Without Metaphor, No Saving God

Theology after Cognitive Linguistics

by R. Masson

DESCRIPTION:
Studies of conceptual and neural mapping in cognitive linguistics, while posing a fundamental challenge for religious belief, also suggest new ways of understanding how people conceptualize God and make theological inferences. This book, inspired by that research and attentive to the distinctive insights of Christian theology, elaborates an innovative explanation of God-talk, better able to credibly address confusion and controversies that trouble the church, academic theology, and broader culture. The first part analyzes both cognitive linguistics' challenge to standard theological depictions of metaphorical, analogous, symbolic, and literal language, and the discipline's promise for providing a more satisfactory account. The second half examines six case studies to illustrate how clarifying the conceptual mapping in God-talk and theological inferences provides a powerful tool for advancing religious understanding. The illustrations include the hypothesis that religion is an epiphenomenon of evolution, the so-called "new atheism," Black theology, and controversies between theologians and Church authorities. This book has won the 2014 CTS Book Award.