

## Ancient Aliens? Rebutting Alien Conspiracy Theories as Popular Alternatives to Biblical History

Were there flying saucers at the crucifixion? Was Jesus really an alien? Just as Christian apologists need to rebut the ‘alternative’ historical claims of *The Book of Mormon*, so they need to rebut claims about so-called ‘ancient aliens’. These claims offer people with a secular worldview historical counter-narratives to biblical history that draw upon the scientific respectability of astrobiology and the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence (SETI). Drawing on his peer-reviewed research in this field, Williams argues that when it comes to ‘ancient aliens’, it’s the conspiracy theorists who are swimming against the scientific evidence.

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The impulse to re-interpret religion by invoking extra-terrestrial intelligences (ETI’s) gains legitimacy from the fact that speculation about alien life (including intelligent aliens) is a scientifically respectable past-time known as astrobiology. Since the early 1960’s, astrobiology has included the empirical research of the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence (SETI).

Just as Christians need to rebut the historicity of *The Book of Mormon*, so they need to rebut ‘alternative’ historical claims about so-called ‘ancient aliens’, claims that offer people with a secular worldview a historical counter-narrative to biblical history.

A 2017 survey conducted in 24 countries showed 47 % of 26,000 respondents believed ‘in the existence of intelligent alien civilizations in the universe . . . Russians were the biggest believers [with] 68 percent saying they think intelligent alien life exists . . . The Netherlands ranked as the most skeptical of life beyond Earth, with only 28 percent of Dutch survey-takers entertaining the possibility . . .’ - Amanda Woods, ‘Half of humans believe in alien life, study says’ *New York Post* (December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017) <https://nypost.com/2017/12/08/half-of-humans-believe-in-alien-life-study-says/>

A 2017 survey of 1700 Americans reported:

- 47 % of those surveyed said they believe in aliens
- 39 % of those surveyed said they believe aliens have visited Earth

- Alejandro Rojas, ‘New survey shows nearly half of Americans believe in aliens’ *Huffington Post* (August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017) [www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/new-survey-shows-nearly-half-of-americans-believe-in\\_us\\_59824c11e4b03d0624b0abe4](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/new-survey-shows-nearly-half-of-americans-believe-in_us_59824c11e4b03d0624b0abe4)

Ancient alien conspiracy theories are convoluted and highly *ad hoc*, and multiple facets of such theories are strongly disconfirmed by scientific evidence readily available from secular scientific sources:

- Scientific evidence suggests that (on a naturalistic worldview) alien life is unlikely to exist
- Even if alien life exists, it's unlikely that it would develop into intelligent life, or be blessed with the ecological and cultural preconditions for the development of science and technology
- Even if technologically advanced aliens exist, there are significant barriers to interstellar travel
- Even if technologically advanced aliens able and willing to engage in interstellar travel exist, it's unlikely they'd visit us, let alone in our pre-industrial past, let alone that they'd end up flying around the crucifixion, etc.
- The compound improbability of such a sequence of events is staggering!
- Not only do we lack convincing evidence that aliens have visited Earth, but SETI has provided evidence that technologically advanced aliens don't abound, at least not in our cosmic neighborhood

## Recommended Resources

**Watch On-Line:** William Lane Craig, 'Is the Resurrection Hypothesis Really as Absurd as the Alien Hypothesis?' <https://youtu.be/QW97epVeN7Y>

YouTube Playlist, 'Aliens & UFOs' [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQhh3qcwVEWixwhvDhbqSoO3qcIK7zu5](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQhh3qcwVEWixwhvDhbqSoO3qcIK7zu5)

YouTube Playlist, 'The Origin of Life' [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQhh3qcwVEWggFeEP9H7k1Lycfzv0Sr](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQhh3qcwVEWggFeEP9H7k1Lycfzv0Sr)

YouTube Playlist: 'The Rare Earth Hypothesis' [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQhh3qcwVEWiLU4H5kBr2JzSAzfIIIRst](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQhh3qcwVEWiLU4H5kBr2JzSAzfIIIRst)

YouTube Playlist, 'Physical Preconditions of Science & Technology' [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQhh3qcwVEWiEbtcuD5f8bK0DHH31Lg6Y](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQhh3qcwVEWiEbtcuD5f8bK0DHH31Lg6Y)

YouTube Playlist, 'The Theological Roots of Science' [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQhh3qcwVEWh3jDVYqFFzWSnTbtUeCg3](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQhh3qcwVEWh3jDVYqFFzWSnTbtUeCg3)

**Read On-Line:** J. Annis, 'Placing a limit on star-fed Kardashev type III civilisations' *Journal of the British Interplanetary Society*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (1999), 33-36 [www.jbis.org.uk/paper.php?p=1999.52.33](http://www.jbis.org.uk/paper.php?p=1999.52.33)

Susan Blackmore, 'Abduction by Aliens or Sleep Paralysis?' [www.csicop.org/si/show/abduction\\_by\\_aliens\\_or\\_sleep\\_paralysis](http://www.csicop.org/si/show/abduction_by_aliens_or_sleep_paralysis)

Kyle Butt, 'Ezekiel's Vision: An Alien UFO?' [www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=11&article=1061](http://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=11&article=1061)

Tim Callahan, 'The Spaceships of Ezekiel' [www.skeptic.com/eskeptic/05-07-28/](http://www.skeptic.com/eskeptic/05-07-28/)

Jon Coumes, 'Ancient Aliens is Everything That's Wrong with America' [www.theawl.com/2017/09/ancient-aliens-is-everything-thats-wrong-with-america/](http://www.theawl.com/2017/09/ancient-aliens-is-everything-thats-wrong-with-america/)

William Lane Craig, 'UFOs' [www.reasonablefaith.org/media/reasonable-faith-podcast/ufos/](http://www.reasonablefaith.org/media/reasonable-faith-podcast/ufos/)

Diego Cuoghi, 'The Art of Imagining UFOs' [www.diegocuoghi.com/arte-ufo/SKEPTIC\\_CUOGHI\\_ARTUFO\\_complete.pdf](http://www.diegocuoghi.com/arte-ufo/SKEPTIC_CUOGHI_ARTUFO_complete.pdf)

William A. Edelman and Arthur D. Edelman, 'Speed kills: Highly relativistic spaceflight would be fatal for passengers and instruments' *Natural Science* (Vol.4 No.10, October 2012) [www.scirp.org/journal/PaperInformation.aspx?paperID=23913](http://www.scirp.org/journal/PaperInformation.aspx?paperID=23913)

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James Hannam, 'How Christianity Led to The Rise of Modern Science' [www.equip.org/PDF/JAF3384.pdf](http://www.equip.org/PDF/JAF3384.pdf)

Marko Horvat, 'Calculating the probability of detecting radio signals from alien civilizations' <https://arxiv.org/pdf/0707.0011.pdf>

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- ‘Toronto Aetherius Society: His Master’s Voice, stuff that goes boom, and a lack of proof (Part 2)’  
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- Jean-Luc Margot *et al.*, ‘A Search for Technosignatures from 14 Planetary Systems in the *Kepler* Field with the Green Bank Telescope at 1.15–1.73 GHz’ *Astronomical Journal* (April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018)  
<http://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.3847/1538-3881/aabb03>
- Joe Nickell, ‘Navy Pilot’s 2004 UFO: A Comedy of Errors’ *Skeptical Inquirer* (Volume 42.3, May/June 2018)  
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## Books

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- William C. Berger, *How Unique Are We? Perfect Planet, Clever Species* (Prometheus, 2003)
- Susan A. Clancy, *Abducted: How People Come to Believe They Were Kidnapped by Aliens* (Harvard University Press, 2005)
- David Clarke, *How UFOs Conquered the World: A History of a Modern Myth* (Aurum Press, 2015)
- James Colavito, *The Cult of Alien Gods: H.P. Lovecraft and Extraterrestrial Pop Culture* (Prometheus, 2005)
- *A Critical Companion to Ancient Aliens Series 3 & 4* (Lulu, 2012)
- Lewis Dartnell, *Life in the Universe: A Beginner’s Guide, Astrobiology* (OneWorld, 2007)
- Paul Davies, *The Eerie Silence: Searching for ourselves in the universe* (Penguin, 2011)
- Michael Denton, *Fire Maker: How Humans Were Designed to Harness Fire and Transform Our Planet* (Discovery Institute, 2016)

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John Gribbin, *Alone in The Universe: Why Our Planet Is Unique* (Wiley, 2011)

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David Waltham, *Lucky Planet: Why Earth is Exceptional - and What That Means for Life in the Universe* (Icon, 2015)

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Stephen Webb, *Where Is Everybody? Fifty Solutions to the Fermi Paradox and the Problem of Extraterrestrial Life* (Copernicus, 2010)

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