bread. One day the spiritual reading at table described a soldier who used to utter ejaculatory prayers while machine-gunning the enemy. Poor Smitty suddenly began to weep and cry in the most uncontrollable fashion. He rushed up to the Father Abbot and fell on his knees by him, weeping and sobbing and asking how the Mystical Body of Christ could thus rend itself. I have seen two mental hospitals where people rend themselves; it is a horrible sight. Our conscientious objectors worked in one, a place without hope where one man had to be permanently tied down to his bed because he tore at his own flesh. He had already put out his own eyes. The Mystical Body of Christ rending itself in this way. It seems to me that these are the kind of things we must meditate on.

It is not worthwhile writing or speaking unless you say what is in your heart and say it as you see things. This is the way. This is what converts expect when they come into the Church and they find it in the lives of the saints who accept the idea of death in whatever form it takes. We say all these things in our prayers and don't mean them. And God takes us at our word, fortunately, and so we are saved in spite of ourselves; we are just dragged in by the hair of the head. But this is the message that we try to give at the Catholic Worker. It is painful to speak of and that is one of the reasons we rejoice in tribulation, we rejoice in suffering and so we can speak in those terms.

We have been called necrophiliacs, we have been accused of taking a morbid delight in the gutter and worshipping ashcans. The fact of the matter is that God transforms it all, so that out of this junkheap comes beauty. We have poetry and painting and sculpture and music and all of these things for the delight of the senses that are given to us right in the midst of filth and degradation and mires so that I often feel we know whereof we speak. God certainly comes to the rescue over and over again and enables us to do what seems utterly impossible. Many a person comes into the Church under utterly impossible circumstances; it is as though they were taking their own life, as though they were dying, in order to do this. I have seen people unhinged by it. We have quite a few with us who are disturbed, who have suffered extremely, have cut themselves off from their families and backgrounds. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. It is not anything that we can take except with the utmost seriousness and yet it is of course the greatest joy in the world.

**books**


by Monika Hellwig

Good books are written not from other books but from life, and they are usually written with passion. Professor Eckardt's second attempt at a Christian theology of contemporary Judaism, like his first written some twenty years earlier, qualifies as a good book on both scores.

The present volume ought really to be read in succession to Eckardt's doctoral dissertation, *Christianity and the Children of Israel* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1948). The earlier book gives a rather painstaking historical argumentation in the perspective of Protestant Neo-Reformation theology but does not venture a personal solution to the problem posed. The later book takes this historical argumentation for granted, sets the problem within a much wider horizon of contemporary research in psychology and the social sciences, and proceeds to a bold and constructive personal solution.

The point of departure in both books is the phenomenon of Christian anti-semitism. The first two chapters of *Elder and Younger Brothers* isolate the Christian ideological factors in this phenomenon and present the paradox: Some of the claims that have been made by the Christian Church in its account of itself are identifiable as important contributory causes of anti-semitism, while Christian ethics has simultaneously and explicitly been opposing anti-semitism. Eckardt suggests that the problem inherent in this paradox can only be met "head-on" by asking without any evasion how the continuing historical reality of Israel is to be understood in the context of Christian theology, with the proviso that good theology cannot be rooted in bad history. He therefore devotes three chapters to an analysis of the concept People of God, as understood by contemporary Christian theologians. In the light of the earlier book these chapters, though rambling, are very much to the point. Without that histori-
cultural preparation the selection of authors would seem quite arbitrary.

Having shown the possibilities and the limitations of the question in Christian theology as it stands today, the author gives three final chapters to an elaboration and defense of his own solution — the Christian complement of Franz Rosenzweig's explanation of the relation between the two faith communities. In Eckardt's view, the irrevocable vocation of Israel is to remain the People of the Sinaiic Covenant pointing, by its very existence, beyond all particular gods and passionately concerned over the "unredeemedness" of human society. The vocation of the Church is seen as the opening of the covenant relationship to the nations, constantly trying to preserve the unity of the endeavor within the plurality of cultural initiatives. The Christian task is seen as contingent on Israel's fidelity to its own vocation.

Anyone who is trying to remain open to the truth reflected to us from the various cultural and religious traditions in the contemporary world, can only agree with Eckardt's conclusion. With his method of argumentation one may well disagree for one or more of these three reasons: that he does not explain and justify his methodology; that he responds to a problem posed in terms of the social sciences with a purely theological argument; and that he does not make it clear (as he had in his earlier book) in which Christian perspective and by what criteria of orthodoxy he is presenting his argument.

The appendix to the book, on the self-defense of the state of Israel, is disappointing. Brief and undocumented as it is, it serves little purpose. A carefully documented book-length presentation based on this outline would be most helpful.

One can but hope that this book will be very widely read and that no one will attempt a critique who has not also read the earlier volume.

current reading

Fifty Years of Soviet Foreign Policy
Herbert S. Dinerstein. Washington Center of Foreign Policy Research, Johns Hopkins. 73 pp. $1.95 (paper)

Dr. Dinerstein has chosen two themes to elaborate in his analysis of Soviet foreign policy—and particularly its relation to American political developments—since 1917: "first, the replacement of the belief in temporary coexistence by the belief in the possibility of extended coexistence; second, the existence of mutual misperception." The book is sixth in the "Studies in International Affairs" series published by the Center with which the author is associated as research associate and professor of Soviet studies.

From Sacred to Profane America: The Role of Religion in American History
William A. Clebsch. Harper & Row. 242 pp. $5.95

In the words of the author (professor of religion and humanities at Stanford), "This book contends that the chief features of the American dream were formed by people's religious concerns and that they came into realization outside the temple. In these senses the book finds aspirations of Americans sacred in origin and their achievement profane in fruition." He locates one such development in "God, War and Nationality."

The Concept of Ideology and Other Essays
George Lichtheim. Random House. 372 pp. $5.95/$1.95

These essays, written during the period 1962-66, offer an examination by a prominent student of the subject (Marxism and Modern France, The New Europe) of the nature and status of political ideology and the origins and development of the intellectual movements that have shaped the history of the present century. Rosa Luxemburg is here and so are Hegel, Marx, Trotsky, Rousseau and de Maistre, Pascal and Sartre, to mention just a few.

Thailand: Another Vietnam
Daniel Wit. Scribners. 205 pp. $4.95

The accent here is on Thailand's own ability to resist the challenge of revolutionary warfare—its prospects and problems in economic, political and social matters. And the prognosis? Professor Wit, who has served at the Institute of Public Administration in Bangkok, answers: "One can only hope that the Communist pressure is limited enough, the traditional Thai cultural resistances to revolution still strong enough, and the dedication of senior Thai elites to their country great enough to produce in time that society development (above and beyond limited economic growth) which alone can prevent" this occurrence.