

THE CELESTINE PROPHECY

by James Redfield

1993, Warner Books, 246 pages

“We know that life is really about a spiritual unfolding that is personal and enchanting—an unfolding that no science or philosophy religion has yet fully clarified. And we know something else as well: we know that once we do understand what is happening, how to engage this allusive process and maximize its occurrence in our lives, human society will take a quantum leap into a whole new way of life—one that realizes the best of our tradition—and creates a culture that has been the goal of history all along.” — James Redfield

This is a book I generally find myself reading again and again, when I need a lift or when I want to feel more spiritual about things. It was published back in the early years of the Clinton presidency at a time when early Baby Boomers like me were passing into their 40s: suddenly middle age and looking for meaning... as important, not finding it in the belief systems handed down to us.

Basically, because there were so many Baby Boomers (and we were mostly expected to live past 50), the customary period of psychological passage acquired a name: New Age Spirituality.

Redfield writes in that New Age tradition, say in the Carlos Castaneda (*The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*) vein or even in a less cerebral Robert Pirsig (*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*) sense. He doesn't channel ancestral spirits, though he may invoke them. What appeals to me about Celestine—aside from the fact it's an example of a self-published novel that has sold more than 20 million copies—is its uncanny resonance.

Think of a tuning fork. Redfield's story is so genuinely personal yet at the same time so universal, even after 15 years now, it still taps the deepest harmonies within us.

So what is the story here?

Somewhere in the Southeast US our totally decent humanistic-academic, Redfield-like “man with no name” encounters a former platonic girlfriend who speaks of the discovery of an ancient manuscript that's being researched and fought over by church, state, and scientists in Peru. The manuscript supposedly contains nine insights into life itself. Our intrepid humanist takes off on a first-person wild exploration in the Andes.

As adventure stories go I'd have to give it a pedestrian C+. This isn't Indiana Jones in the Lair of Lucretia. But because each chapter unravels one of the mysteries, and because each insight is so resonant, we are drawn into the web of self-discovery. This is the quintessential “book you cannot put down.”

The insights, briefly:

- 1) A Critical Mass—In an age of restlessness, paying attention to meaningful coincidences.
- 2) The Longer Now—As the 20th century closes, we're ready to tap into a new spiritual energy.
- 3) A Matter of Energy—Learning to inhale and exhale, direct the flow of energy.
- 4) The Struggle for Power—Energy traps, how they happen, how to avoid them.
- 5) The Message of the Mystics—Remedying energy shortages by opening up to the universal source.
- 6) Clearing the Past—How energy seeking gets twisted from our upbringing; how to untwist.
- 7) Engaging the Flow—Techniques for meditation, how to take in nature.
- 8) The Interpersonal Ethic—Sharing energy as well as avoiding energy addictions to others.
- 9) The Emerging Culture—Semi-utopian. Meshes with post-Cartel benevolent voluntarism.

Highly advocated for “healing our world.”

Quite candidly, I have this common feeling of awakening among my family, friends, business acquaintances, radical freedom fighters, just about everywhere. It's as if the Matrix, the Cartel, the secret societies that have dominated us for centuries are dying, and a true human society is about to ascend. It may be like breaking the sound barrier; some troubles, but most will wind up just fine.