

and moral courage of a singular thinker like Camus. Perhaps we are in a position to see him once again.

And what do we see, at least through Todd's lens? A complex artist, always struggling with his craft. A man always committed to the politics and passions of his time but determined not to fall into clichéd and murderous ways of thinking and acting. A man with a complex and by no means exemplary personal life who nevertheless seems not to have embittered the many women who shared his bed. A person wary of big abstractions that drive out concrete consideration of actual lived lives. A nonbeliever who wrote a matriculation thesis on Saint Augustine and remained in dialogue with Christians—the Catholic Church, especially Dominicans—throughout his life. In other words, a person with whom those immersed in the Christian tradition can, and should, be in dialogue. Now that the clamor of the ideologically inflamed, caught up in their "logical deliriums," is no more, perhaps Camus's commitment to lucidity and his recognition of our brokenhearted yearning for a kind or bracing word, an open face, the saving presence of our fellow human beings, will be greeted with honor and with tears.

Todd tells us that, until "the end of his life, [Camus] advised others not to confuse creation with propaganda: 'It seems to me that a writer must know everything about the dramas of his time and must take sides every time he can, but he must also keep a certain distance from history, at least from time to time.' . . . Camus sought a rule for living, and in the public sphere he refused lies and despotism. He diagnosed certain evils of his time, which reflected his era's anguishes and his own penchant for nihilism" (p. 418). Todd concludes that Camus's "endearing human warmth and goodness embarrass some thinkers," who seem to prefer slightly monstrous masters to vulnerable human beings (p. 420). Despite his many relationships, Camus was loyal in friendship and love. Of course, he died too young. That is a loss we who loved him still feel.

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GREEN, ARTHUR. *Keter: The Crown of God in Early Jewish Mysticism*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997. xv+226 pp. \$35.00 (cloth).

This excellent book offers an erudite inquiry into the origins and development of the concept of *keter* ("the crown of God"), a major mystical theme and religious symbol in the Jewish tradition. This striking analysis is marked by a thorough grasp and enlightening presentation of a broad range of mythical-mystical materials in all their historical evolutions and phenomenological transformations. Further, the book illuminates the process of shaping and reconfiguring religious imagination that strives to grasp the nature of divine-human relations through transformations of the mythical world, mystical symbols, ritual, and prayer.

Arthur Green examines the intricate range of meanings related to the crown of God that emerge from the prayers, homilies, hymns, legends, and other literary sources that shaped the imaginative universe of those who invoked this concept in their prayers and symbols. The author thereby links together the early merkavah literature of late antiquity with the emerging Kabbalah of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The methodological point of departure is Green's synchronic reading of literary texts written by Jews and others close to them in late antiquity. This reading transcends the conventionalized boundaries sundering "Jewish" and "Christian" sources in the earliest centuries of the common era, as well as those separating the "rabbinic" and "merkavah" traditions of a somewhat later period.

The synchronic reading is further based on Green's perceptive argument that "the imagination does not usually adhere to such boundaries, and myths have a way of creeping across all the lines drawn by cautious theologians in order to rein them in" (p. x). Thus the exoteric and esoteric traditions of Jews in late antiquity and rabbinic times must be treated as a spectrum or continuum, rather than as clearly demarcated realms. Neither is earlier than the other, nor can either be understood as more mainstream.

Twelve major facets of the crown and coronation myths are studied according to a rigorous reading of fifty brief Jewish texts: (1) The development of the idea of God's crown in relation to the loss of Jewish political sovereignty is accompanied by the loss of both the royal house and the priestly cult. The ancient motifs and traditions of mundane monarchy are carried over into the rabbinic and later Jewish liturgy as divine kingship. (2) The daily enthronement or coronation rite occurring in Jewish liturgy is fulfilled by the angels crowning God in the angelic liturgy of the Qedusha (*sanctus*) in the merkavah literature, the New Testament, and in Christian liturgy. (3) All Israel joins with the angels in their prayer in offering a crown to God. This involvement of Israel through prayers in the heavenly sanctus rite represents a great mythical power that affects the balance of divine-human relations. (4) The crown offered to God is made up of words of the prescribed prayers that have the power of ascent. The ascending words are "woven" or "tied" into crowns or wreaths. The prayers of Israel rise up to heaven and come into the hands of the angel who functions as a priest and weaves these prayers together into a wreath, a crown, a name, or a garland of names and causes them to be placed on the divine head. The ascent of prayer and its placement as a crown on God's head is related to the ascent of the sacrificial smoke that rises to heaven and wreaths itself over the divine throne. (5) The name of God is inscribed or engraved on the crown; thus the name of God is identified with the crown. God is rendered as wearing a crown that bears divine names and holy letters. The various traditions of the explicit/ineffable names and their forbidden utterance are incorporated into the angelic-human prayers. (6) God is depicted as the wearer of phylacteries, crowns, or seals that contain the name Israel or the praise of Israel as God's own people. (7) The crown as a magical symbol expresses submission to the king and the assertion of power to offer the crown as a gift that humans and angels give to God. The magical-theurgical nature of prayer is associated with the coronation of God as theurgic act. (8) The myth of the sacred marriage occurring on Shavuot speaks of a mutual coronation of God and Israel: Israel crowns the divinity as God, ruler, and spouse, and God crowns Israel as his beloved bride. The mutual act of coronation, seen as religious longing and fulfillment, is also an act of marital union. (9) The early centuries of the second millennium witness a passage from coronation mysticism of the crowned God to crown mysticism: the *keter* or "crown" emerges as a key symbol in the kabbalistic myth of the middle ages. *Keter* is the first of the ten divine emanations, or *sefirot*: within this myth flourish the symbols of male and female, both belonging to the divine pleroma. (10) In the kabbalistic tradition the crown is divided into *keter*, the highest in the hierarchical arrangement of divine gradations, the ten *sefirot* (singular *sefirah*), including *atarah*, diadem, the tenth and lowest of the *sefirot* appearing at the bottom of the symbol group of the hierarchy, the one that is most often associated with femininity. The restoration of the pleroma will occur as the result of their union. (11) The very heart of the Kabbalah is the ascent of the tenth *sefirah* to reunion with the first, or the assertion that the two crowns appearing at either end of the kabbalistic pleroma are in fact one, made so once

again by the merits of human prayer and deed. (12) The female figure of *atarah*, often depicted as the king's bride or daughter, is described in language of a return or reunion with a higher male divine realm. This female figure is identified with God's chosen people Israel, thus Israel is the crown restored to God's head: the union of the *sefirot* is in this symbolic way a cosmic collective act of unio-mystica.

Green combines profound scholarship with a very elegant style as he sensitively deciphers that meaning that the authors and redactors of the ancient texts were striving to express within the context of their spiritual world and intellectual quest. Green does not attempt to impose ready-made biased structures on the textual corpus but allows them to speak through the centuries in their own language, within their conceptual world, a wonderful innovation in the light of modern research of Jewish mysticism. The crown is seen as a multifaceted mythical symbol expressing the elusive divine reality that human religious language is ever seeking to grasp by means of such symbolic expressions.

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SMART, NINIAN. *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996. xviii+331 pp. \$29.95 (cloth).

In an effort to address the fact that "we have rather too few general studies of religion" (p. 298), Ninian Smart offers here what he calls a "taxonomy through which we can better understand the structures of worldviews" (p. 25), aimed ultimately at promoting dialogue in the service of a "deeper global ethos" (p. 297). Acknowledging his debt to Gerardus van der Leeuw and building on a number of his prior publications, Smart embarks on an unabashedly phenomenological, comparativist enterprise: describing "the modes and forms in which religion manifests itself" (p. 1). Using material from a wide range of religious traditions, Smart outlines seven "dimensions" of the sacred: ritual/practical, doctrinal/philosophical, mythic/narrative, experiential/emotional, ethical/legal, organizational/social, and material/artistic.

Although the chapters on doctrine, ritual, myth, and society are substantially longer than the rest, any effort to include the experiential, ethical, and aesthetic into a global theory of religion certainly represents an important step toward accounting for the full range of human activities and concerns we call "religious." Smart also emphasizes throughout the strong relationships that exist among the various dimensions. He raises a number of interesting points, among them the idea that rather than "secularizing," the modern world is simply coming to focus on different dimensions of the religious—currently the experiential, rather than the doctrinal or ritual (pp. 267–74).

Yet any attempt to account for the sum of human religiosity is bound to raise a number of questions large and small, and Smart's work is no exception. The characterization of "modern" Hinduism, for example, as favoring "a philosophy of toleration" (p. 22) sweeps aside the messy fact of Hindu fundamentalism. Buddhism is presented as "an intrinsically philosophical religion" (p. 67) espousing a "non-identity theory [that] leads toward a more empirical and proto-scientific approach to the world" (p. 82), ignoring the significant body of recent work that challenges such Orientalist assumptions.

More problematic than such details, however, is Smart's reluctance to define what lies at the very core of his project: religion. While he outwardly resists "af-