

[1962. Review of *Divine Perfection: Possible Ideas of God*, by Frederick Sontag. *Christianity Today* 13 Apr.]

FROM PLATO TO HEGEL

Divine Perfection: Possible Ideas of God, by Frederick Sontag (Harper, 1962, 158 pp., \$3.75), is reviewed by Gordon H. Clark, Professor of Philosophy, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Part I is a well-written history of some major ideas on divine perfection entertained by the great philosophers from Plato to Hegel. Part II is a cross classification of these ideas with the aim of seeing how each affects the others. Some of these chapters seems to add very little to what was said in Part I.

The entire discussion presupposes the possibility of natural theology, and no account is given of those who deny this possibility. In fact, revealed theology is apparently regarded as impossible: "Since God has no lips, he cannot speak ... This means that we have much indirect but no direct word about God and by God. Were it otherwise, we would have but one religion and one doctrine of the nature of God." Both inferences are logically invalid, are they not? The author also rules out verbal revelation by asserting "the natural incommensurability between our language and such a Being."

Although the author wishes to avoid endorsing any one theory of the nature of God, he does not succeed in refraining from unsupported assertions. "Metaphysic is never born in Ethics"—Nietzsche said it always is—and "Being good himself, God was bound to recognize some but not all value standards in creation," are two that are stated oracularly.

The main conclusion, however, is well supported, viz. that twelve concepts, infinity and unity, form and transcendence, actuality and self-sufficiency, power and motion, simplicity and division, freedom and volition, are not all consistent when defined in certain ways, but may, most of them at any rate, be made consistent by changing their meanings.

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