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THE Christian Century

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from tuberculosis in 1831, even though Emerson says little about his reaction to her suffering. Second, Roberson places Emerson in the context of 19th-century popular literature of advice about the routes to success of "the self-made man," demonstrating how Emerson's self-reliance departed from convention.

The book raises but does not fully explore a number of questions about the sermon as a mode of self-representation. Emerson himself was greatly concerned with the connection between forms of expression and the ideas to be expressed, and a full account of his "self-fashioning" would require a careful analysis of the opportunities and the constraints that the 19th-century sermon presented to self-expression. To what extent is that Emerson of the sermons also the Emerson of the essays, journals and letters, and how would a comparison of these Emersons enrich our understanding of the personal dimension of the sermonic form?

Seven Theories of Religion.

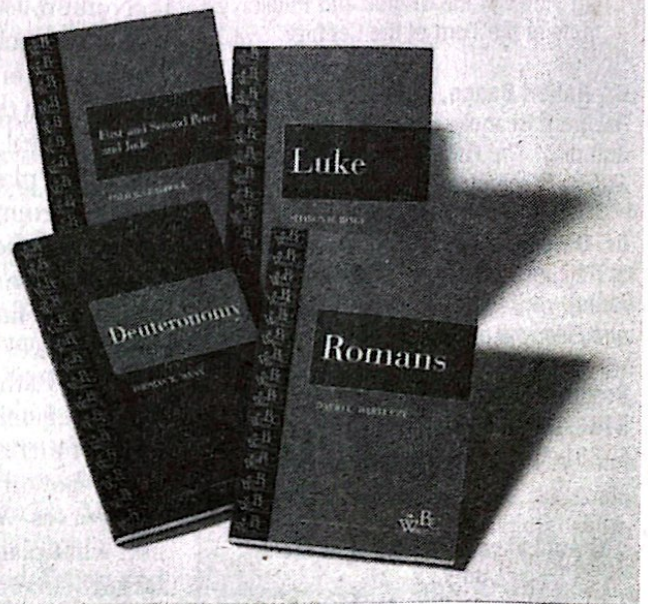
By Daniel L. Pals. Oxford University Press, 294 pp., \$13.95 paperback.

DANIEL PALS identifies seven prominent and influential theories of religion and elucidates their meanings and implications. The theories under study are those of E. B. Tylor and James Frazer (constituting a single chapter), Sigmund Freud, Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Mircea Eliade, E. E. Evans-Pritchard and Clifford Geertz. The theories are variously rooted in anthropology, sociology, psychology and psychoanalysis, economic theory and cultural analysis, phenomenology and the history of religions. Together the seven theories offer impressive witness to the power of religion to create meaning, invite critical investigation, and spark sustained and sometimes heated controversy.

Pals, who is professor of religious studies and chair of the department at the University of Miami in Coral

Reviewed by Walter H. Capps, professor of religious studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

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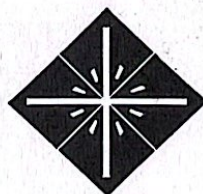
Gables, Florida, does not claim that these are the most essential or even the most important theories of religion. They do, however, illustrate some of the impressive ways in which religion has caught the interest and imagination of scholars, each of whom claims scientific respectability for his approach.

Numerous fields and disciplines within the social sciences and humanities have taken religion seriously, even on their own terms. And the influences are reciprocal. Serious scholarship has made due place for religion, and the insights from such scholarship have influenced the way religion is understood. Consequently, the discussion has moved far beyond whether religion deserves to be advocated or disclaimed. Rather, there is now at least tacit agreement about what religion is, how it functions in societies and cultures, how it affects those who espouse it (as well as those who do not), and what place it inhabits within the larger inventory of ingredients that make up worldviews and life-views.

In his final, somewhat abbreviated chapter, Pals tackles questions about the ramifications of these theories. Since all seven throw light on the subject, how does one select between them? Pals answers that one need not make such a choice. Since all seven seem to account for religion without using supernaturalistic explanations, haven't they explained the subject away? Here Pals's answer is more subtle: the seven theorists do in fact take a position toward their subjects, whether reductionistic or sympathetic. Pals chooses not to trace the implications of this finding very far, since each of these theories is dated. Finally, Pals raises the question of whether there is any way at all, in today's intellectual climate, to develop a general theory of religion that might attain the status of the seven examined here.

Pals would have completed his task had he not raised the last question at all. Certainly the attempt to develop general theories of religion will continue, generation after generation,

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and age after age: we have been curious about religion since the questions about the True, the Good, the Beautiful and the Holy were first formulated. As Pals's book illustrates, it is not so much this or that product of this insatiable quest that impresses us as it is the confirming force of the quest itself, and the quality of mind that attaches itself thereto. I do not consider any of the seven theories as the final word, nor did those who constructed them. There are at least seven new theories of religion in the process of formulation today. These, like Pals's book, help illustrate religion's enduring intellectual appeal.

A Spiritual Formation Journal. By *Jana Rea and Richard J. Foster.* HarperSanFrancisco, 210 pp., \$13.00 paperback.

■ Richard Foster and Renovaré, his spiritual formation group, do not believe that spiritual literature is a finished

product. Every person is poised to contribute to spiritual formation by keeping a journal. Renovaré draws on five spiritual themes: Contemplative, Holiness, Charismatic, Social Justice and Evangelical. There are plenty of useful fill-in-the-blank guidelines, patterns and prescriptions for attentive pilgrims. Retreat leaders should take note.

Signs of Grace: Sacraments in Poetry and Prose. By *David Brown and David Fuller.* Morehouse, 178 pp., \$ 19.95.

■ Protestants used to fight over the number of sacraments; most Protestants narrowed them down to baptism and the Lord's Supper. Some Protestants and most Catholics defined sacraments to include seven or so, and still others borrowed the concept of "pansacramentalism" from Martin Buber. The editors of this winning anthology spend less time defining and more time collecting. They bring to-

gether literature that both reinforces and enlarges the sacramental vision. Scores of literary artists are represented here—poets as far back as William Blake and as recent as Geoffrey Hill. This is a useful book for vocational reasons and a beautiful one for those more focused on devotional interests.

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