du Boulay, *Beyond the Darkness: A Biography of Bede Griffiths*, New York: Doubleday, 1998, p. 102.
2. Cited in Judson Trapnell, *Bede Griffiths: A Life in Dialogue*, in the "Foreword" by Kenneth Cracknell, State University of New York Press, 2001, p. xii.
3. BG, "A Meditation on the Mystery of the Trinity" in *Monastic Studies* 17, 1986, ["On the Trinity"], Benedictine Priory of Montreal, p. 69-70.
4. *Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics* (hereafter MFH), Paulist Press, New York, 1979, p. 347.
5. *The Rhythm of Being: The Unbroken Trinity* (unpublished draft of Panikkar's Gifford Lectures) p. 34.
6. "The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of Babel - - A Meditation on Nonviolence" i *Cross Currents*, 29:2, 1979, p. 17.
7. "Philosophy as Lifestyle" in Philosophers on Their Own Work, Peter Lang, Bern, Frankfurt, 1978, pp. 199-201.
8. Rowan Williams, "Trinity and Pluralism" in Gavin D'Costa (ed.) *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1990, p. 3.
9. Jorg Splett, *Die Trinitaetslehre GWF Hegels*, Herder, Freiburg, 1965.
10. Williams, p. 5.
11. Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, ed. Scott Easthan, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1993, p.60.
12. Walter Pater, "Conclusion" in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, Oxford, New York, 1919, p.194.
13. RP, "The Rhythm of Being" (unpublished manuscript).
14. MFH, p. 10.
15. RP, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man*, New York: Orbia Books, 1973, p. 42.
16. *ibid.*, p. 60.
17. *ibid.*, p. 45.
18. *ibid.*, p. 46-47.
19. *ibid.*, p. 48.
20. *ibid.*, p. 52.
21. *ibid.*, p. 62-64.
22. See note 3 above, p. 70-71.
23. Panikkar, *The Trinity*, op. cit., p. 64.
24. Griffiths, op. cit., p. 72.
25. *ibid.*, p. 73.
26. Panikkar, *The Trinity*, op. cit., p. 38-39.
27. Griffiths, *The Golden String: An Autobiography*, Springfield, IL: Templegate, 1954, p. 187.
28. Griffiths, *Return to the Center*, Springfield, IL: Templegate, 1976, p. 116.

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