

The Discerner

the voice of... **Religion Analysis Service**

A QUARTERLY EXPOSING
UNBIBLICAL TEACHING & MOVEMENTS

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January • February • March 2012

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*"Hereby know we the spirit of truth
and the spirit of error" 1 John 4:6*

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Religion Analysis Service

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IN MEMORIAM

We regret to inform our readers that another Member of our Board of Reference has left us. On February 5, 2012, Rev./Dr. Roy Emmett Knuteson went to be with his Lord and Savior, succumbing to the final stages of Parkinson's Disease. His loving wife, "Trudi" and children were at his side. His obituary is hard to abbreviate: Dr. Knuteson was born and grew up in Wisconsin Rapids, WI, attended the local schools, married his sweetheart "Trudi", and served with her in rest home ministries and churches for over 60 years. He enjoyed pastorates in Alexandria, MN; Concord and Whittier, CA; and Fort Collins, CO.

Roy received his undergraduate degree from Northwestern University in Minnesota, where he later taught as a Professor of Biblical Archaeology and New Testament Greek. He received his Master of Theology degree from the Dallas Theological Seminary and his Doctor of Philosophy from the California School of Theology. Dr. Knuteson was a prodigious writer, authoring numerous articles for Christian magazines. He wrote dozens of articles for The Discerner, the last of which we plan to publish in an upcoming issue. His son, Randall, plans to complete this work. In all of these contributions Dr. Knuteson displayed a fervent passion for the Word of God, its



authenticity, its infallibility, and its complete sufficiency and reliability for salvation and preparation for the life to come.

In my many phone calls to Roy, I always sensed a “sweet reasonableness” of attitude and consideration. RAS will miss his guidance on our Board of Reference.

May God bless Roy’s memory to us all. May his words of counsel and insight continue with us all!

Laurence J. Sutherland

DEAR READER

In our youth we played the game: “What Then?” The idea of this game is to begin with a story, and then all of the participants in the game would add, in succession, their contributions to answer the question: “What Then?”. Invariably, perhaps after a lot of “rabbit trails”, it came to some finality: What is the final end? Depending on the participant answering the last question it must inevitably result in answers such as “death, heaven, extinction, eternal bliss, happy ever after, etc.” Theologians would insert here that eschatology, the “study of end times” is really in vogue here. This is simple lineal thinking that ends in a consummation. An Eastern worldview such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Hare Krishna, Transcendental Meditation would advance a different view – there is no final end, everything is in flux, the philosophy is circular. From this they advance to reincarnation, transmigration of souls, endless Nirvana or other cosmic possibilities. New Age thinking is submerged in this endless cycle.

Biblical Christianity gives clear answers to the question “What then?”
I submit just a few answers:

1. There is a heaven to gain and a hell to avoid. “The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”. Romans 6:23.
2. There is a judgment ahead. “It is appointed unto men, once to die, and then the judgment”. Hebrews 9:27. Christians shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ, the so- called “Bema” seat, where our works will be judged or rewarded. 2. Corinthians 5:10.
3. The final existence for Christians is permanent conscious blessedness. Unbelievers will experience everlasting, conscious separation from God in hell. Revelation 21:7. There is no biblical evidence for any middle position.
4. All beings, entities, principalities and powers will be finally dealt with. “And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur” (Rev. 20:10); “Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:14); “But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters, and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur” (Rev. 21:8).

These are candid, clear, biblical answers to that penetrating and poignant question: “What then?” that constantly besets the sons of men. We at RAS unequivocally adhere to them and espouse them.

Laurence J. Sutherland

WITH THIS ISSUE

The name “Nostradamus” evokes a variety of views and reflections, from fertile, entertaining speculations to serious involvement with demonic forces. It is almost incomprehensible how a man of such dubious and dark background still is consulted for momentous political decisions, not to say for tantalizing personal horoscopes. RAS president, Steve Lagoon, researches this mysterious person citing an array of academic sources and comes up with some substantive conclusions. Lagoon’s study should fill a niche in our knowledge of numerology and weird occultic applications.

Occasionally in mission circles in the Minneapolis, St. Paul area, I have opportunity to talk with Dr. John Mayer, director of CityVision in the Twin Cities, about his mission-ethnic studies. From his article included, one can extract the enormous wealth of statistics and experience that John possesses. Considering this, we are greatly enriched with his decades of study in Muslim evangelism. His article gives us a frank assessment of Muslim evangelism in the Twin Cities’ area over the last 60 years. We also include new thoughts on global missions as presented by Steve Austvold from a recent webinar on current trends in mission strategies. It would do our churches well to assess our mission outreach programs in the light of these insights.

Dr. Ronald McRoberts in his book review of T.A. Mahon’s “Temporal Delusion” supplies a salutary and succinct analysis of the Emerging Church Movement as it has unfolded over the past decades. The book review confirms what Mahon has observed that the ECM is faddish, misguided, and injurious to basic tenets of faith and practice. Is this all temporal or symptomatic of a deeply entrenched slippery slope from biblical truth and reality?

How about those theological words in vogue? Do we know what theologians and enlightened leaders are talking about? If you score 70% or better you can enjoy solid theological literature.

Laurence J. Sutherland

NOSTRADAMUS

BY STEVE LAGOON

It was Niels Bohr, who famously stated: “Prediction is very difficult, especially about the future.” And perhaps there is none more famous in his day for making prognostications than Nostradamus. In this article, we will examine the legacy of Nostradamus. Was he indeed a prophet as many believe? How should Christians respond when confronted with the claims of Nostradamus’ supporters? It is to this task we proceed.

Brief Biographical Information on Nostradamus

Michel de Notredame was a Frenchman known to history by his Latin name Nostradamus. The *World Book Encyclopedia* states that he was born in the year 1503 and died in 1566.¹ This would make him a contemporary of Luther and Calvin during the heart of the Reformation. The *World Book* provides further biographical information about Nostradamus:

A French astrologer and physician. His fame rests on his book *Centuries* (1555), a series of prophecies in verse. Nostradamus won lasting fame in 1559 when King Henry II of France died in a manner predicted in the *Centuries*. Nostradamus was born in St.-Remy, in Southern France. He earned a doctor’s degree in 1532, and became a professor at the University of Montpellier. The success of *Centuries* gained him an appointment as court physician to King Charles IX of France. He also became an advisor to Catherine de Medicis, wife of King Henry II of France.²

Ashley stated that “Nostradamus came from a long line of Jewish physicians” and that “the family converted to Christianity and took the Christian surname ‘Notre-Dame’³ in honor of the Virgin Mary. This brief biography reveals that Nostradamus had a successful career and moved in powerful circles. He was trained as a physician, but made his mark in history as an astrologer and / or prophet. By

1 John Bell Henneman, *Nostradamus*, World Book Encyclopedia, Volume 14, Chicago IL (World Book, Inc, 1998) 550.

2 Ibid

3 Leonard R. N. Ashley, *The Complete Book of Superstition, Prophecy and Luck*, New York (Barricade Books INC., 1984) 91. Some dispute the fact that Nostradamus came from a line of Jewish physicians.

all accounts, he was a courageous physician who worked tirelessly to help victims of the plague. Tragically, the plague would take the life of his own wife and two children. He would later remarry and have six more children.

How to Assess Nostradamus' Skills at Prognostication

To suggest the direction our assessment of Nostradamus' skill as a prophet will take, we quote once more from Henneman's article in the *World Book Encyclopedia*: "Nostradamus' prophecies are vague and open to interpretation."⁴ We arrive immediately at the problem with the claims of Nostradamus. Since they are written so vaguely, how can one determine if they are genuine?

Falsifiability

In the fields of philosophy and science there are the terms falsification and verification. Indeed, the philosopher Karl Popper taught that "falsifiability . . . is the hallmark of science. Science, in other words, characteristically puts itself at risk, commits itself, by implication at least, as to what is, or would be, observed . . . and hence its theories are always liable to be discarded."⁵ Speaking about verifiability, philosopher Antony Flew stated that: "Verification is any procedure carried out to determine whether a statement is true or false."⁶

In other words, in order to have confidence in a given claim, there must be some way of testing it. For instance, with the theory of evolution, Charles Darwin suggested that all living things descended from common ancestors and that the fossil record would show this widespread gradual evolution of species. This was a testable hypothesis. One can examine the fossil record and either verify or falsify the theory (We believe it clearly falsifies Darwin's theory).

Concerning prophets and their prophecies, the Bible has just such a test. It says:

You may say to yourselves, 'How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?' If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that

4 John Bell Henneman, *Nostradamus*, *World Book Encyclopedia*, Volume 14, Chicago IL (World Book, Inc, 1998) 550.

5 Antony Flew, *A Dictionary of Philosophy-Revised Second Edition*, New York (Random House, 1979) 281.

6 *Ibid*, 368

is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him (Deuteronomy 18:21-22).

So, even one single false prophecy marked the speaker as a false prophet, and the penalty was death (Deuteronomy 18:20). Obviously, such a test would be meaningless unless the prophetic pronouncements were actually clear enough to be understood and tested.

In the same way, we must have a way to verify or falsify the alleged prophecies of Nostradamus. But this is just what we can't do with the vague quatrains of Nostradamus. Leonard Ashley stated it well:

It was Merlin, Magician at the court of the legendary King Arthur, who is supposed to have said that he would 'not speak before our people nor at court save in obscure words, nor will they know what I mean until they see it come to pass.' One Michel de Nortre-Dame (1503-1566) was the past master of this form of prognostication.⁷

Mackay agreed stating that Nostradamus's prophecies "take so great a latitude, both as to time and space, that they are almost sure to be fulfilled somewhere or other in the course of a few centuries."⁸ It is clearly impossible to prove any of Nostradamus' predictions as being fulfilled and accurate, and equally impossible to disprove them as failures. They amount to verbal silly putty to be shaped as one desires. To quote Shakespeare, the predictions of Nostradamus are "much ado about nothing."

The Centuries

The chief work of Nostradamus was the *Centuries*, which was first published in an incomplete version in 1555 with a final edition in 1558, though century seven remained permanently undone.⁹ *Into the Unknown* published by the Reader's Digest Association stated:

Nostradamus during his lifetime published 10 volumes of four-line quatrains, 942 verses in all. He had planned that each volume would contain 100 verses and referred to the volumes as *Centaines*, now popularly called *Centuries* . . . Aside from his *Centuries*, he published widely read almanacs [and] drew horoscopes."¹⁰

7 Leonard R. N. Ashley, *The Complete Book of Superstition, Prophecy and Luck*, New York (Barricade Books INC., 1984)91.

8 Charles Mackay, *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*, New York (Harmony Books, 1980) 287.

9 Richard Abanes, *End-Time Visions: The Road To Armageddon?*, New York (Four Walls Eight Windows, 1988) 190.

10 *Into the Unknown*, Will Bradbury—Editor, Pleasantville, New York (The Reader's Digest Association, INC., 1981) 130-131

We have already concluded that Nostradamus' prophecies in the Centuries are so vaguely written that they are not really specific predictions. Norman Geisler sums up the case well: "There is no real comparison between Nostradamus' predictions and those of the Bible. His are vague, fallible, and occult. Those of the Bible are clear, infallible, and divine. The Bible made numerous clear and distinct predictions hundreds of years in advance. Nostradamus did not."¹¹

Nevertheless, we will briefly examine several well-known passages from the Centuries that supporters of Nostradamus claim prove his prophetic abilities. We begin with the claim that Nostradamus predicted the work of the great scientist Louis Pasteur.

Louis Pasteur

I must admit that when I first read Cheetham's translation of the 25th quatrain of the first century of Nostradamus, I was bit surprised. Wow, Nostradamus actually made reference to a famous scientist by name 300 years in advance. But a closer examination reveals a house of cards with no foundation. Here is Cheetham's translation and commentary on Nostradamus' quatrain dealing with 'Pasteur:'

C1:Q25 *The lost thing is discovered, hidden for many centuries, Pasteur will be celebrated almost as a god-like figure. This is when the moon completes her great cycle, but by other rumours he shall be dishonored.* [Cheetham's commentary follows]
Louis Pasteur, 1822-95. Founding Of Institute, 1889 Another fascinating quatrain which contains not only the name of Pasteur but also a very specific dating although not apparent at first . . . he founded his Institute Pasteur on 14th November 1889; the cycle of the moon ran from 1535 to 1889.¹²

A couple of points are important to make in response to Cheetham's claims. First, the word that Nostradamus wrote in French was "pasteur" defined in French, is equivalent to the English words pastor, minister, or shepherd.¹³ In other words, rather than naming a famous future scientist, Nostradamus was, in fact, merely referring to a nameless future minister or pastor. Some think that he was actually referring to a future pope.

Further, even if you accept Cheetham's claims about a supposed

¹¹ Norman L. Geisler, Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics, Grand Rapids MI (Baker Books, 1999)546.

¹² Erika Cheetham, The Prophecies of Nostradamus: Translated, Edited and Introduced by Erika Cheetham, New York (A Wideview/ Perigree Book, 1973, Capricorn Books Edition, 1975) 32-33.

¹³ Larousse Pocket French-English Dictionary, Paris, (Larousse, 1994)245.

moon cycle that ended in 1889 (something I haven't been able to confirm), history seems clear that the Pasteur Institute was founded, not in 1889 but in 1888 at the latest. For instance, Kenneth Manning stated: "The Pasteur Institute in Paris, a world center for the study, prevention, and treatment of disease, was founded in 1888 in gratitude to him."¹⁴ Wikipedia reported more specifically that "The [Pasteur] institute was founded on June 4, 1887, and inaugurated on November 14, 1888."¹⁵

So whatever Nostradamus might have had in his mind, he clearly was not referring to Louis Pasteur!

Adolf Hitler

Erika Cheetham makes the case for Nostradamus' prediction of Adolf Hitler with her English translation of C2:Q24 followed by her commentary:

Beast wild with hunger will cross the rivers, the greater part of the battlefield will be against Hitler. He will drag the leader in a cage of iron, when the child of Germany observes no law. [Cheetham's commentary follows] One of Nostradamus' most remarkable series of quatrains, with the name Hitler given in anagram as Hister. There can be little doubt that Hitler is implied; who else could be so well described by the last line, the German who observed no law? . . . Hitler recognized himself in these quatrains by the mid 1930s and Goebbells made great propaganda out of them.¹⁶

Although there are several quatrains that Cheetham believes were prophecies about Adolf Hitler (C3:Q58; C6:Q7; C9:Q90, etc.), we will now examine C4:Q68 along with Cheetham's commentary:

At a nearby place not far from Venus, the two greatest ones of Asia and Africa will be said to have come from the Rhine and Hitler; cries and tears at Malta and the Ligurian coast. [Cheetham's commentary follows] Hitler and Mussolini. The word Venus is the clue to this quatrain. It probably stands for Venice, thus linking Italy with Hitler. The two dictators met not far from the city at the Brenner Pass to seal the Tripartite Pact with Asia, that is, the Japanese.¹⁷

¹⁴ Kenneth R. Manning, Pasteur, Louis, World Book Encyclopedia, Volume 15, Chicago IL (World Book, Inc., 1998) 193.

¹⁵ Retrieved on January 1, 2012 at following Web address: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pasteur_Institute

¹⁶ Erika Cheetham, The Prophecies of Nostradamus: Translated, Edited and Introduced by Erika Cheetham, New York (A Wideview/ Perigree Book, 1973, Capricorn Books Edition, 1975) 82.

¹⁷ Erika Cheetham, The Prophecies of Nostradamus: Translated, Edited and Introduced by Erika Cheetham, New York (A Wideview/ Perigree Book, 1973, Capricorn Books Edition, 1975)191.

Richard Abanes responds to the claims that these quatrains refer to Hitler:

Even the most casual reader will notice that the name Hitler is in neither quatrain [in Nostradamus' original]. The word Ister, however, does appear in both of them [C2:Q24 and C4:Q68]. This term, according to Nostradamites, is a veiled reference to Hitler for two reasons: 1) It sounds and looks like Hitler (but only if you add an 'H' to make it 'Hister'); and 2) Ister is an old name for the Danube River, on the banks of which Hitler grew up (i.e., in Austria). Furthermore, there is reference to Germany ('Germain') in line four of C2:Q24.

Norman Geisler responds:

"This is allegedly a prophecy concerning Adolf Hitler. According to followers of Nostradamus, the lower portion of the Danube [river] is known as either '*ister*' or '*Hister*'. . . which seems to be close enough to 'Hitler' for their purposes. However, the substitution of 'l' for 's' in *hister*, and the inversion of 't' and 's,' is totally arbitrary. In another quatrain (4—68), Nostradamus mentions the Lower Danube in conjunction with the Rhine (*De Ryn*). But if '*hister*' refers to Hitler, then to what does '*De Ryn*' refer? Followers of Nostradamus are inconsistent, treating one river as an anagram and taking the other literally."¹⁸

Abanes adds: "There is no reason even given for why the 'cage of iron' in C2:Q24 should be interpreted as the bunker where Hitler committed suicide. The assertion is simply made for gullible persons to believe, even though the bunker was actually concrete."¹⁹

As to the claim that Hitler is the German "who observes no law," Abanes quoted researcher James Randi: "From the 12th to the 16th century, '*de germain*' meant 'brother' or 'near relative' and nothing else." So, at the time Nostradamus wrote the quatrain, '*de germain*' did not refer to a resident of Germany, but instead merely referred to a brother or near relative. In other words, there is simply no reason to think Nostradamus predicted anything about Adolf Hitler.

The Kennedys

As with Adolf Hitler, Cheetham believes there are multiple quatrains of Nostradamus related to the assassination of brothers John F.

¹⁸ Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Grand Rapids MI (Baker Books, 1999) 544.

¹⁹ Richard Abanes, *End-Time Visions: The Road To Armageddon?*, New York (Four Walls Eight Windows, 1988) 201.

Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy (C4:Q14; C10:Q26 etc.). We need only to examine C1:Q26 in Cheetham's translation followed by her commentary:

The great man will be struck down in the day by a thunderbolt. An evil deed, foretold by the bearer of a petition. According to the prediction another falls at night time. Conflict at Reims, London, and pestilence in Tuscany. [Cheetham's commentary follows]. Assassination of J.F. K., 1963 and R.F.K., 1968. The first three lines here may apply to the assassinations of the two Kennedy brothers. John F. Kennedy was shot down (thunderbolt) in broad daylight at Dallas Texas on 22nd November 1963 by the psychopath, Lee Harvey Oswald. The other man linked with him who is killed at night, was his brother Robert F. Kennedy who was shot down on 5th June 1968 in the early morning.²⁰

Only by the greatest of mental gymnastics can one interpret this quatrain to be referring to the tragic assassinations of the Kennedy brothers. To begin with, why take the thunderbolt as gunfire and not as a literal thunderbolt? But even assuming it is metaphorically referring to a gunshot, how can one know which "great man" is being referred to?

There have been many great men shot and killed. Could it not refer to American leaders such as Alexander Hamilton or Presidents Abraham Lincoln, James Garfield, or William McKinley? What about the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand that was the spark that began World War One? What about Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat, or Al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden? For that matter, why could it not be referring to the assassination of entertainer John Lennon?

In light of the large list of 'great men' that have been assassinated, it is completely arbitrary to assume that the quatrain refers to the Kennedys. Cheetham's interpretation then assumes that "another" refers to a brother of the first one killed, though the events are separated by five years. Finally, if Nostradamus was predicting an assassination of a "great man" in the *United States* (the Kennedys), why is the reaction *in Europe* one of "conflict at Reims [France], London [United Kingdom], and pestilence in Tuscany [Italy]"? I don't recall reading about any pestilence in Italy following the assassinations of either of the Kennedy brothers, as tragic as they were.

²⁰ Erika Cheetham, *The Prophecies of Nostradamus: Translated, Edited and Introduced by Erika Cheetham*, New York (A Wideview/ Perigree Book, 1973, Capricorn Books Edition, 1975)33.

9/11/2001

Alex Boese recounts the excitement about Nostradamus following the tragic events of 9/11:

Within a few days of September 11 an e-mail began to circulate claiming that the sixteenth-century astrologer Nostradamus had predicted the attacks on the World Trade Center. Two quatrains attributed to Nostradamus were offered as proof of this claim. They read: ‘In the City of God there will be a great thunder, / Two brothers torn apart by Chaos, / while the fortress endures, / the great leader will succumb, / The third big war will begin when the big city is burning.’ And ‘On the eleventh day of the nine month, /two metal birds will crash into two tall statues / in the new city, /and the world will end soon after.’ Nostradamus did not write these quatrains. The first was loosely derived from his writings, but the second was of completely modern invention. Nevertheless, numerous people were taken in by the claims, and interest in Nostradamus rose to an all-time high.²¹

Modern Legacy: Aum Shinkriyo

Today, there are several groups that look to Nostradamus for inspiration. Mark Juergensmeyer reports: “The Leader of Aum Shinrikyo, borrowing Christian ideas from the sixteenth-century French astrologer Nostradamus . . . predicted the coming of Armageddon in 1999 in the form of World War III, after which the survivors—mostly members of his own movement—would create a new society in the year 2014.”²² David Miller also reported that the leader of Aum Shinrikyo, Matsumoto Chizuo (also known as Shoko Asahara), drew his teachings from multiple sources including “the prophecies of Nostradamus.”²³ Tragically, Aum Shinrikyo “sprang to public attention after it launched a sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system on 20 March 1995. Twelve people died and thousands were injured.”²⁴

21 Alex Boese, *The Museum of Hoaxes: A Collection of Pranks, Stunts, Deceptions, and Other Wonderful Stories Contrived for the Public from the Middle Ages to the New Millennium*, New York, and (Penguin Putman Inc, 2002) 230-231.

22 Mark Juergensmeyer, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural—Seventh Edition*, Pamela A. Moro, James E. Myers & Arthur C. Lehmann, Editors, Boston MA (McGraw Hill, 2008) 471

23 David Miller, *New Religions, A Guide: New Religious Movements, Sects and Alternative Spiritualities*, Christopher Partridge—Editor, New York (Oxford, 2004) 26

24 *Ibid*

Occultism and Astrology

Some may feel that Nostradamus's *Centuries* were merely the creation of a fertile and educated imagination. They are at least that. But there is much evidence that Nostradamus, in violation of the Bible, was indeed involved in occultic activities that connected him to the world of demonic spirits.

Abanes informs us that Nostradamus had an education in Avignon “that included classes in *astrology*.”²⁵ In fact, Cheetham stated: “It is important to remember the Jewish element of Nostradamus’ childhood when trying to decipher the Prophecies, as he was greatly influenced by occult Jewish literature.”²⁶

We need only refer to the very beginning of his *Centuries* where Nostradamus shares his occultic method for writing the quatrains. Erika Cheetham, who according to her book *The Prophecies of Nostradamus*,²⁷ “is an Oxford scholar who has been researching Nostradamus’s life and work for several years”²⁸ explains the implications of the first two quatrains in book one of the *Centuries*:

[Nostradamus’s C1:Q1] *Sitting alone at night in secret study; it is placed on the brass tripod. A slight flame comes out of the emptiness and makes successful that which should not be believed in vain.*[Cheetham’s commentary follows] Divination. Both this and the following quatrain describe Nostradamus’ method of divination . . . Nostradamus used the methods of the 4th century Neo-Platonist Iamblichus, a reprint of whose book *De Mysteriis Egyptorum* was published at Lyons in 1547 . . . All the ingredients for magical practices are in this quatrain. It is night. Nostradamus is alone in his study reading the secret forbidden books which inspire his prophecies; the brass bowl of water into which the seer gazed until the water became cloudy and pictures of the future were revealed. *Flambe exigue* is the light of inspiration which seizes Nostradamus as he begins to prophesy.

[Nostradamus’s C1:Q2] *The wand in the hand is placed in the middle of the tripod’s legs. With water he sprinkles both the hem of his garment and his foot. A voice, fear; he trembles in his robes. Divine splendor; the god sits nearby.* [Cheetham’s commentary

25 Richard Abanes, *End-Time Visions: The Road To Armageddon?*, New York (Four Walls Eight Windows, 1988) 189.

26 Erika Cheetham, *The Prophecies of Nostradamus: Translated, Edited and Introduced by Erika Cheetham*, New York (A Wideview/ Perigree Book, 1973, Capricorn Books Edition, 1975) 5.

27 Erika Cheetham, *The Prophecies of Nostradamus: Translated, Edited and Introduced by Erika Cheetham*, New York (A Wideview/ Perigree Book, 1973, Capricorn Books Edition, 1975)

28 *Ibid*, back cover.

follows] Divination. Nostradamus continues to explain his method. He touches the middle of the tripod with his wand, and then moistens his robe and his feet with the water placed on it. This is the same method as was used to obtain inspiration by the Apollonian prophetess at the oracles of Banchus in Classical times. Nostradamus is afraid of the power he evokes when it comes to him; he hears it, as well as sees it; it appears to speak to him and he writes down the prophecies. He is unafraid once the gift has possessed him.²⁹

In his book *Horoscopes and the Christian*,³⁰ Robert Morey lays out the strong biblical case against involvement in astrology and the occult. Among the evidence he presents is Deuteronomy 18:10-12: “Let no one be found among you . . . who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist, or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord.”

Bayly gives the definition of *divination* as the “practice of seeking to foretell or foresee the future and discover hidden knowledge, often by means of omens, augury, or other occult means.”³¹

Morey also cites the prophet Isaiah’s condemnation of astrologers: “Let your astrologers come forward, those stargazers who make predictions month by month, let them save you from what is coming upon you. Surely they are like stubble, the fire will burn them up. They cannot even save themselves from the power of the flame” (Isaiah 47:13-14).

Morey summed up the biblical view of astrology by saying, “For the Christian, the stars’ function is to ‘declare the glory of God’ and ‘to show his handiwork’(Ps. 19:1); not to guide the destiny of man. It is idolatry to ascribe to the stars that which belongs only to the God who created them. It is sheer folly to look to the stars instead of to the Scriptures . . . There is no place for astrology in the life of a Christian believer.”³²

29 Erika Cheetham, *The Prophecies of Nostradamus: Translated, Edited and Introduced by Erika Cheetham*, New York (A Wideview/ Perigree Book, 1973, Capricorn Books Edition, 1975)20-21.

30 Robert A. Morey, *Horoscopes and the Christian: Does Astrology Accurately Predict the Future? Is it Compatible with Christianity?*, Minneapolis MN (Bethany House Publishers, 1981)

31 Joseph Bayly, *What About Horoscopes*, Elgin IL (David C. Cook Publishing CO., 1970) 89.

32 Robert A. Morey, *Horoscopes and the Christian: Does Astrology Accurately Predict the Future? Is it Compatible with Christianity?*, Minneapolis MN (Bethany House Publishers, 1981) 54-55

Final Thoughts

For the Christian, what the Bible teaches is of the utmost importance, and in regards to both occult activities and astrology, both are forbidden to the believer. For instance, in light of Nostradamus' occultic connections, Gregory Camps reports that Christian leader Jack Van Impe "has also been increasingly bold in his use of Nostradamus as at least a somewhat authoritative source for proving his end-time theories"³³ is troubling indeed.

Some may wonder why Nostradamus' predictions were not more specific and accurate given their occultic influence. It should be remembered that though Satan and his demonic forces are surely highly intelligent beings, yet they are also limited beings and do not know the future. The future is reserved to God alone, except those portions He has chosen to reveal to us in His Word.

Time and space simply do not allow for a more thorough investigation of the works of Nostradamus. It should be remembered, however, that those predictions we did examine are amongst those that Nostradamus' followers believe to be the strongest evidence of his prophetic skills, and which our brief examination has exposed as without merit. It is fair to say that the overwhelming majority of the quatrains are simply vague and meaningless to all but the most dedicated and delusional followers of Nostradamus.

It should be clear that Christians should place no credence in the alleged prophetic utterances of Nostradamus. This is due primarily to his relationship to forbidden occultic activities. Also, due to their extremely vague style, they are quite worthless in providing insight, especially in light of the abundance of clear guidance provided to the Christian in the Holy Scriptures.

³³ Gregory S. Camp, *Selling Fear: Conspiracy Theories and End-Times Paranoia*, Grand Rapids MI (Baker Books, 1997) 186.

MUSLIM MUSINGS FROM THE WAR ROOM

*BY REV. DR. JOHN A. MAYER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR*

*CITY VISION
JANUARY 2012*

I recently served as Co-Chair of COMMA VII (Coalition of Muslim Ministries in North America). This was a national conference for those working with Muslims and 150 attended the conference (including over 40 Muslim Background Believers-MBB's) that was held on October 12-15, 2011 at Bethlehem Baptist Church's North Campus. It was during this conference that I began to reflect on the progress of Muslim outreach and evangelism. These are some of my reflections.

How do we reach out to Muslims with the message of Jesus Christ? This is a very good question. To know where to go, we must first look at where we are at in relation to outreach to the Muslim populations in our own city, America, and North America.

It seems that there is a great revival among Muslims throughout the world right now. Some estimates state that about 6 million Muslims worldwide are converting to Christ every year in places like Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, India, China, Iraq, Indonesia, and in many countries of Africa. This is all very good news.

But how are we doing in our own city? In the Twin Cities, I estimate that there are currently in 2011, 150,000 Muslims and 119 mosques in our city, with about half the Muslims being Somalis (the Twin Cities has the largest Somali concentration in the U.S.). The first Muslims arrived in the Twin Cities in 1946, and now 66 years later, they have grown to 150,000. During this 66 years how many have been reached for Jesus Christ? I estimate that there are currently about 150 Muslim Background Believers living in the Twin Cities and about half of those (about 70) became Christian while living in the U.S. That means that every year in our city that just 1.077 Muslims converts to Christianity. That means that at this current rate that it will take 139,211 more years to reach the current Twin Cities Muslim population. This does not include the hundreds that are converting to Islam each year in our city from Christianity. So we have a lot of work to do to mobilize the Church of the Twin Cities to reach out to the Muslims God has brought to our city. Currently, we have 2,827

Evangelical churches in the Twin Cities and that is one church for every 53 Muslims in our city. Looking at it another way there are 24 Evangelical churches in the Twin Cities for each Muslim mosque in our city. Or yet another way, the Twin Cities has an estimated 1,115,880 Evangelical Christians and that means there are 7.4 Christians for every Muslim in our city. So we are actually closer to reaching them than appears at first glance and this is a doable task the Lord has given us to do if we do the prayer, care, and share for these Muslims strategically and together as the Body of Christ.

Satan's plan to defeat us in this Muslim evangelism task is threefold: Ignorance, Fear, and Hate. First of all there is Ignorance. I have a saying, "You can't do the prayer, care, share, unless you know they're there." So the first step to Muslim outreach is, as Jesus said, "having eyes to see and ears to hear." We can't do the prayer, care, and share, for Muslims we don't know exist in our city and the cities of North America. Second, Satan's plan involves Fear. Yes, many Christians are very fearful of Muslims both as individual people and as an overall religion. Many fear that Muslims will take away their jobs, or are all terrorists, or even will conquer America and Canada politically and religiously. But this fear actually causes us to distance ourselves from Muslims in our schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces. This fear then actually leads to a greater cycle of more fear. It is a simple fact, if we are all afraid of Muslims, then no Christians will pray, care, or share the Gospel with them and their numbers will keep steadily increasing. This fear is not from God and must be overcome. Third, Satan's plan to stop Muslim outreach involves hate. Many Christians do honestly hate Muslims out of the fear I previously described. Even if Muslims are the enemy of God as some Christians believe, hate is not an option. Jesus told us to love our enemies. Thus, Christians should not fall into the trap of ignorance, fear, and hate that Satan has laid out for us.

Instead God has his own plan to reach Muslims and this involves Christians being the Church. God's plan to reach Muslims and the world is laid out clearly in Galatians 5 and other passages and involves the Fruit of the Spirit. Notice that the Fruit of the Spirit are clearly the opposite of what Satan intends. God wants us to reach Muslims by "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." I have seen this work as an outreach strategy in reaching Muslims for Jesus. Muslims and others respond to the Fruit of the Spirit. I know of no Muslim or anyone that was converted to Christ through Ignorance, Fear, and Hate.

When our ministry work involved starting a Somali Strategic Partnership in 1999 to reach out to the largest Somali concentration

in America located in our city, we had just one known Somali believer. We mobilized churches and ministries to work together to do the prayer, care, and share to reaching the Somalis at our doorstep. We hosted a Somali Strategic Partnership Consultations in 2000 with 60 attendees and another Consultation in 2001 with 80 attendees. Later in 2002, the first Somali church in America was formed out of this Partnership and several Somali ministries spun out of this Partnership as well. Today we have 25 known Somali believers and this is what I call “a quiet revival.” When the Church is mobilized to work together I believe this honors God and empowers believers by the Holy Spirit. This is the good news. The bad news is we currently aren’t working together anymore in partnering to reach Somalis in the Twin Cities. This means that at the current rate of Somalis coming to the Lord in the Twin Cities since they have first arrived here 18 years ago, that it will take 57,877 more years to reach the current Somali population in our city. We have a lot of work to do in mobilizing the Evangelical church of the Twin Cities to reach out to the Somalis God has brought to our city. No missionaries can even safely travel to Somalia right now. No visas to Somali will be issued to a country that is war-torn with no functioning government for over 20 years. Even if you could sneak across the border into Somalia (which you probably could), as a Christian missionary and an American, you’d most likely be killed or kidnapped. God knows this and brings the Somali people literally to our schools, our neighborhoods, and our churches. We need to start being the Church and reach out to them.

A final word on the remaining task of reaching the 8-10 million Muslims of the U.S. and North America. First, the good news is that according to author, Dr. Jim Murk, in his book *Islam Rising*, that he estimates (I think it is a high estimate) that 20,000 Muslims per year in America are currently converting to Christianity. The bad news is that at this rate it will take 350 years for the current American Muslim population to be reached. According to the 2010 7th *Edition of Operation World*, there are 493,549 Christian churches in the U.S. and 27,097 in Canada for a total of 520,642 Christian churches in North America. Are Muslims in reach of these churches? Actually I think they are. There are 14 churches for every Muslim in America and about 37 churches in Canada for every Muslim person in that country. Thus, in North America there are 15 churches for every Muslim person. That is a reachable goal for the Church of North America to reach the 8-10 million Muslims. Think of what could happen if the Holy Spirit worked through 15 churches strategically working together doing the prayer, care, and share of Muslim

outreach. Picture these 15 churches with no ignorance, fear, and hate, all coming together to reach the Muslims God has brought to North America. Can Muslims be reached for the Lord? Absolutely, but not by a disunified weak Church operating out ignorance, fear, and hate. Now it will only happen by a unified Holy Spirit empowered strategic Church doing the prayer, care, and share, through the Fruit of the Spirit.

Amen.

Rev. Dr. John A. Mayer is the president of the non-profit ministry, City Vision, headquartered in Minneapolis, MN. John holds professional degrees in banking and organizational systems and academic degrees in history (BA) and theological studies (D. Min.).

John serves in leadership on several ministry boards and is a well known conference speaker and researcher. He has instructed as an adjunct professor in various Christian colleges and seminaries and has been instrumental in developing urban/cross-cultural degree programs. He is considered to be an authority on the religious, urban, and ethnic climates of the Twin Cities. Through his ministry work, John has worked with over 1,100 churches /ministries from 61 denominations.

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GOD'S CENTURY AND MISSION TRENDS

STEVE & KATHY AUSTVOLD, EFCA MISSION MOBILIZERS

Editor's Note: The following is a webinar put on by Todd M. Johnson, from the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He talks about religious demography and mission strategy and calls 1910 to 2010 **God's Century**. Todd Johnson highlighted some of the recent mission trends. Steve Austvold, a missions strategist with the Evangelical Free Church of America, submitted these formulations to me.

- The world is less religious in 2010 than in 1910 but more religious than in 1970. In 1970, 20% of the world was communist and with the fall of communism the world became more religious. In 1910 the world was over 99% religious, today it is under 89%.
- One in ten people in the world today is an atheist or an agnostic.
- Smaller religions have the highest growth rate, like Daoism and the Baha'i faith.
- Africa has seen the largest growth rate in the past 100 years. It now has 48% of the population claiming to be Christians (495 million people).
- 200 million people are on the move today. Over 720 million people have settled outside their culture's main country. Almost one-half of these are Christians.
- The global north (Europe and North America) have under 40% of the world's Christians today.
- 700 million Christians are considered Great Commission Christians.
- 86% of Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists don't know a Christian. The whole church needs to be involved in inviting people to consider Jesus Christ.
- Christianity is fragmented in 41,000 denominations. Churches are failing to show a united front.
- The global Christian population is 2,293,000,000 in 2010.

- Christians are experiencing unprecedented renewal in the global south.
- Christians in the global south represent 60% of all Christians but have only 17% of the Christian income. This puts them at a great disadvantage in many areas of life.
- Spanish is the number one mother tongue of Christians. The others in the top five are English, Portuguese, Russian and Mandarin.
- There is enough evangelism to reach the world by sheer quantity; however, Asia and Northern Africa have the lowest amount of evangelism but the largest non-Christian populations.
- Most Christian outreach never reaches non-Christians. Over 85% is aimed at other Christians of various confessions and does not reach non-Christians. There is a shift in the past decade toward work with non-Christians.
- Many of the responsive people in the world today are in the least reached areas. Muslims, Hindu's and Buddhists are receptive to the gospel today. There is an increase with insider movements- defined as "movements to Christ where the Gospel flows through pre-existing communities and networks, believing families remain inside their socio-religious communities, retaining their natural identity while living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of scripture."
- Missions in the world's largest cities need to be remembered. Over one-half of the world's population now lives in cities.

TEMPORAL DELUSION

T.A. McMahon

by Ronald E. McRoberts, PhD

Temporal Delusion is a review and critique of the Emerging Church Movement (ECM) by the president and executive director of The Berean Call ministry. The book is a short (157 pages) easy read, written for casual readers rather than theological scholars.

McMahon describes believers and churches associated with the ECM as focused on “the ecumenical common good” of eliminating poverty, eradicating disease, remedying social injustices, promoting civil rights, and saving the earth from political and environmental disaster, all in the name of advancing God’s kingdom on earth.” This earthly focus apparently derives from the errant understanding that the mission of the church is to usher in Messiah’s kingdom via humanitarian efforts and political processes. McMahon challenges this view, arguing that the church has no commission to fix the problems of the world. Rather, believers are citizens of heaven, not earth where they are only temporary sojourners. Thus, the mission of the church is to be called out from the world and, as the bride of Christ, to prepare for a heavenly marriage. Further, when Messiah does return, it will not be to accept a ready-made kingdom but to reign over a kingdom in a world that God has completely refashioned.

The term *temporal* in the book’s title, refers to the ECM’s earthly focus and its failure to understand the Biblical timeline as it pertains to end times. In particular, as per the dispensational framework espoused by The Berean Call, the last days will **not** be characterized by the advancement of mankind toward the Kingdom ideal but will be characterized by apostasy, perversion, and rebellion. The term *delusion* in the book’s title refers to the deception of believers into accepting a false biblical timeline and a corresponding false church mission. McMahon attributes this deception to multiple causes including contemporary church music with shallow repetitive choruses; topical, psychology-based sermons; church social programs to attract the lost; reliance for truth on group-think and subjective, extrabiblical sources such as interpretive books and movies rather than the objective revelation of Scripture; replacement theology which subscribes to the view that the church has replaced Israel in God’s plan; and Bible studies that address everything except the Bible.

Although McMahon mentions the rapture and the Millennial Kingdom, the book would have been strengthened if he had included a chapter near the beginning that systematically presented the chronology of the last days. Such a chapter would provide a useful and relevant context. The book is not generally available from public sources such as Amazon but can be ordered from The Berean Call Internet bookstore: <http://www.thebereancall.org/store>.

NOT FOR LONG

BY DURWOOD (WOODY) BRIDELL

MARCH 20, 2009

REVISED FEBRUARY 13, 2012

He was taken from a garden in the middle of the night.
They came with torch and weapons, thinking there would be a fight.
When asked who they were looking for, “Jesus”, came the sound,
And when He answered “I am He”, they all fell to the ground.
Judas stood among them, he had made his choice that day,
Thirty pieces of silver was the price of his betray.
Then Simon Peter drew his sword, and cut off Malchus’ ear,
But Jesus said “put up your sword”, and healed so he could hear.
And so they bound and took Him to the palace of the Priest,
But Peter kept his distance, hoping He would be released.
There he denied his Savior before the rooster crowed,
Then Peter wept and realized what Jesus had foretold.
They sent Him to the High Priest, and then to Judgment Hall,
Where Pilate would examine Him, but find no fault at all.

But not for long!

The Jews were so determined, they said that He should die,
He made Himself the Son of God, that’s the reason why.
He said He had a kingdom, but many wondered why,
If He was born a King, why did He have to die?
So Pilate made a trade that day, Barabbas for a King,
The people yelled out loudly, that Ceasar was their King.
So they beat Him and they scourged Him, and led Him up a hill,

That's where they crucified Him, that's when the world stood still.
They divided all His garments, among the four of them,
Then they cast their lots to get His coat, without a single seam.
He gave His Mom to His best friend, then the last words that He
cried,
Were to say "it is finished", then He bowed His head and died.

But not for long!

They put Him in a rich man's grave, Joseph saw to everything,
They brought a hundred pounds of spices, enough to bury a King.
Pilate put a watch of soldiers there, when the Pharisees appealed,
They rolled a heavy stone in place, and put a Roman Seal.
The next day was the Sabbath, and the Jews did what they do,
But when they came to temple, found the vail was torn in two.
Three days and nights they watched Him, His angels from on high,
And as the time approached, one began to fly.
The rocks were torn assunder and the earth began to quake,
Then Jesus took up life again, many saints became awake.
The woman came unto the grave, that first day of the week,
The gardner met them with these words, "Who is it that you seek"?
When Mary saw it was her Lord, one word was all each spoke,
"Mary", Jesus whispered, "Master", Mary choked.
I go unto my brethren to show them I'm alive,
And then unto my Father, to present my sacrifice.

But not for long!

That same day in the evening, the first day of the week,
Jesus came right through the closed doors, and He began to speak.

Peace is what I give you as He showed His hands, and side,
And then He breathed upon them, and the Spirit came inside.
Thomas the great doubter was there to see that day,
He became a true believer, and his doubts were wiped away.
Then after forty days and nights He went to Bethany,
He gave the Great Commission, what a job for you and me.
He raised His hands and blessed them and ascended through the air,
To heaven where His Father is, many mansions to prepare.

But not for long!

This watch of night will not remain, but soon we fly away,
The gospel message not restrain, but share while it is day.
For soon our Savior will return in Glory as He left,
So we must pray and live by faith, and He will do the rest.
But now we wait, and watch and work, and sing to Him His song,

But not for long!

QUIZ:

*OFTEN USED THEOLOGICAL TERMS
DO WE UNDERSTAND THEM?*

1. kerygma

- a. poetic expression
- b. central scriptural message
- c. heathen incantation
- d. musical term

2. kenosis

- a. akin to water baptism
- b. an oracle portending destruction
- c. self-emptying of Christ
- d. declaration of weakness

3. synergism

- a. logic structure
- b. lazy demeanor
- c. dominant characteristic
- d. united effort

4. amanuensis

- a. strong assertion of truth
- b. assistant in writing
- c. afterthought in an oration
- d. difficult passage to understand

5. parusia

- a. the Second Coming of Christ
- b. pronouncement of judgment
- c. unwanted intrusion
- d. persuasive speech

6. imprecatory

- a. relating to repentance
- b. charitable disposition
- c. relating to a bold witness
- d. relating to vengeance

7. Septuaginta

- ___ a. Greek translation of the Old Testament
- ___ b. texts borrowed from Greek literature
- ___ c. Bible text that replaced the Vulgate version
- ___ d. a group of early church fathers

8. goyim

- ___ a. Jews in the dispersion
- ___ b. Hebrew term for heathen
- ___ c. Jewish zealots
- ___ d. lectures in the synagogue

9. casuistry

- ___ a. special training for elders
- ___ b. dealing in cultic practices
- ___ c. clever sophistries
- ___ d. well trained in the sciences

10. Apocrypha

- ___ a. non-canonical Jewish writings
- ___ b. related to the Apocalypse
- ___ c. related to the persecution of Christians
- ___ d. elements in the Old Testament tabernacle

Answers:

1. (b); 2. (c); 3. (d); 4. (b); 5. (a); 6. (d); 7. (a); 8. (a); 9. (b); 10. (a)

Personal Notes on the Articles:

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