STATEMENT DC997

The Celestine Prophecy
& “Cosmic Synchronicity”

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CURRENT PREOCCUPATIONS IN THE NEW AGE

The 1960s saw a paradigm shift, an “emerging spiritual awareness” that today has reached widespread acceptance in the New Age movement. It is a search for a utopia that devotees are convinced will be ushered in by human beings. This new sense of “cosmic consciousness” is epitomized in James Redfield’s The Celestine Prophecy.

Millions of copies of this book have been sold, which is evidence that New Age thinking has filtered into every fabric of society. Why is The Celestine Prophecy resonating with people from all walks of life? To understand the phenomenal success of The Celestine Prophecy we must first understand how its author has captured the spirit of our age.

PROPHESY: A BACKGROUND

James Redfield was born in 1950 and grew up in a rural area near Birmingham, Alabama. He was brought up in a Methodist church, but because the church could not adequately answer his spiritual questions, he studied Eastern philosophies. He majored in sociology at Auburn University and graduated with a Master’s degree in counseling in 1975. For more than 15 years, he was a therapist for abused adolescents. Meanwhile, he was drawn into the human potential movement and to the work of Carl Jung. In 1989 Redfield quit his job as a therapist to write full-time.

During the writing of The Celestine Prophecy he visited Sedona, Arizona, a New Age mecca known for its supposed high-energy vortexes. While there, Redfield claims he was miraculously healed of a foot injury. He also claims to have learned of his past lives. In 1992, he sunk his life savings into printing 3,000 copies of The Celestine Prophecy. Peddling the paperback to New Age bookstores, he managed to sell over 100,000 copies within six months. Seeing the book’s potential, Warner Books bought the rights to it in 1994 for $1,000,000.1

Within four years the book sold nearly five million copies in more than 40 countries.2 It stayed on The New York Times best seller list for more then three years, and Redfield became the world’s best-selling hardcover author in 1996. He is also the author of follow-up books such as The Celestine Prophecy: An Experiential Guide (1995); The Celestine Prophecy: A Pocket Guide to the Nine Insights (1996); The Tenth Insight: Holding the Vision (1996); The Celestine Vision (1997); The Tenth Insight: Holding the Vision: A Pocket Guide (1997); and The Secret of Shambhala: In Search of the Eleventh Insight (1999), as well as supplementary audio tapes.

The Celestine Prophecy tells the story of a “Manuscript” that was allegedly composed by Mayans in the Peruvian Andes around 600 B.C. Although the Manuscript was found in these “Celestine Ruins” of Mayan and later Incan use, oddly enough it was written in Aramaic. According to the book, this substantiates the authenticity of the Manuscript since “much of the Old Testament” was written in Aramaic.3 The Manuscript claims to contain the secrets of human existence recorded in “Twelve Insights,” nine of which are presented in The Celestine Prophecy. We now turn to a review of the book itself and the additional two Insights that have been disclosed thus far in sequels.4
EXPOSITION AND CRITIQUE

As we address each Insight, we will begin with a direct quote about the Insight from Redfield’s book *The Celestine Prophecy: An Experiential Guide*. This will be followed by a plot description, a delineation of what the particular Insight entails, and a brief response.

**The First Insight: A Critical Mass — Coincidences That Shape Our Lives — Answering the Question When and How.** A new spiritual awakening is occurring in human culture, an awakening brought about by a critical mass of individuals who experience their lives as a spiritual unfolding, a journey in which we are led forward by mysterious coincidences.

*The Celestine Prophecy,* written in the first person, opens with the main character en route to meet an old friend named Charlene. Although this main character is never named, it appears that he is a projection of Redfield since they share similar traits and experiences. Charlene tells him about an ancient “Manuscript,” which the Peruvian government is suppressing at the behest of the Roman Catholic Church. Because of a dream and his curiosity, the main character books the next flight to Peru.

The character soon learns that the First Insight is about an awareness that would develop in our own time. Society is currently on the verge of a cultural and spiritual transformation — a “renaissance in consciousness.” This transformation is evident because people are restless and because coincidences (i.e., synchronicity) are happening more and more frequently. It is explained that “recognizing the importance of coincidence lays the ground work for the remaining Insights, which inform us that the universe responds to our consciousness and expectations....”

Redfield would have us believe that the concept of synchronicity, developed by Carl Jung, is an established scientific fact; yet there is no evidence for it. Even more problematic is that a coincidence could mean almost anything one wants it to mean. But if it is subjective then why talk of a coincidence as being meaningful, especially if it is to convey a sense of purpose or “destiny”?

**The Second Insight: The Longer Now — Expanding the Historical Context — Delineating the First Insight.**

This awakening represents the creation of a new, more complete worldview, which replaces a five-hundred-year-old preoccupation with secular survival and comfort....

On the plane to Peru the main character “synchronistically” strikes up a conversation with Wayne Dobson, who is an assistant professor of history. Dobson becomes the next person to relay an Insight, the Second, to our protagonist. On arrival in Peru the main character meets Wilson James, who becomes somewhat of a liaison for synthesizing the Insights throughout the book.

The Second Insight prophetically explains history from A.D. 1000 to the present. It supposedly offers a more correct interpretation of recent history. For example, because of Martin Luther, the worldview of the “churchmen” collapsed. A vacuum of uncertainty was created, which later was filled by the scientific method. This supposedly explains our current preoccupation with materialism. The problem is that it distracts us from seeking spiritual answers.

Redfield is seriously mistaken regarding both the “churchmen” and the development of science. He consistently misleads his readers when he talks of history, science, and Christianity. More often than not, he burlesques these subjects until they are unrecognizable. Redfield has done a grave injustice to the pursuit of knowledge and sacrificed truth for his own utopia and euphoria. To believe that modern science was born from the failure of the “churchmen” is counterfactual. The fact of the matter is that the majority of the founders of the major disciplines in science were Christian or theist.

**The Third Insight: A Matter of Energy — The Relationship Between Mind and Energy — Answering the Question What.** We now experience that we live not in a material universe, but in a universe of dynamic energy. Everything extant is a field of sacred energy that we can sense and intuit.

Wilson James takes the main character to an awe-inspiring place called Viciente Lodge. There the character meets Sarah Lomer, a physics teacher from Maine, who has a translated copy of the Insight. Gaining the ability from Sarah
to see energy by focusing on the beauty of nature, the main character sees the energy field around a plant for a moment.

The Third Insight “describes a new understanding of the physical world,” in which “we humans will learn to perceive what was formerly an invisible type of energy.” This Insight is supposedly supported by two major findings, “those of quantum mechanics and those of Albert Einstein.” As told by Sarah, “The whole of Einstein’s life’s work was to show that what we perceive as hard matter is mostly empty space with a pattern of energy running through it.” Furthermore, at the subatomic level of quantum physics, “the act of observation itself alters the results — as if these elementary particles are influenced by what the experimenter expects.”

As one critic notes in response to such common New Age misconceptions, quantum mechanics “provides no mechanism for the psychic phenomena or simultaneous connections [synchronicity] between events.” Furthermore, the theory of Relativity in no way makes reality observer dependent. Philip Frank, in Philosophy of Science, clarifies the confusion: “The ‘relativization’ of space and time is an advance in semantics and not, as has been frequently said, an advance in metaphysics or ontology.”

The Fourth Insight: The Struggle for Power — Competing for Energy — Answering the Question Why. To gain energy we tend to manipulate or force others to give us attention and thus energy....

As the protagonist travels on with Wilson James, they meet Chris Reneau, a psychologist, who helps him understand the Fourth Insight. The Insight teaches that one does not need to compete for energy since true energy comes from a universal source.

Like other New Agers, Redfield believes Quantum Mechanics proves the monistic worldview and that consciousness, therefore, affects reality since everything is interconnected. In Examining Holistic Medicine, Drs. Douglas Stalker and Clark Glymour, in their article “Quantum Medicine,” state:

Quantum Mechanics has not led physicists to place any emphasis on “consciousness” as a causal factor in experimental outcome. States of consciousness do not appear as variables in any of the papers published in Physical Review nowadays. Physicists have not found that in order to do particle physics they must first do psychology. Consciousness plays only a minor role in one rather implausible solution to the measurement problem; and even if that solution is embraced, there is nothing to be learned about the physical structure of the universe from speculations about the mind.

The Fifth Insight: Message of the Mystics — Altered States of Consciousness — Elucidating the Fourth Insight. Insecurity and violence ends when we experience an inner connection with divine energy within, a connection described by mystics of all traditions.

While trying to save a friend named Marjorie, the main character is separated from James and is now on the run from soldiers. As he contemplates his death, which he thinks is inevitable, he has a spiritual experience on a precipice. Later he learns that what happened can be described as his ego opening to a transcendent state of “higher self-energy.” After this experience, he meets Father Sanchez, a monk who lives in a nearby monastery and who explains the Fifth Insight. He also learns about Cardinal Sebastian, the person behind the suppression of the Manuscript.

The character’s vision or mystical experience helps him understand the concept of evolution; that is, humans are not only evolving physically but also are on the verge of evolving spiritually. When his experience ends, he is left “consumed with peace and completeness,” with feelings of “exhilaration,” “enhanced tranquillity,” and “buoyancy.” More importantly, not only does one receive or absorb energy, but one can also give or project it to people and things. This, he learns, is the concept of love.

In response to the Fifth Insight, just because altered states of consciousness can provide euphoric feelings it does not make mystical teachings true. Furthermore, Redfield bases an entire worldview on a faulty interpretation of the faulty theory of evolution.
The Sixth Insight: Clearing the Past — Control Dramas — Answering the Question How. The more we stay connected, the more we are acutely aware of those times when we lose connection, usually when we are under stress. Once our manipulations are brought to personal awareness, our connection becomes more constant and we can discover our own growth path in life, and our spiritual mission.

The main character now travels with Father Sanchez toward the ruins at Machu Picchu to meet Sanchez’s friend, Father Carl. Never found by the Spanish and undiscovered until 1911, Machu Picchu is located on the eastern side of the Peruvian Andes, 7,800 feet above sea level.

This chapter describes “control dramas” and how they influence us and detract us from evolving. Simply stated, control dramas are behaviors we developed from early childhood. They are formed in response to other people’s personality traits, and we eventually form our own drama to control others, that is, to get energy from others. The first step in freeing ourselves is to become conscious of the problem and understand which of the various control dramas our parents possessed. Father Carl explains that the “process of finding your true spiritual identity involves looking at your whole life as one long story [including past reincarnations]….Begin by asking yourself this question: why was I born to this particular family?”

Redfield’s theory about control dramas fails at several levels. First, his theory about energy is unfalsifiable. Second, the notion of reincarnation conflicts with biblical teaching (see Heb. 9:27; John 9:1–3). Third, since energy and mind are not directly related, “control dramas” are not the cause of human conflict. Rather, human conflict arises when we fail to turn to God for our sustenance by feeding off other people or things.

The Seventh Insight: Engaging the Flow — Evolving Consciously — Answering the Question How. Knowing our personal mission further enhances the flow of mysterious coincidences as we are guided toward our destinies. First we have questions, then dreams, daydreams, and intuitions lead us toward the answers which usually are synchronistically provided by the wisdom of another human being.

Sanchez teaches the main character how to gain energy so he can let his intuition guide him. The latter then decides to go and look for Wilson James. In his search, he is captured and “coincidentally” placed in a cell with a native Indian named Pablo. In prison he learns why the church is trying to suppress the Manuscript: it teaches evolution is both physical and spiritual.

After having a dream that troubles him, the main character learns from Pablo that the Seventh Insight reveals how to interpret dreams and daydreams. Later, the main character is taken from his cell and questioned by a priest, Father Costous, who tells him, “The church feels the Manuscript is confusing people. It gives the impression that people can decide on their own how to live, without regard to the scriptures.” Then the priest angrily asks a question that is never answered: “But from what authority does this Manuscript speak? How can it be trusted?”

Indeed, it couldn’t be trusted, were it an actual historical manuscript. The irony is, many Celestine devotees trust it even though it is patently a fiction. Furthermore, the things in which it tells them to trust — feelings, dreams, and intuitions — are notoriously unreliable foundations on which to base one’s entire life.

The Eighth Insight: The Interpersonal Ethic — The New Approach — Elucidating the Seventh Insight. We can increase the frequency of guiding coincidences by uplifting every person that comes into our lives. Care must be taken not to lose our inner connection in romantic relationships. By seeing the beauty in every face, we lift others into their wisest self, and increase the chances of hearing a synchronistic message.

The main character is taken by jeep from the jail to see Cardinal Sebastian. With him in the jeep is Marjorie, who has become attracted to him. On their way, they manage to escape and find themselves in the house of a woman named Karla, who appears to have been expecting them. Karla reveals the next Insight. With the knowledge of this Insight, the protagonist becomes aware of the mysterious power that Marjorie seems to hold over him, which can stop his evolutionary progression.

The Insight deals with interactions with strangers and close relationships. Since chance encounters do not exist, anyone who crosses our paths has a message for us. It says also parents should have only one child so they can focus their energy on that child, thus helping him or her to evolve. The Manuscript goes on to say that problems arise in romantic relationships as a result of power struggles. A further aspect of the Insight is about projecting and receiving energy. Julia, a minor character, says, “It’s really a rather hedonistic thing to do….The more we can love and
appreciate others, the more energy flows into us.” The last idea this Insight addresses is “conscious conversation.” This is the ability, in a group setting, “to speak up when it is your moment and to project energy when it is someone else’s time.”

To reduce relational problems to energy is both unbiblical and counterfactual. Redfield’s vague notions of love as being subject rather than object-oriented are also worlds apart from biblical truth.

The Ninth Insight: The Emerging Culture — Evolutionary Leap — What the Future Holds. As we all evolve toward the best completion of our spiritual missions, the technological means of survival will be fully automated as humans focus instead on synchronistic growth. Such growth will move humans into higher energy states, ultimately transforming our bodies into spiritual form and uniting this dimension of existence with the afterlife dimension, ending the cycle of birth and death.

The main character travels with Father Sanchez to see Cardinal Sebastian, hoping to prevent him from destroying the Ninth Insight. Father Sanchez tries to convince the Cardinal that the Manuscript does not violate biblical teachings. In response, Cardinal Sebastian says, “This document makes it sound as though humans are in control, as though we are in charge of change in the world. We are not. God is.” The Cardinal is not convinced that the Manuscript has any value or truth.

Sanchez and the main character then drive to the “Celestine Ruins.” Sanchez explains the significance of the ruins, claiming they were built by two different cultures. The first were Mayans, who (contrary to all known history) mysteriously vanished in c. 600 B.C. They were followed by the Incas, who inhabited the same location. The reason for the Mayans’ mysterious disappearance was that they were the first group of people to reach the Ninth Insight.

At the ruins, Julia adds another piece to the puzzle that will enable one to “walk into heaven”: Our destiny is to continue to increase our energy level...Whole groups of people, once they reach a certain level, will suddenly become invisible to those who are still vibrating at a lower level. It will appear to the people on this lower level that the others just disappeared, but the group themselves will feel as though they are still right here — only they will feel lighter.

To say the Mayans, one of the most ruthless cultures of Mesoamerica, reached enlightenment is both curious and grotesque. Moreover, Redfield’s notions of vibrating and disappearing run counter to the physical resurrection of Jesus. The Bible is very clear that the physical world is not something to be renounced or left behind through spiritual development (e.g., Gen 1:31; 1 Tim 4:4).

The Tenth Insight: Holding the Vision — Elucidating the Nine Insights — Questions of the Afterlife....Each of us comes here on assignment, and as we pull this understanding into consciousness, we can remember a fuller birth vision of what we wanted to accomplish with our lives. Further, we can remember a common world vision of how we will all work together to create a new spiritual culture....

In this Insight the main character travels to the Appalachian Mountains in search of Charlene, who had first introduced him to the Insights. A select group of scientists and the Forest Service Rangers now seek to suppress the Insight.

Essentially, this Insight further develops certain aspects of the previous Insights (especially the Eighth); for example, intuition and visualization. Unlike the other Insights, however, it has not been written down. It exists only in the “Afterlife.” The Insight talks of how the world will be transformed until it has become spiritual. Not only does this Insight provide a fuller understanding of this transformation, but it also expounds on the “Afterlife dimension.” We learn that in this dimension “you can make anything happen just by wishing it so...[however], such creation isn’t fulfilling.” Although this type of manipulation can occur in the earthly dimension it happens at a “slower rate.” Such manipulation only becomes fulfilling when “we first tune into our inner direction and divine guidance...[when] we become cocreators with the divine source.”

Our goal in life, with the help of “soul groups,” is to remember our “birth vision.” A birth vision is what we wanted to get accomplished in this life before we entered this physical realm (i.e., in a preincarnate state). Soul groups, people who remain in the Reincarnation Afterlife dimension, offer us support and help to attain our birth vision.
Since this Insight doesn’t offer any new information, little needs to be said in response. The Bible never talks of anything like birth visions or soul groups, nor does it present a conception of the “Afterlife” as Redfield portrays it.

The Eleventh Insight: Prayer — Attaining through Visualization — The Method of Holding the Vision....For centuries, religious scriptures, poems, and philosophies have pointed to a latent power of mind within all of us that mysteriously helps to affect what occurs in the future. It has been called faith power, positive thinking, the power of prayer. We are now taking this power seriously enough to bring a fuller knowledge of it into public awareness. We are finding that this prayer power is a field of intention and moves out from us and can be extended and strengthened, especially when we connect with others in a common vision....

In this Insight the main character travels to Tibet in search of the Kingdom of Shambhala. Like the previous Insight, the Eleventh Insight is essentially a commentary on certain aspects of the other Insights, particularly on the power of what he calls prayer but what is really a form of Eastern/occult meditation. The purpose of this Insight is to show how to extend “prayer-energy.” This is possible through the process of “visualization” since “every thought is a prayer.” We are also informed that “all prayers in the Bible are not requests, they are affirmations....It merely affirms that these things are ready to happen already, and by faithfully assuming that they will, we make it so.”

This teaching turns the biblical concept of prayer on its head. By definition biblical prayer involves humble petition of, and utter dependency on, a personal, sovereign, and benevolent Creator to meet needs we ourselves and natural processes are inadequate to fulfill (e.g., 1 John 5:14–15). In response to such intercessory prayer God has made the sun stand still (Josh. 10) and changed the course of history (Exod. 32; Dan. 9).

UNDERSTANDING PROPHECY’S POPULARITY

What is it that people from all walks of life find worthy of appreciation within the pages of The Celestine Prophecy? For one thing, the book is subtle. Words like karma, reincarnation, and samsara are omitted. This allows Redfield to reach a broader audience, including Christians, who may not realize that what he is teaching is contrary to the person and teachings of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, The Celestine Prophecy offers meaning to mundane life through the belief in synchronicity. Common experiences such as spontaneous eye contact, deja vu, coincidences, dreams, or seeing someone who looks familiar are considered meaningful signs. Life is no longer seen as boring. The book also appeals to the spirit of individuality and anti-authoritarianism: “No one wants to be subservient to anyone else any longer.” That includes God. The only “sin” is competing for energy. Finally, life is seen as simple. The Celestine Prophecy is appealing because people no longer need to be confused by diversity, since diversity is an illusion.

All of these reasons are symptomatic of something deeper. The problem facing modern humanity is that never before has the average person been confronted with such tumultuousness. We are experiencing information overload. As a result, life has become like listening to an orchestra tune up. Not only is the current Zeitgeist (spirit of the age) confused, agnostic, and cynical, but also it is no longer Judeo-Christian. No wonder a book such as The Celestine Prophecy is appealing.

Redfield’s book has become a catalyst for the New Age movement. Indeed this movement is developing into one of the most dangerous threats toward the cause of Christ since the mystical and Gnostic movements of the early church. Its impact is creating ripples the world over, and only time will tell how much damage it will do.

It should come as no surprise that people who cannot find answers in secularism and cannot see Christ in the lives of those who claim to believe in Him are searching elsewhere. As a result, people are no longer religious, but spiritual. This means no theology, no ethic, no ultimate commitment, and no worship. Until we acknowledge and understand our times, we will not be able to effectively bring those who are lost to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Redfield has constructed a best seller that is built on a pragmatic and experiential test for truth, and on the presumption that pantheism is true. Throughout its pages it contains many fallacious arguments, including non sequiturs, contradictions, unfalsifiable premises, and ambiguous terminology. Yet Redfield offers an apologetic against those who disagree with him “intellectually.” He says, in the preface of The Celestine Prophecy: An Experiential Guide, “It can be argued that those who take a strictly intellectual approach to this subject will be the last to get it.” We all have a worldview whereby we interpret reality. Do we let the facts speak for themselves, or do we simply assume our worldview is correct?
Redfield takes his readers down a fallacious mystical path. We do not believe he is intentionally misleading his readers, but that he is primarily deceiving himself. No matter what type of factual evidence is presented against the “Insights,” many will not be convinced because of the powerfully seductive self-deception that we are divine and possess powers to manipulate reality. The will to believe something because it evokes feelings of tranquility and hope is all it takes for people to abandon their rational faculties. Only the Holy Spirit through God’s Word can break through such obduracy.

In the final analysis, The Celestine Prophecy is a book of fables, interspersed with fragments of truth. This Prophecy flies in the face of God’s inspired Word. In the last days, Jesus said, there will be many false prophets. How foolish to follow them when in Christ we have all the answers we truly need! He alone has died for our sins and has risen again as proof that He has won our eternal justification (Rom. 4:25)!

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2 See the inside jacket cover of Redfield’s The Tenth Insight (New York: Warner Books, 1996).
3 James Redfield, The Celestine Prophecy: An Adventure (New York: Warner Books, 1993), 8. Since Redfield leads his readers to believe in the Manuscript’s existence, it should be noted that (1) down through the centuries no indigenous group of people of Central or South America have ever spoken Aramaic; (2) although the Mayan people did develop writing skills, they were limited to hieroglyphics while the Peruvians left no written records; (3) even if the Old Testament were written in Aramaic this would not establish the authenticity of the Manuscript; and (4) it is not true that “much” of the Old Testament was written in Aramaic. It was written in Hebrew and only a few chapters of the book of Daniel and Ezra were written in Aramaic (Daniel 2:4b–7:28 and Ezra 4:8–6:18; 7:12–26).
4 Redfield will be releasing the Twelfth Insight sometime in 2001.
6 The Celestine Prophecy, 6.
7 See, for a powerful critique, M. D. Faber, Synchronicity: C. G. Jung, Psychoanalysis, and Religion (Westpoint, CT: Praeger, 1998).
9 The Celestine Prophecy, 40.
10 Ibid., 42.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
14 The Celestine Prophecy, 59.
18 The Celestine Prophecy, 136.
19 Ibid., 170.
20 Ibid., 171.
21 Ibid., 201.
22 Ibid., 215.
23 Ibid., 235.
24 Ibid., 242.
25 Ibid., 241.
28 The Tenth Insight, 29.
29 Ibid.
32 The Eleventh Insight, 13.
33 The Celestine Prophecy, 194.