

REVIEWS

the Revolution, and maintains that its disastrous collapse was due to the refusal of its leaders to face the fundamental issue and seize the means of production when again and again they had the chance. At heart they were capitalists who did not wish the system away and surrendered easily to its latest saviours. He sees a similar danger in England unless the Labour Party radically changes its policy and observes the beginnings of the new regime in the wage cuts, the Means Test, the Trades Disputes Act and the Trenchard scheme for a militarised police force officered by men of the governing class.

It is an interesting and forceful analysis of the present situation. We do not agree that Communism is the only alternative. But it is clear that Catholics will have to be very much alive if they wish to preserve those liberties which, as citizens of a democratic country and maintainers of Christian freedom they have hitherto assumed as inviolable.

A.M.

THE TRUTH AND ERROR OF COMMUNISM. By H. G. Wood.
(S.C.M. Press; 4/-.)

Fundamentally the preservation of our civilisation rests upon the Catholic Church. No other organisation in the world can stand up to the challenge of Communism with any hope of success. Naturally Mr. Wood, who is a Quaker, does not shout that truism from the housetops. Quite possibly he would indignantly deny it, but it is implicit in his book; for he is never tired of stressing that Communism is a religion at issue with 'Christian opinion,' demonstrably false in that two of its main premises, Historical Materialism and Marx's application of the Hegelian Dialectic to World History neither correspond with the historical evidence at our disposal nor provide a key for our present problems.

Moreover, being an intelligent man, he realises that you can only fight a false Religion with True Religion: but as he appears to regard all the various Christian sects as equally possessed of the Truth, the task of mobilising this varied array is likely to be difficult.

A cursory glance at Capitalism convinces him that it is merely a rusty and useless weapon: certainly the idea of a big business man dying to save the Stock Exchange seems a major improbability; and the Capitalist System as an end in itself, as Mr. Wood would agree, is hardly worthy of unswerving devotion. But this book offers no solution; its last chapter, called *Towards a Christian Social Policy*, is a plea for 'Christian British Labour': all parties, according to this new policy, must sink their differences and lend each other 'fraternal' aid: 'the op-

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position is not to oppose' (its precise function is not expressly designated): little bits of Capitalism and Communism will be patchworked together into an ideal Commonwealth, pervaded by a faint odour of piety, and presided over by 'Christian British Labour,' which, a few paragraphs before, has avowed its dislike of controlling anything. This kind of muddled Utopia will satisfy no one. As an ideal it is watery, as a policy it is unworkable.

Finally the main point of impact between Communism and Europe escapes Mr. Wood's notice: that point of impact is the family, already weakened in our Capitalist society by the State's disregard of the indissolubility of marriage; in this matter many forces are allied with Communism, which would indignantly repudiate any suggestion that they were furthering the Communist triumph. On this point the Church is fighting single-handed, but if the battle is lost here, it will be lost all along the line.

So far only the omissions from this book have been mentioned; nothing has been said of its merits. This book is an admirable analysis of the intellectual basis of Communism: the chapter on the *Importance of Tools*, with its reiterated refrain that 'every tool ever invented is a triumph of mind over matter,' and the consequent assertion that the history of tools refutes rather than confirms Historical Materialism, should be re-read time and again by all those 'Economic' Historians who wish to constrain History within the narrow frame of their 'Economic' minds. There is indeed enough of Catholicism in this book to make it the duty of every Catholic to read it.

D.T.H.K.B.

NAZARETH OR SOCIAL CHAOS. By Vincent McNabb, O.P.
(Burns, Oates & Washbourne; 1/6.)

Father McNabb inveighs against absenteeism in all forms—the remoteness of modern man from all the foundations of life. He calls for a return to Nazareth—the small city-unit, based on agriculture, of human society, where the majority of the population live directly from the soil. Only by so living, he says, can men return to first principles and recognize the true end and therefore the true value, of things. We have become caught up in a complex of substitutes—token finance, canned food, mechanized music, everything at second-hand. Father McNabb is not always strictly logical—for instance, he deplores the destruction of forests for newspaper pulp and yet advocates wholesale adoption of wood fires (first-hand fuel) and wooden houses (first-hand material), which would enormously hasten the destruction he deplores. Clearly, a great migration to the soil of