

TRADITION OF FREEDOM. By Georges Bernanos. (Dobson; 8s. 6d.)

As in all his books, Bernanos writes here with intense feeling: deep love of France, concern for justice, love of the Church, but contempt for the mean, the treacherous, and above all for those who exploit the love and patriotism of others. He must write in his own way, and we can be grateful that he shows up so vividly the weaknesses of the time. If he is still somewhat preoccupied with Franco and Fascism, he has towards the end of the book some penetrating comments on the dangers of the present situation. The dehumanisation of man by our technical advances, the paradoxical situation of the horror of atomic warfare being accompanied by an increased respectability of the man who wages it, the unimportance of the distinction between Left and Right when all governments are dictatorships, the inevitable tendency to go from the abuse of democracy in a mass-civilisation to totalitarianism, these are all topics about which we have been warned before, but rarely so forcefully or with poignancy. It is to be hoped that the clergy will forgive his use of an epithet which most of them—for all their complacency—have not deserved, and take up his challenge to do something for modern man before his soul is finally crushed:

The soul. . . . One almost blushes nowadays as one writes the sacred word. The same swindling priests will say that no power on earth can get the better of the soul. I do not pretend that the brain-plugging machine can eviscerate the soul, or clean the soul out of a man as a cook 'draws' a rabbit. I merely say that men can have souls and not be aware of them, not be in the least affected by them. The fact is all too obvious. Man is in contact with his soul only when he lives the inner life, and the Machine Civilisation is, little by little, endowing the inner life with a new, abnormal character. For millions of fools it is merely the common title of the subconscious, and the subconscious must remain under the control of the psychiatrist.

EDWARD QUINN.

OF THE CHRISTIAN ALTAR AND THE BUILDINGS WHICH CONTAIN IT.  
By J. Ninian Comper. (S.P.C.K.; 5s.)

The author is a leading Anglican ecclesiastical architect, and this book contains musings and notes gathered from a long and wide experience. Canon Pilkington has offered his criticisms and suggestions, so that the Catholic liturgical point of view is accurately presented. But there are, of course, many sallies that appeal to Anglican controversy rather than to Catholic instruction. Yet the book will provide a great deal of challenging material to encourage meditation on the meaning of the structure of the altar and the church.

C.P.