
Beginning with oneself: Alastair McIntosh shares a lesson from Raimon Panikkar

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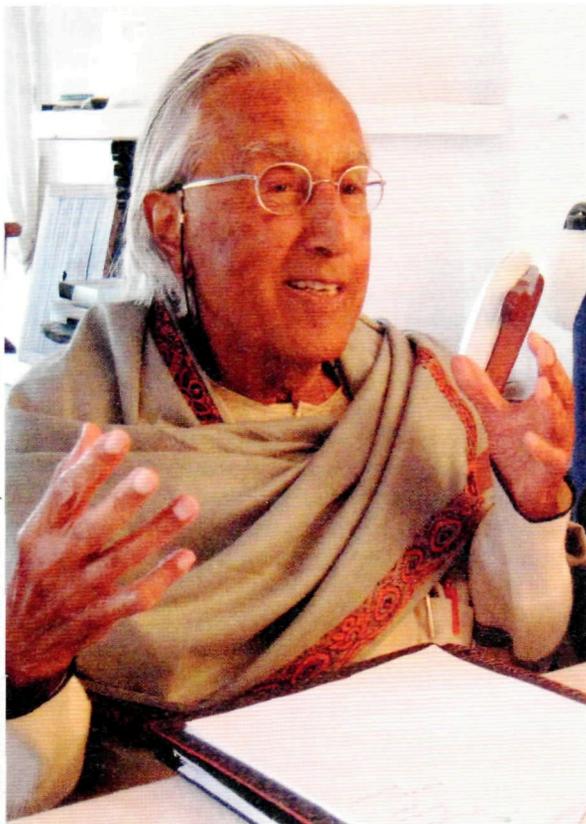


Photo: Raimon Panikkar in 2007 by Milena Carrara on Wikimedia Commons

COP26, will soon take place a mile away from Glasgow Meeting House. What might we and other faith groups have to offer? We are the bearers of centuries-old spiritual insights. If we are awake, might these speak to our times? Here I mean ways of seeing, being and doing that rest upon discernment. Upon a listening to the movement of the Spirit that gives life. Beyond ego, that ‘basic call to consciousness’. To interconnection. In community. With all life, and to its source, sweet child in time.

In practical terms, it means simple living, truth and integrity in public affairs, nonviolence, conflict resolution, mediation, creative listening; and especially, our Quaker methodology of Meetings for Clearness – something that activists can find immensely helpful in discerning questions that divide us, divided even within ourselves. This is our ‘holding in the light’.

Allow me, then, to share from a conference called ‘No Life Without Roots’. A small group of us put it on, here in Glasgow, in 1990. The keynote speaker was the great Indian-Spanish/Catalan thinker, Raimon Panikkar, author of *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* and the Gifford Lecture, ‘The Rhythm of Being’.

With doctorates in philosophy, chemistry and theology, this ‘wholly Hindu and wholly Christian’ brightly impish figure would have understood a thing or two about the scientific and spiritual depths of climate change. He called his Glasgow lecture ‘Agriculture, Techniculture, Human Culture’. The manuscript recently emerged from archives and was passed to me.

Here, then, is the opening paragraph and the closing set of sutras – a thread of sharing meditations. These words have not been seen for nigh on thirty years. Let this be Panikkarji’s legacy... to COP 26.

‘Let me begin with prayer: that is, becoming conscious of our sense of precariousness. Not only for ourselves; none of us has the solution to the world we tackle, none of us can offer a convincing programme of action. The very word prayer suggests being conscious of our precariousness when we deal with such major issues. Not only the sense of our precariousness; also, of the precariousness of the situation where we live, of this moment which is our moment in time and history.’

The nine sutras

1. one should begin with oneself
2. and by oneself (not waiting for the push from one side)
3. opening myself to the entire reality
4. there, where my self is – Glasgow, not outside
5. without forcing the consequences
6. in solidarity; solitude is not isolation
7. self-motivated; if it is not self-motivated, no motivation would ever work
8. non-violently, and
9. beginning all over again. ●

Alastair is from Glasgow Meeting.