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**BIBLICAL vs. HUMAN PARADOXES,
 AND WAYS OF DEALING WITH POST-PARADOXICAL CONFUSION
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I would like to thank Professor Olga Petrovna Vorobyova for her inspirational instruction and guidance. A wonderful scholar and teacher, Olga Petrovna has instilled in me a deep appreciation and love for the beauty and intricacy of language and linguistics. She has been very generous in her support of my academic pursuits. Dear Olga Petrovna, may the light of the Lord shine upon you!

O.A. Jaffae/Kolomiytseva. Biblical vs. Human Paradoxes, and Ways of Dealing with Post-Paradoxical Confusion. This article proposes a comparative study of semantics and pragmatics of human and biblical paradoxes in English discourse. Paradoxes are part of the subconscious code of language. The author uses methods of cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, psycholinguistics, and discourse analysis to prove that manipulative human paradoxes are mentally destructive for the addressee, since they cause post-paradoxical confusion. And conversely, biblical paradoxes are beneficiary for the recipient, which makes them an effective tool in biblical paradoxical therapy.

Key Words: biblical paradoxes, human paradoxes, code of the subconscious, post-paradoxical confusion, biblical paradoxical therapy

О.А. Джеффи/Коломийцева. Библейские vs. светские парадоксы и способы преодоления пост-парадоксального замешательства. Статья посвящена сравнительному исследованию семантических и прагматических характеристик парадоксальных высказываний в английском библейском и светском дискурсе. Парадоксы рассматриваются как одна из структур кода бессознательного. Используя методы когнитивистики, прагмалингвистики, психолингвистики и дискурс-анализа, автор доказывает, что светские манипулятивные парадоксы отрицательно влияют на психику адресата и являются причиной эффекта пост-парадоксального замешательства. Библейские парадоксы, напротив, оказывают благоприятное воздействие на реципиента и могут быть успешно использованы в ходе библейской парадоксальной терапии.

Ключевые слова: библейские парадоксы, светские парадоксы, код бессознательного, пост-парадоксальное замешательство, библейская парадоксальная терапия

О.А. Джеффі/Коломійцева. Біблійні vs. світські парадокси та способи подолання пост-парадоксального збентеження. Стаття присвячена порівняльному дослідженню семантичних і прагматичних характеристик парадоксальних висловлень в англійському біблійному та світському дискурсах. Парадокси розглядаються як одна зі структур коду несвідомого. Користуючись методами когнітивістики, прагмалінгвістики, психолінгвістики та дискурс-аналізу, автор доводить, що світські маніпулятивні парадокси негативно впливають на психіку адресата і спричиняють ефект пост-парадоксального збентеження. Біблійні парадокси, навпаки, впливають на психіку реципієнта позитивно і можуть успішно застосовуватись у біблійній парадоксальній терапії.

Ключові слова: біблійні парадокси, світські парадокси, код несвідомого, пост-парадоксальне збеньження, біблійна парадоксальна терапія.

1. Introduction. Paradoxes are among the most interesting structures of the subconscious code of language. The *objective* of this research is a comparative semantic and pragmatic study of biblical and human paradoxes. It is hypothesized that human and biblical paradoxes, being structurally similar, produce opposite perlocutionary effects. Among human paradoxes are those which have a negative impact upon the psychological state of the listener, who may experience the so-called post-paradoxical confusion manifested by specific destructive responses. On the other hand, biblical paradoxes are intellectually and spiritually stimulating, which makes them an effective tool in dealing with the negative effects of human paradoxes. The empirical data of this research – 174 biblical and 103 human paradoxes – come from fiction and newspaper articles

2. Semantic Characteristics of Paradoxes. What differs biblical (divine) paradoxes from the secular (human) ones is their authorship. Human paradoxes are coined in human speech, while divine paradoxes come from the mouth of God. Therefore, we have the opposition ‘the carnal man vs. the omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent God’.

Traditionally, the paradox, either biblical or human, is defined as an antonymous juxtaposition of two or more contrasting messages. The invariant structure of a paradox, regardless of its type, can be described by the formula **X is Y = X is not Y**. The presence of two or more mutually excluding truths challenges the rules of logic and thus creates a certain cognitive dissonance, as in example (1), where love and hate are two opposite feelings.

- (1) “*There is no love without hate,*” he says, as if stating a *QED* (Eva Hoffman, *Appassionata*, p. 158).

When viewed from the standpoint of cognitive linguistics, paradoxes can be described as conceptual blending. The latter results from interaction of several mental spaces: two or more *input spaces*, a *generic space* that maps onto each of the inputs and contains what the inputs have in common, and *the blended space* that has parts of the inputs arranged according to the structure captured by the generic space [Fauconnier and Turner 2000: 47]. The blend develops emergent structure that is not in the inputs [Ibid: 42; see also Kiang 2005: 14]. In a paradox, the emergent meaning that appears in a blend is that of *an extremely intense emotion bordering on obsession*. A person who experiences such emotion is unable to explain his/her conception of the described entity. Let us consider the biblical paradox in (2).

- (2) *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:20).*

On the surface, biblical and human paradoxical utterances look quite similar. What makes them different is the resultant, emergent meaning of the paradox. For a human contradictory utterance, it is *uncertainty*; the speaker wonders which of the input statements is true. In example (1) it can be either love or hate. On the other hand, both messages constituting a paradoxical utterance are true, and so is the emergent meaning. Biblical paradoxes convey some generic, absolute truth about the nature of God or its creation. For example, the reader of the biblical verse given in (2) may wonder whether the things of God are visible or not. The answer is *yes, God's things are visible but only to the eyes of the spirit*. The inherent contradiction introduces the reader into the realm of the supernatural. Instead of confusion, there is enlightenment.

Viewed from the standpoint of pragmatic theory, paradoxes appear abnormal because of the conflict they create between the speaker's communicative strategy and the maxims of conversation [Жигадло 2006:8]. And yet if we agree that paradoxes are semantically or pragmatically abnormal, we will have to ask ourselves: why do the structures so obviously controversial become popular in everyday speech, in literature, poetry in particular, in scientific and political discourse? We believe that the use of a paradox activates the addressee's subconscious. Bewildered by a paradox, the addressee's mind starts wandering freely, engaging loose associations and hidden connections between seemingly unrelated things, as in (3).

- (3) *Because you can only understand what it means to be free if you have been a slave (Eve Hoffman, Appassionata: 163).*

The reader wonders whether there is really a similarity between freedom and slavery. The lexical units naming them are in antonymous relationship. Antonyms belong in the realm of language as a system; they are not expected to be used in referring to the same entity.

A paradox can be described as infringement of paradigmatic relations of language upon the syntagmatic organization of speech. The result is a shift in the psychological condition of the addressee. The censorship role of consciousness gets reduced to the minimum. Instead of processing the message from the premises of natural logic, the addressee merely accepts the information as a given: *oh, isn't that true?*

Any human language has specific units and structures that activate the subconscious sphere of the recipient [Spivak 1992:32]. The total scope of such units is referred to as *the subconscious code of language* [Kolomiytseva 1999: 27]. The subconscious bridges human soul (mind, emotions and intellect) and human spirit (conscience, intuition, fellowship with God). The realm of spirit is often thought of as something esoteric,

bordering on the supernatural, yet its existence can hardly be denied. The paradox is extremely effective in triggering the addressee's subconscious sphere.

3. Pragmatic Functions of Paradoxes. First of all, let us agree that speaking does not necessarily imply interaction with other individuals. One may move the lips or let the fingers run across a computer keyboard, totally oblivious of the presence of others nearby. Other quick examples are monologues of individuals in altered states of consciousness (being asleep or drug-induced) [Spivak 1992:47], of young children, and of mentally sick people, especially schizophrenic patients. When the speaker focuses entirely on his/her own self, we can say that his/her speech behavior is guided by the expressive mindset [Kolomiytseva 1999:14]. Meanwhile, when the speaker establishes a rapport with another individual, his/her expressive mindset gets accessible to others. The mindset is a more generic notion than the communicative intension; it is the speaker's readiness to either interact with another individual or externalize his/her thoughts in a lonely soliloquy.

Paradoxical utterances that are based on the expressive mindset can be referred to as expressive paradoxes.

3.1. Expressive Paradoxes. Below are two statements made by a schizophrenic patient.

- (4) *I will have lunch... No, I'm not having lunch today.*
- (5) *I got up in the morning. I put on my coat, I didn't put my coat on and I went for a walk.*

Without knowing what exactly happened in the patient's life, it is impossible to tell which of the inputs is true. The important thing is that the patient does not care about the truth; he concentrates on a variety of possibilities. The patient runs through several options of what may have happened and gets a real kick out of it. One of the key symptoms of schizophrenia is ambivalence. Schizophrenic patients display amazing easiness in using or responding to paradoxical stimuli. Contradictory utterances used by mentally sick individuals can be referred to as *self-expressive paradoxes*. Schizophrenic patients use paradoxes not to impress anyone; they merely speak in the way they are able to. For a mentally sick individual, the paradox is a natural form of self-expression.

Paradoxes grounded in the expressive mindset are quite common for poetry or modernistic prose. It is not unlikely for a poet to create unusual concepts, his/her own private universe that abides by the laws unknown to anyone else. Almost every poet comes up with several *poetic paradoxes*. For example:

- (6) *I must be cruel to be kind (W. Shakespeare).*

I dwell in a house that vanished many a summer ago (Robert Frost, Ghost House).

Men work together whether they work together or apart (Robert Frost, The Tuft of Flowers).

The difference between self-expressive and poetic paradoxes is that of spontaneity versus non-spontaneity. A poet chooses to write the way he does; the poems he creates are non-spontaneous.

Paradoxes generated within the communicative mindset draw the addressee's attention to the resources of language and in some way stimulate his/her mind. Expressive paradoxes reflect the author's individual worldview, therefore they are not found in the bible. The Scriptures contain important general truths written for people who have to understand them as intended. The Bible states that *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness* (King James Bible, 2 Timothy 3:16). For the interpretation of a biblical paradox the addressee factor is important, as it is the reader of the Bible who needs to be edified, corrected and instructed in righteousness.

3.2. Communicative Paradoxes. O. Zhygadlo argues that the speaker who uses a paradox violates the maxim of manner for the sake of politeness [Жигадло 2006: 15]. We think that this statement doesn't capture the subtleties. There are two basic groups of communicative paradoxes: those that describe certain facts (informative paradoxes) vs. utterances that require certain behavioral response (directive paradoxes). Their differentiation basically corresponds to J. Austin's classification of speech acts into constatives and performatives [Austin 1962].

3.2.1. Informative (Edifying and Brainstorming) Paradoxes. Informative paradoxes can be found both in the Bible and secular literature. Biblical and human paradoxes, being similar in general, have somewhat different pragmatic functions. Because of the inherent contradiction, both biblical and human paradoxes require an extra effort for their interpretation. The difference between human and biblical informative paradoxes comes down to the specific psychological process involved in the interpretation of the utterance, which is *faith* vs. *intuition*. The reader of the Bible accepts paradoxical utterances by faith, while a scientific or a philosophical paradox triggers the recipient's intuition. Biblical paradoxes are edifying; human contradictory utterances are brainstorming. Let us consider example (7).

(7) *And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death* (Revelation 1:18).

If we came across this paradox in a poetic text, we would definitely interpret it as a figure of speech. Since no one can be the first and the last or alive and dead at the same time, it would be logical to assume that the paradox is a poetic image. However, the biblical verse quoted above is not symbolic at all. Jesus is really all of the above. The explicit contradictions *the first – the last* and *liveth and was dead* are employed to enhance the idea of God's majesty. The emergent meanings are *Jesus is above all* and *Jesus is immortal*. God is the absolute truth; He is all in all. There is no discreteness in God; the very idea of our Creator is all-encompassing. The paradox is used in the Bible not to make the divine message difficult for people to understand; it is the best way to convey the truth of God's nature. The function of the paradox is that of *edification*.

Human paradoxes applied in scientific or philosophical texts are similar to biblical paradoxes; see (8).

(8) *Extreme justice is extreme injustice*(Cicero, In *De Officiis*) [Groethe 2004: 93]

Nothing is permanent but change (Heraclitus, In *Fragmento*) [Groethe 2004: 94]

Agreement is made more precious by disagreement (Publilius Syrus, in *Moral Sayings*) [Groethe 2004: 98]

The communicative intention of the authors of paradoxes is to deliver a message about a certain law or principle. The obvious question would be why a philosopher or scientist choose a more sophisticated expression instead of a simpler way of stating the truth. First of all, people get fascinated by paradoxical truths that allow them to look at something from an unconventional perspective. The excitement over a paradox can be explained by involvement of the subconscious sphere in the interpretation of the utterance.

L. I. Mandelstamm, a Russian physicist, challenged his students with paradoxes of quantum mechanics. According to him true knowledge incorporates the subconscious sphere of the human mind, the realm involving a person's intuition. At that point, the information becomes an integral part of the student's personality; there is total immersion in the topic, and this is a bridge to creativity. Paradoxes helped to achieve this level of awareness [Misra, Sudarshan1976].

As we previously mentioned, the paradox presents some synthetic truth lineally, or syntagmatically. The use of a paradox (both biblical and human) provides an access to the subconscious of the addressee's mind. It is in the subconscious realm where inspiration strikes and discoveries are made. The ability of a human paradox to activate the subconscious can be referred to as the *brainstorming function*.

The perlocutionary effect of informative paradoxes is that of extreme excitement. Similarly to the addressee of a biblical paradox who is fascinated by God's majesty, a scientist gets enthused about scientific or philosophical truths. Cf. the biblical paradox in (9).

- (9) *Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?*
Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am (John 8:57)

Even if we ignore the fact that Abraham lived about four thousand years before Jesus came to earth in human incarnation, the statement appears absolutely wrong from the morphological point of view. The correct form would be *before Abraham was, I had been*. The rules of English grammar require the Past Perfect Tense to be used when describing an event that took place before another past action. However, when Jesus said *I am*, He used one of the names of Jehovah God, the mysterious יהי יהי Yahveh, the unmarked form of the Hebrew verb תויהל (to be). The resulting message is that of eternity, the timelessness of God and of His Son. God cannot be imprisoned either in time or space. He is free to act in relation to time and is equally free to act outside its limitations [Chafer 1976: 215-216].

3.2.2. Directive (Exhortation and Manipulative Paradoxes). A paradox may be used to bring forth changes in the addressee's behavior. The latter can be regulated either by conscious reasoning (persuasion) or by subconscious influence (suggestion). With their inherent contradictions, paradoxes are part of the discourse strategy of suggestion.

Suggestion can be positive or negative; it can be administered for either beneficial purposes or to create chaos and confusion.

Example (10) given below is an excerpt from one of H. Himmler's speeches translated into English. The chief propagandist of the Third Reich speaks about the extermination of the Jews.

- (10) *I want to also mention a very difficult subject ... before you, with complete candor. It should be discussed amongst us, yet nevertheless, we will never speak about it in public. Just as we did not hesitate on June 30 to carry out our duty as ordered, and stand comrades who had failed against the wall and shoot them -- about which we have never spoken, and never will speak. That was, thank God, a kind of tact natural to us, a foregone conclusion of that tact, that we have never conversed about it amongst ourselves, never spoken about it, everyone ... shuddered, and everyone was clear that the next time, he would do the same thing again, if it were commanded and necessary (H. Himmler's October 4, 1943 Posen Speech)
www.nizkor.org/hweb/.../h/himmler.../ausrottung-transl-nizkor.html*

The expressions 'discussed – not discussed', 'speak – never speak', 'private – public', 'amongst us – before you' may confuse the listeners to the point where they are ready to accept the fact that 'shooting comrades who have failed' is not a private, but a public matter.

Unlike human contradictory utterances, biblical paradoxes produce positive changes in the cognitive and emotional condition of the recipients. The two main functions of biblical paradoxes are exhortation and comfort, as in (11) and (12) .

- (11) *Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities* (Psalm 141:5)
- (12) *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me* (2 Corinthians 12:9)

The text in (11) has an implicit paradox, where contradiction is established between the instruction *be happy when you get smitten or reprov*ed and the common sense *it is not good to be smitten or reprov*ed. The purpose of this exhortation paradox is for the addressee to forgo his pride by learning from a more experienced individual. Example (12) contains a comfort paradox. The addressee is encouraged not to focus on his/her weaknesses. God's promise to give strength to the believer provides one with comfort and assurance.

4. Manipulative Function of Human Paradoxes, and Post-Paradoxical Confusion. Manipulative paradoxes belong to a wide set of discourse manipulative strategies, through which the speaker tries to reach certain agenda by getting the hearer on his side.

Contradictory utterances are typical of political discourse. Below are some examples of President Barak Obama's paradoxes.

- (13) *We've opened millions of new acres for oil and gas exploration in the last three years, and we'll open more. But unlike my opponent, I will not let oil companies write this country's energy plan, or endanger our coastlines, or collect another \$4 billion in corporate welfare from our taxpayers.* (B. Obama's Speech to Democratic Convention. – Associated Press, Friday, September 7, 2012)

Barak Obama's overall stand on oil and gas exploration on the territory of the United States is highly negative. His statement contains a contradiction between opening new acres of land for oil and gas exploration and the refusal to spend money on it and to endanger the country's coastlines. The President does his best to achieve his goal while creating the impression of being flexible.

Example (14) is B. Obama's implicit paradox.

- (14) *We don't want handouts for people who refuse to help themselves, and we certainly don't want bailouts for banks that break the rules. We don't think the government can solve all our problems.*

Handouts for the poor and bailouts for banks that break the rules – those are the very reforms the President of the United States has been actively pushing during the first term of his presidency. The statement *We don't think the government can solve all our problems* is an obvious lie, as for Barak Obama big government is the epitome of success.

The author of a manipulative paradox may hope that the recipient will not notice an obvious contradiction in his message. G. Kunz points out that one difficulty connected with a moral theory is the gap between the theory and life [Kuntz1998:163]. However, once the addressee notices that the information conveyed by the utterance contradicts reality, cognitive uncertainty develops.

The damaging effect of several self-denying instructions is known under the name of *double bind*. The concept was first introduced by the anthropologist Gregory Bateson and his colleagues in their discussions on the complexity of communication in relation to schizophrenia [Bateson 1956: 255]. A double bind is a communicative deadlock in which an individual receives two or more conflicting instructions, one of them negating the other. This creates a situation in which a successful response to one message results in a failed response to the other. Therefore, a person appears to be automatically wrong regardless of the response. The classic example of a negative double bind is that of a mother telling her child that she loves him/her, and at the same time she turns her head away in disgust.

G. Bateson considers contradictory instructions schizophrenogenic. Yet, since they are quite common beyond the sphere of pathology, we propose the term *post-paradoxical confusion*. The latter is the result of any conscious attempt to reconcile two or more contradictory messages, which causes strong psychological discomfort. The conventional manifestations of post-paradoxical confusion are conformism, depression, aggression, and perfectionism. Let us look at different ways people respond to a political paradox in the article below.

- (15) *Gross domestic product, the broadest measure of the nation's economic growth, contracted at an annual rate of 0.1% from October to December, the Commerce Department said Wednesday /.../While a contraction is never encouraging, economists pointed to temporary effects that may have caused a one-time dip, and they see better growth ahead. It's "the best-looking contraction in U.S. GDP you'll ever see," Paul Ashworth, chief U.S. economist for Capital Economics said in a research note (U.S. economy contracts for first time since recession by Annalyn Kurtz) @CNMMoney January 30, 2013: 12:48 PM ET*

The phrase *the best-looking contraction in U.S. GDP you'll ever see* contains a clear contradiction as the word *contraction* contrasts with the expression *the best-looking* and has a negative connotation.

Below are a few responses to the article taken from a public forum.

- *Ummm, this is good news. A war economy based on borrowing is unsustainable. The consumer economy grew at a respectable rate. This transition will and should continue.* – The author readily embraces the paradox by reconciling the contradictory messages. The comment is a clear example of conformism.
- *News flash skippy: ANY economy based on a never-ending sequence of borrow/print more money/spend like a drunken sailor, is unsustainable and therefore doomed.* – The author suggests that the economy is doomed, thus focusing on one of the negative input statements of the paradox. The individual is clearly depressed about the current situation in the government.
- *The only cure is to vote out of the office those of our leaders who were willing to borrow money to pay for two wars and tax cuts for the rich. Of course, the people who keep voting these leaders back into office are the same people who are now screaming for a small government and a decrease in spending. There really is no cure for stupid.* – The attitude towards the paradox is aggressive. The author of the comment gets so upset that he suggests voting deceitful leaders out of the office.

Another way of reacting to a paradox is by challenging one's own inner set of values yet agreeing with the explicit component of the paradox. This kind of response can be referred to as *perfectionism*, and it is characteristic of individuals with below-average self-image, who tend to view themselves as culprits for whatever conflicting situation arises. An example of this kind of response is difficult to find, since people who consider themselves imperfect are not prone to expressing their opinion.

Trying to cope with post-paradoxical confusion causes emotional instability. Any human reaction to a manipulative paradox is sinful and self-destructive. People are simply not meant to deal with two or more contradictory instructions at the same time. The attempt to understand that which is beyond finite ability, and the consequent agonies of thought and mental exhaustion into which they cast themselves thereby, is inappropriate, unnecessary and sinful [Adams 1979:54].

5. Biblical Paradoxical Therapy. Since manipulative paradoxes cause deep emotional instability in the addressee, it would be natural to ask 'What is the best way to deal with post-paradoxical confusion?' One of the practical applications of a linguistic study of paradoxes is the so-called *biblical paradoxical therapy*. We suggest that biblical paradoxes can be successfully employed for repairing the damage inflicted by human manipulative paradoxes.

The very idea of using paradoxes for therapeutic purposes is not new to secular counseling practice. G. Bateson spoke of positive double binds encouraging psychiatrists to confront their patients with the contradictions in their life in such a way that would help them heal [Bateson 1956: 260] Mara SelviniPalazzoli, an Italian psychiatrist, introduced the term *therapeutic paradox* and suggested a whole system

of paradoxical intervention in family therapy, especially with families of seriously disturbed children. For example, the therapist complimented an anorectic daughter for artificially creating her problem so her separated parents would have a reason to see each other and to talk to each other [SelviniPalazzoli 1989: 13]. It has also been experimentally proven that a continuous interplay of metaphoric communication between a patient and a therapist typically results in producing an alternative for constructive change in troubled patients [San Pedro 1987: 75]. By recommending therapeutic paradoxes, a therapist destroys the spontaneity of the symptom, thus allowing a person to choose whether to pursue the destructive behavior or to quit it.

However, the healing power of biblical contradictory utterances is more than cognitive restructuring. The purpose of paradoxical therapy is to replace sinful responses to destructive human paradoxes with proper, biblical ones. By leading the addressee beyond the boundaries of language, a paradox introduces him/her into the realm of the spirit. Hence, the perlocutionary effect of a biblical paradox is the feeling of peace and enlightenment.

Meditation on the meanings and functions of edification paradoxes gives a person confidence and assurance that he is not alone with his predicament, that God is always there for him. Let us consider the examples.

(16) *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then am I strong (2 Corinthians 12:10) – The emergent meaning of this paradox is 'don't get discouraged when there are problems in your life: you will become stronger at the end'.*

(17) *Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise (1 Corinthians 3:18) – It is a good idea to examine yourself and to realize that there is a long way to go before you can consider yourself wise.*

Edification and exhortation paradoxes are mostly effective for individuals who have to cope with specific problems in their lives.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus used a lot of paradoxes. Let us look at a situation when Jesus dealt with a confused and unhappy individual.

(18) *Jesus answered, verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:5)*

Jesus' words are an example of a logical paradox. No wonder, the unbelieving Nicodemus found the Lord's statement fallacious. "How can a man be born again if he is old?" he asked. "Can a man enter into his mother's womb again and be born?" Because Nicodemus tried to use human logic in interpreting the paradox (the Law of Contradiction), he failed to understand the deep spiritual message of the statement: *you need a spiritual birth*. Biblical paradoxes are not to be interpreted logically; they

are designed to transfer one from the realm of rational reasoning up into the subconscious sphere of faith.

The comparative study of biblical and human paradoxes demonstrates how the same structure may be potentially damaging or, on the contrary, beneficial and therapeutic. The further perspective of this research is exposure of beneficial influence of poetic paradoxes, and development of theoretical foundations for Poetic Paradoxical Therapy.

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