

## The Raelian Religion

by Marty Butz

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**Founder:** Rael (formerly Claude Vorilhon).

**Founding Date:** 1973.

**Official Publications:** “Apocalypse” (a quarterly magazine), The Book Which Tells the Truth, The Message Given to Me by Extra-Terrestrials, Beings From Outer Space Took Me to their Planet, Sensual Meditation.

**Organizational Structure:** There are six levels of responsibility within the movement. The sixth level, the highest, is occupied by Rael, Claude Vorilhon, the “Guide of Guides.”

**Unique Terms:** Elohim, Harmony, Awaken, Cosmic Orgasm.

### HISTORY

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According to claims by the Raelian Religion,

On the 13th of December 1973, French journalist Claude Vorilhon (now called Rael) was contacted by a visitor from an other planet, and asked to establish an embassy to welcome these people back to Earth. The extra-terrestrial was about four feet in height, had long black hair, almond shaped eyes, olive skin and exuded harmony and humor. He told Rael that “we were the ones who made all life on earth, you mistook us for Gods, we were at the origin of your main religions. Now that you are mature enough to understand this, we would like to enter official contact through an embassy.”<sup>1</sup>

In the days following, Vorilhon-Rael (Rael being the name given to him by the space visitor) allegedly “received commentaries on the most significant parts of the Bible.”<sup>2</sup> These teachings by the extra-terrestrial and notes taken by Rael were later published in his book, *The Messages Given to Me by Extra-Terrestrials*.<sup>3</sup> It is also claimed that Rael was visited a second time two years after his first visitation, again in France. However, this time the space visitors took Rael aboard their space ship to the planet where they lived.

Faithful to his commission, Rael has established a movement to spread the message of the Elohim and to build an embassy to welcome the extra-terrestrials back to earth. The message in large part explains who the Elohim are and how life on Earth came to be. Also, it is important for the embassy to be built in order for the Elohim to return to earth and share their scientific expertise. It has been revealed that the Elohim “will only come when we build their embassy, such is their love and respect for us.”<sup>4</sup>

Despite the bizarre message of Rael, the Raelian Religion, from its beginning in 1973, has found a large following since he first had the alleged extra-terrestrial encounters. His movement within the last year has claimed 35,000 followers in 85 countries<sup>5</sup> and his book, *The Message Given to Me By Extra-Terrestrials*, has been translated into over 22 languages.<sup>6</sup>

The movement has not only been fueled by books that Rael has authored, but also by various seminars around the world which have helped to promote the movement. “Awakening Seminars” have introduced many to the “Sensual Meditation” techniques that presumably “our parents from space taught Rael.”<sup>7</sup> The stated effect and purpose of these

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techniques is to “decondition oneself, uninhibit oneself and appreciate the present in a much deeper way, enjoying every sensation with a maximum of pleasure and love without the paralysis of societies [sic] guilt.”<sup>8</sup> Ostensibly, these techniques are related to what has been reported as the main tenants of the movement: “masturbation, communal orgasm, sexual freedom and pleasure...”<sup>9</sup>

Along with the Raelian Religion’s growth, controversy over the movement’s ideas and practices has grown as well. As early as “the late 1970’s, when [Rael] published a book advocating rule by what he called genioocracy, the French government conducted a series of raids on Raelian homes, prompting Rael to leave the country.”<sup>10</sup> Apparently, Rael’s published opinion regarding “genioocracy,” by which he understands “government by the intelligent, with intelligence determined by... scientific tests,”<sup>11</sup> aroused suspicions of French authorities about ulterior political objectives of the Raelian Religion.

There have also been continual concerns about the official symbol of the Raelian Religion, the symbol of the Star of David with the Swastika symbol inside it. The Raelians have explained that its symbolic value is quite different from that of Nazism, representing infinity. However, to many in the “post Nazi western culture it represents something else.”<sup>12</sup>

Over the years, the Raelian Religion has specifically tried to convert Jews and establish the Elohim embassy in Jerusalem. Since the

Raelians believe that the ancient Israelites had a special covenant with Earth’s creator” and since they “believe that the destruction of the world is near,” the Raelians also believe that “the state of Israel must grant Raelians land in Jerusalem on which to build an embassy to welcome the aliens.”<sup>13</sup>

However, given that the Swastika has been so offensive to Jews specifically, and that Jews have claim to their own special relationship with the Creator, these stated goals of the Raelian Religion have also drawn fire.

The Raelian Religion has not been unaware or unconcerned about public relations problems. In 1991, “Rael decided to change the symbol of the Raelian Religion and replace the swastika with a galaxy...”<sup>14</sup> This was done, not only “out of respect for victims of the Nazi holocaust,” but also for a very practical reason — to “facilitate the building of the Embassy in Israel...”<sup>15</sup> Perhaps feeling the pressure of controversy and scrutiny, the Raelian Religion in 1992 joined forces and became publicly associated with other reputed cults in establishing the International Federation of Religious and Philosophical Minorities (abbreviated as “Firephim” in French). Firephim became a consortium of minority religions organized to fight “religious persecution.” Besides the Raelians, participant organizations included such controversial movements as the Church of Scientology, the Unification Church, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Satanists, among others.<sup>16</sup>

The Raelian Religion’s active association with other controversial organizations was underscored in the past year when Rael himself “expressly requested that over 500 Raelians participate” in Germany in a demonstration for religious freedom “organized by the Church of Scientology,”<sup>17</sup> an organization which is closely monitored and held under suspicion by the German government. Meanwhile, other government authorities in Switzerland have been said to be “closely monitoring the [Raelian] movement,” fearing that “the risk of collective suicide exists.”<sup>18</sup>

## DOCTRINE

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**Creator:** According to the Raelians, humanity’s true creators or “parents” came from another planet. These beings are the “Elohim” and they are mentioned in the first book of the Bible, Genesis. The Raelians also assert that the word “Elohim” has been historically mistranslated and misunderstood to mean “God,” a single entity. “Elohim,” according to Rael, should be translated “those who come from the sky” and properly refers to more than

one entity.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, according to Rael, the “Elohim explained that our concept of an immaterial God is incorrect...”<sup>20</sup>

**Creation:** Incorporating the Bible into their philosophical framework, Raelians claim that “Genesis is a written account of how people from another planet created all life on earth. The messages dictated to Rael explain how the Elohim used their mastery of genetics to scientifically create life from inert chemicals using DNA.”<sup>21</sup> Consequently, “life on Earth is not the result of random evolution, nor the work of a supernatural ‘God.’ It is a deliberate creation, using DNA, by a scientifically advanced people who made human beings literally in their image.”<sup>22</sup>

**Revelation:** The Raelian Movement claims that it “recognizes most other religions because it was...the Elohim, who started them. It was they who initiated the prophets, whose role was to progressively educate and guide humanity,” with the result that “each prophet brought a revelation or message adapted to the culture and level of understanding of humanity at the time.”<sup>23</sup> The Raelian Movement states that “All the great prophets, including Buddha, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed were messengers of the extra-terrestrials.”<sup>24</sup> Rael is also believed to be part of this progressive revelation, being regarded as “the messenger of our times...”<sup>25</sup>

**The Nature of Man:** According to Rael, “there is no soul which flies out of the body after death.”<sup>26</sup> He claims that the “human being is a ‘piece’ of the universe...”<sup>27</sup> that the “Elohim teach that our consciousness is a function of all the reactions within us and all those outside us” and that “we are simply atoms, part of the earth, part of our galaxy, of the huge atom, all in motion...”<sup>28</sup>

**Spiritual Freedom:** According to Rael, the path to paradise depends upon “questioning all our beliefs and all that we take for granted” and becoming aware of “how all our education, upbringing and present environment condition all our attitudes, reactions and tastes. All this ‘programming’ is in our subconscious, but by becoming aware of it, we can remove the thorns of our fears, the blocks of our inhibitions” and “awaken the countless brain circuits of which have atrophied throughout years of misuse...” Thus we can “broaden our tastes and ways of thinking so that we see the world in a new and richer light.”<sup>29</sup> It is also taught that through Sensual Meditation, among other things, one can “question the Judeo-Christian inhibitions of guilt and the mysticism of Eastern traditions” and also “reprogram ourselves into what we really wish to be.”<sup>30</sup>

**Resurrection and Judgment:** The Raelian Movement believes that individuals bear responsibility for their choices and that how one responds to the message of Rael will effect whether they will continue to experience life after death through cloning. Raelians believe that “each person is watched by a computer which notes and will take score of his actions at the end of his life, but people who know about the messages which Claude Rael transmitted, will be recreated from the cells...”<sup>31</sup>

**Heaven:** According to a chapter titled, “The Reward,” from one of Rael’s books, “those who will be entitled to scientific reincarnation on the planet of the Elohim will live eternally in a world where food will be brought to them without them having to make the slightest effort and where marvelously beautiful female and male partners scientifically created for this purpose, will be there only to satisfy their pleasures, and they will live there eternally, seeking only to fulfill themselves doing what they please.”<sup>32</sup>

## CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

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**Biblical:** Rael’s teachings are undeniably unbiblical and clearly non-Christian. Rael’s radical re-definitions bear upon such foundational issues as the nature of God (denying that He is a spirit, as taught in John 4:24); the nature of man (denying that he has a soul or spirit, as taught in Matthew 10:28); and the divine act of creation (denying that it was an act of a supernatural God, as taught in Hebrews 11:3). Moreover, when Rael espouses liberation from “the Judeo-Christian inhibitions of guilt,” his message is fundamentally —

and by his own admission — at odds with the Christian faith, which recognizes the propriety of feelings of guilt before a holy and righteous God.

**Rational:** The point can be argued that the Raelian philosophy is very similar to that of Naturalism, the “view that the ‘natural’ universe, the universe of matter and energy, is all that there really is.”<sup>33</sup> Rael asserts that “we are simply atoms, part of the earth, part of our galaxy, of the huge atom, all in motion”; that “there is no soul”; that “The human being is a ‘piece’ of the universe;” and that “our consciousness is a function of all the reactions within us and all those outside us.” Rael’s materialistic statements about man and the universe echo the same materialistic assumptions as Naturalism.

Being a materialistic world view as such, Rael’s philosophy is subject to all the same criticisms made against Naturalism, namely: (1) it is likely that human freedom cannot really exist in a world where human choices are determined by natural laws, (2) it is likely that there are no absolute values in a world totally comprised of just matter and energy, (3) it is likely that there is no ultimate meaning or purpose in life if there is no God to give it meaning or purpose.<sup>34</sup>

Consequently, if Rael’s metaphysical assertions are true, it logically follows that there is no rational reason, moral responsibility, or genuine possibility to either reject, accept, or be persuaded regarding Rael’s message. Thus, Rael’s message can be rejected on a rational basis, in that it is intrinsically incoherent.

## RECOMMENDED READING

*Alien Obsession: What Lies Behind Abductions, Sightings, and the Attraction to the Paranormal* by Ron Rhodes. Rhodes brings his considerable acumen and scholarly depth to the subject of UFOs and UFO religion. Includes a section on the Raelians. Thirteen chapters, four appendices (one presenting the gospel directed to UFO believers), bibliography, notes, paperback, 252 pages.

*UFOs in the New Age: Extraterrestrial Messages and the Truth of Scripture* by William M. Alnor. Alnor provides a keen insight into the history and messages of UFO phenomena, compared to biblical teaching. Fourteen chapters, appendix, notes, scripture and subject indices, paperback, 293 pages.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.rael.org/English/e-digest/raelmsgB.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Vallee, *Messengers of Deception: UFO Contacts and Cults*, 143.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.rael.org/English/e-digest/realmsgindex.html>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.rael.org/English/e-digest/raelmsgF.html>.

<sup>5</sup> *New York Times*, August 12, 1997, A6.

<sup>6</sup> PRNewswire, May 21, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.rael.org/English/e-digest/raelmsgZB.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Reuters New Service, August 6, 1997.

<sup>10</sup> *The Gazette [Montreal]*, July 22, 1991, A4.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> John Hughes, *Sun-Sentinel [Miami]*, December 20, 1989, E1.

<sup>13</sup> *Gazette*, A4.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.rael.org/English/e-digest/raelmsgZA.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> *Wellspring Messenger*, July/August 1994, 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Business Wire*, Oct. 24, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> Reuters.

<sup>19</sup> Section “The Message in Brief,” at <http://www.rael.org>.

<sup>20</sup> Section “Book One-Second half,” at <http://www.rael.org>.

<sup>21</sup> Section “The Messages of the Elohim: Book One — First half,” at <http://www.rael.org>.

<sup>22</sup> Section “The Message in Brief,” at <http://www.rael.org>.

<sup>23</sup> Section “The Raelian Movement and Other Religions,” at <http://www.rael.org>.

<sup>24</sup> Section “The Messages of the Elohim: Book One - First half,” at <http://www.rael.org>.

<sup>25</sup> Section “The Raelian Movement and Other Religions,” at <http://www.rael.org>.

<sup>26</sup> Section “Book One-Second Half,” at <http://www.rael.org>.

<sup>27</sup> Section “Sensual Meditation: What is it?” at <http://www.rael.org>.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Section “Awakening Seminars,” at <http://www.rael.org>.

<sup>30</sup> Section “Book three,” at <http://www.rael.org>.

<sup>31</sup> *Sun-Sentinel*, E1.

<sup>32</sup> *Sun-Sentinel*, E1.

<sup>33</sup> Walter A. Elwell, Editor, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1984, 750.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.



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