

God and the extraterrestrials

Are we alone, or is there life elsewhere in the universe?

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For decades, speculation about extraterrestrial life has been boosted by tales of flying saucers and encounters with aliens. It is now being fuelled from a more serious source. In August 1996 NASA researchers claimed to have found evidence for simple life forms in a meteorite allegedly from Mars.

Since then, this 'proof' of life in the 'Mars rock' has very much lost favour among the scientific community.¹ In spite of this, the two kilogram rock found in Antarctica has ignited a new surge of 'Mars fever'. In the next 20 years, the Americans, Europeans, Japanese and Russians plan around 20 projects to explore our neighbouring planet, some 78 million kilometres away at its closest approach to us.

Meanwhile, belief in extraterrestrial intelligences continues to grow with an almost religious fervour.

The UFO wave



Harvard University psychiatry professor John E. Mack recently attracted worldwide attention with his collection of cases of people claiming they were 'abducted by aliens'.

There was also the release of a film alleging to be of an autopsy on an alien from a crash in New Mexico close to the U.S. Air Force Base at Roswell. The blurry footage, which most have dismissed as an obvious and crude forgery, was nevertheless the main attraction at the 1995 UFO World Congress in Düsseldorf, Germany.

Then of course, there was the 'alien invasion' film *Independence Day*, which grossed more in its opening week than any previous film in history.

A recent poll in Germany revealed that 17% of the population believe in visits by alien craft, while 31% believe there is intelligent life in other galaxies.

What should Christians think about UFO accounts?

1. Science

(a) Never a single contact with an 'extraterrestrial'.

In 1900, the French Academy of Science offered a prize of 100,000 francs for the first person to make contact with an alien civilisation—so long as the alien was not from Mars, because the Academy was convinced that Martian civilisation was an established fact!

Since then, not a trace of 'little green men', or indeed any life, has been found on any of the planets which our probes have been able to explore.

Despite this, a great number of astronomers think that, since life evolved here on earth, it must have evolved near one of the many stars out there. In America SETI (Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence) researchers have scanned the sky, looking in vain for signals from intelligent beings.

(b) Conditions must be 'just right'.

Life on any planet can only survive in the presence of a great number of very stringent requirements. For example, it must be at the right distance from its sun, so as to be neither too hot nor too cold.

Although one cannot rule out the possibility that planets around other stars may be confirmed at some future point, it is at least extremely improbable that any of them would fulfil all the requirements needed for life. Just having liquid water is completely insufficient, despite the excitement reigning when such was detected as possibly being on the surface of Jupiter's moon, Europa.

(c) Life cannot form spontaneously anyway.

Without intelligent, creative input, lifeless chemicals cannot form themselves into living things.² Without this unfounded evolutionary speculation, UFOlogy would not have its present grip on the public imagination.

(d) Vast distances

Even if one assumed the existence of life somewhere else in the universe, a visit by extraterrestrials to earth, such as is claimed in UFO reports, seems completely impracticable, if not impossible. The distances (and therefore the likely travel times) are unimaginably vast.

The closest star (apart from the sun) to earth, Proxima Centauri, is already 40.7 million million kilometres (c. 25 million million miles) away. The Apollo flights took three days to get to the moon. At the same speed one would need 870,000 years to get to this nearest star. Of course, one could accelerate (particularly unmanned) probes to a greater speed. At the incredible speed of one-tenth of the speed of light, the trip would still take 43 years. However, one would need enormous amounts of energy to reach such a speed—energy roughly equivalent to the electricity output of the world's largest hydroelectric power station for four days (for proof, see [Addendum 1](#)).

Furthermore, in every cubic kilometre of space, there are an estimated 100,000 dust particles (made up of silicates and ice) weighing only a tenth of a gram. At such a velocity, colliding with even one of these tiny objects could destroy a spaceship.³

2. The Bible

(a) *Scripture does not mention 'ET' visits.*

The Bible, the revealed written Word of God, teaches that life is only possible through a process of creation. Even if there were other galaxies with planets very similar to earth, life could only be there if the Creator had fashioned it. If God had done that, and if these beings were going to visit us one day, then He would surely not have left us unenlightened about this.

God *has* given us rather specific details of the future—for example, the return of Jesus, and some details about the end of the world. The universe will, at some future point, be rolled up like a scroll ([Isaiah 34:4](#), [Revelation 6:14](#)). If God had created living beings elsewhere, this would automatically destroy their dwelling place as well. Adam's sin caused all of creation to be affected by the curse, so why would a race of beings, not of Adam's (sinful) seed, have their part of creation affected by the Curse, and then be part of the restoration brought about by Christ, the last Adam? All of this would seem exceedingly strange.⁴

(b) *The purpose of the stars.*

The reasons stars were made are given to us in several places in the Bible, not only in the well-known [Psalm 19](#) but especially in the Creation account. In Genesis 1:14 we read: 'And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.'

We see from this that stars are there *for mankind on earth*. Add to this the sequence of creation (on the first day the earth, and only on the fourth day all of the stars), and it is easy to see the thrust of the biblical testimony, that the purpose of creation is uniquely centred on this earth.

3. So what about UFOs?

How, then, should one understand the UFO phenomena and all the associated 'hype'? In the German magazine *Focus*, it was recently stated '90% of UFO reports turn out to be humbug,

Secret bases? ... Government cover-ups?

...

Many UFO enthusiasts spread the urban myth of secret U.S. Government experiments on aliens, etc.—an idea reinforced by the movie *Independence Day*. However, under the inspiration of atheists like the late Carl Sagan, the U.S. government has spent millions of dollars listening 'out there' for signs of intelligent ET life. Many other evolutionary humanists, like Sagan, passionately believe that intelligent life has evolved 'out there' in addition to earth, and would pounce on any hard evidence for this idea. Consider the recent media frenzy about the 'life in Mars rock' fiasco. To imagine that a much more exciting discovery would be kept secret for decades seems beyond credibility.

but there is a residual 10% which are not easy to dismiss.⁵ 'Humbug' refers to natural phenomena such as heavenly bodies, noctilucent clouds, ball lightning, and man-made objects such as glowing blimps.

The article quoted sociologist Gerald Eberlein as saying:

'research has shown that people who are not affiliated with any church, but who claim that they are religious, are particularly susceptible to the possible existence of extraterrestrials. For them, UFOlogy is a substitute religion.'⁶

The Bible goes somewhat deeper in this matter, identifying a supplementary cause and effect—2 Thessalonians 2: 9–11:

'Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.'

The Bible gives a description of reality concerning all living things. The living God reveals himself as the Triune One, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In heaven there are the angels, who also serve mankind on the earth.

There is another reality—that of the devil and the demons. [Ephesians 2:2](#) talks about the 'prince of the power of the air', whose reign is on earth.

The devil has his own repertoire of deception in the form of various occult practices and a multitude of religious rites. Could it be that, behind those unexplainable reports, is the work of the arch-deceiver?⁷ UFO reports, by definition, remain nebulous and not identifiable. People who do not know Christ are easily fascinated by all sorts of phenomena which are difficult to explain. For Christians there is Jesus' warning in [Matthew 24:4](#) to 'Take heed that no man deceive you.' The best antidote to deception? Paul exhorts us, in [2 Timothy 2:15](#), to *study* the Scripture, so we might be 'rightly dividing the word of truth'.

References and notes

1. J.D. Sarfati, *Life on Mars?*, *Creation* **19**(1):18–20, December 1996–February 1997; *Life from Mars?*, *CEN Technical Journal* **10**(3):293–296, 1996; Bob Holmes, 'Death knell for Martian life', *New Scientist* **152**(2061/2):4, 21–28 December, 1996. [Return to text](#).
2. Some recent creationist critiques of evolutionary origin of life theories are S.E. Aw, *The Origin of Life: A Critique of Current Scientific Models*, *CEN Technical Journal* **10**(3):300–314, 1996; J.D. Sarfati, *Self-Replicating Enzymes*, *CEN Technical Journal* **11**(1):4–6, 1997. A very thorough treatment is the book by C.B. Thaxton, W.L. Bradley and R.L. Olsen, *The Mystery of Life's Origin*, Philosophical Library Inc., New York, 1984. See also [Q&A: Origin of Life](#). [Return to Text](#).

3. This means there is a very small chance of hitting one in each linear kilometre travelled, but over such vast distances, the probability approaches certainty. See [Addendum 2](#) for a calculation of the damaging effects of dust at such high speeds. [Return to text.](#)
4. Furthermore, Jesus dying for alien beings makes no sense, since Jesus became a man, and remains the God-man forever to be our Saviour. The whole purpose of creation is focused on the race on earth, of which some will be Christ's bride throughout eternity. Christ will not have multiple brides. [Return to text.](#)
5. Hallo Erdling, *Ufologie*, *Focus* **45**:254, 6 November 1995. [Return to text.](#)
6. Ref. 5, p. 252. [Return to text.](#)
7. William Alnor, cult expert and award-winning journalist, has studied the UFO phenomenon for many years. His book *UFOs in the New Age* (Baker Book House) documents his investigations leading to the conclusion that the UFO phenomenon has an occult source. [Return to text.](#)

Addenda

The following calculations didn't appear in *Creation* magazine, but are given for the benefit of the technically-minded to confirm Dr Gitt's points.

1. For a spacecraft to acquire a speed of $c/10$, it would need to acquire kinetic energy, given accurately enough by the non-relativistic formula of $\frac{1}{2}mv^2$. For a very small unmanned spacecraft of 10 kg, this is:

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{1}{2} \times 10 \text{ kg} \times (3 \times 10^7 \text{ m/s})^2 \\ & = 4.5 \times 10^{15} \text{ J} \end{aligned}$$

The largest hydro-electric power station in the world at present, Itaipu, is jointly run by Brazil and Paraguay and has an output of 12.6 million kilowatts. Total energy generated by the 18 turbines in four days is exactly equal to the kinetic energy of the above-mentioned 10 kg spacecraft moving with a speed of $c/10$.

For a manned spacecraft weighing several tonnes, the energy requirements would exceed the world's annual electricity consumption. For the city-sized spacecrafts in *Independence Day*, the energy requirements would be even more staggering. And when the spacecraft slowed again, it would need to use up almost this amount of energy in braking. If the spacecraft had to accelerate to $c/10$, slow down and start up many times, it is hard to imagine how enough fuel could be carried.

It would probably be impossible without some sort of antimatter drive. If perfect annihilation—complete conversion of matter to energy ($E = mc^2$)—were possible, 1 tonne of antimatter could annihilate 1 tonne of ordinary matter to produce:

$$2000 \text{ kg} \times (3 \times 10^8 \text{ m/s})^2 \\ 1.8 \times 10^{20} \text{ J.}$$

And this is the *absolute maximum* amount of energy which could be produced even in principle from a given mass of fuel. A real spacecraft would be nowhere near as efficient.

2. The kinetic energy of a particle with a mass of a tenth of a gram travelling at a tenth of the speed of light, calculated from the spacecraft's reference frame, is:

$$\frac{1}{2}mv^2 \\ = \frac{1}{2} \times 10^{-4} \text{ kg} \times (3 \times 10^7 \text{ m/s})^2 \\ = 4.5 \times 10^{10} \text{ J.}$$

In a chemistry lexicon (*Roempp Lexikon*), the combustion energy of TNT is given as:

$$4.520 \text{ kJ/kg} \\ = 4.52 \times 10^9 \text{ J/tonne}$$

Therefore 4.5×10^{10} J is equivalent to:
 $(4.5 \times 10^{10}) / (4.52 \times 10^9)$
 $= 9.95$ tons of TNT.

Therefore the impact energy of one of those 0.1 g objects would be the equivalent of an explosion of about 10 tons of TNT.