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Alien Abductions and the Orthodox Christian



by **Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna**

Most abductees report being taken into spaceships from their homes or from their automobiles while driving. Once in the ship, "the atmosphere may be dank, cool, and occasionally even foul-smelling" (p. 36). Their abductors typically "appear as tall or short luminous entities that may be translucent, or at least not altogether solid. Reptilian creatures have been seen....But by far the most common entity observed are the small 'grays,' humanoid beings three to four feet in height....Gender difference is not determined so much anatomically as by an intuitive feeling that abductees find difficult to put into words" (p. 37). (A sketch of typical aliens, made by one of Dr. Mack's patients, appears at left. It is noteworthy that the morphology of these creatures seems to be universal, as evidenced by reports from abductees worldwide.) Dr. Mack observes that abductees "will often wish to avoid looking directly" into the eyes of the aliens "because of the overwhelming dread of their own sense of self, or loss of will, that occurs when they do so" (*ibid.*). Communication between the humans and their alien abductors is almost always telepathic. The aliens seldom tell those whom they abduct that they are from outer space or another planet; rather, this is an intuition shared by abductees—a "given" that few ever question. Abductees (and investigators, for that matter) also universally assume that these alien abductors have technical skills far beyond those of human beings—as evidenced by what are assumed to be their spacecraft—, though, again, the beings only rarely state so.

Almost universal to the alien abduction experience—which typically entails a number of abductions, not just one—is the physical examination of abductees by the aliens, sometimes leaving lesions and small wounds and inevitably involving experimentation with "the reproductive system" (p. 38). Women often report mechanical impregnation by the aliens, followed, in subsequent abductions, by the removal of alien-human fetuses. Men are frequently subjected to similar mechanical procedures for the removal of reproductive fluids or, in some cases, are forced to mate with their alien abductors. As abduction incidents multiply, abductees usually come to feel "intuitively" that various of the aliens that they see are "their own" (p.

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38)—i.e., their offspring. This sense of attachment also generalizes, resulting in an increasing sense of familiarity with their abductors. For example, whereas their first encounters with the aliens and reproductive experiments are "deeply disturbing" and evoke "terror" (though at times the aliens use certain "emotion-extinguishing devices," with varying degrees of success, to "anesthetize" their victims psychologically), abductees eventually "reach new levels of understanding of what is occurring," through increased contact with their abductors, and "their relationship to the beings themselves changes" from a negative to a positive one (p. 39).

I should emphasize once more, here, that the data from which Dr. Mack draws his profile of abduction events—which I have briefly summarized—show an astonishing degree of consistency. Nor do any psychological or emotional problems seem to account for his patients' reports. The observed lesions on, and other physical changes in, the bodies of the abductees interviewed, furthermore, do not follow the psychodynamic patterns that normally account for self-induced physical scarring. Something has apparently acted *on* these individuals. Noteworthy, too, is the fact that reports of abductions by young children two or three years of age, who would be unlikely or unable to fabricate such detailed accounts, are astonishingly similar to those of Dr. Mack's adult patients.

The effects of these abduction experiences on the personal transformation of abductees are very clearly enumerated by Dr. Mack (p. 48-49) and provide us with clear insight into the psychic and spiritual dimensions of the abduction experience. Once the initial terror of the experience subsides, and with the sense of familiarity or comfort that repeated abductions foster, abductees report profound changes in their philosophical outlook and understanding of themselves, others, and the world around them. Dr. Mack identifies eight stages in this process of change: 1) The individual begins to accept the aliens and experiences what he calls an "ego death." 2) Abductees come to regard their abductors as "intermediaries...between...human beings and the primal source of creation or God." 3) They begin to think of their experiences as trans-temporal and trans-spatial, as "returning to their cosmic source or 'Home.'" 4) The individual begins to feel that he is himself an alien, when he returns "back" to Earth. 5) Abductees come to understand existence in terms of "cycles of birth and death over long stretches of time." 6) The individual forms a feeling of "identification of consciousness with virtually endless kinds of beings and entities." 7) Abductees develop "a double identity," associating their souls with an alien identity and their personalities with a limited human self. 8) They report functioning beyond what they often call a "veil" and describe "being in multiple times and places at the same moment," among other things.

Having examined evidence for the abduction of human beings by alien creatures and Dr. Mack's description of the apparent spiritual changes that these abductees undergo as a result of their encounters with beings from other planets, how is an Orthodox Christian to understand these data? Do they constitute plausible, if curious and bizarre, evidence that humans are being abducted by advanced beings from other planets—indeed by beings with the ability to expand human consciousness

and imbue their victims with new levels of spiritual insight? There is an immediate response to these questions. Whether or not these incidents are believable, as Orthodox Christians we believe that spiritual knowledge, not advanced technology, is the prime factor in the expansion and perfection of human consciousness. We would expect *advanced* beings from other planets, therefore, to evidence, not mundane powers, but highly developed spiritual sensitivities. Enlightenment and salvation, furthermore, are inspired within us, not by alien beings which seek to breed with us and exploit our fallen sexuality, but by God, as He is known in the Holy Trinity, and by His Angels and Saints. Nor, indeed, do we Orthodox Christians imagine that salvation will come to us from other planets or from super-intelligent beings, but from the Divinity within us, from our transformation in Christ through union, in Grace, with Him.

Given what I have said, we must come to understand that there is a decidedly anti-Christian tone in the eight stages that Dr. Mack identifies in the process of personal transformation in abduction victims. Seeing life in terms of cycles of birth and death, identifying with other beings and entities, the cessation of personhood, and looking to the "cosmos" for a "home"—these are all undefined, vague, and eclectic things that violate the precise, Christocentric teachings of Christianity and the life of discipline and obedience that spiritual transformation entails. Indeed, the Fathers of the Church warn us against these "false" teachings: reincarnation, delusion, and spiritual wanderings. The observations of one abductee interviewed by Mack, in particular, fully confirm the anti-Christian dimensions of the post-abduction philosophies and "spiritualities" of those who have come into contact with aliens. This man, called "Joe," reported that after his initial impression that the aliens were "sinister" or "malicious" (p. 186), he eventually embraced his abductors as "his spiritual teachers, peers, and helpers" (p. 192). Rather than grow in an understanding of God and the traditional precepts that we associate with Christianity, after his abduction experiences, he came to think of himself as becoming "more human" (p. 190) and, in a dream, experienced the integration of his "male-female" self through the symbolic birth of a goddess, born in a way too obscene to be repeated. His personal testimony leaves little doubt that the post-abduction "transformation" of individuals who have contacted alien beings is at odds with Orthodox Christian notions of human enlightenment, transformation, and perfection in Christ, but is rooted, rather, as I have argued, in a human-oriented idea of personal growth not dissimilar to that envisioned by the New Age religions.

What, then, if they are not advanced beings from other planets, *are* these alien abductors? Ultimately, one cannot escape the conclusion that they are demons or phantoms created by demonic power. In the first place, they look like demons. They appear to be material creatures, and yet have a transparent character. According to the teachings of the Church, demons are *spiritual* beings; that is, they are fallen Angels. But because they are corrupt and degenerate, they thrive on the human passions—feed on them. This well explains the almost universal sexual exploitation of their captives by alien abductors. In the second place, in the course of their

physical examination of abductees, the aliens inflict pain on their victims and frequently scar them. In spiritual literature, and especially in the lives of the Saints, we repeatedly read of physical attacks against Christian believers by demonic spirits. If these aliens are not demons, how is it that beings so advanced that they can achieve space travel cannot prevent pain and scarring during routine physical examinations? It is not pain which the aliens cannot control, but their demonic passion for inflicting the same on mankind. Moreover, at least initially, abductees experience terror and fright in the presence of their alien abductors; only later, after having been reluctantly won over by the aliens, do they feel secure in the presence of their abductors. This is a classical demonic machination. Demons inevitably strive, in a methodical way, to overcome the initial and natural repulsion that human beings feel in their presence, gaining the confidence of those whom they seek to mislead. Finally, the spiritual effects of abductees' contacts with aliens, as we have pointed out, are anti-Christian. Abductees are drawn away from the universal teachings of Orthodox Christianity and towards the demonic delusion that underlies modern New Age philosophies. Human transformation ceases, for these victims of alien visitation, to be a God-oriented, Grace-mediated process, but becomes part of a personality-dissolving return to the "elemental" universals upon which the pagan notion of Paradise is predicated.

It is worthy of note that the late Father Seraphim Rose, in his book *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future* (Platina, CA: Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1990; Revised Edition), has also examined the phenomenon of alien visitations to earth from an Orthodox standpoint. He devotes an entire chapter of this work, "Signs from Heaven: An Orthodox Christian Understanding of Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs)," to the true nature and meaning of alien contacts with human beings. Though Father Seraphim, at a superficial level, approaches this matter in a way reminiscent of Protestant fundamentalistic thinking, and while his materials are dated and center only on more sensationalistic abduction reports—deficits compounded by the fact that some of the authorities whom he cites are clearly on the fringes of science—, his deeper analysis of the phenomenon is ingenious and supports much of what I have suggested about alien encounters with humans. He also observes that the aliens in contemporary abduction reports are similar in appearance to the demons which, for centuries, have been described in Orthodox literature (p. 134). In fact, he recounts two cases of demonic "kidnappings" in fifteenth- and nineteenth-century Russia that, in Father Seraphim's words, are "quite close to UFO 'abductions'" today (pp. 136-137). It is his conclusion that classical demonic possession, known to the Orthodox Church for centuries, accounts for the alien abductions that we see in modern times and that "...modern men, for all their proud 'enlightenment' and 'wisdom,' are becoming once more aware of such experiences—but no longer have the Christian framework with which to explain them" (p. 137). This conclusion perfectly reflects what I have said about alien abductions and how they should be understood and viewed by the Orthodox Christian.

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