

Review

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The Journal of Religion

the task of first identifying and then confronting that untidiness and provisionality.

RICHARD P. MCBRIEN, *University of Notre Dame*.

ZIMANY, ROLAND DANIEL. *Vehicle for God: The Metaphorical Theology of Eberhard Jüngel*. Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1994. x+180 pp. \$25.00 (cloth).

As the first book devoted to Eberhard Jüngel's work by an American scholar, this reworked dissertation exemplifies the growing awareness in this country of Jüngel's theological significance. The book attempts to present Jüngel's thought through an examination of the interrelationship of his views on language and his doctrine of God. However, while the attempt is certainly welcome, the execution is not without its problems. Two theses underlie Roland Zimany's book: the explicit, material thesis is that Jüngel's theology of revelation involves a sophisticated linguistic model of God's worldly presence whereby metaphorical or analogical language serves as a "vehicle" for God's self-communication. The more implicit, genetic thesis is that Jüngel's thought represents a "combination" of Martin Heidegger's thought with that of Karl Barth (pp. vii–viii). After a brief summary of the structure of the book, I will take up each thesis in turn.

After an opening chapter that delineates Jüngel's scholarly career and the various identifiable influences on his thought (Barth, Heidegger, Rudolf Bultmann, and the "New Hermeneutic"), the next three chapters provide summary treatments of the formal and methodological elements of his theology. Chapter 2 indicates his concept of the theological task and its relation to philosophy, chapter 3 offers a conceptual lexicon of some key ideas (being, thought, language, etc.), and finally the fourth chapter outlines Jüngel's biblical hermeneutic. Chapter 5 forms the substantive heart of the book, presenting the nature of the divine being according to Jüngel, and the peculiar requisites for the apprehension of that being in human thought. Chapter 6 concludes the work with a summary and some critical comments.

Zimany's genetic thesis attempts to interpret Jüngel's thought in terms of a fruitful conjunction of Barth's theology and Heidegger's existential ontology. The problem with this thesis is that it implies a far more conscious and specific appropriation of Heideggerian doctrines than is really evident in Jüngel's work. On the one hand, certain general motifs in Jüngel's thought, such as his orientation toward a dynamic and relational notion of "being," or his insistence on the fundamental linguisticity of human existence bespeak a definite conditioning of Jüngel's philosophical presuppositions by some characteristic Heideggerian themes; they do not, however, indicate a large-scale appropriation for Christian theological reflection of Heidegger's "early" or "later" conceptual schemes.

On the other hand, the thesis as formulated underplays the manner in which Jüngel's putatively "Heideggerian" ideas have been largely mediated (and often heavily qualified) by Jüngel's theological forebears, particularly Bultmann and Ernst Fuchs. Indeed, Zimany's claim (p. 45) that Jüngel's interest in being must be traced specifically to "the Heideggerian strand in his background" and not to Barth becomes untenable in light of Jüngel's claim that it is from Barth that theology learns to use the terminology of being on the basis of the specific revelation of God's being, and not in dependence upon a general ontology (*Gottes Sein ist im Werden* [Tübingen, 1986], p. 75). At the very least, the claim of a "combination" of Barth and Heidegger is not as illuminating as one might have hoped; in view

of Jüngel's insistence on a sharp dichotomy of theological and philosophical thinking, the thesis is downright misleading apart from extensive qualification.

With respect to the explicit thesis concerning language as a "vehicle for God," Zimany effectively marshals the relevant material from Jüngel's sprawling corpus of writings and indicates some of the broad interconnections between Jüngel's understanding of metaphor and analogy and his antimetaphysical, christologically grounded trinitarianism. But here, too, the results are sometimes disappointing; this is largely due to the author's tendency to simply paraphrase Jüngel rather than critically probe the profundity of his positions. As a result, the subtlety of Jüngel's thought is often missed in the attempt to achieve clarity, an attempt which in its turn is vitiated by the author's lack of precision in the use of terms like "objectivity," "figurative language," and "phenomenology."

Many of the weaknesses of this book simply reflect its modest aim: to offer a simplified and broadly sympathetic portrait of a difficult and little-known theologian. Given its lack of an identifiable critical position vis-à-vis Jüngel, the success of Zimany's work must be judged by its ability to pique the reader's curiosity, to encourage an encounter with Jüngel's own writings. As a proper introduction to Jüngel, it must face stiff competition from John Webster's superior work (*Eberhard Jüngel: An Introduction to His Theology* [Cambridge, 1986]), which is a model of analytical and critical acumen. Even so, as a means toward the end of broadening discussion of Jüngel in this country, Zimany's book serves a useful function.

PAUL DEHART, *Chicago, Illinois.*

BONDI, ROBERTA C. *Memories of God: Theological Reflections on a Life.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995. 205 pp. \$14.95 (cloth).

Memories of God is Roberta Bondi's courageous rendering of her life as the subject of theological narration. Her "theological reflections on a life" also represent the attempt to break free of a theological method that has often denied experience its lived plenitude. In the "sixties liberalism of theological education," she recalls, "theology concerned itself only with what theologians assumed was universally true. It did not waste its time addressing the personal and the "subjective," the everyday or the particular. Certainly there was no room in theology to raise any of the kinds of questions I had, especially those connected with my own experience as a female human being. Theology was abstract, propositional, and systematic, and so was its God" (p. 9). Bondi wishes to theologically plumb the "deepest level" of personal experience, to lay bare her life in a kind of prayer so that she may "know God as God is, as a healing God" and know herself as one who corresponds with "that God in whose image we are made" (p. 11)—and this by holding her life up to the resurrection as to a medium of perfect beauty.

Much of Bondi's memoir concerns her coming to terms with the Fatherhood of God. While reckoning with a tradition that has too readily diminished the full humanity of women, and with a father who could never be pleased, Bondi resists the easy conflation of human and divine fatherhood. Inspired by such unlikely sources as *The Thirteen Ascetical Homilies of Philoxenus of Mabbug* (sixth century) and some fragments of the desert fathers ("Not understanding what has happened prevents us from going on to something better" [p. 34], said one Poemen), she uncovers the layers of her childhood image of a shaming, offending Father/father. She attributes the fundamentalist preaching she heard as a child at her