

The Spiritual Origin of Prophecy

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Michelle de Nostredame, otherwise known as Nostradamus, was a French astrologer and apothecary of the 16th century, who had become a trusted advisor to Queen Catherine de Medici of France. He was born a Catholic but was of Jewish descent. As a scholar of his time he was well versed in classical Latin literature, and although he was not a doctor he was called upon to help fight outbreaks of the Bubonic plague. In his time astrology was considered a science for helping to predict the weather and various events, and he made a living publishing yearly almanacs. However he is most well known for a series of prophecies that he published in a series of 1,000 quatrains, and due to a remarkable number of accurate hits it is these sets of writings that have never gone out of print since they were published in the 16th century. They are written in an obscure symbolic style, using a combination of French, Latin, and occasionally some Greek.

Among his fulfilled prophecies he predicted the death of King Henry II in a jousting accident. He foretold how his firstborn son, Francis II, would die of an illness before he reached the age of 18. From the letters of ambassadors at the time, it is a documented fact that his successful prophecies created quite a stir at the French court. It is for this reason that Nostradamus came to the attention of Queen Catherine de Medici, who spent much of her regency attempting to resolve the religious wars between Protestants and Catholics. Nostradamus foretold the rise of Henry of Navarre to the throne of France, who in 1598 issued the Edict of Nantes which gave religious rights to the French Protestants. There are numerous other prophecies, too many to recount here.

In my book, *The Decoded Prophecies of Nostradamus*, I explained how many of the prophecies can be decoded using a numeric system, based on the number that Nostradamus assigned to each quatrain. This took years of research, as there were about 1,000 prophecies mixed up out of order like a giant jig-saw puzzle. But I also wanted to explain how Nostradamus was able to predict certain events of the future. One theory is that he worded the prophecies in such a way that they were bound to eventually be fulfilled. This does not take into account the prophecies that are specific enough to mention a date or the specific name of a person. Another theory is that he based his prophecies on cycles of history, where certain events would repeat themselves based on astrological alignments. While there is some truth in that he made use of astrology to sometimes pin down a date or geographic location, it still does not explain how he arrived at obtaining detailed and specific information concerning future events. Nostradamus had stated that he obtained knowledge of future events via visions or dreams by Divine inspiration, and in one private letter he describes his method in detail. He would stay awake at night from midnight until four in the

morning, waiting to receive inspiration from an angelic spirit which he would then write down with his quill. Having been unsuccessful for nine nights in a row, he then said a prayer to his guardian angel and later he received an answer in a dream. The answer was then written in a highly symbolic form, in the form of an acrostic. In other letters he states he could see future misfortunes as in a “burning mirror through cloudy vision.”

To better understand how Nostradamus received his information, in one particular chapter of my book I examined the visions and clairvoyant experiences of Emanuel Swedenborg. Originally a scientist, he began to record his own dreams in a personal diary. At some point his venture into dream analysis opened up further where he was able to see waking visions. Considering the time of Nostradamus when the Catholic Inquisition had much power and there were religious wars between Catholics and French Huguenots, Nostradamus had to be very careful in what he had to say. Unlike Nostradamus, Swedenborg was not only able to speak more freely but he did so with scientific and encyclopedic preciseness. As he claimed to have visions over a period of 27 years and wrote numerous volumes, it is worth comparing his experience with what Nostradamus had explained in his writings.

Nostradamus either received his information while meditating at night or from dreams while sleeping. Swedenborg stated that one could receive visions while either awake or asleep. When sleeping, these visions would come in the form of a dream, and could be just about as symbolic or representative as a regular vision. Swedenborg stated that there were three kinds of dreams: first, there are prophetic dreams which originate from God; second, instructive dreams which originate from angelic spirits; and third, representative dreams which originate from spirits. Swedenborg distinguished these types of dreams from other ordinary dreams which originate from man’s own mind. [1]

Unlike most people, Swedenborg was able to trace the origin of his dreams. Upon waking, he spoke with angelic intelligences which had produced them in his mind. He described this experience as follows:

“That I might fully know how dreams flowed in, I was put to sleep, and I dreamed that a ship came laden with delicacies and savory food of every kind. The things in the ship were not seen, but were stowed away. Upon the ship stood two armed guards, besides a third who was its captain. The ship passed into a kind of arched dock. So I awoke and thought about the dream. The angelic spirits, who were above, in front, to the right, then addressed me, and told me that they introduced this

dream; and that I might know with certainty that it was from them, I was put into a state as of sleep and at the same time of wakefulness; and they introduced in the same way various things which were pleasant and delightful, an unknown little animal, for example, which was dissipated in a semblance of blackish and shining rays, that darted with marvelous quickness into my left eye. They also presented men and also little children adorned in various ways, and other things besides, with inexpressible pleasantness; about which I also spoke with them. This was done, not once, but many times, and each time I was instructed by them with the living voice.” [2]

In the above passage, Swedenborg mentions the “living voice,” which is an auditory experience by which angels had communicated information which the prophets would then write down in passages of Biblical scripture. It is possible that Nostradamus also used this method to pen down his prophecies. In the first quatrain he wrote the following:

Being seated at night in secret study,
Alone, reposed on the brass tripod,
A slender flame coming forth from the solitude,
Made to pronounce that which should not be believed in vain.

This is what Nostradamus said in the first edition. In later editions, perhaps fearful of being accused before the Catholic censors of the time that he heard a voice, he altered the word *proferer* in line 4 (meaning “to pronounce”) to *prosperer* (meaning “to prosper”). This latter translation is what appears in most current editions of the prophecies of Nostradamus.

As the prophecies of Nostradamus are written symbolically, it is more likely that he saw the future events in dreams or visions rather than through a direct auditory experience. Dreams, in many cases, are symbolic representations of what is communicated by angels. In many instances Swedenborg confirmed that the symbolic representation of his dream corresponded with subject matter communicated by angels:

“It is worthy of mention that when after waking I related what I had seen in a dream, and this in a long series, certain angelic spirits (not of those spoken of above) then said that what I related wholly coincided, and was the same, with the subjects which they had been talking about together, and that there was absolutely no difference; but still that they were not the things themselves of which they had spoken, but representatives of the same, into which their ideas were thus turned

and changed in the world of spirits; for the ideas of the angels are turned into representatives in the world of spirits; and so everything which they talked about together was thus represented in the dream. It was further said by them that the same discourse might be turned into other representatives, and indeed into similar and dissimilar ones, with unlimited variety. That they were turned into such as have been described, was in accordance with the state of the spirits around me, and thus according to my own state in which I then was. In a word, very many dissimilar dreams might come down and be presented from the same discourse, and thus from one origin; because, as has been said, the things which are in a man's memory and affection are recipient vessels, in which ideas are varied and received representatively according to the variations of their form and the changes of state." [3]

Another example is provided by Swedenborg, in which a person appears in a dream to represent a subject matter of conversation among angels:

"One more instance of a similar kind I am at liberty to relate. I dreamed a dream, but of the common sort, and when I was awake I told it all, from beginning to end. The angels said that it coincided throughout with what they had spoken of together; not that the things seen in the dream were the same, but very different, into which the thoughts of their conversation were turned; so, however, that they were representative and correspondent; and indeed even to the particulars, so that nothing was wanting. I then spoke with them about influx, how such things flow in and are varied. There was a person of whom I had the idea that he was in natural truth, which idea I had gathered from the acts of his life. There was a conversation among the angels about natural truth, and on this account that person was represented to me; and the things which he spoke with me and did in the dream, followed in order representatively and correspondently from their discourse with one another. But still there was nothing which was absolutely like or the same." [4]

The inner sight of Nostradamus seems to have been opened in a similar manner described by Swedenborg. If this is the case, there are two levels of symbolism in the writings of Nostradamus: first the symbolism presented in the original dream or vision, and second the symbolism and language used by Nostradamus to compress such a vision into a four line quatrain. Thus without careful research not only is the possibility of error in interpretation increased, but it is also quite possible that one quatrain may deal with multiple events. One topic or subject matter may be represented in multiple ways in a dream, according to the current thoughts and experiences of the dreamer. Luckily future events of importance are repeated multiple times in the quatrains, and these are numerically related according to the decoding system presented in the work, *The Decoded Prophecies of Nostradamus*.

Both Nostradamus and Swedenborg were influenced by Neoplatonic philosophy. In the late 15th century, there was a revival in interest in Neoplatonism due to the influence and publications of the humanist philosopher Marsilio Ficino. Nostradamus again took care to keep this interest hidden, as Ficino had to defend himself against the Catholic Church on the charge of heresy. In one of his works Nostradamus described the Italian scholar Julius Caesar Scaliger as “a second Marsilio Ficino in Platonic philosophy.” In a second edition published two years later Nostradamus changed his description to read that Scaliger’s soul was “...for all I know...that father of eloquence, Cicero; in his perfect and supreme poetry a second Maro, in his medical teaching worthy any two of Galen.”[5] In Platonic thought, the material world is an outward manifestation of the world of ideas, just as the body is the outward manifestation of the soul. The modern naturalistic view of the world is simply not compatible with the phenomenon of prophecy, thus any discussion is immediately met with skepticism. However foreknowledge of future events is compatible with the Platonic view of the world. Future events can be known to those who are in touch with the world of ideas, before such events become manifest in the material world.

This dual nature in Platonic thought is described in Swedenborg’s own words as “spiritual influx.” There is a continuous influx from the spiritual world into the natural world, and lacking this knowledge Naturalists are unable to explain the origin of living things. Without this spiritual influx, nature in itself is dead.[6] This influx is constant, and is the origin of life. It is also the means by which God continually governs all of creation:

“This communication, which is effected by influx according to conjunction, is at this day unknown, for the reason that each and every thing is attributed to nature and nothing is known concerning what is spiritual, which at this day is so remote that when it is thought of, it appears as nothing. ...But the nature of influx is such that from the Divine of the Lord there is influx into every angel, into every spirit, and into every man, and that thus the Lord governs every one, not only in a universal way, but also in things most particular, and this immediately from Himself, and likewise mediately through the spiritual world.” [7]

This Divine governance, down to the most particular things, can explain the presence of specific details in many of the prophecies of Nostradamus. Many of the things that we think are random or inconsequential events are planned out far in advance.

Swedenborg’s descriptions of the spiritual world are extensive, as he claimed that his vision into the spiritual world was opened for a period of about twenty-seven years. In the center of heaven he saw a spiritual sun or light, in which dwelled the “God-Man,” from whom all things exist. It is this spiritual world which explains the existence of prophecy, for unlike the natural world, in the

spiritual world space and time do not exist. Those who die and enter into this world enter a world where there are only ideas abstracted from space and time:

“All who die and become angels put off those two things proper to nature, which...are space and time; for they enter then into spiritual light, in which the objects of thought are truths, and the objects of sight are similar to the objects in the natural world, but correspondent to their thoughts. The objects of their thought which, as was said, are truths, derive nothing at all from space and time; and though the objects of their sight appear as in space and in time, still they do not think from them. The reason is that spaces and times there are not rigid as in the natural world, but changeable according to the states of their life. Hence in the ideas of their thought there are instead states of life — instead of spaces such things as have relation to states of love, and instead of times such things as have relation to states of wisdom.” [8]

In the spiritual world, it is one’s own ideas and inner imagination which immediately becomes reality. As this world is abstracted from space and time, angels are given a higher view of the infinity contained in the Divine:

“The true idea of the Divine Infinity is imparted to angels by the fact that they are instantly present under the sight of the Lord, with no intervening space or time, even though they were at the farthest extremity of the universe; and the true idea of Divine Eternity is imparted by the fact that thousands of years do not appear to them as time — scarcely otherwise than as if they had lived but a minute; and both ideas are received from this, that in their present they have at once their past and their future. Hence they have no solicitude for the future; nor have they ever any idea of death, but only the idea of life; so that in all their present there is the Eternity and Infinity of the Lord.” [9]

A similar idea is expressed by Nostradamus where he states that in the presence of the Divine, past, present and future appear as one: the Divine eternity embraces all of time. Likewise according to Swedenborg, to the Divine all future things are seen as if in the present. Divine foresight is the origin of prophecy, and is necessary for Divine providence.[10] According to Swedenborg, not only are all things foreseen, but also the future state of each person after death. There is a constant spiritual influence to bend man’s evil will towards what is good, which is determined by Divine foresight.[11] Everything that happens according to the Divine will is done in regard to what is infinite and eternal. [12] The ultimate purpose of creation is the salvation of the human race, so that all may return to the One who created them. [13]

Modern science is gradually catching up to the concept of this timeless reality where space has no meaning, and things are closer to each other not in terms of distance but in terms of similar states. When explaining the singular point from which there was a “Big Bang” which created the universe, modern physics describe the laws in such a way where space and time do not exist. The

phenomenon of “quantum entanglement”, where two particles separated by extremely large distances can influence each other with no intervening force in the space between them, is evidence that this is an ever present reality. This reality on a small quantum scale is beginning look very similar to the spiritual world in which space and time do not exist. Clairvoyance is evidence of this reality. Swedenborg himself had one of the earliest cases of clairvoyance, where he was able to describe a fire in Stockholm while at a dinner party 300 km away. The case was confirmed by several witnesses, and was investigated by none other than the German philosopher Immanuel Kant.

When reading the prophecies of Nostradamus, the majority of them concentrate on wars, famine, plague or revolution. As to why the prophecies tend to be so negative, these focal periods are the times where a lesson needs to be learned, and foreknowledge of these events can help mitigate them. Swedenborg provides the following explanation as to why wars are allowed, and why evil is permitted:

“It is not from the Divine Providence that wars should exist, for they are united with murders, plundering, violence, cruelty, and other enormous evils, which are diametrically opposed to Christian charity; but still they cannot but be permitted, because man’s life’s love since the time of the most ancient people meant by Adam and his wife ...has become such as to desire to rule over others, and at length over all, and to possess the wealth of the world, and at last all wealth. These two loves cannot be kept bound, since it is according to the Divine Providence for every one to be allowed to act from freedom according to reason ...and without permissions man cannot be led from evil by the Lord, and so cannot be reformed and saved; for unless evils were permitted to break out, man would not see them, thus would not acknowledge them, and so could not be led to resist them. ... For this reason there are lesser and greater wars, the lesser between possessors of estates and their neighbors, and the greater between the sovereigns of kingdoms and their neighbors.” [14]

In many cases, something good can come out of a bad event, which is not seen until much later. An event that we view as “bad” often leads to introspection, correcting something within ourselves that we would have otherwise not acknowledged. It should be remembered that this life is temporary, and the Divine always has the eternal end in view when determining what events are allowed to take place now.

Swedenborg tended not to make prophecies concerning the future, as he thought that knowing the future inhibits man's rationality and free will, and put much stress on allowing each person to determine their own spiritual direction.[15] However, in some of his visions he may have unwittingly been a witness to future events that were first enacted in the "world of ideas" or the spiritual world. His greatest vision took place in the year 1757, which concerned a judgment that took place upon the religious leaders of the Catholic Church. Over thirty years later the political power of the Catholic Church was broken with the outbreak of the French Revolution and the wars of Napoleon which followed, changing the face of Europe. Some of these events seem to have been foreseen in a general way in Swedenborg's visions. Many of the prophecies of Nostradamus concern the French Revolution and Napoleon, and he even stated that there would be a great persecution of the Christian Church in the year 1792. Is this merely a coincidence? Swedenborg's vision is compared in more detail with the prophecies of Nostradamus in my book *The Decoded Prophecies of Nostradamus*. Prophecy is thus not miraculous; it is part of the natural order of things. Prophets are simply seeing the event in the spiritual world before it manifests itself in the material world.

Prophecy provides evidence of a spiritual reality beyond this natural world. Although Swedenborg often cites instances of Biblical dreams and visions as evidence of prophecy, the prophecies of Nostradamus provide further confirmation of this spiritual view. The original publications of the prophecies of Nostradamus are still extant. Unlike the Bible, it is impossible for skeptics to state that the prophecy was written after the event. That has been my goal in cataloging and arranging the prophecies of Nostradamus from beginning to end with an accurate translation and historical references, so that more people can assess the facts. Many are general, but some are quite specific in detail. While proving the existence of God or the afterlife will perhaps always be beyond our grasp, fulfilled prophecies are within the realm of human knowledge which are easier to validate. From that we can infer that the true nature of reality is much bigger, more spiritual, and more meaningful than the modern naturalistic point of view.

NOTES:

[1] Swedenborg, *Heavenly Arcana*, n. 1975-1976.

[2] Swedenborg, *Heavenly Arcana*, n. 1977.

[3] Swedenborg, Heavenly Arcana, n. 1980.

[4] Swedenborg, Heavenly Arcana, n. 1981.

[5] Wilson, p. 35.

[6] Swedenborg, Angelic Wisdom concerning Divine Love & Wisdom, n. 340.

[7] Swedenborg, Heavenly Arcana, n. 6057(3), 6058.

[8] Swedenborg, Angelic Wisdom concerning Divine Love & Wisdom, n. 70.

[9] Swedenborg, Heavenly Arcana, n. 1382.

[10] Swedenborg, Heavenly Arcana, n. 4815(4).

[11] Swedenborg, Angelic Wisdom concerning Divine Providence, n. 333.

[12] Swedenborg, Angelic Wisdom concerning Divine Providence, n. 56.

[13] Swedenborg, Angelic Wisdom concerning Divine Providence, n. 58.

[14] Swedenborg, Angelic Wisdom concerning Divine Providence, n. 251.

[15] Swedenborg, Angelic Wisdom concerning Divine Providence, n. 178-9.

Author Bio

Doug Webber has been a software architect and consultant for over 15 years, specializing in middleware technologies in the financial industry. He has a degree in Near Eastern Studies from U.C. Berkeley, as well as a degree in Software Engineering. In 2012 he published the theological works of Emanuel Swedenborg in the book “The Divine Revelation of the New Jerusalem” as well as the book, “The Decoded Prophecies of Nostradamus.” In 1994 he appeared as a subject matter expert on Nostradamus in the CBS documentary, “Mysteries of the Ancient World.” He currently lives in New Jersey with his wife and three children.