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Modern forms of a prophecy: From written word to audiovisual Internet product

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Abstract

Prophecies contain a unique cultural and linguistic code, which plays an essential role in organizing the linguistic worldview and shapes national consciousness. The article aims to specify the linguistic features of prophecies and identify their modern forms. To achieve this goal, biblical texts were compared with modern prophecies within and outside religion. Due to the phenomenon's complexity, the material selection criteria were flexible. The Canonic Bible was the initial source of the material (4 books of Major Prophets and 12 books of Minor Prophets). The modern prophecies were obtained from 2 collections of written prophecies (157 texts) as well as 10 audio recordings of prophetic sessions (4 hours) and 40 videos (10 hours). We explored prophetic texts and changes in their forms using semiotic modeling. The interdisciplinary nature of the research necessitated the use of the descriptive method, as well as methods of contextual, interpretative, and content analysis to identify the meaning of the linguistic units by highlighting mechanisms of the construction of meaning. The chosen methods helped to identify the meanings of linguistic units, highlighting the mechanisms of constructing meaning, as well as the ethnocultural language code of prophecies. The method of interpretative analysis made it possible to determine the patterns of expression of meaning associated with the system of ideal images and the rules for their transformation into meanings. The results of the study demonstrated a clear simplification of the initial characteristics during the transition of biblical prophecies from written form to an audiovisual Internet product. In addition, the results revealed an obvious displacement of the vector of decoding and interpretation of ethnoculturally-conditioned components. Further research will allow us to build a linguosemiotic model of prophetic discourse to trace ethnocultural and linguistic changes in the form, content, and entire genre of prophecy, which will open up new prospects for the study and interpretation of the phenomenon itself.

Keywords: *religious discourse, prophetic texts, reception, semiotic code, linguacultural transfer*

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Современные формы пророчества: от письменной формы до аудиовизуального интернет-продукта

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Аннотация

Пророчества содержат уникальный культурно-языковой код, играющий существенную роль в организации языковой картины мира и воплощающий идеи, формирующие национальное сознание. Цель статьи – уточнить языковые особенности пророчеств и выявить их современные формы. Для достижения данной цели библейские тексты сравниваются с современными пророчествами внутри и вне религии. Из-за сложности явления критерии отбора материала были гибкими. Первоначальным источником материала была Каноническая Библия (4 книги Больших Пророков и 12 книг Малых Пророков). Современные пророчества извлекались главным образом из двух сборников письменных пророчеств (157 текстов), аудиозаписей пророческих сеансов (продолжительностью 4 часа) и видеороликов (около 10 часов). Пророческие тексты и изменения в их формах исследовались с помощью семиотического моделирования. Междисциплинарный характер исследования обусловил необходимость использования описательного метода, а также методов контекстуального анализа, интерпретативного анализа и контент-анализа. Выбранные методы помогли выявить значения языковых единиц, выделив механизмы построения значения, а также этнокультурный языковой код пророчеств. Метод интерпретативного анализа позволил определить закономерности выражения смысла, связанные с системой идеальных образов, и правила их трансформации в значения. Результаты исследования продемонстрировали упрощение исходных характеристик при переходе библейских пророчеств из письменной формы в аудиовизуальный интернет-продукт. Было выявлено явное смещение вектора декодирования и интерпретации этнокультурно обусловленных компонентов. Дальнейшие исследования дадут возможность построить лингвoseмиотическую модель пророческого дискурса, позволяющую проследить этнокультурные и языковые изменения в форме, содержании и в целом в жанре пророчества, что откроет новые перспективы для изучения и интерпретации данного феномена.

Ключевые слова: *религиозный дискурс, пророческие тексты, восприятие, семиотический код, лингвокультурный трансфер*

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1. Introduction

The Holy Bible is one of the most famous and translated Canonic texts. Scientists and theologians worldwide and from different scientific areas research various aspects of biblical texts. The biblical language is not only full of symbols that can be difficult to apprehend, convey the meaning, and transfer from one language to another but also highly influenced by extralinguistic context, which cannot be overlooked. “Speakers acquire tangibility and concreteness as biological,

social, cultural, ethnic, and professional identities. Thus, understanding the importance of all types of environments involved in speech production has led to an awareness of the creative role of extralinguistic factors in the use of language as a whole” (Bilá & Ivanova 2020). Biblical texts represent their unique culture, spirit, and characteristics requiring more profound cognitive efforts. The implied meaning appeals to fundamental human values but is often encrypted in a metaphorical context. The most challenging part of the Bible – prophecies – has the highest density of symbols and metaphors. It might seem that the Bible is irrelevant in the modern world and only scientists are approaching canonic texts, but that is not true. The amount of search results on the keyword “prophecy” shows that apocalyptic prophecies are especially popular on the Internet among believers, researchers, theologians, and people considered to be far from religion. Nowadays, they changed forms and some essential characteristics. In present days, prophetic texts are widely supported with audiovisual effects. This audiovisual component aims to influence human reception and affect the emotional side of the recipient. Different researchers have been long interested in the emotional function of religious discourse; emotiology is a whole area devoted to it (Pashkov 2018, 2020, Bobyрева 2015, Il’in 2001, 2002, Davies 2006, The Oxford Bible Commentary 2018). The Internet is full of apocalyptic prophecies presented as a combination of verbal and non-verbal signs. Modern prophecies have acquired audiovisual components, such as music and graphic images that were unavailable to the biblical prophets. The audiovisual or non-verbal component strengthens the verbal part and helps to convey a cultural representation of the world through the combination of language and image that “the viewer perceives as a message” (Delabastita 2007: 193). The study aims to specify the changes in forms of modern prophecies, describe their linguistic characteristics, and answer the following research questions: does the Internet format require a different structure and form of presenting the information? How has the concept survived and changed in the modern world? Do modern prophecies reflect the linguacultural characteristics the same way as the biblical prophetic texts?

2. Literature review

Religious discourse has always been the focus of different researchers. Philosophical, cultural, historical, linguistic, and theological aspects are widely described in the works of different authors from ancient thinkers to modern scientists. Language and religion are closely related, religious communication is one of the oldest types of human communication, and specific aspects of religious discourse, a general description of the ritual activity, and the nature of ritual speech were widely researched by Karasik 2004, Mechkovskaya 1998, Toporov 1988, Gurevich 1993 and others. The most studied are the philosophical (Groff 1994, Spivak 1988) and theological aspects (Camus 1990, Popper 1992, Glovinskaya 1994) of prophecy. The theological aspects often intersect with the philosophical ones so much that it is almost impossible to draw clear boundaries between them,

since “theology combines philosophy as a metaphysical reality and religious studies as a religious experience” (Laluev 2012: 215).

Prophetic texts are endowed with ethnolinguistic characteristics, so it is necessary to go beyond the language structure into the field of “language and culture” (Corner 1980, Saussure 1983,), avoiding “the emphasis on the study of language structure only” (Proskurin, Raikova 2012: 258). However, it is impossible to understand a religious text by simply decomposing it; it is necessary to consider the cultural and historical background.

The word always “carries more information than the consciousness can extract” (Makovsky 2007: 172); therefore, “the culture in a language is characterized by a high degree of metaphoricity” (Dormidontova 2009: 238), and the prophetic discourse is based on the “mythological layer of natural language” (Lotman 2001, Slyshkin 2004, Vorkachev 2014).

The prophetic text is a complex sign with semiotic features, where ethnocultural characteristics are represented through language in the context of a specific historical background embedded in the philosophical and theological paradigm. According to Cassirer, we live “not only in the physical but also in the symbolic universe. Language, myth, art, religion are parts of this universe” (Cassirer 1955: 219). The philosopher considered “symbolic forms” to be an instrument of “encoding” reality (Cassirer 1955: 221). This complex code has different levels and serves as an instrument to interpret cultural texts and their “decryption” (Lotman 2010: 165).

The development of the Internet has reached a new level and now incorporates advanced tools and instruments. “New technologies bring changes in the perception of international, multilingual, and multimodal communication” (Gambier 2019). With this development, purely visual forms have evolved into hybrid forms with media components. Media text presents a combination of linguistic and non-linguistic means – graphic, acoustic, and optical forms of expression highlighting that “texts need a non-linguistic environment to reach the listener, and it is necessary to consider the special conditions of this environment”.

There were attempts in some works to bring together the information obtained by all the disciplines; however, these attempts were limited to the conceptual framework of the religious discourse and especially the prophecies. The task remains unsolved despite a relatively large volume of research on prophetic discourse.

3. Data and methodology

The material for the study was biblical and modern prophecies. As for the biblical texts, the primary sources of the material were the Old and New Testaments of the Synodal Bible in Russian and the King James Version Bible in English. From the Old Testament, four books of Major Prophets and 12 books of Minor Prophets were selected. From The New Testament – the book of Revelation. Modern prophecies are presented by two collections containing 157 texts [Prophecies and

Prophets 2020, The Most Known Prophecies 2003], ten audio recordings from the prophetic sessions of Edgar Cayce (4 hours long) [Edgar Cayce’s Readings], 40 videos from YouTube (10 hours long) [Tip Top Channel, Road to God Channel, Into the Unknown Channel], and four articles [Vanga’s Prediction of Soviet times 1964, The Open Book of Prophecies by M. Nostradamus] summarizing some of the most popular modern prophecies.

The criteria for selecting the material were flexible. Due to the complexity of biblical texts, it was decided first to select only those biblical books that are officially recognized by the religious community as prophetic. It was also necessary to determine who was considered to be a modern prophet. Among the most famous prophets, many Internet resources include Nostradamus, Vanga, and Edgar Cayce. Since they had a maximum number of links, it was decided to include them in the selection. As for video and audio materials, it was decided to use the video platform YouTube; materials were selected by keywords ‘prophecy’, ‘Biblical prophecy’, and ‘apocalyptic prophecy’. All types and forms of the act of prophecy recorded both in Canonic religious literature and in modern sources available for analysis and systematization as a result of continuous sampling were considered significant for the study.

The purpose of the research is to identify changes in the forms of prophecy and to establish their specific linguistic characteristics. The selected material determined the methodological basis of this study. It involves using a methodology that allows us to describe the phenomenon itself and identify its ethnocultural specifics. The junction of several fields required the study of the prophetic material through the prism of descriptive, interpretive, contextual, and content analysis. This approach allowed us to consider the ethnocultural specifics of biblical prophetic texts and trace the changes in the ways of presenting the phenomenon of prophecy that have occurred over time.

4. Results

To understand how prophecies changed their original verbal forms through time, it was necessary to start with definitions of the basic terms – prophet and prophecy. A prophet is “a person sent by God to teach people and **give them messages** from God who claims to know what **will happen in the future**” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries). “A person who speaks by divine inspiration or **as the interpreter** through whom the will of a God is expressed”; “literally, **one who speaks for another**, especially, one who speaks for a God and **interprets** His will to man” (The Collaborative International Dictionary of English), “**an interpreter**, spokesman, especially of the gods” (Etymology dictionary). (Highlighted by the author).

The first and the most crucial thing about biblical prophets is that God has chosen them to be prophets. According to the Bible, those who proclaimed themselves prophets without God’s permission were false prophets. The Bible has many stories about prophets; sixteen prophets in the Old Testament wrote books

that now are a part of the Holy Bible; God specially chose them all in almost the same way as shown in Table 1. They form two groups: Minor Prophets and Major Prophets.

Table 1. Minor and Major Prophets in the Old Testament (Bible)

Minor Prophets	
Joel	The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel (Bible (KJV), Joel 1:1)
Jonah	Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai (Bible (KJV), Jonah 1:1)
Amos	The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake (Bible (KJV), Amos 1:1)
Hosea	The word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel (Bible (KJV), Hosea 1:1)
Micah	The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem (Bible (KJV), Micah 1:1)
Zephaniah	The word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah (Bible (KJV), Zephaniah 1:1)
Nahum	The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite (Bible (KJV), Nahum 1:1)
Habakkuk	The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see (Bible (KJV), Habakkuk 1:1)
Obadiah	The vision of Obadiah (Bible (KJV), Obadiah 1:1)
Haggai	In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying (Bible (KJV), Haggai 1:1)
Zechariah	In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying (Bible (KJV), Zechariah 1:1)
Malachi	The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi (Bible (KJV), Malachi 1:1)
Major Prophets	
Isaiah	The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah (Bible (KJV), Isaiah 1:1)
Jeremiah	The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiyah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign (Bible (KJV), Jeremiah 1:1-2)
Daniel	Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams (Bible (KJV), Daniel 1:17)
Ezekiel	The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him (Bible (KJV), Ezekiel 1:3)

Thus, Table 1 shows some essential characteristics of the prophets from these definitions at the beginning of their existence. They are:

1) divine inspiration

All the prophets had a supernatural experience receiving the message (voice, visions, or dreams).

2) transferring and interpreting messages from God to guide people

All the prophets' messages had a clear purpose – to inform kings or people about their sins and consequences. The prophet was there to interpret God's word and make it straightforward for those to whom it came.

3) predicting the future

It was never the primary function of any prophet in the Old Testament. More often, the prophecy explained why something was happening and what could happen if people did not obey God.

Almost all the prophets in the Bible fit this description, except in some exceptional cases.

A modern prophet is no longer a guide or a teacher of God's will; this function and the function of the interpreter of the messages coming from God became secondary; now, he only predicts the future. This is the modern definition: "a person who predicts the future" (Cambridge Dictionary).

Throughout history, there were always people who claimed that they could see the future; the official churches ignored or even denied them. All these people claim to have a supernatural experience, a divine inspiration. Nowadays, the source of this inspiration does not matter; the personality of the self-proclaimed prophet has become more critical. That is why a definition modern definition of a prophet is "a person or thing that predicts future astrologer, augur, auspex, bard, clairvoyant, diviner, druid, evocator, forecaster, fortuneteller, haruspex, horoscopist, magus, medium, meteorologist, oracle, ovate, palmist, predictor, prognosticator" (New Thesaurus). So now, the prophet acquired mystical, magical, and even occult meanings. It is not necessarily a person anymore; it can be an animal or even a thing. In addition, there is another common thing between all the modern prophets; almost all of them predict wars, catastrophes, and the apocalypse. The interpretative analysis allowed us to obtain summarized changes in the personality of the prophet that are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Changes in the Prophets' Image

Biblical prophets Image	Modern prophets Image	Changes
Divine inspiration	Supernatural experience	Different people can name various sources of their abilities, from God to the universe or even aliens
Transferring and interpreting messages from God to guide people	No longer a function	The first and the most crucial function of biblical prophets does not exist anymore
Predicting the future	Apocalyptic	All the modern and relatively modern prophecies are apocalyptic by their nature

At first, prophecy was “an inspired utterance of a prophet, viewed as a revelation of divine will, an inspired message or prediction transmitted orally or in writing, a message of divine truth revealing God's will, and the act of uttering such a message” (The Free Dictionary).

Prophecy in its original meaning always had three parts – one part stated the problem (why this word came to people), the second part had the instructions (what to do or not to do), and the third part described consequences (what will happen if people ignore the problem and instructions):

Here is the fragment of the Isaiah prophecy. It starts with a **problem**:

- (1) *“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and **they have rebelled against me**. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: **they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward**” (Bible (KJV), Isaiah 1:2–4).*

Isaiah's preaching began “in the year that King Uzziah died” (Bible (KJV), Isaiah 6:1) about 740 BC. When Isaiah carried out his prophetic mission, intended primarily for the inhabitants of Judea, there were four kings on the throne. Three kings were faithful to God, but Ahaz, the son of Jotham, was one of the most wicked among the Jewish kings; he went so far that he even sacrificed his children to idols. The prophet's speech, presented in the first chapter, was delivered in the reign of Ahaz. These verses are an accusation against Judas. Isaiah, the messenger of God, called heaven and earth so that they too, would be horrified by the Jews' infidelity. Through the religious and civil laws God gave to His people and by putting them in a special relationship with Himself and performing miracles, which other nations were amazed at, He proved His love. However, they rebelled, and under Ahaz, they worshipped pagan idols and ignored the words of those whom God sent to them with warnings.

Then there are **instructions**:

- (2) *“**Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow**” (Bible (KJV), Isaiah 1:16-17)*

Isaiah calls on people to be cleansed through repentance, i.e., not only to stop doing evil in the eyes of the Lord but also to learn to do good (repentance implies a change of mindset and actions). The Jews mistakenly believed they could continue to live as they liked as long as they “compensated” for their vicious lifestyle with sacrifices. They did not so much believe in God as in the power of a religious ritual. Only if the repentance of the Jews is sincere and effective will they be able to get closer to God.

Next come the **consequences**:

- (3) *“But **if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword**: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it” (Bible (KJV), Isaiah 1:20)*

He accused his fellow tribesmen on behalf of God, and on His behalf, he offered them a choice: complete forgiveness for those who repent or a harsh judgment for those who persist in disobedience.

The exact structure we can see in the prophecy of Jeremiah:

- (4) *(problem) “Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. For **my people have committed two evils**; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water (Bible (KJV), Jeremiah 2:12–13)*

Jeremiah's ministry spans the final five decades of Jewish history. He was called from above in 627 BC, during the reign of Josiah, the last of the pious kings of Judea. After the previous 55-year reign of the wicked king Manasseh, the predecessor of Josiah, the country continued to be in the grip of idolatry, which deeply disturbed Josiah and prompted him to take decisive action to cleanse the country and the people from paganism. However, Josiah failed to implement his plan, and after his sudden death, the people returned to the path of idolatry and impiety.

- (5) *(instructions) Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, **Return, thou backsliding Israel**, saith the LORD (Bible (KJV), Jeremiah 3:12)*

The Lord wholeheartedly wishes him only the best, but people's sins have made it impossible to receive all His blessings. Therefore, God calls them to repent and confess their sins.

- (6) *(consequences) **and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you**: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger forever” (ibid)*

The prophet Jeremiah also grieved over the death of the reformer king. Very soon, he witnessed such a development of events as he had expected and feared: the reforms undertaken by Josiah began to wear out quickly. This prophet knew that true healing would happen only at the cost of bitter disappointments, sorrows, and punishments.

Even in the last book of the Bible – Revelation –, that is one of the exceptional cases because Johan was not a prophet per se; however, in his prophetic message to seven churches, we see the same structure (Table 3).

Table 3. A Message to Seven Churches in the Book of Revelation (Bible)

Church	Problem	Instructions	Consequences
Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write (Bible (KJV), Revelation 2:1–5)	Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love	Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works	or else I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.
And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write (Bible (KJV), Revelation 2:8–10)	I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not but are the synagogue of Satan	Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death	and I will give thee a crown of life
And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write (Bible (KJV), Revelation 2:12–16)	I have a few things against thee because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate	Repent	or else I will come unto thee quickly and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth
And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write (Bible (KJV), Revelation 2:18–23)	Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols	And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not	Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works
And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write (Bible (KJV), Revelation 3:1–3)	Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God	Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent	If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee

Church	Problem	Instructions	Consequences
And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write (Bible (KJV), Revelation 3:7–10)	Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee	Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown	Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth
And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write (Bible (KJV), Revelation 3:14–16)	I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot	As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent	So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth

From Table 3, we can see that John addresses the book to seven churches in the Roman province of Asia. This province was located in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). There are similarities in the construction of these messages. Each of them begins with a greeting to each church personally; each represents the Lord Jesus in the image most suitable for this particular church; each notes that He knows the affairs of this church, as indicated by the word “I know”. The words of praise are addressed to all churches except Laodicea; the reproach sounds to all except the Philadelphia and Smyrna churches. A particular exhortation is addressed to each church to hear what the Spirit says, and each message contains a unique promise for the conqueror.

Thus, although the original prophecies had a metaphorical component, those symbols were understandable for people, and the prophet's purpose was to transfer God's will and commands. The recipient did not have to interpret the message; this function belonged to the prophet.

Since “the processes of conceptualization and interpretation of the world are carried out in the context of a certain culture and language, which gives cognition a culturally deterministic character. The ethnocultural conditionality of cognition is most fully reflected in metaphor since the process of thinking is metaphorical and is based on correspondences in experience, which is also culturally specific” (Kozlova 2020). Throughout time, people tried preserving the form and the content, considering biblical text sacred and inspired by God. However, for other ethnic groups far from the history of Jews, all those symbols acquired an additional metaphorical layer. For example, when the prophet compares Israel with Sodom and Gomorra, for Jews it is the cities that God destroyed because of their sins. For non-Jewish cultures, the translation of this part will evoke the metaphorical image of Sodom and Gomorra as a symbol of something bad, unclean, and messy. “Several translations made in recent decades are characterized by a pronounced pragmatic orientation, which in some cases leads to a significant neutralization of the national-cultural specifics of the reality or its adaptation to the appropriate

cultural environment, the degree of the permissibility of which in some cases seems controversial” (Khukhuni, Valuitseva, Osipova 2019).

The prophecies of Nostradamus, a famous French astrologist of the sixteenth century, perhaps due to their remoteness in time, are the closest in format to the biblical prophecies. “In 1538, an offhanded remark about a religious statue resulted in charges of heresy against Nostradamus. When ordered to appear before the Church Inquisition, he wisely chose to leave the Province to travel for several years through Italy, Greece, and Turkey. During his travels to the ancient mystery schools, it is believed that Nostradamus experienced a psychic awakening” (ENA, March 11, 2024)¹. His prophecies were created and preserved in written form. He wrote a book called “The Prophecies,” which still causes many arguments among researchers and followers.

(7) 35

*The **young lion** will overcome the older one,
in a field of combat in single fight:
He will pierce his eyes in their golden cage;
two wounds in one, then he dies a cruel death.*

38

*The Sun and the **Eagle** will appear to the victor.
An empty answer assured the defeated.
Neither bugle nor shouts will stop the soldiers.
Liberty and peace, if achieved in time through death (Internet Sacred
Text Archive)*

The text retains its metaphorical layer and polysemy. It is believed that the future of all mankind is encrypted in them, but the quatrains could not be deciphered for a long time. Most of Nostradamus' quatrains could be more comprehensible to the uninitiated, incoherent sentences and calculations. There has yet to be a version of the decoding of Nostradamus. The names of animals – lion, eagle – often denote countries and peoples associated with these animals or those whose coats of arms contain their images. For example, the eagle could point to Napoleon, whose troops carried banners and standards with the image of an eagle.

The prophecies of Nostradamus cannot be attributed to modern prophecies since they were written in the 16th century. However, in the modern Internet, the contradictory text of this book has generated a considerable amount of media content with numerous images and interpretations. Nostradamus's prophecies are incomprehensible, contradictory, and confusing in that they can be interpreted as one likes.

5. Discussion

As the result showed, biblical prophecy usually had three parts – the reason or the problem, the instructions, and the punishment or consequences for disobeying.

¹ <https://www.biography.com/>

The following examples represent the changed structure of modern prophecies. One is a blind mystic Baba Vanga², known as “Nostradamus from the Balkans”.

- (8) **“Horror, horror! The American brethren will fall after being attacked by the steel birds. The wolves will be howling in a bush, and innocent blood will be gushing”** (*The Sun*).

Edgar Cayce, the American mystic, “healer”, and medium, author of thousands of stenographically recorded answers to many different questions, starting with diagnoses and recipes for patients and information about the reasons for the downfall of former civilizations (Edgar Cayce’s A.R.E). He made most of the audio recordings in a trance state, resembling sleep; people called him “the Sleeping Prophet”.

- (9) *“The earth will be broken up in many places. The early portion will see a change in the physical aspect of the west coast of America. There will be open waters appearing in the northern portions of Greenland. There will be new lands seen off the Caribbean Sea, and dry land will appear. There will be the falling away in India of much of the material suffering that has been brought on troubled people. There will be the reduction of one risen to power in central Europe to naught. The young king’s son will soon reign. In America, in the political forces, we see a re-stabilization of the powers of the peoples in their own hands, a breaking up of the rings, the cliques in many places...”* (*ibid*).

As we can see from these examples (8–9), they are very far from the biblical prophecies that we described above. However, they look very similar to the most mystical book in the Bible – Revelation. The Revelation of John or Apocalypse (from Greek – revelation) is the last book of the Bible and the only prophetic book in the New Testament. John was not a prophet per se; he was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ; almost at the end of his life, he got this revelation as a vision of what would happen:

- (10) *“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw”* (*Bible (KJV), Revelation 1:1–2*).

Therefore, the purpose of Revelation from the very beginning was **to predict the future**. The book of Revelation is full of symbols with deep symbolic meaning. Many scientists and interpreters are trying to decode the meaning hidden in the text.

All symbols from Revelation and the interpretation of their meaning are still evoking many arguments. With the development of the TV industry, movie making, and especially the Internet, some have become iconic. There are a lot of movies, TV programs, and YouTube videos representing modern prophecies.

² She lost her eyesight during the storm and claimed to hear voices and predict the future afterward. She became famous; her followers claim that 80-85% of what she predicted has already happened.

Here are some symbols from the Revelation that are very popular nowadays: Dragon (Satan) (Bible (KJV), Revelation 19:9); Horsemen of the Apocalypse (Bible (KJV), Revelation 6:1–8); The Mark of the Beast – 666 (Bible (KJV), Revelation 13:17–18).

The Mark of the Beast is one of the most famous symbols on the Internet; it went from a biblical prophetic text to an audiovisual product. The modern prophecy based on apocalyptic predictions is a complex phenomenon. A linguacultural code gives a vast space for interpretation. If a human “interpreter” participates in the communication process, the unambiguity of the information disappears, and it turns into a “world of meaning”. As a result, communicative systems become conventional with a continuous process of signification. Here are examples of the interpretive fan translation of the Mark of the Beast from English to Russian over the past years (Table 4):

Table 4. The Modern Interpretations of the Mark of the Beast on the Russian Internet

Modern Interpretation	Definition	Biblical Text
Digital Documents	The personal number assigned to every human	no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark (Bible (KJV), Revelation 13:17–18)
Barcode	Three long lines in every barcode form the number 666	
Passport with the electronic chip	The personal number assigned to every human	
Plastic bank card with an electronic chip	The personal number assigned to every human	
Covid-19 vaccination	The unknown substance to control people	to receive a mark on their right hand or on their forehead (Bible (KJV), Revelation 13:17–18)

Verbal components of the prophetic text combined with non-verbal ones, such as music, graphics, and apocalyptic images create the necessary environment and emotional effect. Often the prophetic texts are supplemented with audiovisual aspects by admirers of this genre or amateurs, so to some extent, this activity has passed into the category of creativity. The pragmatics of modern prophecy in the form of an audiovisual product are aimed at creating an emotional effect to attract the attention of a larger audience and increase viewings. The authenticity of the prophecy or the correctness of the interpretation does not matter much. The message formed by the modern prophet has lost its imaginative diversity and has become a simplified sign system with minimal expressive means. When it transforms and passes from text to audiovisual product, the creator of the audiovisual content reinterprets it.

6. Conclusion

The study aimed to demonstrate the evolution of the form of a biblical prophecy. The findings showed that it went from a written text to an audiovisual

Internet product over time. The results showed that the concept of the prophet and the prophecy changed its essential characteristics. Initially, the biblical prophet had to be chosen by God and experience divine inspiration. The prophet's functions were to interpret God's word and teach and guide people. The prophecy had three parts: it stated the problem, contained the instructions, and described the consequences for disobeying. Predicting the future without interpretation was never the most crucial part of it.

The results showed that with the development of technologies and mass media communication, modern prophecies evolved in the audiovisual Internet product that implies both linguistic and non-linguistic means. The biblical prophecies have only verbal-linguistic components. Modern prophecies present as a combination of verbal and non-verbal signs. Followers, believers, and amateurs got an opportunity to share their interpretations on the Internet. The most obvious change that was revealed as a result of the study is, on the one hand, a significant simplification of linguistic and semantic content with a significant complication of the form and methods of expression of modern prophecies with the help of numerous audiovisual tools.

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