

issue, is discussed succinctly as 'the rational proof of what he already accepted by faith' (p 100), Platonic assumptions being neither analysed nor vindicated by Anselm. A final section here sketches the often neglected philosophical developments prompted by Priscian's grammar, and the linguistic preoccupations of the turn of the eleventh century set the scene for Roscelin's nominalism.

The third part of the history, which is devoted to the first half of the twelfth century, traces the currents of thought in northern France. The principal names are those of William of Conches, Bernard Silvestris, William of Champeaux, Peter Helias, Abelard and Gilbert of Poitiers. The principal developments are the elaboration of a rudimentary physics and cosmology from Platonist sources, while grammar and logic attain greater refinement in the de-

bate on universals and Abelard's dialectical synthesis of the older logical material. Of the dialectical theologians, it is the much misunderstood Gilbert whose expositions of Boethius are praised for their philosophical profundity. A final chapter on 'Abelard and the beginnings of medieval ethics' gives credit to the originality of the *Collationes* and *Scito teipsum*, while drawing attention to parallels for the doctrine of intention in the thought of Anselm of Laon and William of Champeaux.

Readers of *New Blackfriars* may find it salutary to learn that medieval philosophy did not begin in the thirteenth century and that Irish thought had its high-point in the ninth. This well-written account of philosophy before Thomas, and even before Dominic, has much to commend it.

OSMUND LEWRY O P

LOGIC AND THE NATURE OF GOD by Stephen T. Davis, *Macmillan Press Ltd* 1983, London and Basingstoke. pp 171. £20.00

Stephen Davis' latest book is a serious, closely argued contribution to philosophical theology from a conservative point of view. Davis attempts to argue for the coherence of a concept of God consistent with the Bible and, as far as possible, with Christian tradition: the God of his presentation is of infinite duration rather than timeless; contingently rather than necessarily omniscient, omnipotent and independent; foreknows the future free actions of his creatures; is good but able to do evil; can temporarily become non-omniscient; and is rationally believed to be triune, despite the apparent contradiction involved.

Davis rejects God's timeless eternity in favour of temporal eternity. We are held to lack any concept of atemporal causation, or of how a timeless God can react as the Bible depicts Yahweh reacting; and advocates of timelessness are accused of making all times simultaneous with each other. But the latter charge unfairly represents proponents of timelessness as defining it in terms of simultaneity; the Biblical predicates can mostly be translated

into the language of timelessness; and the case of God allows (and perhaps requires) us to modify the notion of causation accordingly. In these matters more regard might have been paid to Brian Davies' paper 'Kenny on God' (*Philosophy*, 1982), referred to on p 32 (a paper now supplemented in the May, 1983 number of this journal). There is, however, a sensible response to an abstruse defence of timelessness on the parts of Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (*Journal of Philosophy*, 1981).

Most of the chapter on omniscience concerns the coherence of timeless omniscience, which Davis disputes. Davis persuades me that a timeless God cannot know precisely the same proposition as is stated by "Ronald Reagan is President now" on 16 June 1982. But he could know that in our world Ronald Reagan is President at the time that any utterer of that statement on June 1982 correctly understands as "now"; and knowledge of this and related kinds is all that is needed for him to decide which world to create and to respond to the actions of his crea-

tures. Granted that a timeless God necessarily does not know anything *now*, he can still be omniscient in a manner compatible with timelessness; and must surely be essentially omniscient if creation is to be possible, Davis notwithstanding to the contrary (39f, 125f).

With Davis, God's immutability amounts to his benevolent nature remaining steadfast, and is compatible with his being angry with a person at one moment and forgiving them the next, as at 2 Chronicles 32: 24-26. To Geach's view that all changeable things are caused, Davis replies that the existence of a mutable being might be uncaused. But its mutability would still need explanation as much as that of dependent beings; indeed it could not itself be the creator. Better, then, to accept God's essential immutability *ab extra* and, if necessary, jettison the 2 Chronicles passage.

Davis next attempts to reconcile divine foreknowledge and human freedom, but fails to pay due regard to Anthony Kenny's observation in *The God of the Philosophers* that God's knowledge of future episodes would be grounded in his own intentions and decisions, and that God would thus be responsible for them, even ones involving "free" actions. Davis' later claim that the basis of God's foreknowledge of future free actions is mysterious hardly helps. The difficulty about foreknowledge and the freedom of its objects thus remains a reason for preferring the timelessness account of God's knowledge. This daunting chapter is also vitiated by an error in the symbolism of n. 3. p 157, and, more importantly, by the claim on p 55 that an argument is invalid which is based on a translation into symbols (n. 2, p 157) which is later rejected (p 59). Space prevents an adequate reply here to Davis' criticism of Nelson Pike's cogent view that an agent whose actions are foreseen by a necessarily omniscient being is unfree.

On omnipotence, Davis adopts Richard Swinburne's solution to the stone paradox, but can only do so because of his rejection of God's timelessness. Davis proceeds to define the omnipotence of an agent in terms of states which it is possible for the agent to bring about; but part of the point of seeking a definition is surely to discover

which these latter states are. Here Davis seems too close to Kenny.

By contrast Davis is importantly right to claim in chapter 6 that God is able to do evil, and is praised for his goodness against this background. He is also surely justified in rejecting Swinburne's argument from God's freedom to his inability to do wrong, though not, perhaps, for quite the reasons given.

I have elsewhere (in *Insight*, 1982) reviewed Davis' views on the problem of evil as expounded in his collection *Encountering Evil*. Here, as in that volume, Davis persuasively upholds the Free Will Defence over the consistency problem (which he calls the 'Logical Problem of Evil'), but does not begin to persuade over the issue of whether, in view of the amount of evil in the world, God's goodness is probable, an epistemological problem which he unfairly designates the 'Emotive Problem of Evil'. Davis' solution, namely that natural evil is caused by Satan, does not even satisfy himself, insofar as he holds that Satan may be slightly confused about how to accomplish his aims (p 113); indeed he defends it only by an appeal to revelation (*ibid.*), and by suggesting that there is no contrary evidence (p 112). It would, however, if true, account for some of the textual errors which crop up hereabouts.

In his chapter on the Incarnation, Davis well clarifies what is at stake (pp 123, 129). But his claim that the doctrine (in kenotic form) is coherent is based on God's omniscience, omnipotence and non-dependence being inessential to him, unless essential omniscience is compatible with temporary non-omniscience (p 125), – as surely it is not. This defence of the possibility of incarnation only serves to make creation by the same God impossible. Yet there can only be one God.

The chapter on the Trinity has the merit of criticising some recent defence of that doctrine, and particularly Rahner's relational one. As Davis avers, "Surely there can exist a relation only if there are two items to be related" (p 139). But is there not some mistake in the symbolism borrowed from Martinich at p 138, line 10? Davis proceeds to argue that the doctrine is a mystery in the sense of an appar-

ent contradiction which there is reason to believe, and that there is good reason to believe a mystery if and only if firstly there is reason to believe that its contradictory appearance is apparent only, and secondly there are strong reasons to believe it. But if all three persons of the Trinity are omnipotent beings, as a passage on p 16 suggests, then the first condition is unsatisfied, and if so, there is no coherent 'it' for the second condition to apply to.

Davis' Conclusion distinguishes the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob from the God of philosophy, but, unlike my paper on the same distinction (*Religious Studies*, 1973) has no brief for the latter concept except where it coincides with a

third, the God of Christian philosophers, who explicate the presuppositions of the Bible. If, however, these presuppositions are contradictory, and if (as I argue in *God and The Secular*) the only good arguments for belief in God relate to a God who is essentially omnipotent, omniscient, non-dependent and immutable *ab extra*, then there is a clear choice between (otherwise unsupported) belief in the God of (parts of) the Biblical "revelation" and a well-grounded belief in a God with the ability to create. Perhaps this latter concept of God is as similar to that of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as Christian and other philosophers can rationally maintain.

ROBIN ATTFIELD

MENAHM NAHUM OF CHERNOBYL (Classics of Western Spirituality)

edited and translated by Arthur Green. *SPCK*, 1982. pp xiii + 290. £9.50.

Eastern European Hasidism was a revivalist movement founded in Poland by Rabbi Israel, the "Baal Shem Tov" (c. 1698 - 1760), a wonder-worker who taught a Judaism of joy and love rather than exclusive study. His teaching accorded as high a standing to the piety of the unlearned as it did to that of scholars. It taught all to "worship God with joy". Heavily mystical in orientation, it drew upon Kabbalistic symbols and concepts. Its charismatic character was expressed in the doctrine of the *zaddiqim*, "the saints", living bridges between Godliness and humanity by precept and example, of which the Baal Shem Tov was the prototype. Several of the Baal Shem Tov's spiritual descendants were accorded the role of *zaddiqim*, and became the founders of several extant Hasidic lineages.

It is widely believed that Hasidism has an aversion to Jewish scholasticism, and that its early masters were invariably iconoclastic and anti-intellectual generators of Zen-koan-like stories. This belief is not contradicted by Martin Buber's popular two-volume collection of Hasidic stories, *Tales of the Hasidim* (N Y: Schocken, 1947-48), which are seldom read in conjunction with his more academic writings

on Hasidism. An acquaintance with several important early Hasidic works, such as the *Tanya* and *Shulhan Arukh* of Rabbi Shneur Zalman (1747 - 1813), shows this to be a misconception. Both of these works - and they are representative - are considerable works of Rabbinic scholarship. They demonstrate that while Hasidism did not look down upon those without a capacity for learning, it encouraged learning in those capable of it.

Rabbi Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl (1730 - 1797) was, like Shneur Zalman, a disciple of Rabbi Dov Baer, the Maggid ("preacher") of Mezirichi (1710 - 1773), the Baal Shem Tov's successor. Dov Baer was a man of great learning, and his academy attracted and produced students of notable erudition. Menahem Nahum was no exception to this rule. Prior to his avowal of Hasidism, he obtained a thorough Rabbinical education, which culminated in study at one of the Rabbinical academies of Lithuania, the "Oxbridge" of Eastern European scholars. Several Hasidic lineages trace their ancestry back through him.

Two texts are translated in this volume. *Upright Practices* is a short tract on pious practices in everyday life. *The Light of*