

Editorial

THE CONSCIENCE OF THE SIXTIES. A series of lectures under this title is announced on another page, held in connection with the Dominican Reviews and the Newman Association. Their subject implies a challenge which it is well to reflect on. Though the problems take a form peculiar to our time, they are basically those of every age—war, poverty, oppression in all its aspects. What new contribution has this decade to make to their solution?

The notion of conscience is worth examining in this respect. It marks the meeting-point of belief and action, the practical determination that thought shall be effective, that what is done should first be planned. The two partners are often separated. As Christians perhaps we have tended to suppose that so long as our theology was all right, little needed to come from it, while others have concentrated on good works without reference to the power of grace in which alone they can be done. But now the vocabulary of 'we' and 'they', product of long periods of separation and bitterness, is beginning to get broken down; though our times are evil, at least they are compelling a more genuine sense of unity throughout the world. We cannot do with anything less than an outlook that is global, which for us means consciously looking to the time when Christ will be 'all, and in all'.

This surely is why the coming Council has caught the imagination of the age in a way few could have guessed: caught it in a manner that is sometimes embarrassing, since the reality can hardly not fall short of the kind of expectation it has aroused. It is important therefore to remember that whatever happens in the future great and permanent good has already come about. During the years of preparation, age-old defensive attitudes have everywhere given way to those that are open and forward-looking, hatred and suspicion have been replaced by friendly collaboration. A new spirit is abroad, a work begun which cannot now disappear. As a symbol the Council has already succeeded; it has helped to arouse the conscience of our age.