

Raelianism: a Research Lab Posing as a Cult?

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"The name I propose is Liberal Humanist Scientists for an Intergalactic Philamity."

"Are you serious?" the delegate from the American Humanist Association spluttered. "A name like that will make us a laughing stock. Philamity, indeed! Quite apart from sounding like a religion, the word is a tautology... You're making us sound like some kind of fruitcake occultists without the common sense..." He saw the triumphant gleam in Plato's eyes, and realized what the propaganda specialist was really doing.

"I certainly hope so," Plato agreed. "I don't need to tell you that god worship is a form of insanity, since most of you at some time in your lives had the disease and recovered. And one of the symptoms of insanity is the dog-in-the-manger attitude exemplified by the myth of Jesus cursing a fig tree. If Jesus couldn't have what he wanted when he wanted it, then nobody else could have it, ever. But what reason would even the most chronic dog-in-the-manger god worshipper have for trying to sabotage our efforts, if he was preconditioned to believe we're a bunch of science-fiction freaks who think we can travel to another galaxy?"

"We take an anti-religious attitude," Plato continued, "but a laughable one. We say we're going to have portholes in our spaceships so when we get out into the sky we can look for that fellow, God. We offer three to one odds that he won't be there... But even though we come across as too anti-theistic for any god worshipper to join us or stay with us, we adopt just enough of the external trappings of religion ourselves to satisfy the ignorant that a kind of religion is surviving with us... And to emphasize the religious nature of the Philamity, we elect ourselves a kind of pope. We can't be blatant. We have to give him a title that merely hints at religiosity, but simultaneously denotes a philosophy that is nontheistic."

Does the foregoing sound familiar? Anyone who has read *There Be No Sun But Yahweh, And Jesus Be Him's Planet*, will recognize it as an excerpt from that book's concluding novella, "On His Amity's Philocratic Service." But does it not also suggest a possible explanation for the recent claim of an observably fruitcake religious cult to have cloned a human being?

A claim to have successfully cloned a human being, regardless of its source, would be greeted by the scientific community with a cautious skepticism and a demand that the claim be proven to the satisfaction of outside investigators. But when such a claim comes from what is observably a lunatic fringe religious cult, with a leader whose costume identifies him as a pope-equivalent, the cult itself is bound to become an object of scrutiny-and priceless free publicity.

Raelians claim that their founder, now known as Rael, encountered extraterrestrials in 1973, and they revealed to him that they had been on earth for 25,000 years, and that they had created the human race by cloning. In other words, humans have existed for only 25,000 years and are not genetically related to other terrestrial life-forms. But human DNA is 98 percent identical with that of a common ancestor of humans and chimpanzees that flourished on this planet between four and eight million years ago. Add to that, that travel to earth from another star system could not be accomplished faster than the speed of light, which takes over four years to get here even from our next-door neighbor, Alpha Centauri, and the scientific impossibility of Raelian claims becomes manifest.

Raelians have all the appearance of a religious cult, including a Leader who dresses like Mother but, unlike his Roman equivalent, does not demand to be called Father. And to complete the parallel with the above-mentioned Philamity, Rael specifically denies any belief in the entity called God, and goes so far as to deny the existence of immortality and souls.

And that raises a further analogy. Of the various humbugs who introduced a new religion into the United States in the twentieth century, only one was deported with immoderate haste. Sun Myung Moon, after a short prison sentence that did not destroy his cult, is still flourishing, as are the Hare Krishnas. The only guru deported was the one known as Baghwan. And in what way did Baghwan differ from other cultists and resemble the Raelians? He taught that there are no gods, and that "prayer" is a form of talking to oneself. In other words he adopted, in effect, the trappings of religion to repudiate religion-as Rael is doing. And did that ever upset organized religion!

But while no person with a functioning human brain accepts Rael's claim that the cloning of a human being constitutes scientific evidence for the nonexistence of immortal souls, the

god worshippers are so terrified that it proves exactly that, that governments in Canada and the United States are instituting laws to make human cloning illegal. Apparently they are so determined to go on believing that only their sky-Führer can create life that they see no option but to prohibit research that renders their imaginary playmate superfluous. In a world that is already dangerously overpopulated, *all* extreme measures to enable the infertile to breed should be prohibited. But the same governments that self-righteously denounce cloning as unacceptable are not only doing nothing to combat simple overbreeding; the moron in the White House is actively forcing third-world countries to obey the mentally impoverished pope's insane ban on birth control by denying foreign aid to countries that recognize the overpopulation problem and are willing to take steps to alleviate it.

Raelianism claims to have 55,000 members worldwide. But to be a Raelian, one would have to be unaware of facts known to the average high school student. In other words, a Raelian must be scientifically illiterate, incredibly gullible, abysmally ignorant, and for all practical purposes brain-dead. Is it credible that there are 55,000 human beings on this planet who fit that description? Guess what? A cult not much older than Raelianism, and every bit as dependent on anti-science as *Twilight Zone* as that of the Raelians has as many as a quarter-million such mind-zombies.

In 1950 science fiction writer Lafayette Ronald Hubbard invented a medical scam called Dianetics. When it went belly up four years later, Hubbard concluded that the survival of humbuggery depended very much on obtaining the tax-free status granted only to designated religions. So he bet a friend (\$1?) that he could invent a new religion and have it showing a profit within a year. And he won the bet, even though the sought-after tax-exempt status was not granted until 1993. The hoax religion that Hubbard invented was Scientology.

Scientology claims that human ancestors were brought to earth by extraterrestrials from a star system far, far away. In other words, a quarter-million Scientologists currently believe scientifically illiterate drivel that is qualitatively equal to the verbal diarrhea being promulgated by the Raelians.

But is the parallel absolute?

Certainly Raelianism's 55,000 adherents, in the unlikely event that they actually exist, are the same kind of self-inflicted brain amputees as the rank-and-file Scientologists. But are the specific Raelians claiming to have cloned a human being the same kind of conscious liars as L. Ron Hubbard? Given how thoroughly their cult will be discredited if the cloning claim is falsified, as is likely to happen in a matter of days if it is indeed a hoax or self-delusion, that seems improbable.

But could it not be that Rael is setting himself up as a nutcase in order to free his research laboratory from media scrutiny by preconditioning investigators to believe it is not worthy of serious attention? If the cloning claim is in fact authenticated, the same situation applies. The cloning will create the impression that Raelianism is a lunatic cult that had one piece of incredible luck and need not be watched for possible further successes.

That may well be Rael's ultimate purpose.

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