



## METAPHORIC EXPRESSIONS IN DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS TEXTS

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**Annotation:** *The conduit metaphor for language seems to offer us a well-organized framework for comprehending what it is that we accomplish with words. However, as Lakoff and Johnson contend, this particular metaphor effectively demonstrates how powerful conceptual metaphors can be in structuring our experience to the point where they render us completely unaware of what is left out of the worldview they shape. This is another quality of conceptual metaphors that should make us wary of them. In other words, the conduit metaphor can successfully blind us to the role that speakers and situations play in the process of communication by, for example, implying that words and phrases have meaning regardless of the speaker or context.*

**Key words:** *Metaphors, conceptual metaphors, religious text, conventional approach*

As a result, this specific metaphor deprives us of any tools for comprehending or even identifying circumstances in which the meaning is conveyed not by the words used but rather by the context in which they are stated. The conduit metaphor may also shape our comprehension of language in a way that makes us blind to instances in which the same statement might mean quite different things to different individuals depending on their histories, expectations, and other factors. Metaphors therefore help us to structure our words, actions, and ideas while simultaneously eliminating other options. Because of this, we are left without any means of understanding or even recognizing situations in which the meaning is communicated not via the words employed but rather through the context in which they are delivered. The conduit metaphor might potentially skew our understanding of language, causing us to miss situations when the same phrase could mean quite different things to different people based on their backgrounds, expectations, and other considerations. Hence, metaphors assist us in organizing our thoughts, words, and deeds while also ruling out alternative possibilities. "God is love," come to mind. This specific mental metaphor precludes a wide range of options, including everything entailed by understanding the universe as being dominated by a vindictive God, in addition to shaping a "reality" in which God stands as the divine caregiver for all creation. And if the idea put forward by Lakoff and Johnson is accurate, then this affects the faithful's perceptions of their relationship with God. So, as we've seen, Lakoff and Johnson assert that individuals who employ various conceptual metaphors may really experience various "realities"; specifically, they contend that conceptual metaphors may produce new "realities" by organizing



speech, cognition, and behavior. Hence, it's possible that a new metaphor in religious terminology may let individuals have access to the divine in ways that weren't before possible. Think about the metaphor "God is love" once more. We may contend, using the theory put out by Lakoff and Johnson, that when individuals first started to think of God as love, they also started to feel a loving God; in other words, their "reality" had changed. Yet, a comparable "shift in reality" could have taken place when Jesus introduced the idea of "God as father" into Hebrew monotheistic. The metaphors used in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Quran might also be seen as creating new "realities" by offering up new avenues for encountering the divine.

This method of contemplating metaphor in religious discourse also draws attention to a problematic aspect of religious experience. As we have seen, metaphors function in accordance with Lakoff and Johnson by focusing our attention on specific characteristics of things while simultaneously excluding specific other characteristics. As a result, the metaphor "God as father" highlights certain of the attributes of God (might, providential care, etc.) while hiding from us others of the alleged attributes that are difficult to relate to paternity, such as "God as nurturer." The metaphor "God as father" may thus make it easier to experience God in a particular way while excluding many other options. One reason not to relegate the study of metaphor within religious language to the exclusive, abstract concern of a few scholars is that these observations would seem to concur with the analyses of religious language developed by those feminist theologians who have pointed to the detrimental effects of the almost exclusively use of male metaphors for God within the monotheistic traditions. So if Lakoff and Johnson are right, there is reason to believe that particular conceptual metaphors have influenced whole religious traditions. We would have cause to believe that such analogies have influenced how religious people perceive the divine and how they comprehend the language they use to attempt to discuss it. Furthermore, being cautious about how certain conceptual metaphors have influenced whole religious traditions may have far-reaching effects on how the divine is perceived in the future.

Although there are still supporters for each of the three conventional approaches to religious language, modern theories of metaphor may offer far more compelling theoretical explanations of religious speech. Furthermore, even if they first seem to be mutually incompatible, the idea that religious language is primarily metaphorical rather than literal may make it easier to see a variety of metaphors or models of the divine as having equal importance (for example, the metaphors of father and mother when applied to the deity). It may also be more difficult for one interpretation of God to prevail over all others by bringing attention to the variety of viable metaphors, especially when each may be seen as having something to offer to a more comprehensive religious understanding. This finding may open the door



to an understanding of the benefits that religious persons may stand to gain by investigating the metaphors used in various religious traditions. Once religious language is seen of as operating in the way described above, viewing them as complementing rather than adversaries would appear to become a more acceptable alternative. And it is obvious that this might be extremely advantageous for the inhabitants of a globe that is becoming more and more diverse.

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