CONTENTS

PREFACE vii

INTRODUCTION: Seeking God’s Will 1
   When Bad Things Happen 2 / God’s Will for the World 4
   “God Willing” 6 / The Flow of the Book 8

1. God the Metaphor: Imaging God 11
   How We Know and Imagine God 15 / Metaphor and Language 18
   The Metaphor of God’s Will 22 / Theology as Truth 24
   Language for God 26

2. Lord and Master: God the All Powerful Monarch 29
   God the Monarch 30 / God in the Superlative 32
   The Scope of God’s Will 33 / Freedom and Chance 36
   Sin and Grace 37 / God’s Goodness and Love 38
   God as Liberator 41 / God as Magician 43
   Prayer and Worship of the Lord and Master 44
   The Strengths of This Metaphor 46 / The Limitations of This Metaphor 47

3. Father Knows Best: God the Patriarch 51
   Patriarchal Families 51 / Patriarchal Households 54
   God as Patriarch 56 / God Creates and Orders 58
   God Directs and Controls 59 / God’s Providence 60
   God Judges and Punishes 61 / God Is Merciful 63
   Prayer to God the Patriarch 65 / The Strengths of This Metaphor 66
   The Limitations of This Metaphor 67

4. The Prodigal Son Revisited: God the Merciful Father 69
   God’s Mercy Reigns Supreme 70 / Amazing Grace 73
   Dependency 75 / Compensatory Love 76
   The Lengths to which God Will Go for Us 79
5. Friendly Persuasion: God the Nurturing Parent 87
   Biblical Sources 89 / God Changes 91
   In and through Relationship 94 / God the Nurturing Parent 95
   God as Teacher and Coach 100 / A Spirit of Cooperation 101
   The Strengths of This Metaphor 103 / The Limitations of This Metaphor 104

   A Tale of Two Gods 109 / A Tale of Two Persons of God 111
   A Tale of Suffering: Is It One? 112 / God Suffers with Us 113
   God Is Compassion 117 / Presence in Absence 119
   The God Who Hears Our Cries 121 / The Strengths of This Metaphor 122
   The Limitations of This Metaphor 124 / All Will Be Well 126

7. Power with Us: God in Relation 127
   Enter the Web 129 / God in Here 132
   Panentheism 134 / The Relational God 135
   Reimagining Relation 136 / God’s Will in Relation 140
   Relating to the God of Relation 141 / The Strengths of This Metaphor 142
   The Limitations of This Metaphor 144

8. Power in Us: God as Energy for Life 147
   What Is Real 148 / From Essence to Energy 151
   Divine Energy rather than Will 154 / Immanence and Transcendence 154
   Beyond Moral Dualism 156 / Energy as Power 158
   Prayer and Worship 161 / Metaphoric Play 164
   The Strengths of This Metaphor 165 / The Limitations of This Metaphor 167

EPILOGUE: For the Living: Reimagining God 169
   Discernment 171 / Cultural Context and Discernment 172
   Prayer and Action 174 / The Power of God and Our Power 175

NOTES 177

FOR FURTHER READING 179

INDEX 183