

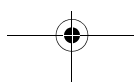
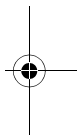
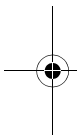
## Introduction: The Scope of this Book

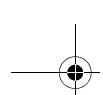
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For hundreds of years before the great Cathedral of Chartres rose from the ashes of the fire of 1194, teachers and students lived, worked, and learned in and around the town of Chartres. They wondered about and wrote about God, the stars, and humanity—about the world. They studied the Bible, the Church Fathers, ancient Greek and Latin pagan philosophy, and the most up-to-date scientific information, including that arriving from Islamic sources in Spain and North Africa. In all, they sought a comprehensive understanding of the cosmos. They sought to understand the numinous and physical reality of their world and they sought to praise God in the process. This book is about the thought and teachings of some of these people. It is a book about the theology, philosophy, and science of the twelfth-century School of Chartres. It is an investigation into the Chartrian understanding of God and the cosmos, and how humanity encounters God *in* the cosmos.<sup>1</sup>

Reference will be made to other members of the Chartrian School of thought, but we will concentrate on the writings of Thierry of Chartres and William of Conches. We shall seek to understand these individuals within their historical context of the first half of the twelfth century. While this study is rooted in the theological framework of the thought of these men, one aspect of Chartrian thought that will become clear is the fact that they reveal a theology that is interwoven with spirituality, cosmology, and metaphysics. Indeed, to attempt to isolate the theological aspects and present them as independent of the others would be naive. Using an integrated approach to learning and life is one of the central tenets of the Chartrian worldview.

During the last three decades, historians of philosophy and literature have discovered the richness of the writings of the Chartrians.<sup>2</sup> Historical





theologians, however, have not. Consequently, the theology of William of Conches and Thierry of Chartres has not been thoroughly studied. The lack of in-depth study and integration into academic curriculums has resulted from a lack of thorough investigation of Chartrian thought and from a poor understanding of the available material. In many cases, a thirteenth-century scholastic lens has been used to explore this twelfth-century school of thought. The theological significance of their thought, especially as it refers to the relationship between God and the cosmos, has not been recognized and enjoyed. This has consequently rendered the historical understanding of twelfth-century theology incomplete.

One task of this book is to retrieve these writings and to bring to a fuller light their theological content and the contribution they make to the understanding of twelfth-century theology—and medieval theology as a whole. This work serves as an invitation to the medieval scholar and the lay reader, to those who are interested in the academic milieu that gave rise to the Chartres Cathedral, and to historians of science and religious consciousness. Ultimately, this book is a work of intellectual history and theological recovery.

The content of this book revolves around questions raised by many twelfth-century thinkers concerning the nature of the relationship between God and the cosmos. In many ways, this is related to the question of the relationship between science and religion, between the physical and the numinous. We shall discover that the Chartrians taught that the cosmos was an exemplary image of God; that God was emanationally present in the cosmos; and that humanity, through knowledge of, experience of, and contemplation of the cosmos, could achieve illumination by, knowledge of, and union with God. This book will guide the reader through the world of these distant Chartrian voices. Although central themes such as exemplarism, the world soul, and illumination will be treated in turn, they should not be thought of as distinct foci or categories of Chartrian thought. Together they form an integrated whole. More, it is our contention that this metaphysical whole was also integrated into their understanding of the liberal arts, the scriptures, and the natural sciences to form a unique expression.

This book is not a comprehensive study of early twelfth-century theological history, nor a complete analysis of the whole of Chartrian science or philosophy. We seek to recover one aspect of the Chartrian mind—their understanding of the sacredness of the cosmos and the intimate relationship between the cosmos and God.

In one sense, for us to say that in Chartrian thought the cosmos was understood as sacred is no more than to say that they held that it is created by God and it remains connected to God. The term *sacred* is not simply

