

civilization as distinct from its ability to meet the problem of the individual who searches for a reply to the issue of pain and evil,' he gives the impression of time on his hands, to say the least of it.

We are informed that it is not difficult to believe that States like Poland, and institutions like the Catholic Church, will only adjust themselves with painful slowness to the thesis of the Russian Revolution. This statement would seem to imply a voluntary adjustment by the parties concerned, which, in face of present events, is palpably absurd. Poland's adjustment shows every indication of being fast and forceful, and the likelihood of a Commissar for Religious Affairs at the Vatican seems an extremely remote possibility.

Like so many of his party, Prof. Laski is convinced that everyone who is not an extreme socialist must have fascist tendencies. Accordingly, he castigates the Vatican for having allied itself to Mussolini, and its vagueness in criticising Germany. The Papacy, he insists, has been at all times backward in its support of the masses against their masters. Why does the Professor delude himself in these matters? The statements he makes are untrue, for there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary. He would be well advised to use a little of his precious time scrutinising it.

English foreign policy also receives critical attention. Truly, it is not above criticism but against the acrobatics of Soviet foreign policy our own seems almost childishly straightforward. One almost feels sorrowful when pondering on the probable reactions of left wing intellectuals to the news of the Kremlin's recognition of the 'reactionary, semi-fascist Badoglio-Victor Emanuel Government' in Italy.

MAURICE McLOUGHLIN.

THREE RUSSIAN PROPHETS. By Nicolas Zernov. (S.C.M. Press; 8s. 6d.)

The three prophets are A. S. Khomiakov, F. M. Dostoevsky and V. S. Soloviev, who between them cover a century of Russian religious thought, the first being born in 1804, the last dying in 1900. Practically everything Dostoevsky wrote is available in English, and there has been no lack of writing about him in our tongue. Soloviev is still far too little known and only a few of his books are translated, though most of them are to be had in French. Of Khomiakov, very little indeed can be read in English; but his work on the Roman Catholic Church and Protestantism is in French, as is what Dr. Zernov calls the best study of his life and thought, Gratieux's two volumes published in Paris in 1939.

Accordingly Dr. Zernov's account of Khomiakov is particularly welcome: the man who was poet, philologist, historian, journalist, politician, physician, engineer, sportsman and country gentleman, but above all philosopher and theologian—the 'father' of Dostoevsky, as Dostoevsky was of Soloviev, making the three-fold influence that was formative of that Russian religious thought that is

so important for our time. The essay on Soloviev gives a clear and useful account of his ideas—the best of its kind the present reviewer knows. Dr. Zernov's treatment of Soloviev's reconciliation with the Holy See is not altogether satisfactory, but it would not be fair to blame him for this: so long as Catholics talk of Soloviev's (and others') 'conversion,' as if he had previously been an unbeliever or a heathen, there is bound to be misunderstanding.

An outstanding idea common to these prophets is the paralysing tragedy of Christian disunity. Christians cannot 'approach the task of transfiguring mankind and the rest of Nature in their present state of divisions, for only the reintegrated Church can be used by the Holy Spirit as a proper instrument for this purpose. . . . They believed that inasmuch as the confusion as to the Church's true mission facilitated the growth of divisions among Christians, so the recovery of its right understanding will bring about the restoration of visible unity among them. . . . The oecumenical fellowship among Christians could never be based on any man-made pattern. It could only be inspired by the new life given to them through the Holy Eucharist.'

The Student Christian Movement Press has given us a number of excellent books, and this is one of the best of them. Dr. Zernov writes with a lucidity and plainness that is uncommon among Russians: the English reader does not get the impression that he is reading as it were a foreign language, nor the Catholic that he is looking at minds whose processes are unintelligibly different from his own.

DONALD ATTWATER.

THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS. By Alfred Noyes. (John Murray; 5s.)

The book is advertised as a controversial, stimulating book and a damning indictment of modern pseudo-intellectualism. We agree, and we agree with the reader who writes to Mr. Noyes 'You have put into words the thoughts which have been haunting us for months.' It is pleasant to read the author's remark 'All too often the reader lacks the intellectual background which would enable him to estimate the value of the fragment in the light of what had already been thought out by uncounted generations before him. An amusing instance occurs in Mr. H. G. Wells's book, *The Fate of Homo Sapiens* (and it is only one of a thousand in that author's works). He quotes a nursery hymn which he heard in his childhood:

There's a friend for little children  
Above the bright blue sky,

and remarks with a naive contempt that modern astronomy has made that point of view impossible.

Mr. Wells, of course, was presumably unaware of what Origen had to say about such things nearly two thousand years ago, when that early Father ridiculed the heretic Celsus for supposing that