

ENGLAND.

THE VOCATION OF ENGLAND. By Maurice B. Reckitt and J. V. Langmead Casserley. (Longmans; 5s.)

It is a heartening thing that there should be so widespread a realisation that the end of the war must be the beginning of a struggle for a new, a happier and juster social order. But it is one thing to hope vaguely that something may be done; it is quite another to know exactly what is to be done, and to set about doing it. We need knowledge; and we need energy and hope. We need knowledge: because it is not enough to be acquainted with the many superficial evils which make our social system hideous; we need to get below them, to the root disorder which produces them, and to remedy that—we need, in other words, not many partial reforms, but a radical revolution of our system. We need energy: because the evil is so deeply entrenched, and by now so much taken for granted as part of a normal way of life instead of a symptom of insanity, that only by the most dogged faith and tenacity can we hope to move it. And in the end knowledge and energy meet: for as we have exactly reversed the true order of things (religion, ethics, politics, industry, finance) and need a social revolution precisely because we need a turn right-about, so in restoring the true Godward purpose to life we find in the love of God the energy which alone is sufficient to move the mountains.

This book should help us considerably to see the issue clearly. It is uneven: the chapter on religion in England seems vague and weak, though it should be the centre of the whole book; and it is surely a great pity that the occasional remarks about the type of internationalism which denies nationality were not offset by an explicit statement of the principles and the necessary machinery of international order. Again, if education was to be mentioned, it is a pity that at least a summary statement could not be included of the ways in which the present educational system is fundamentally unsound. Finally, the book gives the impression of wandering over matter which, though far indeed from irrelevant, does not seem to be drawn into a clearly unified argument; and this detracts from the strength of the book as a whole. None the less, the main lines of the argument are clear in themselves and cogently expressed: a balanced rural-urban economy, concentrating immediately on the revival of rural life (a combination of large farms and small holdings, with joint ownership of the larger implements); a rational finance, state control of credit, with agriculture and industry freed from financial bondage; regional decentralisation and functional devolution; the revitalising of urban life by turning the vast amorphous agglomerations we call cities into a larger number of much smaller towns, and restoring to them their proper function as markets for the produce of the surrounding countryside; all these things in order that English traditions (and tradition means movement) may be victorious over the

economic institutions which have been killing them, and may survive and freely express themselves, and that England may be true to its geographically- and historically-determined vocation. Unless we are well prepared when the call to this new struggle comes, we shall fail: we have no time to lose.

GERALD VANN, O.P.

MALVERN, 1941: The Life of the Church and the Order of Society: Being the Proceedings of the Archbishop of York's Conference. (Longmans; 10s. 6d.)

The task of the Malvern Conference was to make a provisional synthesis from an Anglican point of view of the group of questions, theological, sociological, economic and political, which are raised among Christians by the breakdown of Western civilisation. The book which records its proceedings is a serious book. It avoids religious claptrap. Not once does it set down the facile and vague plea for a renewal of Christian spirit. For it is assumed that such renewal is the task and problem which the conference will try to understand.

Each contributor has a definite work to do in 'attempting to discover the essential nature of the problem' in his allotted sector of the vast field covered by the Conference. There are no ready-made answers, and anyone who is looking for a blue print of a Christian post-war England will find it difficult after reading the book to sustain so complacent a level of expectation.

The list of contributors is a brilliant one, including the present Archbishop of Canterbury, T. S. Eliot, Maurice B. Reckitt and Dorothy Sayers. There is what Eric Gill called 'a wealth of worldly and other-worldly wisdom' from W. G. Peck and V. A. Demant, but in the opinion of the present reviewer the two outstanding contributions are those of D. M. Mackinnon and J. Middleton Murry. It seems evident that D. M. Mackinnon, whose recent book, *God the Living and the True*, deserved all the attention it got, is one of the keenest theologians in this country, poised, and at present not very securely poised, between the highly developed Thomist synthesis of the Abbé Penido and the crisis theology of Kierkegaard and Barth. However, his desire to realise among Christians 'a spiritual tension that is well-nigh intolerable' seems to have less strictly theological import than the spiritual anxiety of the last few years may have led a sensitive mind to suppose.

Middleton Murry's short contribution—it is the straightest piece of speaking in the book—shows a quite staggering contrast with the last days of his editorship of the *Adelphi*. The centre of gravity is changed, the old crippling self-consciousness is gone, and the conviction that the present social order is quite radically anti-Christian comes forward in his writing with vastly increased force.

BERNARD KELLY.