

Prophetic Revelations in Near-Death Experiences

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ABSTRACT: Prophetic revelations in near-death experiences (NDEs) are a fourth type of flashforwards. Prophetic revelations are similar to another type of flashforward called the prophetic vision, which was identified in 1982 by Kenneth Ring. Like prophetic visions, prophetic revelations are a phenomenon in which NDErs are given a knowledge of the earth's future; they have a global or world focus. Prophetic revelations differ from prophetic visions in that events in the earth's future are told or revealed to the NDEr by a deceased relative or some otherworld person during their NDE, rather than in a visual display, and they are less detailed. Four categories of flashforwards have now been identified. In addition to the prophetic revelation and the prophetic vision are the other flashforwards, the personal flashforward and the otherworld personal future revelation (OPFR). The major features that distinguish these different flashforwards are their focus (global or personal), method of delivery, and detail. All flashforward types occur in a small number of cases and during deep NDEs.

KEY WORDS: near-death experience; precognition; prophecy; revelation.

In 1980, Kenneth Ring labeled the preview of an individual's future life on earth during the life review portion of his or her near-death experience (NDE) a "flashforward." George Gallup's nationwide survey of Americans on the afterlife (Gallup and Proctor, 1982) found a similar phenomenon in approximately a half million adult Americans, out of eight million who had had an NDE: these NDErs also experienced a premonition about some event or events that would happen in the future. For example, some of the people in the Gallup study reported "that during near-death encounters or other related experiences, they

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learned of events that were in the process of happening at some distance or would happen in the future" (Gallup and Proctor, 1982, p. 54).

Ring (1982) later labeled one type of flashforward he investigated the "prophetic vision." Ring's prophetic vision differed from both the personal flashforwards he identified in 1980, and another type of flashforward that was identified as the otherworld personal future revelation (OPFR) by Craig Lundahl in 1993, in that it had a world or global focus and pertained to a picture of the earth's future, rather than focusing solely on the personal future of an individual. It was also a vision that was highly consistent from person to person.

Prophetic vision cases have also been reported by Margot Grey (1985). First-person accounts of prophetic visions have been reported by George Ritchie (1991) and Dannion Brinkley (Brinkley and Perry, 1994). We now know that prophetic visions are usually reported to occur during an NDE, that they involve deep NDEs, and that there are apparently a relatively small number of cases.

A Composite Model and Elements of the Prophetic Vision

An idealized version that broadly conforms to the elements that comprise the prophetic vision, based on information from 16 NDErs, was formulated by Ring as follows:

There is, first, a sense of having total knowledge, but specifically one is aware of seeing the entirety of the earth's evolution and history, from the beginning to the end of time. The future scenario, however, is usually of short duration, seldom extending much beyond the beginning of the twenty-first century. The individual reports that in this decade [the 1980s] there will be an increasing incidence of earthquakes, volcanic activity and generally massive geophysical changes. There will be resultant disturbances in weather patterns and food supplies. The world economic system will collapse, and the possibility of nuclear war or accident is very great (respondents are not agreed on whether a nuclear catastrophe will occur). All of these events are transitional rather than ultimate, however, and they will be followed by a new era in human history, marked by human brotherhood, universal love and world peace. Though many will die, the earth will live. While agreeing that the dates for these events are not fixed, most individuals feel that they are likely to take place during the 1980s. (1984, p. 197)

Ring outlined five specific features or elements of the prophetic vision scenario for the future of the earth: geophysical changes, meteorological changes, supply and economic breakdowns, nuclear war, and a new era of human history characterized by universal love and world peace.

The purpose of this article is to present an initial description of a fourth type of flashforward in the near-death experience that is very similar to the prophetic vision described by Ring. This type of flashforward I have labeled the “prophetic revelation.” The article will also describe the features of the four categories of flashforwards and differentiate between them.

Prophetic Revelations

Another type of flashforward, the “prophetic revelation,” has yet to be added to the literature of near-death studies. Even though this fourth type of flashforward may be even more rare than the prophetic vision, there is evidence that suggests it exists.

The prophetic revelation resembles the prophetic vision in that it has a world or global focus and pertains to a knowledge of the earth’s future. Two features seem to distinguish the prophetic revelation from the prophetic vision. First, unlike the prophetic vision, in which NDErs are shown a vision of events in the earth’s future by a guide or a being of light, in the prophetic revelation events in the earth’s future are told or revealed to NDErs by a deceased relative or some person in the otherworld. Second, the prophetic revelation has a less detailed description of future events on the earth, compared to the descriptions found in prophetic visions. Rather, it appears that the future event or events are named without any further elaboration of the details in prophetic revelations.

As is the case with most prophetic visions, prophetic revelations appear to occur during an NDE, to involve deep NDEs, and to involve a relatively small number of cases.

Two Cases of Prophetic Revelations in Near-Death Experiences

To illustrate prophetic revelations, I will cite two cases. The first case is that of the NDEr Angie Fenimore, who had a near-death experience on January 8, 1991. She gave the following account:

I could feel the urgency in the spirits who were scurrying about to do the work of God. I was then told that we are in the final moments before the Savior will return to the earth. . . . I was not told when it would happen, but I understood that the earth is being prepared for the Second Coming of Christ. (Fenimore, 1995, pp. 145–146)

Another NDE that contains a prophetic revelation was that of Christine Monsen, a case cited by Lundahl and Harold Widdison:

During Christine Monsen's NDE in 1987 she saw the earth enveloped in layers of dark haze which was growing more thick as she watched. Her deceased husband who was present explained that it was evil that darkens the earth and it will continue to spread until the whole earth is covered and that terrible turmoil is ahead. (1997, p. 73)

These two illustrations reveal a few features that might be described as follows: A person who is near death finds him- or herself in another world and encounters others who foretell a future event or events that are to occur on the earth. In these illustrations, Fenimore was told of one event to occur in the earth's future, that of a Savior returning to the earth; and Monsen was told that evil will continue to spread until it covers the whole earth in the future and that terrible turmoil is to occur in the earth's future. No additional information was provided beyond the naming of these future events.

Types of Flashforwards in Near-Death Studies

Since 1980, four types of flashforwards have been identified. Ring (1980) initially labeled the apparent preview of an individual's future during the life review portion of his or her near-death experience as a "personal flashforward." He described another type of precognitive near-death vision as the "prophetic vision" (1982). The first type of flashforward pertains solely to the personal future of the individual experiencer, while the second type pertains to a picture of the earth's future. In 1993, I identified the "otherworld personal future revelation" (OPFR) as a preview of an individual's future, as told to the NDEr by deceased relatives or friends or by an escort in the otherworld. In this article I identify the "prophetic revelation," a fourth type of flashforward. Table 1 is constructed to assist in understanding the similarities and differences between these types of flashforwards. The table shows that for all flashforward types there are a small number of cases and that they occur during a deep NDE. They also occur at any time during the near-death experience except for the personal flashforward, which usually occurs only during the life review portion of the NDE. However, in the personal flashforward and the prophetic vision, a visual display for the NDErs reveals events that will occur in their personal life and on earth, respectively, while in the OPFR and the prophetic revelation, the NDErs are told by a person in the otherworld either of events that

Table 1
Four Types of Flashforwards in Near-Death Experiences

	<i>Personal Flashforward</i>	<i>Otherworld Personal Future Revelation</i>	<i>Prophetic Vision</i>	<i>Prophetic Revelation</i>
Number of cases	Small	Small	Small	Small
Depth of NDE	Deep	Deep	Deep	Deep
Focus of flashforward	Personal	Personal	World	World
Method of delivery	Vision in life review	Told by someone	Vision in life review	Told by someone
Detail of description	More detailed	More detailed	More detailed	Less detailed
Consistency of observed events	Varied	Varied	Agreement	Undetermined

will occur in their own future on the earth or of events that will occur in the future of the earth, respectively. Of course, the consistency of the events observed in personal flashforwards and OPFRs varies according to the individual NDErs, because they see or are told of future events that are specific to them. Prophetic visions are highly consistent because they have a common scenario of future earth events from person to person. There is yet an insignificant number of prophetic revelations in the literature to evaluate their consistency. All the flashforward types except the prophetic revelation have considerable detail in them. The few recorded prophetic revelations seem to name events but provide little detail about those events. Finally, the personal flashforwards and OPFRs focus on events in the NDEr's future life, whereas the prophetic visions and prophetic revelations focus on events in the earth's future.

Conclusion

Flashforwards are a fascinating aspect of the near-death experience because they project the future of individual lives and the earth. Personal flashforwards and OPFRs have particular meaning for the lives of individual NDErs and certain individuals who are intimately associated with them. However, prophetic visions and prophetic revelations have particular meaning not only for the lives of individual NDErs, but for all other people in the world as well, because they may be affected by these prophetic visions and revelations whether they are cognizant of them or not. The consistency found in these prophecies and their predictions for the earth give ample reason for their careful investigation and consideration by near-death researchers and the world. Such scrutiny is warranted by the fact that future events in all NDE flashforwards reported in the literature have been occurring and others may follow (Alschuler, 1996).

Further collection and study of cases of flashforwards will contribute to our further classifying and understanding them and utilizing them for the prediction of future events, one of the ideals of science. Such knowledge can also be utilized in preparing for these events and in making informed choices in the affairs of humanity.

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