Seeker in sneakers
Phil Jackson's basketball praxis
by David Heim

The far right and the politics of rage
by Jeffrey Kaplan

After the Righter trial
by William L. Sachs

Religion as news
by Martin E. Marty
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.

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, Émile 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 Gables, Florida, concludes that understanding religion in a modern context is impossible without an appreciation of the critical insights and open methodological approach of the theories under study. These include the ideas advanced by Ralph L. Barton, Paul Tillich, Karl Jaspers, and Talcott Parsons, as well as the theories of Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx. The book is a valuable contribution to the study of religion and is highly recommended for anyone interested in the topic.
Cables, 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.
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.


Richard Foster and Renovare, 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. Renovare 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.


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 "pan sacramentalism" from Martin Buber. The editors of this winning anthology spend less time defining and more time collecting. They bring together 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.

Bates College
College Chaplain

Bates College is seeking a full-time College Chaplain.

Candidates for this appointment should be recognized within an established religious tradition and be interested in the particular challenges of working in a secular academic institution. Candidates should have experience in pastoral counselling, be unusually effective in communication skills, and be practiced in encouraging a supportive and inclusive community.

While the teaching interests of the candidates are open, the successful candidate will need academic credentials to hold a lectureship at Bates.

The Office of the Chaplain is organizationally independent, but is significantly connected to the life and the campus community, and reports directly to the President. Salary and fringe benefits are competitive.

Candidates should be available to begin the position before January 1, 1997. For detailed announcement and description, please contact the Committee at the address below.

The Search Committee will begin reviewing credentials September 1. Interested persons should send a letter of application, professional résumé, and three letters of recommendation to:

Chaplain Search Committee
Bates College
2 Andrews Road, 204 Lane Hall
Lewiston, ME 04240

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