

Chapter Six

The next evening, David came by again. He had picked up a large pizza, some bagels and a container of cream cheese in a kosher café on Lexington Avenue, and we dined on hot pizza and cold Diet Coke. After dinner, June went back to her study, and David and I watched a ball game. At eleven o'clock, we were all staring at the screen.

Charles Robinson was a rotund black man in his fifties with a bald head and big black glasses. His warm smile disarmed his subjects, even if they were prepared for it, and often left them defenseless against his probing questions. His audience cut across all lines.

Dr. Sanford Johns was not much thinner than Robinson, but he was much less bald. His hairline was receded a few inches, but from there, it was a thick bush of white hair covering his ears and the nape of his neck. His eyes were pale blue, and his half glasses gave him a pedantic look. The two men sat across from each other at a small round table.

“Good evening, Dr. Johns,” said Robinson. “Thank you for coming.”

“Thank you for having me.”

“You are the founder and head of the Church of Natural Humanism. Where is this church located?”

“Little Rock, Arkansas.”

“That’s the headquarters?”

“Yes.”

“Where are the other branches?”

“They’re in the future.”

“I see,” said Robinson. “I’d like to get into the idea of Natural Humanism, but first I’d like to ask you a preliminary question. You call your organization a church, so is Natural Humanism a religion?”

“Of course.”

“And you are the ... high priest, shall we say?”

“Hmm. I like the sound of that. The answer is yes.”

“So tell me, Dr. Johns, do you believe in God?”

“Of course. There is no doubt that God exists.”

“Do you mean the argument from design?”

Johns gave him a disdainful look. “Come on. That’s not conclusive proof. The existence of God is a mathematical certainty based on the concept of infinity.”

“That is very interesting. Can you explain?”

“Of course. Infinity is not a humongous number. If it was, you could say infinity plus one, and you’d have a number larger than infinity. No, infinity is a concept. When we say that the number one divided by zero is infinity, it does not mean that the number one is stuffed chock full of zeros. It means that there is no limit to how many times zero can be added to zero, because you never get closer to one. It’s infinite, literally, without finish. That’s the meaning of infinity. Is that clear?”

“Absolutely.”

“It follows that there cannot be an infinite number of pebbles at any point in time. Pebbles accumulate, and if you had the time and the inclination you could count all of them. In fact, the terms infinite and number are mutually exclusive. This is one of Aristotle’s most basic propositions. The existence of an infinite number of finite entities is impossible. There cannot be an infinite number of things. Is that clear?”

“It is.”

“So! The universe exists. Where did it come from? There are only two options. One, it was created *ex nihilo*, from nothing. In order for this to have happened, there has to be a God. Two, it was always there in one form or another. But wait a minute! Time is composed of finite entities, years, hours, seconds, whichever way you care to slice it. Therefore, there cannot be infinite time. Going forward, time may be infinite, because new time is

constantly being created, and there is no limit to how long that process can continue. But going backward? There's no new time being created going backward. Therefore, if you say the universe was always there, you're saying it existed in infinite time. That can't be. Let me say it again. Time cannot be infinite going backward into the past. Which leaves us with only one viable option. God created the universe. So that's the answer to your question, Mr. Robinson. Yes, I believe in God."

"I would have to give that some thought, Dr. Johns, but right now, I can't see a flaw in your argument. Very well, we've established that you believe in God. What does God expect from us? Are you a Christian church?"

"Absolutely not. Turn the other cheek? Love your enemy? Preposterous. It's a corruption of the natural human condition. We're a natural religion."

Robinson pulled off his glasses and rubbed his nose.

"I see," he said. "Do you have a sacred text, Dr. Johns?"

"No. Nature is our sacred text."

"Do you believe in revelation? Has God spoken to you?"

"Absolutely not. God has never spoken to me. Nor has He ever spoken to anyone else. God does not speak to people."

"So how is your religion practiced? Is there a particular day of the week when you have services in your church? And what are the services like?"

"We have no particular day, but we get together at least once a month. We talk about the incredible universe God has created; sometimes, we have video presentations. We talk about Natural Humanism. We know that just as God is all-powerful, He's also all-aware. He hears our words, indeed our very thoughts."

"Do you pray to Him?"

"Not in the sense of asking Him to intervene on our behalf, because He doesn't intervene. He has set the world in motion, and it goes on its own. He did a good engineering job, and it doesn't need any help to keep running smoothly. We pray in the sense that we express admiration of His glory. We

ask for nothing in return. God has given us the tools to take care of ourselves. Sink or swim. It's up to us."

"But what if you're not strong enough to stand up to your opponents?"

"And not clever enough to make alliances?" said Johns.

"Yes."

"Then we sink. Life is a competition for survival. If we're not strong enough, we don't survive."

"Might makes right."

Johns nodded. "Might makes right, but not necessarily physical prowess. Intellect, cleverness and cunning are higher forms of might."

"So, what exactly does God expect from people, Dr. Johns? How has He communicated His expectations to you? And what is Natural Humanism?"

"God created a gorgeous, complex world full of all kinds of animals. He didn't tell the animals what to do. All He expects from the animals is that they do their best to survive. That's what it's all about. Survival! Eating, drinking, mating. That's all animals care about. They also like to take pleasure from the world, but it's all about survival."

"And you see human beings as glorified animals," said Robinson.

"Exactly! Human beings, not lions, are kings of the natural world. Our species is endowed with survival tools more powerful than those of any other species on the face of the earth. We have intellect. We have weapons. We have technology. Of all the animals, we are best equipped to survive. The threat to our survival is not from other species. It's from other members of our own species."

"Where are you going with this, Dr. Johns?"

"You asked what God wants from us. He wants us to take our cues from the natural world. He wants us to fight for our survival against our enemies with the same vigor and savagery that a lion fights to defend his lioness and cubs. In a pride of lions, the males fight to defend the group and its territory. But that's it! They will not fight to defend a different pride of lions unless it helps them defend their own. That is what we have to do. We have

to be strong and vigilant for all threats to our survival.”

“You would not come to the aid of a different group of human beings under attack?”

“Absolutely not. Why should we? It would be unnatural.”

“What about simple human kindness?”

“Human kindness is limited to us and our group. Not to strangers. If we’ve done nothing to cause their misfortune, why should we expend our time, effort and money to help them? It’s unnatural. It’s a corruption of nature. All it does is weaken us and put us at risk.”

“You’re talking about paganism.”

“Exactly! We’re neo-pagans. We live by natural law, but we don’t believe in silly deities, just in the one true God.”

“And the Bible?”

“It’s a fraud. All of it. The Old Testament. The New Testament. The Quran. All works of fiction. Come on, you know that, don’t you, Mr. Robinson? Any college undergraduate knows it. Biblical criticism and modern archaeology have proved that the Bible was written a thousand years after it claims to have been written. It’s all a myth concocted by the Jews to give them an advantage over other peoples.”

“You don’t believe in Jesus?”

“Did Jesus ever exist? I don’t know. But if he believed the myths of the Old Testament, then he couldn’t have been much to write home about.”

“So you don’t believe in any moral code?”

“The only morality is survival. I believe we should work hard, be loyal to our families and our comrades, brave and strong on the battlefield, honest with our companions. That all falls under the heading of survival. Natural Humanism is about survival. Physical and racial survival.”

“Do states and nations have a role under Natural Humanism?”

“We have no loyalty to other members of our species. Only to our own group, not to strangers. But if there’s a broader threat, it makes sense to ally ourselves with other groups like ours.”

“Can you be more specific, Dr. Johns? How does your church align with the American Identity Party? Are you facing a threat?”

“Damn sure, we are. Jews, blacks, Hispanics, Africans, Indians, Chinese, Cambodians, Vietnamese, Filipinos, Arabs, and who knows what others, they’re all overrunning America. White people have to get together and drive them back before it’s too late and we’re strangers in our own country.”

“Are you suggesting that over a hundred million people be expelled from the United States? Do you intend to exterminate them if they refuse to go?”

Johns ran his fingers through his hair

“Come on, Mr. Robinson,” he said. “Do you think we’re savages? They can all stay if they get the proper documentation, but their citizenship will be revoked. Only white people will be allowed to vote. Only our representatives will pass the laws and rule the country. The rest will be guest workers, always subject to the revocation of their guest visas. If they behave and obey, they can enjoy decent lives in our country. That is the salient point. Our country, our territory, not theirs.”

“Are you advocating for the end of democracy in the United States?”

“God forbid. We would still be a democracy. Just as ancient Athens was a democracy, even though only Greeks, a minority of the population, were allowed to vote.”

Robinson had a disturbed look on his face. He had obviously not been prepared for the radical paganism of Johns and his followers. Johns, on the other hand, looked pleased. He had presented his views articulately in front of a television audience of many millions. Some would accept his point of view, but most would reject it. That was fine. Movements did not arise full-blown. He had succeeded in planting seeds. He was satisfied. It was written all over his face.

“This is fascinating, Dr. Johns,” said Robinson. “We have to break for messages from our sponsors, but please stay with us. We’ll be back before

you know it.”

June, David and I looked at each other in disbelief. For a few long moments, no one said anything. What could we say?

June finally broke the silence. “Do we have to take this seriously, Adrian? Could this really happen?”

David said nothing, but the same question was in his eyes.

“I don’t know,” I said. “I think that most whites sympathize with his frustrations, if not with his solutions.”

“Are we considered white?” asked David.

“Not really. We’re Jewish. To these people, we’re aliens of the same color. No, these people are decidedly not our friends.”

“So who are our friends?” asked June.

“We don’t have too many,” I said. “Strange as it may seem, the devout Christians, who’ve persecuted us for two thousand years, may turn out to be our strongest allies. In order to defend their ideology, they have to defend the Old Testament, and that gives us legitimacy.”

“Maybe we should convert some of our money into diamonds,” said June. “Like your father was saying at the Seder.”

“Maybe. But it’s a little premature. Let’s not go overboard just because some radical fringe group raises its head. We have plenty of time.”

“We may have plenty of time to leave,” said June, “but it’s never too early to be prepared.”

“Maybe. I think they’ll fail. Most people do not see themselves as animals in the wild.”