

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

“God is Dead.”

Friedrich Nietzsche

“Nietzsche is Dead.”

God

“That sounds pretty ominous.”

Walker laughed. “Knowledge is power. The Fourth Awakening is a natural progression in human development and shouldn’t be feared or misunderstood. One of the reasons we wanted you was to explain what was going on in language that could be understood by the average person on the street.”

“You win, we’ll do background first, but I want to establish a few ground rules.”

“Such as?”

“No psychobabble and no New Age gibberish. I want the five “W”s. Who, what, when, where and why.”

“Fair enough.”

“I’m not done. I need verifiable facts, and not opinions or interpretations based on divine intervention.”

“Okay, for the sake of clarity I’m going to be referring to four different ages of man. You can call it whatever you want, but to me they are The Age of Man; The Age of Religion; The Age of Science; and The Age of Thought.”

“I can live with that. Go ahead.”

“I’ll make this as concise as possible; we have a lot of ground to cover.”

“How much ground?”

“Pretty much the entire history of mankind told from a perspective you’ve probably never considered.”

“What?”

“Napoleon once said ‘History is a set of lies agreed upon,’ and he was probably right. I’m going to tell you some things that only peripherally relate to the Hermes Project. I doubt I’ll tell you much you haven’t heard or suspected already, just rearranged and with a different viewpoint.”

“I don’t follow.”

“Just keep an open mind and if I lose you anywhere, let me know.” Walker waited for an acknowledgement, which he got in the form of a nod, before continuing. “There have been three previous awakenings. The Age of Man, The Age of Religion and the Age of Science.”

Penelope grunted and shook her head.

“What now? This is already starting to sound like a bad game of Dungeons and Dragons.”

“Humor me.”

“Okay, okay.” Penelope pretended to zip her lips shut, lock them and toss an imaginary key in the backseat.

“The exact time of the Age of Man is hard to guess since there were no written records, but it was sometime after the last great glaciation, which ended around 12,000 years ago in Egypt and gradually spread north. Humans began grouping, and with better weather, the population began to grow. An agricultural society began to replace the nomadic one that had existed for over a million years. Then suddenly, in terms of historical timelines at least, humans got smart...”

“So you’re saying the light bulb clicked on when some magic force said ‘let there be light’, and the human race suddenly appeared.”

“Yes.”

“That’s absurd.”

“Okay. There is a large body of supporting text which you will have access to when we get you to the compound. For now, look at this as a new theory on the development of mankind. And try to restrain your natural skepticism for just a few minutes, or this is going to take forever.”

“Sorry.”

Michael Walker just smiled. “Should I continue?”

“By all means.”

“Over the next few thousand years, humans moved from being hunter gatherers and began to figure out how to grow and store crops, keep livestock, build cities, build the pyramids, master ship building and sailing, and establish trade with other cultures. Cats started liking them...”

“Cats? What?”

“Until the Egyptians, cats wouldn’t have anything to do with humans. That was a big step in our evolution.”

“Cats?”

“Yes.” Penelope’s mouth opened, but she thought better of it and motioned for Walker to continue. “Cats are some of the most instinctive animals on the planet. When they sensed that we had changed, they started to allow us to live with them.”

“Allowed us to live with them?”

“You’re not a cat person then?”

“No.”

“Ahh.”

“Ahh, what?”

“Something else you’ll have trouble understanding.”

“Cats?”

“You don’t choose a cat, a cat chooses you.”

“I see. Cats. Anything else?”

“Yes. Humans discovered time.”

“Time?”

“Before then humans only had three dimensions to their lives. Up/down, left/right, and forward/backward. They had no concept of time and no way to express it.”

“So, let me get this straight, you’re telling me time did not exist until around 12,000 years ago?”

“Yes, at least not in their minds. This was a huge breakthrough and would explain parts of the Bible.”

“Parts of the ... what?”

“The text of the Bible was written long before we had the vocabulary we have today. Since they had no way to describe or understand time, it would be easy for humans back then to believe that the world was built in six days.”

”Right.”

Okay.” Walker glanced sideways at Spence. “The Second Awakening beginning around 800 BC was the Age of Religion.”

“A religious awakening?”

“Yes. Up until then, the early humans created deities out of things they could not understand or explain. There were rain gods and fertility gods. When bad things happened it was because the gods were angry, so sacrifices and rituals were created to keep the gods happy. This reached its height with the Egyptians, then to a lesser degree with the Greek—and later Roman—pagan gods. Between 800 BC and 400 BC, all around the world there was a religious explosion. This is when the key events in the Old Testament occurred, from which emerged Judeo/Christianity beliefs. At the same time Taoism was being followed by Confucianism in China. The same was happening with Shintoism in Japan and Hinduism and Buddhism in India, and later Islam. This was the first true indication of the power of thought emerging.”

“How does any of this confirm the power of thought?”

“How do cultures that share the same planet but separated by geography not knowing of the others’ existence, all, at the same time, suddenly discover the same thing if we’re not all connected? The power of thought is not limited to physical bodies; it is shared by all bodies.”

Penelope rolled her eyes. “Say for one second I’m buying this. To what do you attribute this Awakening?”

Walker shrugged. “If forced to guess, I’d say it was probably the development of the written word, and the emergence of art, particularly of color and statues.”

“Art?”

“Yes.”

“At least that’s better than cats.”

Walker ignored the jab and continued. “Artists and dreamers are often the first to see and experience an Awakening. This is why they are often out of synch with the rest of a society which is still clinging to the old ways.”

“I can see how having a written language could help human development, but what does color and statues have to do with anything?”

“We see the ancient Egyptian artifacts much differently today than they were at the time. They were originally rendered in vivid colors which have faded over the years. Color was so important that in the ancient world indigo was more valuable than gold.”

“You’re serious?”

“Yes. Next came the early Greek statues and busts; the world had never seen anything like them before. Everything before then had been bas relief or crude; these were three-dimensional representations. These were the only major intellectual changes which occurred during this time. By taking quill to papyrus and chisels to stone, something was triggered in the human brain that started another cascade of events.”

“If you say so.”

“I do, and if you’re willing to take off your blinders and look at things from a different perspective, you might begin to see that I’m right.”

“So far there is only one thing you’ve said that I completely agree with.”

“Pray tell, what’s that?”

“There is no way anyone would publish this if you wrote it.”

“I know.” Walker was unfazed by the criticism. “Do you want to hear about the Third Awakening?”

“I’m on the edge of my seat.”

“The Third Awakening is, thanks to the written word, a bit easier to track. It occurred around 500 years ago and is the Age of Science. At the time, religion was still firmly in control, but Da Vinci and Copernicus, along with the others like Galileo and Newton, triggered a scientific awakening that changed the world again.”

“And this one was caused by gerbils?”

Walker ignored her again. “I’m guessing here, but most likely, it was the invention of the telescope and microscope, and possibly the invention of moveable type.”

“Why?”

“These inventions allowed the human eye to extend beyond its normal range of vision and see parts of the world and universe that were previously unknown. And Gutenberg allowed knowledge to move from the wealthy elites to the common man. The telescope and microscope were extensions of the eye and books were extensions of the mind.”

“This is awfully Marshall McLuhan-ish, don’t you think?”

“Probably, but art and literature were also changing during this time, making it hard to separate which was the cause and which was the effect.”

“So you’re saying around 1500 there was another Awakening, and it could have been triggered by either the telescope or art?”

“Or literature. This was the time of Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Sir Thomas More and many others.”

“Do you know how silly that all sounds?”

“Remember, this is the Reader’s Digest condensed version. I want you to have an overview to put what’s happening in a historical prospective. I’m just trying to plant a few seeds in the hope they grow.”

“So far, I wouldn’t hold out much hope for a bumper crop, if I were you.”

Walker sighed and shook his head, but never took his eyes off of the road. “For the past 500 or so years, the human brain has turned more and more to secular science and away from mysticism and religion. If it cannot be proven in empirical scientific terms.” Walker glanced over at Penelope. “You know: if it can’t be answered by who, what, when, where and why, then it is suspect. Many secular humanists look at religious people with the same contempt the pagan mystics were shown during the Religious Awakening. That is why church attendance has been in a freefall in Europe and other developed countries that have prospered during the Age of Science.”

“So, you’re saying you can either believe in God or in science?”

“To some today, that is the clear choice. This wasn’t the case until the 19th century.”

“What happened then?”

“Up until then, all of the great minds were looking to science to prove there was a God, not to disprove it.”

“I suppose you have a theory of why they suddenly turned their back on God in the 19th century?”

“Would you be surprised if I didn’t?”

“Frankly, yes. And I’m betting it will be a doozy.”

“Dinosaurs.”

“Dinosaurs?”

“Yes.”

“I can’t wait to hear this one.”

“In the ninetieth 19th century, when science figured out that the dinosaur bones they had been digging up for centuries were not old dragons or animals that had perished in Noah’s Biblical flood but animals that had roamed the planet millions of years ago, it pretty much shot down the theory of Earth being built in six days.”

“Dinosaurs?”

“It was enough to have Friedrich Nietzsche make his famous declaration that God was dead, and most of the intellectuals at the time agreed. This was as startling as Copernicus disproving the longheld belief that the earth was the center of the universe and the sun revolved around us. At that point, science pretty much gave up on religion as superstition and myth.”

“Let me get this straight. You’re claiming that the current secular humanist movement got its start because of the discovery of dinosaurs?”

“Yes. That, and carbon dating.”

Penelope shook her head. “Remarkable.”

“What has been interesting is the number of truly gifted scientists that have returned to the spiritual and the mystical for answers to the big questions science can’t answer.”

“Big questions?”

“Why are we here, and how did we get here? How was the universe formed, and who or what formed it?”

“Ah. Those questions.” Penelope allowed that one to slowly sink in. Science had nothing approaching an answer to those questions, while religious people, through their faith, knew the answer. Interesting. Walker was right, she had never thought of it in quite in those terms.

Walker continued, “The advance in human knowledge during this period has been astounding and appears to be accelerating. In the 20th century we went from the first motorized

flight to walking on the moon in less than 70 years. Cures for diseases were discovered and life expectancies doubled, then doubled again. The industries that dominated modern society at the end of the 20th century – aircraft and travel, automobiles, computers, instant mass communications, motion pictures, television, the Internet – none of these even existed a hundred years earlier.”

“For the sake of argument—and this is in no way an endorsement of your theories—in a nutshell, humans are in an ongoing state of development until they reach the point where something external or internal triggers a change that causes human capability to suddenly look at the world in new and different ways. When these Awakenings happen, all existing social structures are turned on their respective heads.”

Michael Walker was beaming. “That’s as good a summary as any I’ve heard.”

“What about Darwin and gradual evolutionary change?”

“There is now an entire school of thought that thinks maybe it’s not so gradual. Why can’t it be sudden, and completely change in a generation or ten generations, instead of thousands of years?”

“That would certainly buttress your claim to an Awakening.”

“Excellent.”

“Don’t get cocky, I was conceding a small point, not saying I’m buying any of this. How would natural selection and survival of the fittest fit with your little theory here?”

“Survival of the fittest may still apply. What’s changed is the definition of what is the fittest.”

“Okay. What in the world does that mean?”

“Cro-Magnon man was fine for his time, but was no match for smarter and more agile Homo Sapiens. Cro-Magnon vanished around 10,000 years ago.”

“At the beginning of the Age of Man.”

“Exactly.”

“Do you think they had an evolutionary shift or that they were killed?”

“No way of telling, but Homo sapiens adapted to the changing world and took control. They were clearly the fittest.”

“Interesting. What is going to be the new definition of the fittest in the next Awakening?”

“Fifty years ago in American society it was the high school quarterback and the head cheerleaders who were the alphas. Now it may be that geeky kid in the Chess Club who’s going to create some new software application that might be the best pick.”

“Were you in the Chess Club?”

“President. Were you a cheerleader?”

Penelope made a face at Walker. “I went to an all girls’ school; we didn’t have cheerleaders. I was editor of the school newspaper.” Penelope scratched her chin as she mulled all of this over. “Okay. For the sake of argument, let’s say I buy all of this. Where’s the problem?”

“The Fourth Wakening is coming and this time it will unleash the Age of Thought; with each new awakening there is an adjustment period.”

“What kind of adjustment?”

“People develop at different rates, and it’s natural to assume you’re right and the other people are wrong; conflicts naturally occur. This is common following an Awakening. Let’s go back to the Geek versus the Quarterback for a moment. How many kids who ended up living in mansions and driving Bentleys were shoved into lockers by big dumb jocks that ended up selling life insurance or used cars?”

“Is there anything about your childhood you would like to share?”

“Funny. My point is this, until the new Alpha versus Beta pecking order is established there will be conflict. A new age means things are changing dramatically, but there is always one constant. There is always a group of people who would benefit by maintaining the status quo.

Unfortunately, the groups with the most to lose are usually the rich and powerful, who are usually willing to go to extremes to protect their lifestyle. We've seen this many times in history."

"And I'm sure you have examples."

"Sure. Remember the rich and powerful Egyptians trying to suppress Moses? Remember the rich and powerful Romans trying to suppress Jesus? Remember the European imperialists of the past 500 years? The people with the most to lose are always the most dangerous and vicious."

"So you're expecting a protracted period of wars because of this Awakening?"

"No, quite the opposite. The change will be over much more quickly this time. It has to be."

"Why?"

"Look at the history of Awakenings. The Age of Man lasted 8,000 to 10,000 years. The Age of Religion lasted 1,500 to 1,800 years. The Age of Science has only been around 500 years and another age is already dawning."

"They're getting closer together."

"Exactly. Human development is accelerating. If I am right about what is happening, then we could be looking at the Fifth Awakening in perhaps another 100 years. That will give people very little time to adjust."

"I don't understand."

"The people today who have the most to lose also have all of the weapons, and have shown a historical willingness to use them. It didn't matter so much when we were talking hand-to-hand combat. In the first three Awakenings the killing was pretty much done on a one-on-one basis. Modern weapons don't have that limitation."

"What are you saying?"

"Unless we can make as many people as possible aware of this so they can be prepared for the changes and understand what's going on, someone, somewhere is going to do something

catastrophic to try and stop the Awakening. When that happens it could cascade and destroy the entire world.”

“You’re serious?”

“That’s why we went to all of this trouble to get you involved. You’ve already started awakening but you still have your skepticism. You were the perfect choice. You’ll be able to explain it since you’re going through it yourself.”

“Why is it whenever I start talking to you I feel like my head is about to explode?”

“Raw animal magnetism?” Walker offered.

“That was pretty far down my list.” Penelope turned toward the window and watched West Virginia roll by. She wasn’t sure whether to believe all, none, or somewhere in between the things that Walker had been telling her. All of the pieces fit, and nothing she had learned in history class or Sunday school directly contradicted anything he was saying. Still, she wasn’t ready to take a leap of faith and cast aside a lifetime of knowledge and experience on the word of what could prove to be a deranged man.

“What do you think will happen?”

“Unless we can get in front of this Awakening and let the world know what is happening, I don’t see those in power taking any options off the table. Conventional, chemical, biological...nuclear.”

“You actually think a government would launch weapons of mass destruction to stop an Awakening? You can’t be serious.”

“They’re not the ones I’m worried about. Most major governments with these kinds of weapons have some sort of checks and balances built in. Besides, if you’re looking to protect your lifestyle, launching something like that could lead to annihilation by the other major governments. I’m worried about the small wars.”

“Small wars?”

“Yes. Smokescreens or proxy wars to divert the attention of the masses. It could start a ripple effect.”

“What do you mean?”

“The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand by an obscure radical group in 1914 plunged the world into World War I.”

“You’re afraid one of these small wars will spin out of control?”

“My biggest concern is that a fringe group that cuts across cultural and political borders will emerge and will somehow gain access to these weapons.”

“What kind of group?”

“I don’t know. They haven’t shown themselves yet. But let’s hope it isn’t someone willing to kill for their beliefs,” Walker hesitated. “Or worse, someone willing to die for them as well.”

“What are the odds of this happening?”

“A lot of that will depend on you.”

“Me?”

“Yes. The more people we make aware of the Awakening the better.”

“What if that is not enough?”

“We could be looking at 100 years of terror until the Fifth Awakening, followed, hopefully, by a millennium of peace.”

Penelope knitted her eyebrows. “That sounds oddly familiar.”

“You probably heard it in Sunday School. The Bible talks about it ‘Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, Go, pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth.’

Christians have another name for the Fourth Awakening. Armageddon.”