

**INDICATIVE OF GRACE -
IMPERATIVE OF FREEDOM**

**Essays in Honour of Eberhard Jünger
in his 80th Year**

Edited by

R. David Nelson



Caption: This image of Eberhard Jünger was taken in the garden of the Evangelisches Stift Tübingen, where he was Ephorus from 1987 to the beginning of 2005. Used with permission from Eberhard Jünger.

B L O O M S B U R Y
LONDON • NEW DELHI • NEW YORK • SYDNEY

Chapter 6

METAPHORICAL TRUTH AND THE LANGUAGE OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

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1

‘With what can we compare the rise of metaphor in recent theology, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like the kudzu plant, which begins as one sprout among many, but ends up hiding everything under its smothering embrace.’¹ So R. Kendall Soulen, with the help of Mark 4: 30–2, parodies contemporary flights of theological fancy stemming from what was once a genuine insight into the language of the New Testament. According to Soulen’s critique, there are several elements involved in this unhappy mimicry of the New Testament’s way of ‘bringing God to language’. First, there is the basic decision to interpret metaphor as *simile*, indeed, all the more emphatically for lacking the comparative particles ‘like’ or ‘as’. Metaphor is taken as strong simile. Second, strong simile is said to speak the unfamiliar God in terms of the familiar Jesus; hence we may classify the evangelical narrative on the whole as an extended similitude: Jesus shows us what God is like. Third, this supposed Biblical precedent authorizes ‘revisionist’ theologians today ‘to devise new metaphors for God in keeping with contemporary insight and experience . . . [replacing] worn-out metaphor that has been killed by over-use.’² Imitating the putative *pattern* of New Testament talk about God by way of a human similitude, Jesus, not presenting the *person*, Jesus Christ, as the Father’s Son given for us, is the Biblical basis for much that goes by the name today of ‘metaphorical theology’.

For Soulen, the problem with such ‘progressive claims on behalf of metaphor’ is that they drastically over-reach in supposing that the theory of metaphor as strong simile ‘says *everything* that is important and true’ about bringing the Biblical God to contemporary voice. In fact, he argues, it does not. As Thomas Aquinas recognized, the Tetragrammaton does not name God “from below”, as metaphors [taken as

1. R. Kendall Soulen, *The Divine Name(s) and the Holy Trinity: Distinguishing the Voices*, vol. 1 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011), p. 238.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

similes] do, but rather serves to fix the ultimate referent of biblical discourse, while leaving other forms of speech (metaphors, narratives, analogical discourse, etc.) free to speak about that referent in the terms most appropriate to them.³ Thus, according to Soulen, the referential function of the holy, and so incomparable, Tetragrammaton, qualifies the plentitude of metaphors as articulation of a divine reality that is not reducible to its relations to creatures. This crucial affirmation of the substantiality of God in relation to creatures can be obscured, however, when we take metaphor (understood as strong simile) categorically as *the* Biblical way of speaking about God: in fact, the kaleidoscope of inventiveness displayed by today's metaphorical theologians actually comes to supplant the facet of Biblical discourse affirming the *named* God as holy and *thus* the incomparable referent to which all similitudes apply and by which, presumably, they might be governed.

In his programmatic 1974 essay, 'Metaphorical Truth', however, Eberhard Jüngel marshalled an impressive case for the thesis that 'the language of faith is metaphorical through and through' because, over and above the tautological and non-metaphorical statement, 'God is God', Biblical metaphor specifies 'in *what way* God is ...' God, apart from which there is 'no proper talk of God'.⁴ That is to say, Jüngel did not quite agree with Soulen's Aquinas (let alone with today's 'metaphorical theologians'). The way in which God concretely exists for us is as the Father speaking the Son in the Holy Spirit to us; God is specifically for us, then, not as irreducible divine substance but in addressing us as such in the event of Jesus Christ the Son of God. In specifying by the metaphor, 'Jesus who was crucified is the Christ, the Son of God', Jüngel claims, the way is given in which the tautology, God is God, 'properly' holds in relation to creatures, namely, as the Father addressing through the Son in the Spirit. Moreover, to make this claim, Jüngel did not and could not take the metaphor in question, without further ado, as simile. If the term, metaphor, denotes a *translatio*, a transference or an exchange, of meaning in language, it can only be understood as making a 'discovery' of something in the world, that is, as making a *referrence* that is its *meaning*.⁵ 'Metaphorical language is neither non-literal nor equivocal language, but a peculiar mode of literal

3. *Ibid.*, p. 240.

4. Eberhard Jüngel, 'Metaphorical Truth: Reflections on the Theological Relevance of Metaphor as a Contribution to the Hermeneutics of Narrative Theology', in *Theological Essays I*, ed. John B. Webster (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), p. 58.

5. 'This story of salvation is gathered in kerygmatic and homological metaphors (as clusters of time and eternity) whose root metaphor is the identification of the *risen one* with the crucified man Jesus,' Jüngel, 'Metaphorical Truth', p. 67.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 45–6. Cf. Janet Soskice's splendid illustration to that effect that if you disregard the warning not to touch the 'five wire' because it is not literally alive but only metaphorically alive, you will not be metaphorically but literally electrocuted. The metaphor, alive, has reference to the wire through which deadly voltage runs and this is literally referenced by means of the metaphor, 'five wire', Janet Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1987), p. 70.

speech and in a particular way language which specifies.⁷ Furthermore, alongside the understanding of metaphor as simile there is an important, additional and distinct sense of metaphorical transference or exchange apropos a 'hermeneutical emergency: in a situation in which normal language does not represent a particular state of affairs by a *verbum proprium*'.⁸ Just here, metaphor appears as theologically indispensable.

Jüngel, in accord with other theorists like Janet Soskice, identified the invention here of a new word by metaphor to fill an emergency void in the lexicon by exchange or transference of the meanings of familiar words as *cataphresis*. 'The strong metaphor [= cataphresis] does not prompt the routine renaming of aspects otherwise identifiable [as in simile], but suggests new categories of interpretation and hypothesizes new entities, states of affairs, and causal relations'.⁹ Indeed, Jüngel claimed that such 'metaphorical cataphresis is enough to call into question the entire traditional theory of metaphor' as ornamental or inspirational decoration added to literal, that is, non-metaphorical speech – the notion on which today's 'metaphorical theologians' depend in thinking to ascend by fresh images towards the literally true, but empty and unknowable tautology, 'God is God'.¹⁰

Decisively and affirmatively for contemporary metaphorical theologians, then, all similitudes are equally true and equally false. There is and can be no literal speech of God that can tell us anything specific about the way God is in the world and as such serve to govern 'responsible speech' about God. Thus Jüngel's oft-repeated mandate for theological science as 'responsible speech about God' is evacuated: what we have is the free play of self-expressive imaginations of the divine, checking and balancing one another to keep the peace and maintain the equilibrium of our liberal order. Quite in contrast, theological metaphors for Jüngel refer to God as something specific in the world and in referring they sometimes create new words for new realities of God that come about by the way of God in the world.

If, then, his analysis of metaphor as having reference applies to speech about God, and if a distinction between metaphor as simile and metaphor as cataphresis holds up, the problem of theological language will not be only or chiefly, as Soulen thinks with St. Thomas, to avoid the reduction of God to His relations with creatures, as seems to happen in the free play of imagination of today's metaphorical theology. To be sure, to this extent Jüngel is with Soulen and Thomas and was already in 1974 expressly opposing the 'dreadful nonsense' of 'some of the recent theological literature' in its 'boundless lack of taste'.¹¹ Nevertheless, by Jüngel's lights the problem of theological language is to articulate the coming of

7. Jüngel, 'Metaphorical Truth', p. 67.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

9. Soskice, p. 62.

10. Jüngel, 'Metaphorical Truth', p. 47.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

God to creatures: in the creation of a world other than God, in the Incarnation and in the final ecstasy of the Beloved Community. To express this coming of God to creatures, metaphor in the disruptive sense of catachresis is needed, for there is no existing *verbum proprium* to tell of it. 'Thus God's difference from the world is not merely to be negatively declared and defined [as supposed by today's metaphorical theologians], but rather trusted in as a positive state of affairs; and this can only happen if God is the one who comes to speech [Luther: *metaphora/translatio verborum*] in the same way that he is the one who comes to the world [Luther: *metaphora/translatio rerum*]. This coming to speech is then narrated in language, a language which would be, as it were, a priori metaphorical language. In such language God allows himself to be discovered as the one who comes:¹² To articulate the coming of God is the fundamental burden of an evangelical theory of theological language.

It is as the *One* who comes and must thus be 'discovered' that God is not reducible to His relations with creatures; yet as the *One who comes*, God is known, not only or chiefly as the Irreducible, but also as the *One* who as such chooses to dwell with creatures, full of grace and truth (John 1: 14) and indeed, according to Jüngel, *has done so*.¹³ It is not then the case in the New Testament that the familiar Jesus tells us what the unfamiliar God is like (or rather, provides us a precedent and pattern by which to familiarize God); rather, in narrating Jesus on the way to the cross as the 'Son of God's coming into the far country' (Barth), Jesus comes now to 'break into the strong man's house and bind him up in order to plunder his goods' (Mark 3: 27). In this specific way, the Father speaks His Son in the Spirit also to us today.

II

Without doubt, the discovery of catachresis with the luminosity it offers for understanding the coming of God as language in the New Testament marks the great insight and advance of Jüngel's 1974 essay. Yet in this essay, Jüngel at times seems to hover between a view of catachrestic metaphor as *similitude* and a view of it as *paradox* (my terms, shortly to be explained) that begs for clarification and amplification. He argued at one point, for instance, that 'unlike God, all states of affairs named by metaphorical catachresis belong to the world and as such are more or less known to the one who wishes to name them. Indeed, it is only on

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 62–3. The insertion of the Luther references is my own.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 67. The gospel 'tells of the possibility of non-being not simply as that which can only be overcome by God but as that which has been overcome by God; I have reservations about this too realized eschatology in which Jüngel shows himself to be too dependent on a certain line of thought in Barth's theology. But this does not undermine the point being made, that God is to be known as *irreducibly* God precisely in His *free* coming to bless and embrace the creature. As Jüngel often puts it, 'God comes from God.'

this basis that we can name them by comparison. God, however, is to be named in his difference from the world, as the one who is absolutely unknown on a worldly basis'. This formulation seems confused, even though Jüngel went on brilliantly to develop the catachrestical metaphor, not as an isolated word or term, but as shorthand of the fulsome statement of a narration, 'in which the meaning of the grammatical subject and of the metaphorical predicate collide, forcing one of two words to change in meaning'.¹⁴ Consequently, as the narration unfolds that is required to identify the grammatical subject – Jesus who was crucified, it collides with the predication – the Christ of God – in the statement, 'Crucified Jesus is the Messiah'. This collision of a plain-sense contradiction in terms either collapses into nonsense or somehow produces a new meaning in the world concerning a new reality that has come about, telling *in what way* Jesus is the Son of God, namely, in His Gethsemane obedience to His Father's uncanny will, Jüngel rightly, then, infers from such a theological resolution of the apparent catachrestical contradiction that, 'as metaphor clarifies the way in which being is, it indicates that being is historical'.¹⁵ Surely that is right. God is the *One who comes*, according to the gospel, in the person of His obedient Son on His way to death, even death on a cross' (Philippians 2: 8). But this much does not yet tell us how this theological resolution, as opposed to the 'natural man's' (1 Corinthians 2: 14) reception of the word of Messiah's cross as *folly*, comes about, equally historically. More on the question of the theological subject will follow shortly.

For the present, if this insight from the application of catachrestical metaphor into the historicity of God who comes is so, indeed if just this telling of God's coming is what the theory of catachrestic metaphor makes lucid, how was it apt in the earlier formulation cited earlier to characterize the catachrestical 'collision' as but a 'comparison' immanent to the system of beings organized as a cosmos, as mere similitude based on what a worldling already knows in reasoning from the better known to the lesser known? Must not the worldling conclude by this light of nature that speech of a 'Christ crucified' is nonsense, 'folly' (1 Corinthians 1: 18), nothing but a contradiction in terms? If nonsense in not intended here, have we not to do precisely with something that is *not* already 'more or less known' to its auditor? Furthermore, if it is so that God is the *One* who comes according to the gospel of the Christ crucified, why should it be thought necessary in advance to name God 'as the one who is absolutely unknown on a worldly basis'? It is as if a *strange* similarity (namely, that God is *like* an unknown something in the world) yields by means of extended simile to an all-the-greater *dissimilarity* (God is an 'absolute' unknown in the world).

Because of such aporia, I reckon the unfortunate phrasing in cited passage, and the untoward implications it bears, as but a dying ember fallen out from the traditional Western doctrine of the analogy of being; it ill suits the overall argument that Jüngel is making though it does serve to illustrate the sympathy,

14. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

though not full agreement, with Soulen and St. Thomas noted earlier. A few pages later, Jungel articulates his actual point with the affirmation that familiarity with God has first to be established¹⁷ by God before the true difference between God and the world can be rightly known, even though as a result we ‘find ourselves in a circle:’ ‘a making known of God, which must in addition always state the difference between God and the world, can only take place in metaphorical speech.’¹⁶ True enough.

III

I propose now to try to straighten this circle by sorting out the understandings of metaphorical transfer, both in words *and in things*, as similitude on the one hand and as paradox on the other.¹⁷ By ‘simile’ or ‘similitude,’ I mean the comparison of a lesser known with a greater known that illuminates the lesser known by displaying analogical relationships within the system of beings ordered as a cosmos. This happens by way of the extended simile of analogical comparison: as ‘A is to B, so C is to D.’ For theological example, as a son is to a father so Jesus is to God. By ‘paradox’ I mean the assertion of an apparent contradiction that reduces to nonsense if it does not become lucid as *catechesis*, that is, as the creation of a new word referencing a new reality emerging from or coming upon the system of beings ordered as a cosmos. This happens by way of literal contradiction: as ‘A is not-A,’ for theological example, as used already and to which we will again recur: ‘Christ crucified!’ This iteration must be nonsense if not somehow expressing a new and unanticipated sense of A. But this too may be taken in several ways, namely, that somehow *either* A includes not-A *or* A acquires not-A. If we take the catechetical metaphor as disclosing somehow that A antecedently includes not-A in its own ‘natural’ state, we convert the catachresis back to simile. If we take the catechetical metaphor, however, as indicating the acquisition and appropriation of not-A by A, we take it as reflecting and reiterating an *event* in A’s *history* resulting in a *Novum*.

In the latter case, the new perspective itself – of one who understands the catachrestic metaphor as reiterating the acquisition by A of not-A – derives from the coming about, not only of A’s new reality by acquisition of not-A, but also with it and through it of a corresponding new subjectivity of the one who also historically comes to understand this event *pro me*.¹⁸ For theological example, this occurs when Christ crucified is heard to promise, ‘I am yours and you are mine’ (Luke 23: 43). Christ acquires the sinner by His cross and the sinner acquires Christ by virtue of Christ’s resurrection and contemporaneous promissory address

16. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

17. I have attended to this distinction at some length in Brent Adkins and Paul R. Hinlicky, *Rethinking Philosophy and Theology with DeLuzze: A New Cartography* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), pp. 143–59.

precisely as the One who has acquired him. Together, these correlative events alter the system of beings ordered as a cosmos. This alteration occurs in a disruptive but ultimately salutary fashion. In the former case of simile, or the extended simile of analogy, by contrast, the new insight of one who understands a comparison penetrates our existing reality more deeply by discovering hitherto obscured relations or connections in the cosmic order and with the understanding subject. Nothing changes but that which now becomes better understood.

Obviously, the choices here make a great difference for the fundamental doctrine of theological language at which Jungel aimed in his great essay. The choice for metaphor as a disclosure event within understanding, revealing Being as beings would be a choice for philosophy. The choice for metaphor as causal initiative in the world for understanding beings as claimed and redeemed by the coming reign of the God of Israel would be theology. The choice here between disclosure and causation is a choice between revelation as immanent to the system of being (as Heidegger understood truth, *aletheia*, as the unveiling of beings in the world) on the one side, and as the advent of something ‘more than necessary,’¹⁸ that is, the advent of a new ordering of reality, as the sense of the theological word, God, on the other. Taking into consideration Jungel’s theological legacy as a whole, there can be little doubt that with ‘the coming of God as language’ he intends to prioritize the latter – the ‘interruptive’ Word, as R. David Nelson has shown, of the God of the gospel.¹⁹

Yet Jungel also wishes, rightly enough, to secure a *redemptive* relation between this coming of God in the paradoxical event of gospel language and the immanent order of beings as cosmos as known by similitude. But his negotiation of this relationship between paradox and similitude in ‘discovering God’ is not wholly clear in the 1974 essay, as argued earlier. ‘God is a discovery which teaches us to see *everything* with new eyes; yet this possibility, he is quick to add, could be ‘full of terror’; and yet, even more quickly, he repudiates this possibility of terror: ‘For the sake of God, this must not be said.’²⁰ That is to say, ‘Christ crucified,’ *could* teach us to see everything under the wrath of God. Yet, Jungel demurs, this conclusion of terror must not be drawn; it is as if God must be protected from the ambiguity of His own self-revelation. Jungel’s *reasoning* for declining to say this, however, seems weak, though surely his motive is sound. Is the mere fact that God so addresses us as the Christ crucified the grace that makes for trust? Apart from the Spirit who raised Christ crucified to vindicate His way in the world, and in the same way remakes the human auditor, must not word of Messiah’s cross indeed *terrify*?

I leave these questions dangling for a moment to suggest that Jungel struggled in this essay to decide between the two Martins that were his sources: Martin

18. Jungel, ‘Metaphorical Truth’, p. 65.

19. R. David Nelson, *The Interruptive Word: Eberhard Jungel on the Sacramental Structure of God’s Relation to the World* (London and New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 20. Jungel, ‘Metaphorical Truth’, p. 63.

Luther and Martin Heidegger. While Luther arguably prevails – ‘the cross of Jesus Christ is the ground and measure of the formation of metaphors which are appropriate to God’²¹ – ambiguity persists in that Jüngel concluded by arguing that the metaphor brings about a ‘gain to being’ that ‘expands the horizon of the world in such a way that we may speak of the renewal of the world.’²² In this formulation, we may sense an attempted synthesis of paradox and simile as the discourses of redemption and creation, respectively. The synthesis is motivated, as indicated earlier, by Jüngel’s entirely proper desire to secure a redemptive relationship of the interruptive Word with the world in which we live. Jüngel argued accordingly that a test of theological language is whether the order of beings is expanded by the advent of the new such that the cosmos is now seen in a new and renewing light, that is, the world fallen into godlessness is now seen as the blessed creature of God on the way to righteousness, life and peace. The apparent contradiction of this world by the paradox of the cross yields to a new affirmation of the world, vindicating the simile of creation: as the potter to the clay, so the One who vindicated crucified Jesus is to the world that crucified Him. ‘Behold, I make all things new!’

Yet once more, as if in haste, Jüngel qualifies this final formulation, without any previous preparation for it in the essay, with the *ubi et quando Deo visum est* of Augsburg Confession V: ‘A theological metaphor can only have this effect, however, because of the renewing power of the Spirit of God.’²³ Let us grant, then, that – at least in the hands of the Spirit! – the paradox of contradiction effecting the salutary slaying the old Adam yields to the simultaneity of the new born child of God and that this new birth is an expansion of being, indeed, nothing less than renewal of the world, new creation. Just so, we have all the more to ask, ‘Which is it?’

Is it the Word working on its own, so to say, as an event in language asking us to regard things differently, as a consistently forensic theory would require? Or is it the Spirit working through the Word, that is, not only a *translatio* in words but also a valid verbal predication because first of all a *translatio* of things? So Luther against Latomus: ‘*Et in hac translatione non solum est verborum, sed et rerum metaphora. Nam vere peccata nostra a nobis translata sunt a posita super ipsam, ut omnis qui hoc credit, vere nulla peccata habeat, sed translata super Christum, absorpta in ipso, eum amplius non damnent.*’ (‘And in this transference [that Christ was made to be sin] it is not only a metaphor of words but of things. For truly our sins are transferred from us and placed on Him, so that all who believe Him truly have no sins but they are transferred onto Him, absorbed in Him, no longer damning him.’)²⁴ To be sure, for Luther, the exchange of things

21. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

23. *Ibid.*

24. WA 8, p. 87; cf. LW 32, p. 200. See here the compelling analysis of Anna Vind, ‘Christus factus est peccatum metaphorice: Über die theologische Verwendung rhetorischer Figuren bei Luther unter Einbeziehung Quintilians’, in *Creator est creatura: Luther’s*

concerns Christ, not the believer: Christ who comes as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. Only so, however, can this Word incarnate say and regard the auditor as forgiven and freed as a matter of truth, no matter how she feels one way or another. So we may set aside the allergic fear of Osiander in our considerations at this juncture. If it is clear, then, that the *metaphora rerum* concerns Christ who comes to the sinner, the question now is whether the power to become the child of God can it have ‘this effect’ in the believer merely by saying so, ‘abracadabra’, that is, apart from the ‘translating’ power, if I may so put it, of the Spirit of God? To be sure, this is none other than the Spirit of Jesus Christ, whom the Son breathes upon the auditor, that is, the Spirit who sheds the love of God abroad in human hearts that have been convicted concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgement, so that *in the Spirit-given reality of faith* sin is yielded to Christ and in turn His righteousness is assumed? Isn’t just this Spirit-given *translatio rerum* of the human subject the faith that justifies in its own *specific way of being* corresponding to the *specific way of being* that is told by the metaphor, Christ crucified?

Clearly the Word, according to Jüngel, works as metaphor in an *ordered sequence* that passes from paradox to simile, from contradiction to simultaneity, from the death of the sinner to the newborn child of God; it is Luther’s crucial *purpose clause*, ‘God kills in order to make alive’. Another way to pose the question about how Jüngel thinks this movement to occur is to ask, ‘Can the metaphor fail in this progression, e.g., can it blind and harden (Mark 4: 11–2) as well as enlighten and redeem?’ Arguably, it *can* fail in the sequence Jüngel, following Luther, intends, precisely if and when the disruptive metaphor of paradox is thought to work on its own, so to speak. It is thought to work on its own when the dissonance of paradox is muted by defanging the catachrestic metaphor by turning it into mere simile. Just so, the intended progression *through contradiction* to simultaneity is obscured. In this case, if not taken in the *Spirit by faith* as the contradiction in terms, ‘Christ crucified’, this kerygma has to be taken *out of the Spirit, in bad faith*, disclosing something like, ‘To be Christ

Christologie als Lehre von der Idiomenkommunikation, ed. Oswald Bayer and Benjamin Gleede (Berlin & New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2007), pp. 95–124. Her conclusion about Luther on metaphor comports with my own conclusion about Jüngel’s effort (which she mentions in this connection) in the present essay. ‘Der Begriff der Metapher ist zu eng, um den Inhalt sowohl der kontroversen Textstelle aus dem *Antilatomus* als auch der Schrift *Vom Abendmahl Christi* sowie der Disputationen wiederzugeben. Das Wesentliche ist nicht bloss der Metapher, sondern es ist die Bereicherung der Sprache überhaupt, die die Erneuerung durch den Schmuck der Rede, durch den ornatus, bewirkt . . . es bei Luther um etwas geht, was ausserhalb von Quintilians Horizont liegt’ (p. 123), namely, the *non solum est verborum, sed et rerum metaphora*. In the same volume, see my treatment of Luther on metaphor, ‘Luther’s Anti-Docetism in the Disputatio de divinitate et humanitate Christi (1540)’, pp. 147–66. In his 1974 essay, Jüngel drew on all of the Luther texts that Vind mentions.

is to be victim', or 'The victims of the world are Christ'. Not a little contemporary theology, right and left, views the matter in just this way.

But it is important to see why we may come to such perverse theology that divinizes victimization or victimizes the divine – and justly offends alike those who struggle against victimization and those who hope in God's vindication of victims. We mute the paradox in this way: making it into an illuminating disclosure of some supposedly deeper truth of our world, because we take ourselves, the human auditors of this strange announcement as having by nature epistemic access and aptitude to process this information in comparison to, and thus as part of, all that we already know. We have access and acquire aptitude as members of a system of beings ordered as cosmos who regularly learn the lesser known in terms of what is already familiar. We presume to learn accordingly what it is to be Christ crucified by our all too familiar experience of victimization. 'Christ crucified' – for good or ill, victimization is the deepest truth of our world. Self-hatred, as the history of popular Christianity amply documents, becomes the religious work that brings us close to the divine, while for elite culture pleasure is in the perception of a momentary radiance, before the door of disappointment is finally shut on us.²⁵

The alternative to this perverse theology – and the reason why the mature Luther left behind the easily misunderstood rhetoric of his early 'theology of the cross' to learn to speak the Crucified in the Spirit as truly His Father's victory for us who are victimizers as well as victims – is that the Word works as metaphor in progressing *through contradiction* to similitude. This is the *redemptive* connection that Jungel was rightly seeking and in fact indicated in the last, hasty afterthought of the 1974 essay regarding the coming of the Spirit of Pentecost effectively to proclaim Christ the crucified as deliverance from the guilt and the power of sin. This connection is forged by something other than, though essentially related to, the Word. Indeed, as the Word concerns 'Spirit-anointed' Jesus, that is to say, Jesus as 'the Christ' who was crucified (Acts 10: 38–9), it likewise 'anoints' the auditors (Acts 10: 44) with the same Spirit, so that the faith to receive this Gift is itself gift. In that case the coming of God as an event in language is not and cannot only be an event in language, all too easily co-opted in the existing order of beings as cosmos to valorize victimization. Ironically, such non-trinitarian 'Word alone' theology is too readily co-opted precisely on account of the proper desire to establish its redemptive relationship to our world sore oppressed by structures of malice and injustice. But 'no one can say, "Jesus is Lord", except by the Holy Spirit' (1 Corinthians 12: 3). This coming of the Spirit must be understood, as Paul and Augustine and Luther understood, as a causal infusion of the love of God into the hearts of auditors (Romans 5: 5) that actually reorganizes affects, realigns wayward desire and so transforms the person that the Word may effect in them what it says about them.

25. Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 145.

IV

If the Word as the Father's speaking of the Son to us is impotent apart from the Spirit (and, as well, if the *Holy Spirit* mute apart from the Word *incarnate*, 1 John 4: 1–2), 'responsible speech about God' is not finally in the control of the preacher or theologian. Rather the theologically responsible preacher is finally responsible in ceding responsibility to the Holy Spirit, whose promised coming to call, convict, persuade, enlighten and so on can be trusted but not presumed upon, let alone confected by the hocus-pocus of a theory of performative language. In this case, preacher and theologian let the contradiction in terms, 'Christ crucified' work as the jarring paradox that it is, as offence. Bultmann understood this much well. 'The question thrust upon' Saul of Tarsus 'by the kerygma was whether he was willing to regard the crucified Jesus of Nazareth, whom the kerygma asserted to have risen from the dead, as the expected Messiah.'²⁶ If this demand of the kerygma, moreover, is not to be taken as asserting perverse nonsense by way of simile, it must be resolved, as Jungel underscored throughout his essay, as *literal reference*, as presenting the new reality in the world, along the lines of Mark 10: 45: 'the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and lay down His life a ransom for many'. It can present this new reality of Jesus Christ by the language of metaphor because the *translatio* in question is also a 'metaphor of things', not only of words (Luther), but also of the Spirit's coming who first 'drove' (Mark 1: 12) Jesus to take this responsibility for us upon Himself. Just so and only so the Spirit can and does still open the auditor of the gospel to the *translatio rerum* that Luther called the 'joyful exchange'.

Of course, Biblical language for God is surfeit with the routine similes of creaturely life. But so is all other language, as Jungel cogently argued. That is not the crucial differentiation. Language is at its heart metaphorical, a vast and ever-evolving system of translations from known to unknown to better known that works with a variety of tropes, though simile is central to the immanent work of contrasting and comparing things within any given order of beings as cosmos. Consequently, it is not particularly insightful to observe that Biblical language for God is metaphorical. I can say of my spouse of many years, 'She has been my rock', and I can likewise say of the faithful God, 'The LORD is my rock', and there is absolutely no logical difference here in the metaphorical form of language. But Jungel was not thinking on the plane of making empirical generalization about what the Bible says about God, as if such ransacking and cataloguing were in any serious sense theology, that is to say, *knowledge of God*. He was thinking theologically about how the Biblical word concerning the crucified Jesus as the Son of God can take hold and form the theological subject. This latter transformation of the person can only occur when the stunning contradiction contained in the kerygma, or narrative, or confession of 'Christ crucified' becomes lucid as the

26. Rudolph Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Complete in One Volume, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), p. 187.

purpose clause expressed in Mark 10: 45. This Christological *Novum* becomes lucid, as Jungel tried somewhat less successfully to explain,²⁷ in 'faith', where faith comes as a biographical event, taking the 'for many' of the kerygma as also valid 'for me', thus transforming the subjectivity of the one who in just this way comes to faith at the Spirit's persuasion.

Other scholars have called to our attention a certain 'Pneumatological deficit' in Jungel's account of the theology of the Word.²⁸ I have sought in this contribution to honour of one our time's premier theologians by pointing to a resource among Jungel's own resources for articulating a fuller Trinitarian dialectic of the Word and the Spirit, the Spirit and the Word, that also clarifies certain ambiguities attending his important discovery of the 'metaphorical truth' of the gospel.

27. That is to say, in this 1974 essay. But even in Jungel's splendid *Justification: The Heart of the Christian Faith*, trans. Jeffrey F. Cayzer (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 2001) one notes the Gnesio-Lutheran anxiety about the Augustinian 'imperfection' (p. 74) without a corresponding Lutheran self-critique of its Pneumatological 'imperfection', even though, in my view, Jungel's account of the ecstatic existence of the Christian in *The Freedom of a Christian: Luther's Significance for Contemporary Theology*, trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1988) cries out for such pneumatological articulation.

28. Thus, following Webster, Nelson, *The Interruptive Word*, p. 139.