

relation which is best characterised as two-substance dualism. Ganeri's achievements in this argument are also indebted to the pioneering work of another Roman Catholic scholar of Rāmānuja, Julius Lipner. Ganeri drives home that Rāmānuja is best related to Aquinas' account of mixed relations and also allows us to see Rāmānuja as affirming a form of *creatio ex nihilo*. Through this close exegesis of Rāmānuja, Ganeri argues that both Rāmānuja and Aquinas employ complex discourses that seek to hold polarised tensions such as keeping together unitive and differentiating language in a *sui generis* causal relation between the world and ultimate reality, in keeping intact the immutability of God while affirming this reality's creation of the world. This argument will surely require serious attention to Rāmānuja and to Scholasticism in any subsequent scholarship assessing Rāmānuja.

This is a demanding and important book. Read it.

GAVIN D'COSTA

THE LOST KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST : CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUALITIES, CHRISTIAN COSMOLOGY AND THE ARTS by Dominic White OP, *Liturgical Press, Minnesota, pp. x + 222, 2015, \$23.00, pbk*

This is a book of unusual originality and daring. The average reader of *New Blackfriars* might be tempted to ask, 'But shamans, astrology and liturgical dance - is it just batty?' Those who persevere with an open mind may have a surprise. Fr White's ambition is to rediscover an ancient Christian world-view, which was largely forgotten around the end of the middle ages. He is a Classical historian, trained in the Dominican tradition, an experienced organist, choirmaster and composer, the founder of a dance project, a pastor and university chaplain. All the elements of his wide experience are woven into this powerful and challenging account. His text is supported by pictures, videos and music available on a linked website.

This is an exercise in the kind of interreligious dialogue to which recent popes have called us, a dialogue which listens and learns before it distinguishes and criticises. Such a dialogue, because it is open to truth, can help us see deeper into our own tradition. Fr White's specific encounter is with the various forms of 'New Age'. He carefully describes the evolution from the mass peace and drugs movements of the 1960s to the more individualistic, yet more ecological, spiritualities popular today. He asks why people are attracted to these rather than to Christianity, even while they often admire both Jesus and the social conscience of church-goers.

He next pieces together from a combination of apocryphal, patristic and archaeological sources the cosmic understanding of the early

Christians. Both Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria identified unwritten traditions passed down from the apostles. These, Fr White argues, included an account of cosmic redemption, which was, especially through the liturgy, gradually taught as individuals matured in their faith. The essence of this teaching was that the cross was the instrument of the redemption of the whole cosmos, effected through the subjecting of the ‘powers and principalities’, understood as angels, stars and planets. The cross reached from the depths of the earth to the heights of the heavens (that is, ‘deeply’ – as we now put it – into the mystery of God), from the four corners of the earth, and from past to present to future.

Combining the detailed artistic decoration of the church of Dura Europos with the baptismal liturgy described in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus, Fr White movingly reconstructs the experience of being baptized in the second or third century. First, the candidates were screened: practising magicians and astrologers, for example, excluded, and a record of good works required to show that they were ready to grasp the teaching they sought. They were exorcised and fasted before the Easter Vigil, held at the Spring Equinox. Stripped naked, they approached the tomb-shaped baptismal bath. When they rose up from it as new Christians, they were able to see clearly the star-painted ceiling above them and begin to understand the cosmos as God sees it. White brings out the significance of every tiny detail of the frescoes, including their numerology, to recreate this journey from darkness to light, from ignorance to the first stage of knowledge. But much would remain to be explained, as the new-born Christians grew in their faith.

The boldest part of Fr White’s thesis is that part of what needed to be explained was a journey through the seven heavens, as alluded to by St Paul and described in different ways in early Christian and Jewish apocrypha. He connects this with sevenfold schemes of colour (cf. rainbows, Eastern icons), of significant parts of the body (cf. healing ‘channels’) and of the angels and heavens linked to gifts of the spirit (cf. Irenaeus). Importantly, this was always a journey which integrates the levels through which it has passed; it was the Gnostics, by contrast, who were trying to leave the world behind.

To make sense of this an openness to the truth in non-Christian (and non-western) traditions is essential, but at the same time a judicious cautiousness. If the chakras, for example, are truly powerful channels of energy, they are open also to abuse. ‘Powers and principalities’, if not subjected to the Lord, are dangerous. Fr White carefully distinguishes between the use of astrology for prediction, which is based on principles incompatible with Christianity, and the idea of integrating the planetary powers under God, which is suggested for example by the many zodiacs found in medieval cathedrals. (C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image* provides the medieval context which can help make sense of this.)

The details of this cosmic picture will strongly attract some; others will find them off-putting. The basic claim, though, that the Christ restores

the lost unity not just of mankind, but also of the cosmos, is scriptural. It follows straightforwardly from a full commitment to His divinity, combined with a belief that the Fall was not merely a human phenomenon. Fr White explores with pastoral sensitivity the benefits of the consequent understanding sin of as something that we 'fall into' rather than commit.

This world-view also underpins an illuminating account of the liturgy. Stepping back from the familiar battles over types of church music, Fr White asks rather, 'Why do these battles occur?'. He reimagines liturgical music as primarily a mystical ministry, in which hymns such as 'Of the Father's heart begotten' were a means of passing down a cosmic vision, a sharing in the healing power of Wisdom. Such a ministry needs to be consciously prepared by a life of prayer and aware of the great tradition of which it is a part. Similarly, instead of arguing about 'liturgical dance', we should reenvision the liturgy, with its orchestrated movement, as something that is itself a kind of dance. Relics of the ancient tradition such as the feast-day dances found in a couple of Spanish cathedrals make sense in this context. The faithful on earth were mirroring the dance of the angels (as depicted for example by Fra Angelico).

Liturgy, Fr White writes, 'is weird . . . Like art, it seems beyond analysis.' But this is partly because we have lost the knowledge that made sense of it. An immensely suggestive chapter describes what our sacramental worship might look like if we recovered the ancient wisdom. The ancient analogies between our bodies, the Temple and the cosmos, the sense of participating in the cosmic healing power of Christ, the rebinding of the bonds broken by sin: this is the task of liturgy. Again, this analysis enables Fr White to integrate a wealth of otherwise puzzling details, from debates over altar rails to the visions of St John in *Revelation*.

Dialogue with the questions of the 'New Age' has stimulated this inquiry. Yet Fr White is clear about the dangers of Gnostic and New Age spiritualities: their adherents seek to separate themselves from their 'lower' selves, the past, and the community. Catholicism rather seeks to *integrate* the whole person, the community, the tradition, the heavens and the earth, as the cosmic cross so powerfully signifies. This book is only a beginning of a vast project, and Fr White invites us all to join the exploration. If you are intrigued, visit: lostknowledgeofchrist.wordpress.com

MARGARET ATKINS CRSA

HAGAR'S VOCATION: PHILOSOPHY'S ROLE IN THE THEOLOGY OF RICHARD FISHACRE, OP by R. James Long, *The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 2015, pp. xviii + 271, \$69.95, hbk*

This is a most interesting book, both in content and composition. The format which gathers together contributions on Richard Fishacre