

Aliens Among Us

Millions of intelligent people believe in alien life forms, and their fascination with UFOs typically leads them to New Age beliefs. Is the church doing anything to reach this unusual mission field?

Ginger Thompson shows an X-ray of the implant she says was left in her head by aliens. The pea-size object in her brain was discovered by doctors at the Mayo Clinic, she says, who were baffled by its origin. She is matter-of-fact, even a little weary, as she recounts being experimented upon by extraterrestrials.

"I have two grown children. Why would I want to submit myself to ridicule? I want to get the truth out," she told Charisma.

That truth, Thompson says, is that Earth is being visited by beings from another planet. They are coming to help us reach a higher consciousness, a superior intelligence. Her last encounter was three years ago.

"We think they have already programmed me for what I am supposed to do," she says.

But she misses them. "They taught me how to use a computer," she adds.

She is talking about "The Grays," the embryo-like aliens with oversized heads and large, slanting black eyes whose image—somewhere between mysterious and malevolent—has become a fixture in movies and on television in recent years. But this is not an episode of The X-Files. This is a Saturday morning

conversation in an oceanside Florida hotel.

And Thompson is not the only one who believes we are not alone. The Radisson Beach Resort in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, is buzzing with some 200 people looking to distant galaxies with their intriguing questions about the meaning of life.

They have gathered at the Journeys Beyond conference, where the answers are served up on a mystical smorgasbord. An expert on ancient languages tells how historic texts reveal that Earth was populated by “gods” from a distant planet. An “investigative mythologist” explains that the resurrection was actually Jesus’ disappearance into another dimension through a space wormhole. A former nuclear scientist declares the government’s cover-up of the truth about Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) to be a “cosmic Watergate.”

But this odd gathering cannot be summarily dismissed along with the supermarket tabloids that publish photographs of the president greeting aliens at the White House.

Apart from the occasional oddball standout—like the woman with alien earrings and a smock covered in little green men, clutching a bag bulging with UFO research papers—the people waiting to enter the ballroom for the next presentation are decidedly normal and ordinary. They could be delegates to a shareholders meeting. Or members of a church.

This is not the lunatic fringe. Rather it is the tip of a massive iceberg.

And the few Christians who have ventured into this area

believe the church is in danger of making the same mistake the Titanic's crew made about the vessel's invincibility—smugly ignoring the danger only to find out too late that its defenses are not watertight after all. They warn that the Journeys Beyond seekers and their millions of counterparts—including some Christians—are being drawn in by a sinister plot more alarming than that of any sci-fi drama.

Aliens: Friends or Foes?

The plot, they contend, is illustrated by the views of the likes of Stanton Friedman, a full-time UFO researcher, author and speaker for more than 30 years whose studies have led him to the conclusion that aliens are visiting Earth and the observation that: "It gives you a new sense of perspective about where man fits in the universe."

That is why Chris Ward, a Florida teacher and pastor, attends these UFO events with a small group of like-minded believers. Most Christians don't want to get involved in engaging the extraterrestrial culture because they dismiss the whole idea as nonsense or don't understand the significance of what is happening, Ward says.

He was asked to take his church out of a well-known evangelical church network because he refused to halt his ministry at UFO gatherings. He never got a straight answer for the expulsion, but suspects it's because leaders were embarrassed by what he was doing.

But Ward says that he is not simply debating with a few deluded space dreamers. Rather, he maintains, he is engaging in a battle that strikes at the heart of the church.

“The idea is to get our eyes off of God. If what these aliens say is true, then it denies the Creator,” he explains. “That’s the bottom line—they are trying to destroy our relationship with the Creator.”

Noted Assemblies of God theologian and prophecy scholar David Allen Lewis agrees. He has studied the modern UFO phenomenon from its earliest post-World War II days, writing one of the first—and few—significant Christian books on the subject in the early 1990s.

“It’s very important, because what a person believes alters attitudes about God, the origin of mankind, and the possibility of a relationship between God and humanity,” Lewis says. “So whether UFOs actually exist or not is not the main point. The main point is that millions of people believe they exist.”

In their books, he and radio Bible teacher Chuck Missler argue that the UFO world is part of an elaborate satanic plot intended to set the stage for the final acts of world history. What better way would there be to explain away the rapture, they suggest, than have people believe their family members, friends and neighbors were taken away by aliens? Or how more effectively might the nations of the earth be persuaded to join together in some form of one-world government than to unite against a formidable common foe—an advanced civilization from outer space?

And, in the meantime, say Ward and his associates, UFOs draw people almost inevitably into New Age beliefs. It is certainly the case at Journeys Beyond, where the merchandise tables selling books about UFOs and alien abductions are mixed among stalls offering aura photography, psychic and tarot readings,

past-life studies, etheric handprints, auric renderings and astral-projection lessons.

“These people need help and guidance and deliverance,” Ward says. “These people are hurting and suffering. They have opened themselves up to something, and the church is really missing a ministry here.”

Close Encounters

Surveys suggest that more than 20 million Americans believe they’ve seen a UFO in the sky—and up to 3 million claim, like Ginger Thompson, some kind of an encounter with an alien being. Although UFO sightings have been reported throughout history, their frequency has exploded since the end of World War II.

Since then there have been thousands of alleged contacts, including widely reported sightings of lights in the skies in the summer of 1952 over Washington, D.C, and strange cases of cattle mutilations in the West. Project Blue Book, the U.S. Air Force’s official dossier on alleged sightings, gathered 140,000 pages of testimony before the project was disbanded. Sightings have been reported by astronauts and former President Jimmy Carter.

The public fascination with UFOs has mushroomed in the last three decades. The box office is evidence of its lure, where space visitors and other worlds are responsible for drawing some of the biggest cinema audiences of all time: E.T., Close Encounters of the Third Kind, Independence Day.

Hundreds of books have been written about UFOs and abductions.

The Internet has thousands of sites examining the case for life somewhere out there, and exploring some of the many conspiracy, cover-up and covert-action theories that proliferate in a mix of claim and counterclaim, report and rumor, data and doubt.

Among them are the beliefs that:

- * The sinking last year of the Russian submarine Kursk was due to a collision with a USO, or "Unidentified Submersible Object."

- * President Reagan's Star Wars defense system actually was developed to protect Earth from aliens, not the United States from the Soviet Union.

- * A high-powered secret government group known as Majic 12 was formed to keep the public from finding out that the existence of space visitors was well-known.

- * Though treated lightly in the action-comedy movie Men in Black, there really are mysterious agents who track UFO sightings.

- * The government once recovered a crashed alien spacecraft and some alien bodies.

- * The Apollo moon program was abandoned after astronauts found evidence of alien visitors there.

This last one is being revisited this year as we reach the

date of science-fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke's famous 2001: A Space Odyssey, in which the discovery of a mysterious black obelisk on the lunar surface prompts a mind-stretching journey into the far unknown reaches of the galaxy.

Some even tried to make UFOs part of the recent presidential campaign. Campaign Watch 2000 asked all the candidates their stand on secrecy over UFOs. According to UFO Magazine, when then-Gov. George W. Bush was asked at a press briefing if he would "finally tell us what the h— is going on," he said he would.

Even UFO apologists admit that many supposed sightings can be written off as tricks of light, excitable imaginations, invention, secret government technology, or explained away for some other good reason. But they maintain that there are still many documented cases that defy rational explanation. Says Friedman: "There is overwhelming evidence that we are being visited."

Don Ecker, a former police officer who for more than a decade has used his investigative skills as researcher at UFO Magazine, agrees. "The question is not are they real, but are UFOs from somewhere else? Our speculation is that in some cases, yes," he says.

Nor can all abduction accounts be summarily dismissed as delusions, dreams or fraud. Ginger Thompson's case is one of them.

She remembers some kind of encounter as a child, but it was when she was an adult that they began coming to her regularly. She would wake up in the morning with large bruises on her

body. She remembered being on a ship, subjected to medical examinations and procedures.

“At first I didn’t really want to believe this was happening,” she recalls. “My personality started to change.”

She lived in fear of windows and going upstairs alone.

“I went from being a real sweet homemaker-type wife and mother of two girls to a real b—. When I stop now and think about it, I had lost my privacy. I was afraid of everything.”

She became “very controlling,” she says. “At nighttime, when I went to sleep, I had no control, so during the day I wanted to hold onto something. I was content being a wife and a mother and baking bread; now here I am totally out of control.”

But something changed as the encounters continued.

“I don’t mind them anymore. I have gotten over the fears,” she says. “There’s an excitement. If ever I write a book I want to call it Prisoner or Privileged. I’m a prisoner or one of the privileged few who get a glimpse of what we are really all about.

“I get a glimpse of another dimension, to a higher level of consciousness. I think I am one of the lucky ones,” she says.

Her views of God have changed, too. Raised in a Baptist church, she no longer believes in hell.

"It's where you are," she says. Jesus was "just a man like we are, sent here to show us that we have the same power that He had." God is "not something we can touch. God is pure energy," she adds.

From her Florida home, Thompson travels widely to speak about her experiences and to try to learn more about the visitors who turned her suburban life upside down. She and her husband are frequent visitors to Area 51, the off-limits region of the Nevada desert surrounding a top-secret Air Force installation said to be the location of frequent UFO sightings.

Thompson's shifting attitude toward her uninvited visitors is not uncommon, note researchers who say people who report encounters with aliens frequently start by being frightened but gradually become accepting. Author Whitley Strieber, whose best-selling book *Communion* described his terrifying encounters, has since written about coming to terms with his experiences and his belief that the aliens have come to Earth to help us all.

Percy Galloway thinks the same way. He has been a friend for years with "Kobel," who is a "Nordic"—tall, blonde and the other most commonly reported alien after the Grays. Kobel comes from the Pleiadian star system, out in distant space. He is 8 feet tall and speaks 1,000 languages.

A former machinist with gentle eyes and a soft voice who for the last 15 years has run Cosmic Connections—selling UFO-related materials around the country—Galloway recounts how he was first taken aboard a ship as a child. They taught him about astrology, science and electronics.

But they said he could not talk about the experience until he was older, as people would not understand. As he grew up, people thought he was strange. "I had this ability to do things that I should not be able to understand."

His guides came to Earth, he says, when the atom bomb was invented because they feared humanity might develop something even more destructive. They want to "try to infiltrate their learning, knowledge and spiritual growth for mankind to grow by," he says.

They have revealed to Galloway and the few thousand like him around the world who have been contacted that God is "not as most would predict Him to be. He is a teacher. He lives out in the center of the universe and watches and observes all that goes on but takes no action, but passes on spiritual wisdom to people."

Galloway believes Jesus came from another planet. He was sent here as another messenger to give us certain truth.

"But people put Him on a pedestal and made Him more than He was," Galloway says, adding that the alien guides want us to "strive to live in peace, to have a total awareness of yourself, love yourself, love nature, promote harmonic balance between your fellow man and help him along his way."

From Outer Space to Inner Peace

For Christian UFO researcher Joe Jordan, the beliefs Galloway shares are the almost inevitable destination for people who start to explore the world of aliens and abductions. Their search for the truth invariably leads them into New Age

thinking, he says. And he knows, because he has been there himself.

The book he picked up at an airport bookstore 10 years ago to pass the time on a long flight drew him into an almost all-encompassing fascination with the unknown and inexplicable. He read as much as he could on the subject, and joined the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON), which investigates UFO sightings from a scientific point of view.

He also found himself being sucked into New Age practices. He studied crystals and visited a "channeler." He sees his reflection in many of the people at Journeys Beyond.

"They're middle-aged. They've gone through a lot of things and come to a point where they have settled down, but they are still missing something, and that something is the spiritual fulfillment, and they are looking for it," he reflects.

"The New Age offers something that is very seductive, that is not biblically based, that is spirituality without accountability; anything that happens in your life is part of your life growth, whether it be drugs, alcohol or sex outside of marriage. Knowledge is the key. But the search is never-ending, and it gets you running in circles. You are chasing your tail. It's like catch-22."

Joe Murgia is one of those searching. A TV-station producer, he has been investigating UFOs and other phenomena for five years and would like to turn his Internet newsletter hobby into a full-time job.

Raised a Catholic but now unpersuaded by organized religion,

he says: "How can you not be interested? Even if it all turns out to be one big mass delusion, that would still be interesting."

He believes UFOs may be real but doesn't know whether they are from outer space or another dimension.

"I don't know what I think anymore as far as what is real," he adds. Murgia's research has made him more easygoing, however. "Things don't bother me as much because I think of the bigger picture of what is important. I think that all this is a blink in the eye of what we are, being on this planet."

As Jordan dug deeper, a Christian friend challenged him to read the Bible on the premise of being "as open-minded as you claim to be." Caught by her argument he agreed—and found the gospel coming alive to him in a way it never had when he attended church as a kid. He gave his life to Christ and gave up his UFO inquiries.

But then he came across what he calls the real UFO cover-up, which drew him back into the world of sightings and Grays—but with a new mission. With a Christian friend who had also been part of the MUFON network, Jordan discovered the astonishing case of a man who claimed to have halted his abduction experience.

It was the first time Jordan had ever heard such a thing—and it happened when the man called out the name of Jesus. "Nobody had ever said you could escape an abduction. There was no mention of it in any of the literature," he notes.

But as he spoke with other, more experienced MUFON

researchers, they admitted to him privately that they had heard of similar instances.

“My next question was why I had never heard about them, and their answer usually was, ‘We didn’t know what to make of it.’ Quite often they said that they were concerned about how it might affect their credibility in the realm.” Since then, Jordan and his colleague have traced about 100 abduction cases that have been stopped by the name of Jesus.

Some who say they’ve been abducted have physical phenomena to back their claims, such as strange bruises, marks or pains. For others, there are no marks, but whether their encounters are in the material or metaphysical world, they have been marked.

“I don’t know whether it’s real or not, to be honest,” Jordan says. “What matters is that these people’s lives are being destroyed. It’s affecting every part of their lives. Whether it’s third-dimensional or fourth-dimensional, I don’t know, but it doesn’t matter because the name of Jesus stops it.”

Jordan twinned his notes with Ward’s biblical research and ministry experience. Many of the people he dealt with in his deliverance ministry reported alien encounters among their other troubles. The pair’s exchange reinforced their belief that UFOs and aliens are not of this world—but they do not come from another world. They maintain that many sightings and encounters are real, but that the visitors come from some unseen spiritual plane rather than a distant planet.

Under the banner of “Alien Resistance,” Ward and Jordan and their few helpers are disarmingly nonconfrontational at UFO

events. They don't dispute people's accounts or opinions. They swap stories of sightings and reports of encounters.

For those who visit his booth, Ward plays a recording he says an Australian radio ham made of an exchange between the U.S. space shuttle and ground control. Through the crackle the commander can be heard telling mission control that he still has the alien craft in view.

Once he is sharing common ground, Ward takes people to the Bible and offers to pray for them. Many are troubled, he says, because peace has eluded them in their New Age hunt.

"It doesn't teach sin. There's no guilt," he observes. "The bottom line is that you're God. That's the same line as in the Garden [of Eden]. It's what I call neo-New Age. What Satan was peddling in the Garden, he is today at the UFO conferences."

Ward and Jordan are intrigued by a common link between UFOs and revival. They point out how UFO sighting "hot spots" have often been associated with places that have experienced a powerful move of God.

Besides the United States, Brazil is one of the countries with the highest number of UFO reports. In Florida, the town of Gulf Breeze saw a rash of widely publicized sightings in the early 1990s before the Brownsville Revival erupted in nearby Pensacola, and the Great Lakes were the location of alleged UFO activity before the Toronto Blessing revival began not far away.

Curiously—or perhaps not so surprisingly if the theory of an end-times delusion intended to divert people from the second

coming is true—Israel also reports high UFO traffic.

For most people, the idea that UFOs have become their new religion, or is at least shaping and redefining their religious views, is not clearly formed. But there are groups that unashamedly set themselves up as the faith of the future.

The Raelians, who claim 50,000 members, say that humans were made in laboratories by “Space Fathers” who want to return to Earth to enlighten us all. They recently announced their intentions of cloning the first human being.

What concerns Ward and Jordan is that many of those they meet at events like Journeys Beyond have some sort of Christian background. “Somewhere along the line they had questions that no one would or could answer, and so they end up here,” Jordan says. He believes what keeps the church away from the UFO world even more than ignorance is fear.

“I think it scares them because they are not prepared to deal with it. They don’t understand the true nature of the experience,” he says.

“We seem to have more positive response and acceptance with what we are doing from the charismatic churches. They experience signs and wonders—they don’t have a problem accepting them. If you don’t see real ones, you really don’t believe that there are bad ones.”

Exploring the outer limits: Ginger Thompson (left) claims she was abducted by aliens. Stanton Friedman sees “overwhelming evidence” of UFOs.

Surveys suggest that more than 20 million Americans believe they've seen a UFO in the sky.

FINDING JESUS IN ROSWELL

One alien-abductee-turned-Christian has set up an evangelism center in the town where many claim the world's greatest UFO cover-up occurred.

For gamblers it is Las Vegas. For Elvis Presley fans it is "The King's" Graceland home in Memphis, Tennessee. And for those fascinated with UFOs, Roswell, New Mexico, is their Mecca. This small desert town in the middle of nowhere draws thousands of visitors a year because of something that happened more than 50 years ago.

Roswell has generated more speculation than the California Gold Rush. Somewhere beneath the mountain of conspiracy claims and dismissals lies one of the most astonishing events of the modern world, an unparalleled elaborate hoax or an impressively enduring myth.

Summer 1947: Something crashes outside town, not far from one of the United States' most sensitive military bases, home of the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. An official Army press release says a crashed "flying disk" has been recovered. Within 24 hours a retraction says, sorry, it was just a weather balloon.

Since the 1970s, Roswell has been the subject of a string of books and documentaries, with sensational claims of the recovery of alien bodies and witnesses threatened into

silence.

Enough questions and contradictions remain to attract the curious from all over the world. And it is here at the heart of the UFO world that Guy Malone has established his Alien Resistance headquarters.

Just around the corner from the International UFO Museum, which has drawn almost a million visitors since it opened in 1993, Malone's coffee shop/bookstore challenges the prevailing wisdom. Words on its outside wall announce: "Every Knee Shall Bow."

People don't go all the way to Roswell on a whim. Something drives them. The UFO world is "a spiritual and religious journey," says the 32-year-old former waiter and broker. "It gets them into New Age doctrines and communicating with spirits that the Bible tells us not to communicate with."

He speaks from personal experience. As a young boy, Malone was subjected to nighttime visitations by frightening creatures with large eyes. He came to believe they were angels, bringing him secret knowledge. But his encounters left him scared and unsettled.

Twice, he recalls, he was sexually molested by the strange visitors. As he grew older he got heavily involved in drugs, tried astrology and carried "healing" crystals.

Although leery of Christians, a chance conversation with a work colleague planted the unshakable thought that these beings were not benevolent. Eventually the truth soaked

through his New Age layers, and he asked Jesus to rescue him. But as he grew in his new faith, he told no one about his past experiences.

Then in 1997 he heard the news about the mass suicide of 39 members of the Heaven's Gate cult. Uniformly dressed in black, they had poisoned themselves and lain calmly down to die in their California ranch home, waiting to be picked up by a passing spaceship.

"Maybe I could have prevented [Heaven's Gate]," Malone says. "I had the answers. I knew the truth. I could have put up a Web page as easily as they did. Maybe one or all of those 39 might have been influenced by my work. Maybe that's vain thinking, but I had a calling from God I was not obeying."

Malone wrote a book about his experiences and understanding, couching and designing it in New Age style. He linked up with fellow UFO ministry leaders Chris Ward and Joe Jordan to establish Alien Resistance, originally just as a Web site. Then in 1999 he moved from Nashville, Tennessee, to Roswell, opening his information center last summer.

Although there are about 100 churches for the town's population of some 50,000, Malone found most of them ignoring the UFO phenomenon. The local Christian bookstore would not carry Malone's book because it was about UFOs, and many Christians embrace the tourist trade that feeds off the alien connection that spawns souvenirs, sightseeing and even Roswell: The Musical.

But Malone's ministry has gained some local acceptance over the months. Alien Resistance has a laid-back atmosphere,

allowing visitors to drink coffee, browse books and pamphlets on UFOs, and talk about their personal experiences. Those who believe in UFOs hear something that comes all too infrequently from Christians—that there are good answers to their tough questions.

“It’s quite honest to say, ‘I don’t know.’ But to say that the Bible doesn’t answer these questions, you are wrong,” Malone says. “The truth is, you haven’t studied the topic. What we are telling an experiencer who comes to us is that my Bible, my God is not sufficient to meet your needs, and go elsewhere.”

Many UFO searchers he has contact with have had bad encounters with Christians in the past.

“They know [most people] will say they are nuts. On the whole, if you were to call up a pastor and say you had been abducted by aliens, 95 percent of them would refer you to a psychiatrist before they would refer you to Jesus,” he says. “[These people] have a deep need to know,” he adds. “So the cults tell them. They find community and false answers [instead of] what the church should be doing.”

Malone says that there is a growing sense among some Christians in Roswell that one day the town will be known for something other than whatever happened in 1947—and that “something” will be revival.

STRANGE ENCOUNTERS WITH ANOTHER WORLD

For years Cathy Land was plagued by an unsettling sense of being “visited.”

When she realized what was happening, she turned to God to end her abduction experiences.

The pieces started to fit together the night they dropped her. For years Cathy Land had been plagued by the sense that something wasn't quite right. There were periods of unaccounted missing time, mornings when she felt heavy and lethargic despite a full night's sleep, an unsettling sense of somehow having been visited.

Then she woke up with an alien's face inches from hers.

"He had dropped me. I could feel his breath on my face. It startled him that I woke up. He had this confused—'That's not supposed to happen'—look on his face. The second one still had hold of my legs. I rolled over into a fetal position and went right back to sleep."

In the morning she told her son what had happened. Usually the family dismissed her recollections as a joke. This time he told her: "Those were not aliens; they were demons."

"It finally all made sense," she recalls.

Her son's comment propelled her to the Internet, where she found some Christians who didn't dismiss her experiences as nonsense. Her faith was enriched and deepened as she discovered that God's power could free her from her years of torment.

"I stopped being so scared, and I got mad," she says. "I finally understood. These things were trying to get the

world's attention away from God, and how better to do that than make people think they are being invaded from outer space? These are not benevolent little come to clean up the environment, fix the hole in the ozone layer. They are not from a distant galaxy. They are raping women, they are murdering animals, they are terrifying children."

An office manager for a medical supply company, and one-time stock-car racer and singer-musician, Land began to read all she could to learn more about what had troubled her for so long. She had been fascinated by UFOs since early childhood, one time reporting a seashore sighting to the police.

"Many times I would have a strange feeling just before going to bed," she says, adding that precise memories were hazy when she awoke. "I would feel like something had happened during the night—but nothing I could put my finger on."

One time her son told of a frightening encounter he'd had with "a tall man." She admits that his account had scared her.

But she continued to devour books and TV shows on alien phenomena. She told family members about her experiences and talked about UFOs with friends, though most laughed her off.

"Sometimes it made me feel like I was losing my mind. Maybe I did dream this all up. But there were too many things over and over and over again," she says.

As she read all the Christian material she could find on the subject after her spiritual awakening, she began to see how she had been so deceived for so long. "Everything started to make sense," she says. "I realized that everything I had read

had probably been happening to me all along, and it scared me. Then it made me mad. How dare they mess with me and my children?"

Land's anger over the years her life was "held" has spurred her to tell her story to others caught in the UFO mesh.

"This is war. It's the most ingenious hoax there is. It's a plan to get the world's attention away from the gospel of Christ, and it's working."

She says many exploring the UFO world are, as she was, "searching for love."

"That's what they are looking for, really, in their beliefs about aliens. But there's only one place they will find unconditional love, and they are looking in the wrong place."

An active part of her local Baptist church in Jacksonville, Florida, Land says that she now has a peace she never knew before. "I didn't know it for years.," she says. "It was a miserable existence from day to day. Nobody should be victimized like that. If I can save one person from being harmed, then I have to do this for God. It's my offering to Him.

"It's not the mission field I would choose for myself," she adds. "I would rather be feeding hungry people in India because maybe people wouldn't laugh at me. [But] who else is going to go and tell them, 'You are all being so deceived?'"

ALIENS, FALLEN ANGELS AND THE BIBLE

Evangelist Chris Ward has an unusual theory about the true identity of extraterrestrials.

In his ministry to the UFO world, Chris Ward boldly goes where few other Christians do. And his studies of the Bible and the UFO phenomenon have led him to an understanding that for many demands a radically deeper, if not new, look at Scripture.

Ward has no doubt UFOs are real and that people have had encounters with the beings in them. Where Ward disagrees with UFO believers, and where his explanation differs from many Christians, is what the aliens really are.

They are not from another planet, he maintains. But they are not demons, either, as many Christians are inclined to identify them, he contends. Rather, they are fallen angels.

That is not theological hairsplitting, he says. It is important both for everyday ministry to people in the scene and for understanding its crucial importance, he says.

“The people who are involved in this scene know the difference [between angels and demons], yet the church dismisses them as though they are ignorant,” Ward says. “Many of the people we have met are also involved in Wicca or paganism or whatever, and they conjure up demons all the time. But these people think they are dealing with beings from another planet.”

While most UFO apologists believe Earth is being visited from other planets, the perspective held by Ward—that aliens are extradimensional rather than extraterrestrial—is being considered more widely. A few respected secular figures in the

UFO world have raised the idea of a spiritual dimension to the phenomenon.

Ward's studies have taken him not only back to Scripture but also to other ancient texts highly respected by early church leaders, such as the books of Enoch, Jasher and Jubilee. These writings, some of which are referred to in the Bible or appear in the Apocrypha, shed further light on what can be gleaned from the Old and New Testaments, he says. Among his conclusions:

- * Demons are not angels that have fallen. The two are different entities. Although spiritual beings, angels can manifest in human or other physical form. Demons seek embodiment.

- * Extraterrestrials are the fallen angels variously named in the Bible as "watchers," "wicked hosts in high places," and "principalities and powers." They want to divert worship from God.

- * Demons were not created by God. They are the disembodied spirits of the Nephilim—the hybrids created when the angels who fell with Satan had intercourse with humans, as recounted in Genesis 6.

- * The fallen angels wanted to mate with humans to pollute the genes of humankind so that it would be impossible for Jesus to be born. Some translations of the Genesis 6 account describe Noah as being found "blameless in his generations," a reference to his pure DNA.

- * Old Testament accounts of Israel's wiping out idolatrous

tribes make more sense if they were doing so to rid the Earth of the last of the Nephilim, some of whom were still to be found after the Flood.

* The rising number of alien abduction accounts is consistent with Jesus' warning in Matthew 24 that the time of His return will be "just like the days of Noah"—when the Nephilim roamed the Earth.

* Reproductive experiments and sexual encounters often reported by abductees are part of an attempt to produce a new generation of angel-human hybrids, from which the Antichrist will arise.

While referencing texts in addition to the Bible is considered approvingly by non-Christians who reject the authority of Scripture, it is viewed suspiciously by some believers. "I do look at extraneous material, but I prove it all through the Bible," Ward says. "You don't have to refer to any of these other books, but they are standard accepted."

Ward admits that his perspective seems unbelievable to some. "[But] I do not speculate. I only synthesize what I read. There is no need to speculate because the information is sensational enough on its own."

Exploring the Strange World of UFOs

The Day the Earth Stood Still may not be among them, but resources about UFOs are available from a Christian

perspective.

BOOKS

Alien Encounter

by Chuck Missler (Koinonia House)

Aliens in the Bible

by John W. Milor (Xlibris Corp.)

Come Sail Away:

UFO Phenomenon and the Bible

by Guy Malone (Seekye1 Publishing)

UFO Cults and the New Millennium

by William M. Alnor (Baker Book House)

UFO: End-Time Delusion

by David Allen Lewis with

Robert Shreckshire (New Leaf Press)

UFOs in the New Age

by William M. Alnor (Baker Book House)

WEB SITES

Alien Resistance

Koinonia House

Logos Christian Fellowship

UF0s Revealed

Andy Butcher is Charisma's senior writer. Chat about UF0s with Andy and evangelist Chris Ward on April 30 at 9 p.m. (EST). Go to .