

Metaphors We Believe By

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Abstract

This paper examines the pervasive use of metaphors in the parables that Jesus Christ used when He spoke to His audiences and preached His message in Israel. There is a great number of metaphors in the parables in the New Testament gospels. At a closer look there seems to be a metaphorical system running through those parables. At the same time there are conceptual metaphors underlying the metaphors in that system. Through this analysis we will explore the idea that since conceptual metaphors are an overall part of human cognition manifested in every-day language, this may be the reason why Jesus used this linguistic tool of metaphors so frequently and was usually understood by His listeners. This research is based upon the general framework of *Metaphors We Live By*, by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980). These authors firmly believe that metaphors are not merely poetical or even grammatical realities, but part of normal everyday speech. Apparently this concept has been the same for a long period of time already, as can be proved in this study.

Keywords: Conceptual metaphor, conceptual domain, metaphorical entailments, event structure metaphor

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to analyze the metaphors which Jesus used in the gospels, so as to establish a metaphorical system that operates in the New Testament gospels in the Bible. For the advancement of this objective, the current research outlines a brief analysis of some metaphors used in the gospel parables, giving special attention to their behavior in relationship to the conceptual metaphor, with its corresponding linguistic expressions —that underlie in each instance—, and to the dominant metaphorical use in the gospels. The metaphors to be taken into consideration will be the ones that seem to transmit the knowledge of the surrounding world with the text without major difficulties. This research is made up of a brief introduction followed by an analysis of preliminaries as a theoretical framework. After this the central analytical context is introduced by means of the analysis of the different types of metaphors used in the New Testament gospels, to finally present the conclusions.

The reason why this particular topic was chosen for the research has to do with the wish to see how and why metaphors are used so frequently in the gospels, a phenomenon repeated in the rest of the New Testament, and in the final analysis, in the entire Bible. This research is based upon the general framework of *Metaphors We Live By*, by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980). Terms such as CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR, CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN, METAPHORIC SYSTEMS² and other pertinent terms will be used.

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² Lakoff and Johnson (1980) introduced the use of small capital letters to indicate a conceptual metaphor.

Within this context, the speakers of a language resort to the use of common and everyday concrete language structures in order to interpret more abstract concepts, a phenomenon that happens in a normal and natural way, as when one says *at the foot of the mountain, the table leg, the clock hands*, for instance. To acknowledge the metaphorical nature of these expressions requires two conception constructs that are very different —a literal meaning and a meaning of figurative valence, that together will convey the idea of what one wants to express in his language, according to Langacker's (1991) opinion. Lakoff and Johnson (7, 8) are of the opinion that much of our understanding of daily experience is structured in metaphorical terms. An example that they utilize to explain this reality is given by the conceptual metaphor TIME IS MONEY that is expressed by means of expressions we normally use in everyday language, such as

Time Is Money

You are *wasting* my time.
 This will *save* you time.
 I have *invested* a lot of time in that.
 Do you have much time *left*?
 I *lost* a lot of time when I got sick.

This is because for us time is a value, something to which we assign value, as to money. These expressions that we so commonly use give us an idea of the metaphorical nature of the concepts that structure our daily activities. Considering this premise and examining the gospels, we can see they are imbued with metaphors. They especially abound in the teachings that Jesus gave to the crowds and to His disciples, when He conveyed His truths in a way more intense or less intense with the figures of speech appropriate to His topic or speech. In order to convey His message, Jesus would use everyday aspects of the local culture of His time —people, animals, plants, food (bread, fruit), light, water, institutions, the law, the prophets, and various other elements so as to put into words His abstract principles that would probably require much more explanation were they to be expressed in their abstract context.

Ungerer and Schmid (1996) point to us the fact that the metaphor is a powerful cognitive tool for the conceptualization of abstract categories, and it is interesting to see how Jesus would use this literary/cognitive resource in a natural and normal way. Jesus said He spoke "in parable." A parable is defined as a "short allegorical story designed to illustrate or teach some truth, religious principle, or moral lesson."³ His parables were usually expressed figuratively, mainly through the use of metaphors. We could perhaps say that Jesus used metaphors precisely due to the implications that they have on the understanding of daily experience in a more coherent and meaningful way.

According to literary tradition, a metaphor is a literary figure of poetic imagination, a comparison between two objects that have similar but not entirely analogous qualities that share related qualities. We can see this in the lines written by David the psalmist, when he speaks about God and says in Psalm 18:2 "The LORD is my *rock* and my *fortress* and my deliverer; my God, my *strength*, in whom I will trust; my *shield*, and the *horn of my salvation*, my *stronghold*."⁴ In this particular case, in the eyes of the psalmist, God shares with him qualities of protector in the form of rock, fortress, shield, horn of his salvation, and stronghold. All these elements have to do with the idea of battle and attack, translated to defense, safety and protection through metaphorical extension.

For Langacker (1991), metaphor is not a peripheral aspect of our mental life, but it is largely its constituent part. This cognitive part of the human mind, interpreted in the form of language, is given by the conceptual metaphor. In the vision of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors are dominant in daily life experience not only in language, but also in thought and actions. Hence the importance we assign to the metaphors that appear in the New Testament parables, as an indication that they are an ordinary part of human language.

³<http://www.wordreference.com/definition/parable>

⁴ <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+18%3A2&version=NKJV>

Preliminaries

Kovecses (2002) is of the opinion that both in academia and in popular tradition, a metaphor is considered 1) a propriety of words, a linguistic phenomenon; 2) an adornment for artistic and rhetoric purposes; 3) a similarity between two entities that are compared and identified; 4) the conscious and deliberate use of words; 5) a figure of language we can dispense with. However, with the creation of a new paradigm, from the linguistic-cognitive standpoint, Lakoff and Johnson state that a metaphor 1) is a propriety of concepts, not of words; 2) its function is to understand certain concepts better, not only artistic or aesthetic; 3) it is not frequently based on similarity; 4) it is used without effort in everyday life by all people, not only the especially talented; 5) far from being a superfluous but pleasant ornament, it is an inevitable process of human thought and reasoning. As a mental process, nowadays the metaphor is seen as an integral part of life, as a vehicle to understand and even build our experience, something that generally transcends individual linguistic expressions, according to Langacker (1991:8). Within this referential framework seeing metaphor as an intrinsic, normal and natural part of human cognition expressed and accommodated in everyday language and supported by experience, it is not surprising to see how familiarly this resource is used in the in the New Testament parables.

From the cognitive-linguistic point of view, Lakoff and Johnson define conceptual metaphor as *understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain*, or, in other words, conceptual domain A is conceptual domain B. A conceptual domain is any coherent organization of experience. Hence a complex concept (B) is understood in terms of a concept (A), more defined, real and close to our everyday reality: (A = B). Metaphorical expressions —what we actually say— are possible thanks to the conceptual metaphor that underlies them. On the other hand, Taylor (1995:132) says that the cognitive paradigm sees metaphor as the means by which more abstract and intangible areas of experience can be conceptualized in terms of the familiar and concrete but he adds that what makes metaphor so central in the cognitive paradigm is precisely its realization in everyday experience. This is a phenomenon normally present in the parables spoken by Jesus.

In the purely linguistic-technical aspect, the New Testament, where the parables of this study are narrated, was written in Greek by Jewish authors who spoke Aramaic, the language acquired in the Babylonian exile, where the Hebrew language faded little by little among the Jewish population. At the same time, the New Testament authors were under the political dominion of the Roman Empire, whose language was Latin. The text that concerns us in this study is the direct Greek-English translation, and in this translation we have cases of metaphors that come from Greek to English, but that were initially modeled for minds that were structured in the Hebrew system. So from the text of the gospels we have a range of contacts of interrelated languages —Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, and finally English, and in the midst of all this linguistic diversity there appears the metaphor, that passed from one thought style to another. At this point, then, there arises an obligatory question: Can we, at this point, state that the metaphor is the human cognitive way of explaining life and our relationship to the surrounding world through language? Observing the parables metaphors closely, we can find details that will orient our analysis.

The Use of Metaphors in the Gospels

1) Projection to the vegetal world

In the gospel of Mark, chapter 4, verses 1 to 8, the following narration is found:

“And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching: ‘Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”

Since the disciples could not really understand what Jesus meant by those words, they asked him in private and he explained the parable in Mark 4:13-20.

“And He said to them, ‘Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble. Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty and some a hundred.’”

The first thing to notice here is that at the time when the New Testament was written, the land of Israel, under the Roman Empire dominion, was basically an agricultural society. They also raised sheep, and many lived on fishing in the Sea of Galilee. So that the people of that place were very familiar with the words Jesus was using in this particular parable —sower (farmer), seed, ground, types of terrain, grain, good soil, and fruit. There was nothing they did not know in all that array of lexical items Jesus was employing. All His audience was capable of understanding what Jesus was saying because of His vocabulary use.

But after He had said all that He explained the real meaning to His disciples in private. In this sense it is here where we can see a new realm of meaning, the meaning that underlies the common everyday words, which was what Jesus explained: He used A to explain B, the more abstract and complex explained by the more immediate and common, as can be seen in the following example:

A	B
The sower went out to sow the seed, which fell on different types of soil, and produced different results, according to each soil condition.	The preacher went out to preach the message that was accepted by different people, and had different results, after each person’s condition.

Jesus was not speaking in riddles to the multitudes, but in figurative language, in this case using metaphors, so as to be easier for the listeners to understand more complex truths. Metaphor is precisely about this —using a cognitive domain to explain or clarify another one. However, in this particular case, which are the conceptual metaphors that underlie in all these linguistic metaphorical expressions? Linguistic metaphorical expressions are the words that derive from the terminology of the more concrete conceptual domain, and they manifest a conceptual metaphor, according to Kovecses (2002:4).

If in this speech Jesus used common everyday words known by the listeners in the form of linguistic metaphorical expressions so as to transmit a deeper truth or principle, let us see which the conceptual metaphors that support His speech are. Analyzing this parable and the metaphorical expressions it contains, we can see that there is a person in the process of sowing the seed that falls on different types of terrain, each producing results or fruit according to its condition. All this refers to the preaching or proclamation of the gospel, the reception that the proclaimed message has on the different types of hearts of the listeners, and the effect this produces in their lives. So in order to express a manifest reality we have the conceptual metaphor THE MESSAGE IS PLANT [SEED], or TO PREACH IS TO SOW, as a support, and because of that, THE MESSAGE PRODUCES FRUIT. The correspondences in the metaphoric mapping, to explain the relationship between what is said and what is really meant to be said, are the following:

Origin: THESEED	Objective: THEGOSPEL
Thesower	Thegospelpreacher [Jesus]
Theseed	Thegospel [message]
Thesoil	Thepeople
Thegoodsoil	The people who receive the message
The grain/theharvest	People who believe and accept the gospel

Figure 1 Correspondence between the origin (domain A) that expresses the objective (domain B)

Given the fact that the correspondences combine on the mapping and the objective explains or clarifies the origin, we can conclude that THE MESSAGE [THE GOSPEL] IS PLANT [SEED] is the conceptual metaphor that underlies the parable. In Matthew 13:24-30 we have another case of conceptual metaphor closely related to the previous one.

“Another parable He put forth to them, saying: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not so good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

Once again in their present circumstances the disciples approach Jesus to ask Him about the meaning of the parable He had just spoken to the multitudes. And this is what He says to them in Matthew 13:36-42.

“Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, ‘Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.’ He answered and said to them: ‘He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who showed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire.’”

Jesus explains the parable in a clear and objective way. We can state that the conceptual metaphor that underlies here is PEOPLE ARE PLANTS [SEED, TARE, and WHEAT] / THE WORLD IS A CULTIVATED FIELD, from which we have the following reading of the mapping, to corroborate the explanation of one domain for another domain:

Origin: THESOWER	Objective: JESUS
The field	The world
The good seed	The sons of God
The tare	The sons of the wicked one
The harvest	The end of this age
The reapers	The angels
The wheat	The just [the sons of God]
The furnace of fire	Hell

Figure 2 Relationship between origin/objective, the simple to explain the complex

It would not be hard to understand the meaning of something expressed in this way, when the audience had full experiential knowledge of the agricultural realm. Hence we can agree with Ungerer and Schmid (1996:126) when they say that “the cognitive models of abstract phenomena are in fact cemented in basic experiences and on one essential part of the experimental aspect of language.”

In Matthew 9:37-38 there is another case closely related to the previous examples, where Jesus speaks: "Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'" Here harvest refers to the people who have already received the gospel through the preaching of it, and PEOPLE ARE PLANTS is again the conceptual metaphor. After considering the conceptual metaphor origins and objectives, the reading now becomes much easier for the beginner reader of the Bible. We can deduct that the harvest refers to the number of people who have already received the gospel, but need leaders to guide them in their Christian walk, the laborers. Those laborers are the gospel preachers, and the field is the world. What Jesus is telling His disciples is that they should pray for more leaders, since there are many people who need to be guided. From these parables we can see that the function of a metaphor really is to clarify concepts of the more abstract realm and translate them to the form of speakers' everyday language to accommodate the mental system that is expressed through language. One last case of conceptual metaphor that has to do with the vegetal world is the one in which Jesus speaks to His disciples privately, in John 15:1-5.

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

Here Jesus again turns to the use of metaphors, this time to teach His disciples that separated from Him they will accomplish nothing. He is now the vine, a very familiar term to the disciples' understandings. The Mediterranean area is well known for its vineyards, grapes, and wine and the disciples were knowledgeable in this respect. Vineyards and grapes were a daily view in their local regional experience. Here Jesus represents Himself as the vine that transmits life to the branches through the sap. As the true vine, Jesus also clarifies His interaction with the Father, whom He relates to the vinedresser, the gardener, the disciples being the branches. Jesus explains that it is the dynamic interaction among the three which will produce much fruit, that fruit being the metaphor to signify the positive results in the spiritual realm. The branches that are not productive will be taken away and burned.

Jesus' message could not be any clearer. The disciples never asked Him for any clarification of the concepts mentioned in this speech. Explanations were unnecessary. In this instance of metaphorical language, the conceptual metaphor is PEOPLE ARE PLANTS again, and also TO PRUNE IS TO CLEAN, as an event, since in this case it is about an action. Therefore, we can trace the mapping of this conceptual metaphor in the following manner, showing how one domain explains another domain:

Origin: PLANTS	Objective: PEOPLE
The true vine	Jesus
The vinedresser /gardener	God the Father
The branches	The disciples
Cut the branches	Separate unproductive people
To prune	To clean and clear (renew) Christian life
Abide in the vine	To be with, to follow Jesus
The sap	The words of Jesus [His message]

Figure 3 Correspondence between the origin (linguistic expression) and its objective (conceptual metaphor)

Through the examples previously cited we can see that the metaphorical nature of all these expressions require a conceptual metaphor that gives them support in each instance. When the two elements combine we have a metaphor that, as we have seen so far, is an integral part of the cognitive structure of human beings, normally based on experience, and in many cases, culturally defined as well.

2) The “I am” metaphors

In the gospels we can find a great number of instances in which Jesus presents Himself in metaphoric language, beginning His statements with the expression “I am” to immediately refer to Himself by means of something known and familiar for His listeners. Some of those cases are, for example,

a. The bread of life

We read in John 6:48-51 “I am the bread of life... This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” In this particular situation Jesus is using a very simple and basic verb for human understanding, *to eat*, to refer to *believe in Him*. How can we infer this? Analyzing the metaphoric expressions that underlie the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE FOOD [BREAD] / TO EAT IS TO BELIEVE, we have the reading of the conceptual metaphor in the following mapping:

Origin: TO EAT	Objective: TO BELIEVE
Bread	Jesus

Figure 4: Correspondence given between the metaphoric expression and its conceptual metaphor

b. The light of the world

Another set of metaphors in the gospels is the one related to light, a word or concept common to all human beings, an essential part of our humanity, that relates us directly to the world around us —if we are not blind— and gives us a sense of direction, stability, and natural cyclical order. In John 8:12 Jesus says, “I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” In this particular example light and darkness are presented in opposition, and the fact of following Jesus means to be in the light, not in darkness. And since light is something that helps us to see and know where we are, we see that the conceptual metaphor underlying here is the same mentioned by Jesus. How do we know that? The light is the origin, the objective is Jesus. From that mapping we have the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE LIGHT.

c. The door of the sheep

The people of Israel were familiar with sheep. In fact, this animal constituted the basic type of sacrifice in the Jewish religion besides being used as normal food. So what better example could Jesus use to refer to Himself than the door of the sheep that would keep the sheep safe, an animal so symbolic to the Jewish people? In the gospel of John 10:7-9 we read that Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.” In these two instances, “I am the door of the sheep” and “I am the door”, Jesus compares Himself to the door through which the sheep go in to find protection in the sheepfold, and through which they go out to find food and pastures. He is, therefore, the protective element for the sheep. Once again an ordinary object is taken, the door, to represent a more complex and deeper truth. The linguistic metaphorical expression *I am the door* can be encapsulated in the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE ENTRANCES / PEOPLE ARE DOORS. In the following mapping we have the reading of the conceptual metaphor by means of the linguistic expressions that clarify them:

Origin: THEDOOR	Objective: JESUS
The door	Protection
The sheep	Believers
Enter through the gate	Salvation
Pastures, grass	Spiritual food

Figure 5: Relationship between THE DOOR and the objective JESUS

d. The good shepherd

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own...” This reference in John 10:11-14 shows the contrast between the good shepherd, the sheep’s owner, and the hired shepherd. In the Israelite’s mind this concept of the good shepherd is essential. There were men in that culture who dedicated their entire life to being sheep shepherds, and they understood the implications of what Jesus was saying at that moment. The message was clear and direct, addressed to an audience made up of shepherds, and sons, parents, wives, brothers, sisters of shepherds.

Besides all those points in common, the Jews had previous literary references related to sheep. Psalm 23:1 states, in its famous introductory lines, “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want,” implying that the Lord is the provider who will not let His children, the sheep, lack what is necessary, that is, the basic necessities of life. Another reference is found in Isaiah 40:11, that states, “He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young...” There is still another case in Ezekiel 34:11-13 where the LORD says, “Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country.” We can read this as PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS in the conceptual metaphor that underlies the linguistic expressions of the text. The following correspondences of the mapping confirm the analysis:

Origin: THE (GOOD) SHEPHERD	Objective: The LORD God
The sheep	The people of Israel

Figure 6: Correspondence between the origin expressed and its more abstract objective

e. The way, the truth, and the life

In “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me,” we have one of the most striking metaphors spoken by Jesus. This metaphor involves three key aspects of human experience: *the way*, that is to say, the direction a person has to follow on his way to heaven; *the truth*, a vindication that only Jesus has made; and *the life*, since He Himself is the fountain of life. He created life and sustains it. He demonstrated this when He resurrected Lazarus from the dead in John 11:23-27. On that occasion, Jesus told Martha, Lazarus’ sister: “Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’ Martha said to Him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?’ She said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.’” The conceptual metaphor for this portion could well be PEOPLE ARE WAYS / PEOPLE ARE A WAY TO FOLLOW. In this case Jesus is the way to the Father, the only way through which the farer can get to his destination, the Father, or Heaven. As a fountain of life, the conceptual metaphor can be PEOPLE ARE LIFE [A PERSON IS LIFE].

3) The “You are” metaphors

Another style of conceptual metaphor found in the gospels has to do with what Jesus stated about His disciples, addressing them and beginning His speech with the expression “You are...” immediately naming the element to which He was comparing them. From this modality we have, in Matthew 5:13-14, Mark 4:21-23, and Luke 8:16-18, the following instances:

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." Speaking in such manner, Jesus commends His disciples to preserve His message, in the way that salt has a preserving effect. At the time when there was no refrigeration system, the disciples logically knew very well the preserving properties of salt that helped meat not to rot so fast. This time as well they did not ask for any explanations about the things Jesus was saying to them, a clear indication that they knew what their Master was referring to. They were to be a means of preservation for the good of society. Then He tells them to be good examples in their conduct and behavior so that people would notice, using light as reference. In the metaphorical expression "You are the salt of the earth", the conceptual metaphor is PEOPLE ARE GOOD INFLUENCE / PEOPLE ARE PRESERVERS. In the case of "You are the light of the world," PEOPLE ARE GUIDES OF CONDUCT / PEOPLE ARE GUIDES.

4) The "They are" metaphors

Apart from the "I am" and "You are" metaphors, there are also metaphors that Jesus spoke about other people, "They are." In Matthew 16:5-12 we read the following:

"Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said to them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?— but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

Then in Luke 12:1 Jesus clarifies the metaphorical expression telling them to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." Here the relationship between being a hypocrite and pharisaic derives from the meaning of yeast. The dough that has no yeast is free of the substance that can change it. The natural state of the dough, equated with the innocence and purity of mind and actions, will remain uncorrupted by the yeast of pharisaic hypocrisy. So on this occasion we see Jesus speaking to a group of people that was part of the Israelite social culture, in fact a very representative group, especially in what appertains to religion. They were a religious sect that pretended to live and have pious lives.

On occasions Jesus calls them *serpents, brood of vipers, whitewashed tombs...*(Matthew 23:27, 33). This was the religious group's moral condition, and Jesus was warning His disciples of the danger of becoming like them. So in this case yeast is hypocrisy, something that can affect the place where it is put. The conceptual metaphor can be expressed as AN OBJECTIONABLE HUMAN CONDUCT IS YEAST / CERTAIN HUMAN ATTITUDES ARE CONTAMINATING, and specifically about the character of the Pharisees, when Jesus called them serpents and vipers, CERTAIN HUMAN BEHAVIORS ARE ANIMAL BEHAVIOR / AN OBJECTIONABLE CONDUCT IS ANIMAL CONDUCT.

5) A conversation with metaphorical implications

In the gospel of Matthew, chapter 15, verses 21 to 28, there is a record of a conversation with metaphorical implications:

"Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.' But He answered her not a word. And his disciples came and urged Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she cries out after us.' But He answered and said, 'I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'

Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!' But He answered and said, 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.' And she said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour."

This is the case of a creative conversation which is surprisingly quite common in our everyday language in the world today as well. It is interesting because it was characterized by a man who was Jewish and a woman who was Greek, from Syria, and who probably apart from Greek, spoke Arabic, the local language. It is possible that the two of them spoke in Aramaic —the language Israel spoke in those days— and yet the manner in which both the man and the woman understood each other without any difficulty is simply amazing. She understood what Jesus meant and followed Him in His pun (metaphorical language), and as a result she obtained the miracle she was so anxiously seeking. The conceptual metaphor here is PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS and A FAVOR (MIRACLE) IS FOOD [BREAD].

This conversation is a case of metaphorical implication. By metaphorical implication we understand the fact that the conceptual metaphor forms a system based on sub-categorizations. Since PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS it can then be said that ANIMALS EAT CRUMBS that fall to the floor, the way dogs do. There is also the fact that A FAVOR IS BREAD, in this instance the favor of granting spiritual healing associated to everyday bread. According to the mapping, therefore, the little dog corresponds to a person, and the bread is the attention on God's part to operate miracles in a person's life. The piece of information that a person can be an animal makes the woman take that meaning, identify herself with the objective —a little dog— and continues the conversation on those terms.

The woman puts herself in the place of a little dog that can have access at least to some crumbs from the master's table. In this particular case, a conceptual metaphor is introduced in the conversation, and the participants follow the conversation based on that concept, adding more expressions associated with the origin or source domain in the metaphor (animals / little dogs). According to Kovecses (2002:95), the activation of several metaphorical implications of a conceptual metaphor can govern or structure one part or the entire conversation. He demonstrates this by a graphic conversation in Hungarian he had with his old physical education professor when they ran into each other at a gym in Budapest:

PROFESSOR You look like a healthy apple.
 KOVECSES I hope it's not rotten inside.
 PROFESSOR I hope, too, that it will last a long time.

6) A metaphorical system in the gospels

If we pay close attention to the metaphors that have been examined, we notice that in several instances human beings, or persons, are compared with animals or inanimate objects. Therefore we have cases of people who are compared to soil, good soil, grape, branches, bread, sheep, wolf, little dogs, light, salt, and yeast. In a more negative sense we have seen serpents, vipers, and whitewashed tombs. In the first case examined, we see that metaphors mostly have to do with matters related with the vegetal world. People are always related to the art and crafts of sowing and harvesting, with the use of vocabulary adapted to the message proclaimed. When Jesus introduces Himself as the "I am" what He does is reveal a bigger truth about Himself, His Person, His Character, so that His disciples may know Him better and trust Him more. Jesus presents Himself as bread, light, door, shepherd, and the way, which are tangible, concrete, everyday realities, seen in the daily experience of His followers. As the living bread He will nourish their lives with spiritual goodness so that they do not hunger. Eating that bread they will be satisfied in the spiritual sense. As light He will be their guide and there will be no darkness for them, in a spiritual way. As the door He will be the free access through which they can enter freely to the Father so as to find in Him all good. As the shepherd, and they as sheep, He will guide them to the best pastures, will take care of them, will see to it that they do not lack any daily food. As the way He will be the path that will lead to eternal life, if they walk in that way.

When Jesus says to His disciples “You are...” another dimension of His speech opens up. This time to commend them to do the tasks related to those qualities seen in them. If “You are the light of the world,” it is because they will reflect the light as He does, as living testimonies of the followers of a God that is light and clarity. As salt the disciples will have the mission to preserve society and the world, of the contamination of evil, with the message and the life style of people transformed, who can offer hope to others. Being serpents, vipers, dogs, wolves, obviously talks about words of accusation, accommodating these words to a highly negative connotation, since in the Hebrew culture serpents and vipers, dogs and wolves were considered undesirable. From this we see most of the timesthat in the gospels metaphors related to animals capture the negative characteristics of human behavior. A notable exception would be the sheep or lamb, which always has a positive connotation. Yeast, meanwhile, has a more metaphorical breath and scope, since despite being a good thing, may nevertheless have transformative effect for evil, as was the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

So far we have mainly two groups of entities to which the human being is compared. On the one hand the group that explains the relationship of the people with the surrounding world. This type of conceptualization of things is what Koveceses (2002:123) calls the great chain of metaphor. Thus we see that when human beings are being resembled to animals in relationship to their character or behavior, the phenomenon of the great chain of metaphors occurs, because now comes into scene a game that is not only a “thing” but also a type of “being” or that possesses a quality. A hierarchy of concepts that correspond to each other can be noticed. When this correspondence occurs, we can attest that the conceptualization is more immediate and direct, since the objective focuses on things that surround us more closely. We can also infer, after having seen these relationships of origin-objective, A-B, that human beings—the human body—are the first entity to be used to explain other concepts: “I am...”, “You are...”, “They are...” Koveceses (2002:126) presents an interesting hierarchy designed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) that can help us to visualize the great chain:

The Great Chain of Being	
HUMAN BEING	Attributes and behavior of superior order
ANIMALS	Atributes and instinctive behavior
PLANTS	Attributes and biological behavior
COMPLEXOBJECTS	Structural attributes and functional behavior
NATURAL PHYSICALTHINGS	Natural and physical behavior

Figure 7: The great chain of being as metaphorical system on different levels.

One level can be used to explain another level.

There exist all types of possibility of interaction between these categories. We can go from the animate to the inanimate and vice versa, and it is interesting to see how Jesus used objects both animate and inanimate to produce His acute metaphors. Nevertheless, the most interesting thing is the fact that He utilized as an immediate reference the surrounding ambience to get His concepts to be understood by His audiences, which was usually composed of all types of persons, of all ages, social classes and conditions. In the parables that were not taken into consideration for this study for reasons of space, Jesus resorted to entities such as a fig (fruit, plant), a cup, a rock, a coin, a pearl, a mine, etc. From this and what is exposed above is that we can say that the parables in the gospels belong to this category of comparing human beings and inanimate objects to other objects animates/inanimate. Lakoff and Johnson also consider a great chain of extended metaphor (Koveceses 2002:128) that serves the purposes of literature and Bible linguistics that corresponds to the category of complex abstract systems:

GOD [in the Judeo Christian tradition]
COSMOS / UNIVERSE
SOCIETY
HUMANS
ANIMALS
Others

Figure 8: Table of levels and categories of more abstract characters to be utilized in biblical language

In this more abstract or complex categorization, we see the examples of metaphors such as *I am the good shepherd, I am the vine, you are the light of the world*, passing from one level to another level easily.

Origin	Objective
Vinedresser (gardener)	God (animate-animate)
Goodshepherd	Jesus (animate-animate)
Dove	HolySpirit (animal-divine)
Bread, light, way, life	Jesus (inanimate-animate)
Field	World (inanimate-inanimate)
Harvest	People (animate-inanimate)

Figure 9: Correspondence of animate and inanimate categories

Another categorization we notice in the metaphors used by Jesus is the event structure metaphor (Kovecses 2002:134, 5). As its name indicates, these metaphors have to do with events, not objects, and they can be metaphors of state, cause, actions, changes, etc. According to what we have seen so far in this analysis, the majority of instances correspond to the great chain category (objects, things). But there are also a few instances belonging to the category of event structure. In John 15, in the parable of the vineyard, we can see that there are certain correspondences of person/object but it also appears, for example, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

From which we have TO ABIDE IS TO LIVE IN GOD / TO PLUCK IS TO PURIFY. Another instance that was found is when Jesus mentions que He is the bread of life, and that if a person eats that bread will not hunger anymore. TO EAT IS TO GROW. When Jesus said that He was the light of the world, He was saying that whoever followed Him would not be in shadows, and said that whoever followed Him would not dwell in darkness. That gives us the conceptual metaphor TO FOLLOW JESUS IS TO BE IN THE LIGHT / FOLLOWING JESUS IS NOT TO BE IN DARKNESS. Of all the metaphors considered in this study, these are the only cases that reveal action. This is an important sign: the evidence shows that in the gospels, when Jesus speaks in metaphors, He does it by referring to people —He himself, and His Father, many times—, objects, animals, plants, that is to say, categories of +[animate] or -[animate] more than actions or expressions related to actions.

Conclusion

We know that language is an instrument to conceptualize and interact with the world immediately surrounding us. The world is an extension of ourselves, so we need to find ways to accommodate that relationship in our mind so as to project it to our language. Metaphors are very useful tools to get us closer to realities that are not easy to explain, that is to say, to put those realities into words to give them the meaning we want to convey. Metaphors are the way by which the abstract and intangible dimensions of our experience can be conceptualized in terms of the known, familiar, and concrete, or, as Kovecses says, one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. So metaphors make it possible for us to understand our language better, and we have seen that this is so from Greek to English, in Aramaic, in Hebrew, in Hebrew, and in Arabic too. We can say from this evidence that metaphors are important for human language, as an extension to cognition. In instances in which Jesus uses them, it is clear to see how well related they were with the situation and the context of His messages. Jesus adapted His language to His audiences that would mainly be formally uneducated in an agricultural society. That may be due to the fact that the metaphors He would use had such a strong cultural content, with an amazing immediacy. We can then see that the close relationship that metaphors have with everyday human experience is what makes them so dominant in the parables taught by Jesus.

Moreover, the presence of metaphors is dominant as a clear indication that what has been registered in those parables was said by human beings who speak and interact with language and their experience with the world surrounding them within their cultural framework. In the parables that have been analyzed Jesus would usually compare people to objects +[animate] or-[animate] so as to project His message, and the metaphorical expressions He used were grounded by a conceptual metaphor.

The New Testament was written over two thousand years ago and it is pervaded with countless metaphors. Today we read those metaphors and have no difficulty to understand them. Having seen several instances in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, in which Jesus uttered those metaphors, we can attest that the metaphor is a natural cognitive way of explaining life and our relationship with the surrounding world through language. That is the reason why Jesus used metaphors so frequently and in such a natural way when He taught His spiritual truths. This is indicative that the human mind is a factory que is constantly producing the type of language that will explain more abstract realities in a more simple way. And by saying that the mind is a Factory, we are once again making use of a conceptual metaphor.

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