

## COMMENTARY

THE COST OF FREEDOM. It is not the least of the paradoxes of Christianity that its defence of human freedom is ultimately resolved in the chosen submission to God. At a time when the assaults on liberty grow ever graver, it is especially necessary that the Christian tradition of the dignity of conscience should be restated, and that not as an abstract conclusion of the moral theologians but as the immediately redemptive determinant of man's action is in the concrete situation where he is. This is a problem not merely for those who suffer under the spectacular tyrannies of totalitarianism: it affects all who live in a world increasingly at the command of the bureaucrats and the technicians. There is a sense in which the dilemma of the human person under a dictatorship, unimaginably grievous though it be, is simpler than that of the conforming citizen in a neutral state. The advancing tide of governmental power, unconsciously accepted as an inevitable part of the complexity of life in a modern society, can at last leave the individual stranded and alone. And too rarely is he equipped with the defences of a certain faith and an informed conscience to meet the unambiguous challenge when it comes.

'The Church and Liberty' was the subject of last year's *Semaine des Intellectuels Catholiques* in Paris. From the impressive testimony of theologians, philosophers, scientists and lawyers, a simple conclusion emerged: that liberty is not merely to be defended but exercised, not only to be believed in but to be lived. Here, perhaps, lies the hope of a world grown hopeless, and it places a heavy responsibility on those who believe that the service of God is perfect freedom. In this issue of *BLACKFRIARS* a theologian states the classic Christian teaching on conscience, and a lawyer discusses a particular application of it. In future number it is hoped to continue a debate which is perhaps a fundamental one for our time.

[*L'Eglise et la Liberté*, *Semaine des Intellectuels Catholiques*, 1952; Paris, Pierre Horay, 510 francs.]