



International Raëlian Movement

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Introduction

The International Raëlian Movement (IRM), founded in 1975 by Claude Vorilhon (b. 1946), aka Raël ('Light of the Elohim'), is perhaps the world's most successful extraterrestrial (ET) religion (here used to refer to New Age religions in which ETs figure as the agents of salvation). On 13 December 1973, Claude Vorilhon (Raël) reportedly saw an unidentified flying object—'a flying saucer,' according to Raël (2005, 3)—land in the caldera of Puy de Lassolas, a volcano near Clermont-Ferrand, France. There he met an 'Eloha', a diminutive humanoid ET who was one of the 'Elohim'; according to Raël these are the ET scientists who created humanity and all life on Earth. The theologian and sociologist of religions George Chryssides has discussed this as Raëlianism's 'scientific creationism' (Chryssides 2003). Raël reported that 'the figure was only about 4 feet (1.2 meters) tall. His eyes were slightly almond-shaped, his hair was black and long, and he had a small black beard. ... His skin was white with a slightly greenish tinge' (Raël 2005, 5). Raël was told by the Eloha to return to the crater the following day, which he did for six consecutive days, and he was instructed to tell no one of the meeting (or he would never meet the Eloha again), to wear no metal, and to bring a Bible and notebook (Raël 2005, 9). As historians of religion Eugene Gallagher and Paul Brian Thomas have noted, Raëlianism is fundamentally a biblical religion (Gallagher 2010; Thomas 2010). Sociologist of religion Susan Palmer (1995a, 1995b, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2014; Palmer and Sentes 2012) has written extensively about the IRM.

The Elohim

The Elohim, according to Raël, are human beings, albeit of an elder race—so they are not gods, the Eloha told Raël, although they *are* our creators. Evolution, Raël writes, is 'a myth ... this did not happen by chance' (Raël 2005, 92–93). Evolutionists are 'false prophets' (Raël 2005, 273). The Eloha told Raël that the Elohim genetically engineered all life on Earth from the simplest unicellular creatures to humanity's hominid ancestor, to whom the Elohim creators added 'what makes us essentially human. In this way, we made human beings in our image' (Raël 2005, 92). According to Raël, the Elohim have created life on two other planets besides Earth (Raël 2005, 278). The Elohim themselves, according to Raël,

were created by other people coming from another planet, who had been created by other people coming from another planet, and so on to Infinity. It is as foolish to search for the beginning of the Universe in time as it is to search for its beginning in space. (Raël 2005, 253)

In biblical Hebrew, *elohim* is the plural of *eloha*. While the God of Genesis 1 speaks in the first person plural ('Let us make mankind in our image and likeness'), biblical scholars generally see this not as a reference to an actual plurality of gods but as a plural of majesty: 'The most common of the originally appellative names of God is Elohim, plural in form though commonly construed with a singular verb or adjective. This is, most probably, to be explained as the plural of majesty or excellence' ('God', 1906). Jewish interpreters commonly argue that the Tanach (the Hebrew Bible) 'believes in the total Unity of E-lohim with such monotheistic clarity, that it usually uses E-lohim more than E-loha ... without suspecting any kind of confusion or plurality' (Shvat 2015). To Raël, though, the Elohim are an ET race of space-faring bioengineers dedicated to creating life throughout the universe.

Raël, Prophet of the Apocalypse

Raël, it is claimed, has been chosen by the Elohim as the Prophet of the Age of Apocalypse. The Elohim chose a Frenchman as their spokesperson, Raël was told, because France was the birthplace of democracy, and Raël in particular because his father was Jewish and his mother Catholic, and he could thus mediate between the Jews and the Catholics (Raël 2005, 8). In fact, though, Raël claims to have been told by Yahweh and Jesus, whom he later met on the Planet of the Eternals, that Yahweh, ruler of the Elohim home planet, was Raël's *actual* father, and that Raël—like Jesus before him—was conceived aboard an Elohim spaceship:

After the explosion at Hiroshima, we decided that the time had come for us to send a new messenger on Earth. He would be the last prophet, but the first one to address mankind asking them to understand and not to believe. We then selected a woman, as we had done in the time of Jesus. This woman was taken aboard one of our ships and inseminated as we had done with the mother of Jesus. Then she was freed after we had totally erased from her memory all traces of what had happened. Your real father is also the father of Jesus, and that makes you brothers. (Raël 2005, 290)

According to Raël, the serpent of Genesis 3:1-5 represents the Elohim scientists who revealed to the human beings whom they had created that they—the Elohim—are not gods, but human beings (Raël 2005, 17). To punish humanity's Elohim creators, Yahweh, ruler of the Elohim home planet, confined them to Earth, where they took human wives who bore hybrid offspring, the Nephilim: 'The creators living in exile took the most beautiful daughters of humanity and made them their wives' (Raël 2005, 19). Here, Raëlianism's Elohim are the *Bene ha'Elohim*, the Sons of God of Genesis 6:4 (Flaherty 2010). It was then that Yahweh decided from the Elohim home planet to destroy all life on Earth (Raël's reading of Genesis 6:5): 'They then decided from their distant planet, to destroy all life on earth by sending nuclear missiles. However, our exiled creators, informed of the project, instructed Noah to build a spaceship which would

orbit the earth during the cataclysm' (Raël 2005, 206). A single cell from the male and female of each species was preserved. The explosion of the missiles caused a tidal wave that submerged the continent (originally there was only one continent; Raël 2005, 13). Subsequently, the animal species were re-created from the cells that had been preserved on the spaceship, and Earth was restored (Raël 2005, 22).

The International Raëlian Movement

According to the IRM, there are an estimated sixty thousand members worldwide (Raël 2005, xvi). The movement is strongest in France, Canada, South Korea, Japan, and Africa (Raël 2005, 365). Originally Raël called his movement MADECH (Mouvement pour l'Accueil des Elohim Createurs de l'Humanité, Movement for Welcoming of the Elohim Creators of Humanity; or Moïse a Dèvence Elie et le Christ, Moses Preceded Elijah and Christ) but in 1975 the group's name was changed, with the Elohim's authorization, according to Raël, to the International Raëlian Movement (IRM).

The original emblem of the IRM was a Star of David (a hexagram)—also called the Shield of David or Māḡēn Dāwīd—with a swastika in its centre. Raël claims to have seen this symbol on the Elohim spaceship that he observed in 1973 (Raël 2005, 62). The swastika, according to Raël, is an ancient symbol of infinity with a long history as one of humanity's most sacred symbols before it was appropriated by the Nazis in the twentieth century. In 1992, though, the swastika in the IRM emblem was replaced for North America and Europe with a six-armed galactic-shaped swirl within the hexagram because of the swastika's association in the West with Germany's Nazi past and the Holocaust (Raël 2005, 369): 'In Asia, where the swastika can be found in most Buddhist temples and where it represents infinity in time, the original symbol is not a problem' (Raël 2005, 368). In 2007, though, Raël decided to restore the swastika in the hexagram as the official IRM symbol ('The Official Raëlian Symbol Gets its Swastika Back', 2007). The swastika, according to Upendra Singh, National Raëlian Guide for Nepal and leader of the Worldwide Pro-Swastika Alliance, 'is a symbol cherished not only by Raëlians, for whom it represents infinity in time, but by Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains' (quoted in Simon 2016).

Until the 1980s, Raëlianism diffused primarily through the international French community, but in the 1980s Japanese Raëlians translated Raël's books into English: *Le Livre qui dit la Vérité (The Book that Tells the Truth)*

(L'Édition du Message, 1974) and *Les Extra-terrestres M'ont Emmené sur leur Planète (Extraterrestrials Took Me to Their Planet)* (Édition du Message, 1975) were published as a single volume: *The Message Given to Me by Extraterrestrials: They Took Me to Their Planet* (1986). Raël's third book, *Accueillir les Extra-Terrestres (Let's Welcome the Extraterrestrials)* (L'Édition du Message, 1975) was published as *Let's Welcome Our Fathers from Space: They Created Humanity in Their Laboratories* (1989). In 2005, new English translations of *The Message Given to Me by Extraterrestrials* and *Let's Welcome the Extraterrestrials* were completed and published as one book, *Intelligent Design: Message from the Designers* (2005), which the IRM has made available on its homepage as a free download (<https://www.rael.org>).

The Embassy Project

The beginning of the Aquarian Age (the Age of Apocalypse), according to Raël, coincided with Raël's birth and the return of the Jews to Israel in 1946, which Raëlians count as the Year One (Raël 2005, 206):

The Age of Pisces was the age of Christ and his fishermen, and the Age of Aquarius, which follows, began in 1946. This is the era in which the people of Israel found their country again. ... It is not by chance that you [i.e. Raël] were born in 1946. (Raël 2005, 81)

Raël says that the Elohim instructed him to create a movement to spread the messages of the Elohim creators worldwide, and to build an 'embassy' near Jerusalem where the Elohim spaceships will land (Raël 2005, 176). Raëlianism's embassy will be, according to Raël, the rebuilt third temple of biblical prophecy (Raël 2005, 368), which to many Zionists and Christians is a necessary prerequisite of the advent of the messianic age (the first temple in Jerusalem, the Temple of Solomon, was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 bce; the accession of Cyrus the Great of Persia in 559 bce made possible the construction of the second temple, which was destroyed by the Romans in 70 ce). Raël has warned that if Israel does not permit the embassy's construction, the embassy will be built elsewhere and the people of Israel will once again be dispersed (Raël 2005, 177). According to Raël's 1997 Message of the Elohim:

Jerusalem is everywhere where human beings love us, respect us and wish to welcome us with due respect, and the chosen people are those who, knowing what we are, want to welcome us, meaning the Raëlians. The real Jews on Earth are no longer the people of Israel, but those who recognize us as their creators and wish to see us return. The link we have with the people of Israel is about to be severed. ... They have very little time to understand their mistake before being dispersed once again. (Raël 2005, 359)

In 1991 the IRM submitted an official request to the Chief Rabbi in Israel regarding the construction of the Elohim embassy in Jerusalem. The swastika had been removed from the IRM symbol in 1992 not only 'out of respect for the sensitivities of the victims who had suffered and died under the Nazi swastika during the Second World War' (Raël 2005, 368) but also to facilitate embassy negotiations with Israel. An Israeli government commission concluded that the IRM was peaceful and not a threat to Israel's national security; nonetheless, in 1993 Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin rejected the IRM's request that the embassy be constructed in Israel (Raël 2005, 368). The IRM then began negotiations with other nations, including Canada and Russia, but it has not yet succeeded in securing the agreement of a nation-state in which it can establish the embassy. Once a country authorizes the embassy's construction, Israel will, according to Raël, have one last opportunity to reconsider, but if in the end Israel rejects the embassy project, according to Raël, Israel will be dispersed (Raël 2005, 360).

According to Raël, 'our greatest task is to build the embassy for the Elohim so that at long last they can come here and land officially and live among us' (Raël 2005, 71). In 2015 the IRM submitted a request to the United Nations—'Optional Protocol Concerning Embassies for Extraterrestrials'—asking that the Elohim be granted special diplomatic status (International Raëlian Foundation, 2015). Daniel Turcotte, Raëlian

Guide and leader of the IRM in Canada, is Raël's assistant responsible for the IRM's Embassy for Extraterrestrials Project.

Cloning

Raël claims that in 1975 he encountered the Elohim a second time, and they took him to the Elohim home planet and to a second, smaller planet—the Planet of the Eternals—where he met Moses, Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, and Yahweh. On the Planet of the Eternals, people live seven hundred years. Upon their death, eternalists are cloned from a cell taken from their old bodies. There are nine thousand eternalists—Elohim and people from Earth—and ninety thousand biological robots who serve them. Eight thousand Earth humans have already been re-created on the Planet of the Eternals (Raël 2005, xix). The biological robots are incapable of suffering or feeling and cannot reproduce (Raël 2005, 162). Raël teaches that we must show the Elohim that we are proud of having been created in their image by one day being able to ourselves create human beings in our image: biological robots who will free us, their creators, entirely from work:

Work should not be considered as something sacred. Everyone has the right to be comfortably off even if he does not work. Everyone should try to fulfill himself and blossom in the field which attracts him. If men organize themselves, it will not take them long to mechanize and automate entirely all indispensable work. ... Do everything to create the biological robot which will relieve you from menial labor and enable you to blossom and fulfill yourselves. (Raël 2005, 196-97)

In 1997 the IRM established Clonaid, the world's first human cloning project. In 2000 Raël severed all formal involvement in Clonaid (Raël 2005, 365), placing it under the direction of Brigitte Boisselier (b. 1956), a PhD-level biomolecular chemist and Raëlian bishop. According to Boisselier:

In a not too distant future, advanced cloning technologies will allow us to even re-create a deceased person in an adult body, with all his past experiences and memories, allowing mankind to enter the age of immortality as it has been announced by His Holiness Raël, founder of Clonaid, in 1973 already after his contact with the Elohim, mankind's extraterrestrial creators. (Boisselier 2004)

There is no 'God', Raël teaches. Nor is there a soul that survives the body's death. There are our ET Elohim creators, though, and the genetic code, the 'cellular plan', which allows the Elohim to re-create the individual, to whom is granted eternal life (Raël 2005, 247). As feminist theorist Gena Corea wrote: 'The promise of immortality is apparently one of the most attractive features of cloning' (Corea 1985, 262).

On 28 March 2001, Raël appeared before the US Congress during hearings on human cloning. He testified that 'human cloning will make it possible for us to reach eternal life' and dedicated his testimony to Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), the Italian Dominican monk, philosopher, and scientist who was, Raël said, 'sentenced to death by the Catholic Church for saying there was life on other planets' ('User Clip', 2001) (in his 1584 treatise *De l'Infinito, Universo e Mondi—On the Infinite, Universe and Worlds*—Bruno

postulated an infinite universe and multiplicity of inhabited worlds; he was tried for heresy by the Church of Rome and executed). While there have been a number of legislative attempts to institute a federal ban on human cloning in the United States since Raël testified before the US Congress, there is currently no federal law in the United States that completely prohibits human cloning, although cloning is banned in a number of individual states.

In July 2002, Clonaid's South Korean affiliate, Biofusion Tech Inc., announced that a woman had been impregnated with a cloned human embryo (Park 2003). In response, in September 2002, South Korea's Ministry of Health and Welfare announced a ban on human cloning: 'Whether the claim is true or not, it has become more imperative that we enact such a law at the earliest possible date' (Shin 2002). In December 2002, Clonaid announced that a cloned baby girl, whom they named Eve, had been born by caesarean section in the US state of Florida. In January 2003, Clonaid reported that a second cloned baby girl had been born in the Netherlands, and that a cloned baby boy had been born in Japan ('Clonaid Says It's Cloned First Boy', 2003). Clonaid's claims were met with scepticism from scientists ('Clonaid's Claims Were a Hoax', 2003) and condemned by mainstream religious and political leaders worldwide (Associated Press 2002).

Nuclear Holocaust and the Apocalypse

According to Raël, the development of nuclear weapons was a sign to the Elohim that human beings were ready for reestablished contact with their ET creators. Whereas to Raël the sixth seal of the Apocalypse (Revelation 6:12-17) represents the development of nuclear weapons, the seventh seal (Revelation 8:1-6) represents actual nuclear war (Raël 2005, 299). Raël's Elohim will not intervene to prevent nuclear war: 'Either Humanity will develop an interplanetary consciousness and the whole of Mankind will enter the Golden Age, or everything will explode, and you will be those who we will save to rebuild everything' (Raël 2005, 306).

While there is a 1 percent chance of averting nuclear holocaust, according to Raël, there is a 99 percent probability that there will be a cataclysmic nuclear war (Raël 2005, 306). In the event of such, those who have had their 'cellular plan' transmitted to Raël or to a Raëlian Guide designated by Raël will be re-created on the Planet of the Eternals. Additionally, upon death a one-square-centimetre bone sample is to be taken from the forehead of the deceased and sent to the Guide of Guides (Raël) to be kept in the Raëlian embassy (Raël 2005, 192). Individuals will be re-created on the Planet of the Eternals only if the required bone sample is sent to the Guide of Guides (Raël):

The total of those who will be 'sealed in the forehead' will be around 144,000. For as long as the total of these human beings does not reach 144,000, we will help delay the final cataclysm, so as to have a sufficient number to start a new generation on Earth when it has become a suitable place again for humans to live. (Raël 2005, 298-99)

Here, Raël's teaching is a reading of Revelation 7:1-8 and 14:1,3-5, in which it is prophesied that 144,000 servants of God bearing the seal of the Living God on their foreheads will reign with him on the heavenly Mount Zion.

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Raëlism

Raëlism,^[a] also known as **Raëlianism**, is a UFO religion that was founded in 1970s France by Claude Vorilhon, now known as Raël.^[b] Scholars of religion classify Raëlism as a new religion. The group is formalised as the **International Raëlian Movement (IRM)** or **Raëlian Church**, a hierarchical organisation under Raël's leadership.

Raëlism teaches that an extraterrestrial species known as the Elohim created humanity using their advanced technology. An atheistic religion, it believes that the Elohim have historically been mistaken for gods. It also claims that throughout history the Elohim have created forty Elohim/human hybrids who have served as prophets preparing humanity for news about their ultimate origins. Among those listed as prophets are The Buddha, Jesus of Nazareth, and Muhammad, with Raël himself being the fortieth and final prophet. Raëlists believe that since the Hiroshima bomb of 1945, humanity has begun an Age of Apocalypse in which it is threatening itself with nuclear annihilation. It argues that humanity must find a way of harnessing new scientific and technological development for peaceful purposes, and that once this has been achieved the Elohim shall return to Earth to share their technology with humanity and begin a utopia. To this end, the Raëlians have been committed to building an embassy for the Elohim, incorporating a landing pad for the latter's spaceship. Raëlians promote a liberal ethical system with a strong emphasis on sexual experimentation, engage in daily meditation, and hope for physical immortality by human cloning.

Raël first published his claims to have been contacted by the Elohim in his 1974 book *Le Livre Qui Dit La Vérité*. He subsequently established an organisation devoted to promoting his ideas, MADECH, which in 1976 disbanded and was replaced by the Raëlian Church. Raël headed the new organisation, which was structured around a hierarchy of seven levels. Attracting more followers, the group obtained a country estate in France before relocating its operations to Quebec. During 1998 Raël established the Order of Angels, an internal all-female group whose members are largely sequestered from wider society and tasked with training themselves to become the consorts of the Elohim. In 1997 Raël initiated Clonaid, an organisation engaged in research in human cloning that was directed by senior Raëlian Brigitte Boisselier. In 2002 the company alleged that it had successfully produced a human clone, a baby named Eve, bringing much critical scrutiny and media attention to the group. The Movement has attracted further attention through its public protests endorsing causes such as women's and gay rights and against nuclear testing.

| Raëlism | |
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| <p>The Raëlian symbol with the swastika (for the alternative version, see <u>below</u>)</p> | |
| Type | <u>New religious movement</u> |
| Classification | <u>UFO religion</u> |
| Scripture | <p>Main: <i><u>Intelligent Design: Message from the Designers</u></i></p> <p>Minor: <i><u>Sensual Meditation</u></i>, <i><u>Let's Welcome the Extra-terrestrials</u></i>, <i><u>Geniocracy</u></i>, <i><u>Yes to Human Cloning</u></i> and <i><u>The Maitreya</u></i></p> |
| Polity | <u>Episcopal</u> |
| Planétaire guider | <u>Raël</u> |
| Associations | <p>ARAMAIS</p> <p><u>Clitoraid</u></p> <p><u>Clonaid</u></p> <p>NOPEDO</p> <p>Order of Angels</p> |
| Region | Worldwide |
| Headquarters | <u>Geneva</u> , <u>Switzerland</u> ^[1] |

The International Raëlian Movement claims tens of thousands of members, the majority based in Francophone areas of Western Europe and North America as well as in parts of East Asia. Criticism of the philosophy has come from journalists, ex-Raëlians, and anti-cultists, while it has also been studied by scholars of religion.

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|-------------------------|--|
| Founder | <u>Raël</u> |
| Origin | 19 September 1974 <u>Auvergne, France</u> |
| Embassy | 50+ |
| Members | 100,000 (2018) |
| Other name(s) | <i>Raëlianism</i> and <i>Raëlian movement</i> |
| Official website | <u>rael.org</u> (<u>http://www.rael.org</u>) |

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Definition

Scholars of religion classify Raëlism as a new religion.^[2] Raëlism has also been described as a UFO religion,^[3] a UFO movement,^[4] and an ETI religion.^[5] It is possibly the largest UFO religion in existence,^[6] and during the mid-2000s, the scholar of religion Andreas Grünschloß described it as "one of the most consolidated UFO groups internationally active today."^[7] In its beliefs, Raëlism differs from many other UFO based philosophies,^[8] with the scholar of religion James R. Lewis terming it "the most thoroughly secular of all the UFO religions."^[9] Most other UFO religions, such as the Aetherius Society, Ashtar Command, and Heaven's Gate, use many of the beliefs of the late 19th century religion Theosophy, although Raëlism does not.^[10] The Raëlists have also been characterised as having a "belief in ufology",^[11] although Raëlians themselves often stress that they do not regard themselves as Ufologists.^[12]



A public gathering of Raëlists in the Insa-dong neighbourhood of Seoul, South Korea.

Raëlism is materialistic and rejects the existence of the supernatural,^[13] endorsing atheism and rejecting the idea that gods exist.^[14] The religion's founder, Raël, characterises traditional religion as irrational and unscientific,^[9] presenting his alternative as a philosophy that is free from "obscurantism and mysticism".^[15] Raëlians describe their belief system as a "scientific religion",^[16] with the International Raëlian Movement using the motto "Science is our religion; religion is our science."^[17] The religion emphasizes the use of science to solve the world's problems,^[18] and practitioners regard Raël as a pioneer of science who will one day be regarded alongside Galileo and Copernicus.^[19] Many of its members refer to it as an "atheistic religion",^[20] in this way drawing comparisons between it and Buddhism, which similarly does not promote belief in gods.^[21]

Along with science, the other main basis of Raël's ideas is the Bible.^[22] Noting the "central role" of the Bible in Raëlism, the scholar of religion Eugene V. Gallagher suggested that it was a "thoroughly biblical and thoroughly Christian" philosophy.^[23] Similarly, the sociologist of religion Susan J. Palmer characterised Raëlism as being both fundamentalist and Abrahamic in its reliance on the Bible.^[24] Raël nevertheless criticised Christianity for what he believed was its role in perverting the message of the Bible,^[25] and Raëlism is not inclusive of other religions, with new members being expected to formally renounce any previous religious affiliations.^[26]

In 1995, a parliamentary commission issued a report through the National Assembly of France that categorized the Raelian Movement (*Mouvement Raëlien*) as a secte, a French term with the connotations of the English word "cult".^{[27][28]} In 1997, a parliamentary inquiry commission issued a report through the Belgian Chamber of Representatives that also categorized the Belgian Raelian Movement (*Mouvement Raëlien Belge*) as a secte.^{[27][29]} Glenn McGee, professor at the University of New Haven, stated that part of the sect is a cult while the other part is a commercial website that collects large sums of money from those interested in human cloning.^[30]

Beliefs

During the early 2000s, the scholar of religion George D. Chryssides noted that Raëlism exhibits "a coherent worldview",^[11] although added that the movement remained in the "very early developmental stage".^[31] The religion is based on the teachings of Raël. Raël's claims are taken literally by practitioners of Raëlism,^[32] who regard his writings as scripture.^[33] Palmer thought that, from her extensive study of the philosophy and Raël himself, that he genuinely believed in the truth of his claims.^[34] The sociologist of religion Christopher Partridge noted that Raëlianism exhibits "a *strong physicalist* belief system".^[35]

Raëlism presents a form of the ancient astronauts theory which was well known at the time that the religion was formed.^[36] Several French authors, such as Jean Sendy, Serge Hutin, and Jacques Bergier, had already published books during the late 1960s and early 1970s stating that Earth was the outpost of an ancient extraterrestrial society.^[37] The Swiss writer Erich von Däniken had also famously presented the same idea during the 1960s;^[38] his book *Chariots of the Gods* had been published in German in 1968,^[39] after which it was published in French and English in 1970.^[36] Similar ideas had also been put forward in science-fiction, such as the U.S. television series *Star Trek*.^[40] Raëlians themselves often deny the effect of von Däniken on the philosophy, instead believing that it derives entirely from Raël's revelations.^[41]

The Elohim

Raëlism teaches that there exists an extraterrestrial species known as the Elohim.^[43] Raël stated that the word "Elohim", which is used for God in the Old Testament, is actually a plural term which he translates as meaning "those who came from the sky."^[44] Individual members of the Elohim are referred to as "Eloha" by Raël.^[45] He alleged that these aliens gave him the honorific name of "Raël",^[46] a term deriving from "Israel",^[47] and which he translates as meaning "the messenger of those who come from the sky."^[48]

In his first book, *Le Livre Qui Dit La Verité* ("The Book That Tells the Truth"), which was first published in 1974, Raël claimed that he initially encountered these alien beings on 13 December 1973, when he was 27 years old.^[49] He stated that he was walking along the Puy de Lassolas volcanic crater in the Clermont-Ferrand mountains when one of their spaceships appeared and an Eloha emerged.^[50] He stated that the Eloha asked him to return the next day and to bring a Bible with him. Raël did so and over the course of six days Eloha explained to him the true meaning of its contents, thus revealing more about the Elohim's involvement in human history.^[51] In his 1976 book *Les Extra-Terrestes M'ont Emmené Sur Leur Planete* ("The Extraterrestrials Took Me to Their Planet"), Raël added that he was contacted by the Elohim again on 7 October 1975, when they took him aboard their spaceship and transported him to their home planet.^[52] Here he was offered six biological robot women with which to have sex, saw the Elohim create his clone, and taught the techniques of sensual meditation.^[53] The scholar of religion James R. Lewis noted that Raël's account of encountering the Elohim was similar to those of the "classic UFO contactees" of the 1950s and 1960s.^[54]

The Elohim are described as being physically smaller than humans, with pale green skin and almond-shaped eyes,^[55] and divide into seven different races,^[56] although Raëlians are forbidden from painting or sketching them.^[18] Their planet, Raël stated, is outside our solar system but within our own Milky Way galaxy.^[57] Raël alleged that there are 90,000 of these Elohim on their planet and that they are all quasi-immortal.^[58] He commented that on their world, they do not wear clothes.^[59] He added that they are all permitted to engage in free love with one another, and that sexual jealousy between them has been eliminated.^[58] All are regarded as fairly feminine in their manner;^[60] Raël states that "the most feminine woman on Earth is only 10% as feminine as the Elohim."^[15] They are not allowed to procreate to have children and many undergo a sterilisation operation to ensure this.^[58] He also reported that the Elohim are able to communicate with humans because they have an understanding of all human languages.^[61]

The Elohim on Earth



A medallion displaying the Raëlian symbol; practitioners typically wear these medallions to identify their beliefs.^[42]

Raëlism teaches that about 25,000 years ago the Elohim arrived at the Earth and transformed it so that life could develop. It states that the Elohim used their advanced technology to establish all life on the planet.^[62] Raël characterises humans as "biological robots" that have been created and programmed by the Elohim.^[63] Raëlism teaches that humanity is modelled physically on the Elohim;^[64] for practitioners, this is indicated by the passage at Genesis 1:26.^[7] Also representing his own interpretation of Genesis, Raël teaches that the Elohim scientist responsible for creating humanity was named Yahweh and that the first two humans to be created were named Adam and Eve.^[65] Raëlians believe that there were original seven human races, modelling the seven Elohim races, but that the purple, blue, and green races have died out.^[56] In believing humanity was created by the Elohim, Raëlians reject Darwinian evolution and espouse creationism and intelligent design.^[66] Raëlians term their beliefs "scientific creationism."^[67] Raëlians believe that the Elohim were also created by an earlier species, and they before them, *ad infinitum*.^[17] They believe that the cosmos expands indefinitely, both in time and space,^[17] infinity is an important concept for them.^[68]



Raëlians promoting their religion on a street in Japan; one is dressed as an alien character mascot.

Raëlians believe that accounts of gods in various mythologies around the world are misinterpretations of memories about the Elohim.^[69] The philosophy states that the sacred scriptures of many other religions describe the ongoing activities of the Elohim on Earth.^[70] The tale of Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden, recounted in Genesis, is for instance interpreted as representing humanity's difficult transition from the Elohim's laboratories to life on Earth, where they had to become self-sufficient.^[70] The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, as presented in the Gospels, is described as representing how the Elohim cloned Jesus to restore him to life after death.^[70] References to Satan are interpreted as referring to the chief of a group on the Elohim's planet who were opposed to genetic experiments on Earth and who argued that humanity should be destroyed as a potential threat.^[71] According to the Raëlians, the Great Flood narrative recounts an attempt by the anti-human aliens to wipe out humanity, but that humanity was rescued by an alien spacecraft which provided the basis for the story of Noah's Ark.^[72]

Various figures who established or inspired religions throughout human history, including Jesus, the Buddha, Muhammad, and Joseph Smith, are portrayed by the Raëlians as having been guided by the Elohim.^[70] These are characterised as being 39 prophets sent to humanity at various times.^[73] Each is believed to have revealed information to humanity that they could comprehend at the given time, and Raëlism, therefore, emphasises the idea of progressive truth.^[73] Raël claims that he is the fortieth and final prophet of the Elohim,^[74] sent because humanity is now sufficiently developed to understand the truth about the Elohim.^[75] He initially claimed that he was chosen for this role because he had a Roman Catholic mother and a Jewish father and was thus "an ideal link between two very important peoples in the history of the world."^[43] He added that he was also selected because he lived in France, which the Elohim considered a more open-minded country than most others.^[43]

Raël subsequently stated that these prophets are themselves the result of a human mother breeding with an Eloha father,^[76] with the human mothers having been chosen for the purity of their genetic code, beamed onto an Elohim spacecraft, impregnated, and then returned to Earth with their memory of the event erased.^[77] In his 1979 book, *Let's Welcome Our Fathers from Space*, Raël added that he was the biological son of the Eloha whom he first encountered, Yahweh.^[78] He noted that Yahweh was also the father of Jesus, making the latter

Raël's half-brother.^[79] In 2003, Raël publicly identified himself as Maitreya, the prophesied future bodhisattva of Mahayana Buddhism.^[57] He maintains that he continues to be in telepathic contact with the Elohim, hearing Yahweh's voice guiding him in making decisions affecting Raëlianism.^[80]

The religion also teaches that the Elohim continue to monitor every human individual on Earth, remotely, from their planet.^[12] This is done so that the Elohim can decide which individuals merit being offered the opportunity of eternal life.^[81] It argues that the Elohim continue to visit the Earth, as evidenced by crop circles, which adherents regard as the landing spaces of the Elohim's spacecraft.^[73] Raëlians generally understand sightings of unidentified flying objects (UFOs) as confirmation of their belief in the Elohim, although their opinion of Ufology is ambiguous.^[82] Raëlians also consider the appearance of "angel hair" as evidence of the Elohim's presence, stating that it has appeared at various Raëlian summer gatherings.^[83] They typically express scepticism regarding claims by alleged alien contactees other than Raël.^[82] Raëlians believe that they are all capable of linking telepathically with the Elohim but that only Raël is permitted to meet with them physically or receive their revelations.^[83]

The Age of Apocalypse and the Elohim's Return

Raëlism is a millenarian philosophy.^[84] Raël claims that since the U.S. military's use of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945, humanity have been living in the "Age of Apocalypse" or "Revelation".^[85] It states that the human species must now choose whether to use science and technology to enhance life or to use it to bring about nuclear annihilation.^[86] It claims that if humans successfully get through this present age, they will live in an era of advanced technology in which society will be tolerant and sexually liberated.^[40] Raël claimed that he was destined to help lead humanity away from its path of destruction.^[87]

According to Raël, beginning a peaceful age will cause the return of the Elohim to Earth.^[87] He added that they will bring them the 39 immortal prophets whom they had previously sent to guide humanity.^[88] Raël stated that humanity has to build an embassy for the Elohim prior to their arrival on Earth and that it must include a landing pad for their spaceship.^[89] He stated that it needed to be located on internationally recognised neutral territory so as not to indicate favour towards any one particular nation-state.^[75] Initially, Raël sought permission to build it in Israel,^[90] explaining this by reference to how the ancient Israelites were once in contact with the Elohim.^[75] He also stated that this embassy would constitute the "Third Temple" referred to in Jewish prophecy.^[91]

Receiving little help for this venture from the Israeli government, Raël instead suggested that a neighbouring country might be suitable, proposing Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt as possible locations. None of the governments of these countries were favorable.^[75] Senior people of the Raëlian Movement suggested Hawaii as a possible alternative, and in 1998 Raël stated that he had received a new revelation from the Elohim stating that this location would be acceptable.^[15] Chryssides noted that should the Elohim not arrive in 2035, the Raëlians will have to adapt to the new circumstance in which their eschatology remains unfulfilled.^[92] On 16 April 1987, the *Chicago Sun-Times* estimated the funding for the "cosmic kibbutz" at \$1 million. In 1997–1998, the funding had risen to \$7 million.^{[93][94][95]} By 2001, \$9 million had been saved for the embassy,^{[96]:p. 64} and in October 2001, the funding had reached \$20 million.^[97]

Once on Earth, Raël claims, the Elohim will share their advanced technology and scientific understanding with humanity and will help to usher in a utopia.^[87] Raël teaches that the Elohim's arrival will herald a new and improved political system on the Earth.^[81] This will be a single world government that Raël terms a "geniocracy,"^[98] or "rule of geniuses,"^[99] and which he discusses in his fifth book, *Geniocracy*.^[68]



A small-scale tent copy of the proposed Elohim embassy erected at a Raëlian seminar in Colombia.

According to this system, only those who are fifty percent more intelligent than the average person will be permitted to rule.^[100] Raël's proposed geniocentric system bears similarities with the style of governance that Plato promoted in his work *Republic*.^[101] Raëlians thus reject democracy, believing that it fails to ensure that society has the best leadership.^[100] Raël claims that this future society will have no war, and crime will have been ended through genetic engineering.^[100] In this future, Raël states, humanity will be able to travel beyond the Earth to colonise other planets.^[102] He claims that robots will assume menial tasks, allowing humans to devote their time to pleasurable pursuits.^[103] He also argued that there would be biological robots which would serve as sex slaves, akin to those which Raël states he encountered on his visit to the Elohim planet.^[104] A single world currency will be introduced, as a prelude to the total abolition of money, while a unified world calendar will also be adopted.^[100]

Cloning and survival after death

Raëlians reject the existence of the ethereal soul that survives physical death,^[105] and instead argue that the only hope for immortality is through scientific means.^[102] The Raëlians claim that the Elohim will clone and thus recreate dead individuals, but only those whom they feel merit this recreation.^[106] In this, they believe in a "conditional immortality", with immortality for a minority and oblivion for the majority.^[106] The resurrection of Jesus, as recounted in the Gospels, is for instance explained as an example of Elohim cloning.^[106]

Raëlists advocate for the development of human cloning technology on Earth.^[104] Raëlians also believe that deceased individuals can be cloned so that they could be tried and punished for their crimes.^[106] After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, in which the attackers committed suicide, the Raëlists proposed that they could be resurrected through cloning to be tried for their actions.^{[107][108]} Due to its emphasis on attaining immortality, Raëlism deprecates suicide; after the Heaven's Gate group engaged in a mass suicide in 1997, the Raëlian Church was among the new religions that issued press releases condemning suicide.^[109]

As opposed to the scientific definition of reproductive cloning which is simply the creation of a genetically identical living organism, Raëlians seek to both genetically clone individuals, rapidly accelerate growth of the clone to adulthood through a process like guided self-assembly of rapidly expanded cells or even nanotechnology.^[110] Raël told lawmakers that banning the development of human cloning was comparable to outlawing medical advances such as "antibiotics, blood transfusions, and vaccines".^[111]

Morality, ethics, and gender roles

Raëlism insists on a strict ethical code for its followers.^[112] Members are expected to take responsibility for their own actions, respect cultural and racial difference, promote non-violence, strive for world peace, and share wealth and resources.^[112] They are also encouraged to uphold democracy, in the belief that humanity will ultimately make a democratic choice to introduce geniocentricity.^[112] The Raëlian opinion is that everything should be permitted so long as it harms no one and does not impede scientific and technological advance.^[100] Members are nevertheless advised against using recreational drugs or stimulants so as not to harm their health,^[113] although some practitioners have acknowledged that they use alcohol and cigarettes.^[114]



A woman on a bed adorned with the Raëlian symbol.

John M. Bozeman characterised the religion's morality as "progressive,"^[115] while Palmer referred to the group's "liberal social values",^[116] and Chryssides described Raëlist values as being "worldly and hedonistic".^[117] The scholar of religion Paul Oliver noted that the philosophy's ethics were "relativistic" in

that practitioners were encouraged to act in a manner that they felt to be appropriate to the context.^[26] Several scholars have also argued that it is a "world-affirming" religion, using the typology established by Roy Wallis.^[118]

Raël considered gender as an artificial construct and emphasised its fluidity.^[119] Raël avoided a macho persona and is instead often described by his followers as being "gentle" and "feminine".^[120] Palmer suggested that Raël regarded women as being superior to men because they were described as being more like the Elohim.^[60] In Raël's account, the inhabitants of the Elohim planet "have 10 percent of masculinity and 90 percent of femininity."^[60] Raël also proposed that if women were in positions of political power across the world, there would be no war.^[60] The Raëlians have participated with public protests for women's rights.^[121] At its June 2003 "Joy of Being Woman" demonstration, Raëlian women danced naked through the streets of Paris.^[121] Palmer described the Raëlians as feminists,^[122] although Raël criticised mainstream feminism, arguing that it "copied the shortcomings of men".^[123] Generally adopting the belief that the human body is malleable,^[124] Raëlism has a positive opinion of plastic surgery to improve physical appearance.^[125]



A Raëlist contingent on the street at the "Korea Queer Culture Festival" held in Seoul in 2014.

Raëlism teaches that the Elohim created humanity to feel sexual desire as a panacea for their violent impulses.^[126] It states that through the pursuit of sexual pleasure, new pathways between the neurons in the brain are forged, thus enhancing an individual's intelligence.^[127] Raëlism encourages its members to explore their sexuality;^[58] while Raël is often photographed with beautiful women and appears to be heterosexual, he encourages homosexual experimentation.^[128] Adopting an accepting attitude towards different forms of sexual orientation and expression,^[68] Raëlism teaches that differences in sexual orientation are rooted in the Elohim's primordial genetic programming and are something to be celebrated.^[129] Researching about the Raëlians of Quebec, Palmer found that many avoided categorising themselves using terms like "heterosexual", "homosexual", or "bisexual", finding these labels too limiting.^[130]

The Raëlians have stressed the need for respect and mutual consent in sexual behaviour.^[131] The group places a strong taboo on incest, rape, and sexual activities involving children.^[131] Anyone involved in the Movement found to have been involved in these latter activities is excommunicated,^[132] while Raël has recommended that paedophiles be sexually mutilated or placed in mental institutions.^[132] Those believed to have forced unwelcome sexual attention on another are excommunicated from the Movement for seven years—the amount of time Raëlians believe it takes for all of a person's biological cells to be regenerated.^[131]

The Raëlists reject both enforced monogamy and marriage, regarding these as institutions that have been enforced to enslave women and suppress sexual expression.^[133] The religion discourages its members from marrying.^[58] Members are also discouraged from contributing to global overpopulation;^[58] members are urged not to have more than two children, and ideally none at all.^[134] Raël states that should two individuals wish to procreate, their psychic control during the act of conception can affect any child resulting.^[135] The Raëlists also believe that once human cloning has been developed, biological reproduction will be obsolete.^[126] As well as endorsing the use of birth control and contraceptives,^[136] Raëlists endorse the use of abortion to terminate unwanted pregnancies.^[137] Raël has also argued that if a woman does not want a child who has been born then she should give it up to be raised by society.^[132]

Some Swiss government authorities responded to Raëlians' opinions about Sensual Meditation with a fear that Raëlians are a threat to public morals for supporting liberalized sex education for children. They express the opinion that such liberalized sex education teaches youngsters how to obtain sexual gratification which would encourage sexual abuse of underage children.^[138]

Religious symbol



The two variants of the Raëlian logo; the former uses the swastika in the centre and the latter a swirl representing the shape of a galaxy. The latter was adopted to avoid the connotations of Nazism that the swastika has in Western countries.

The symbol initially used to signify Raëlism was a six-pointed star with a swastika in the centre.^[139] Raël stated that this was the symbol he originally saw on the hull of the Elohim's spaceship.^[140] Raëlians regard this as a symbol of infinity.^[141] Practitioners also believe that this symbol helps facilitate their own telepathic contact with the Elohim.^[142] Raëlists typically wear a medallion of the symbol around their neck.^[42]

The Raëlian use of the swastika— a symbol that had been prominently used by Germany's Nazi Party during the 1930s and 1940s— resulted in accusations from the Montreal anti-cult organization Info-Cult that the Raëlians promoted fascism and racism.^[111] Outside Info-Cult's office, Raëlians spoke against the act of discriminating against a religious minority.^[111] On 2 January 1992, a dozen people protested against the use of the swastika in the Raëlian logo in Miami's Eden Roc Hotel. The use of the swastika and other Raelian practices has resulted in criticism from the group Hineni of Florida, an Orthodox Jewish organization.^[143]

In 1992, the Raëlian Movement altered their symbol, replacing the central swastika with a swirling shape. They explained that this was due to a request from the Elohim to change the symbol in order to help in negotiations with Israel for the building of the Extraterrestrial Embassy, although the country continued to deny their request.^{[144][145]} Raël also stated that the change was made to show respect to the victims of the Holocaust.^[99] The newly added swirling shape was explained as a depiction of a swirling galaxy.^[99] In 2005, the Israeli Raëlian Guide Kobi Drori stated that the Lebanese government was discussing proposals by the Raëlian movement to build their interplanetary embassy in Lebanon. However, one condition was that the Raëlians not display their logo on top of the building because it mixes a swastika and a Star of David. According to Drori, the Raëlians involved refused this offer, as they wished to keep the symbol as it was.^[146] From 1991 to 2007, the official Raëlian symbol in Europe and America did not have the original swastika, but Raël decided to make the original symbol, the Star of David intertwined with a swastika, the only official symbol of the Raelian Movement worldwide.^[147]

Practices

Raëlism involves a series of monthly meetings, initiations, and meditation rituals.^[56] Where possible, Raëlians congregate with fellow practitioners on the third Sunday of the month.^[148] It is the group's policy that these events occur in rented rooms rather than property that the Raëlian Movement itself has purchased.^[59] At the monthly meetings in Montreal, Raël himself often appeared.^[149]

The main ritual in Raëlism is the "transmission of the cellular plan", in which a Raëlian Guide placed their hands on another individual's head, through which the Guide is believed to receive the individual's cellular code and then telepathically transmit it to the Elohim.^[150] Doing so denotes the initiate's formal recognition of the Elohim as the creators of humanity.^[151] This is used as part of the "baptism", or initiation ceremony for

Life On Earth

that comes from beyond the stars

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Maitreya Rael is the last messenger sent by our extraterrestrial creators, the **Elohim**. Like Moses, Buddha, Jesus, and Mohammed, the last prophet, Rael, was asked to make the Elohim's final message to humanity known to everyone on Earth.



UPCOMING EVENTS

RAELIANS' PLANETARY SEMINARS AND REVOLUTIONARY ACTIONS IN THE WORLD

AUG

06

CELEBRATION OF THE RAE LIAN NEW YEARS DAY

August 06, 2021

August 6 is the Raelian New Years Day. At this date, one of the worst crimes in humanity took place. On August 6, 1945, the US military dropped an atomic bomb over Hiroshima, Japan, killing more than 100,000 civilians. Obviously, the Raelian Movement does not celebrate this act; however, this act was an indication for the Elohim that the time had come for them to "s..."

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"Finally a book that makes sense with history, religion, art and science... It's the most probable theory I have come across so far!"

Phylis
Scientist with a PhD in stem cell biology

"The beautiful Raelian philosophy reminds me that we always have a choice. How we react to things and to the people around us is up to nobody but ourselves."

Sandra
Project Manager, Travel Trade

"I wake up and take my first waking breath of the day after breathing all night without consciously being aware of it. That is like being Raelian: It's something I've always been, and then I discovered the Raelian philosophy and everything made sense."

Glenn
Professional actor/ musician

"Maitreya Rael showed me the way back to my true self. How beautiful we are and how beautiful life is! We are part of the infinite universe in time and space, and everything is connected. I am in awe of each moment that goes by and live each moment to the fullest."

Color
Dancer

"This book is boldly bringing a complete paradigm shift on our planet. It is of the greatest importance for the future of humanity."

Felix
Certified personal trainer/massage therapist

"This book is exactly matched with my dream from 9 years old. I wish to become a bridge of Love connecting one star to another star. I wish to become the rainbow of life, the song of Rose, the wing of infinite dreams and love."

Lotus
Dancer, Singer, Song writer

"Thanks to this Message, I learned to connect with the creation and infinity...I see in each human being, in each flower, and in each insect the love for science and art, and the sensuality and beauty of an intelligent creation!"

Carmen
Qigong professor



Get full access to RAEL's speeches

On our RaelAcademy Youtube channel you have full access to this priceless treasure given to humanity by our creators, through the mouth of their beloved son, **Maitreya RAEL**.



RAEL's comments

Follow RAEL's most up-to-date teachings of our creators, the Elohim

California cafe charging mask-wearing customers an extra \$5

May 29, 2021

RAEL'S COMMENT: Very good decision! All cafe, shops and restaurants should do the same!

We are not numbers

May 24, 2021

RAEL'S COMMENT: We are the children who were murdered by the Zionist Israelis aggression on Gaza, Palestine the past week. Israel is a war criminal.

Gitmo's oldest inmate approved for release after being held for 16 YEARS without charge

May 18, 2021

RAEL'S COMMENT: Criminal USA. This man deserves millions in damages.

Texas Governor Abbott bans officials from requiring face masks, introduces \$1,000 fine for those who do

May 18, 2021

RAEL'S COMMENT: Let's hope that all countries will do the same as soon as possible.

Love death to stop being afraid of it

May 17, 2021

Text by Maitreya : Every year 60 million people are dying. Every year. And 140 million are being born. It's called life. When you bring

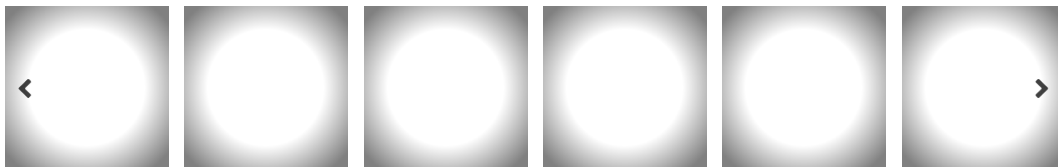
Give me your mask campaign

May 10, 2021

RAEL'S COMMENT: I propose that all Raelians go into cities with a beautiful basket and a big board saying: "GIVE ME YOUR MASK" and written

RAELIANS' REVOLUTIONARY ACTIONS AROUND THE WORLD

Raelians promote various causes initiated by Rael. Each aims to foster the fulfillment of every human being and to save humanity as a whole.



...

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CLITORAID: Help FGM (Female genital mutilation) victims

PROSWASTIKA: Swastika rehabilitation

PARADISM: For a world without work and money

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our creators

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International Raëlian Movement

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Robert Pearson Flaherty. 2021. "International Raëlian Movement." In James Crossley and Alastair Lockhart (eds.) *Critical Dictionary of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements*. 15 January 2021. Retrieved from www.cdamm.org/articles/international-raelian-movement.

Introduction

The International Raëlian Movement (IRM), founded in 1975 by Claude Vorilhon (b. 1946), aka Raël ('Light of the Elohim'), is perhaps the world's most successful extraterrestrial (ET) religion (here used to refer to New Age religions in which ETs figure as the agents of salvation). On 13 December 1973, Claude Vorilhon (Raël) reportedly saw an unidentified flying object—'a flying saucer,' according to Raël (2005, 3)—land in the caldera of Puy de Lassolas, a volcano near Clermont-Ferrand, France. There he met an 'Eloha', a diminutive humanoid ET who was one of the 'Elohim'; according to Raël these are the ET scientists who created humanity and all life on Earth. The theologian and sociologist of religions George Chryssides has discussed this as Raëlianism's 'scientific creationism' (Chryssides 2003). Raël reported that 'the figure was only about 4 feet (1.2 meters) tall. His eyes were slightly almond-shaped, his hair was black and long, and he had a small black beard. ... His skin was white with a slightly greenish tinge' (Raël 2005, 5). Raël was told by the Eloha to return to the crater the following day, which he did for six consecutive days, and he was instructed to tell no one of the meeting (or he would never meet the Eloha again), to wear no metal, and to bring a Bible and notebook (Raël 2005, 9). As historians of religion Eugene Gallagher and Paul Brian Thomas have noted, Raëlianism is fundamentally a biblical religion (Gallagher 2010; Thomas 2010). Sociologist of religion Susan Palmer (1995a, 1995b, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2014; Palmer and Sentes 2012) has written extensively about the IRM.

The Elohim

The Elohim, according to Raël, are human beings, albeit of an elder race—so they are not gods, the Eloha told Raël, although they *are* our creators. Evolution, Raël writes, is 'a myth ... this did not happen by chance' (Raël 2005, 92–93). Evolutionists are 'false prophets' (Raël 2005, 273). The Eloha told Raël that the Elohim genetically engineered all life on Earth from the simplest unicellular creatures to humanity's hominid ancestor, to whom the Elohim creators added 'what makes us essentially human. In this way, we made human beings in our image' (Raël 2005, 92). According to Raël, the Elohim have created life on two other planets besides Earth (Raël 2005, 278). The Elohim themselves, according to Raël,

were created by other people coming from another planet, who had been created by other people coming from another planet, and so on to Infinity. It is as foolish to search for the beginning of the Universe in time as it is to search for its beginning in space. (Raël 2005, 253)

In biblical Hebrew, *elohim* is the plural of *eloha*. While the God of Genesis 1 speaks in the first person plural ('Let us make mankind in our image and likeness'), biblical scholars generally see this not as a reference to an actual plurality of gods but as a plural of majesty: 'The most common of the originally appellative names of God is Elohim, plural in form though commonly construed with a singular verb or adjective. This is, most probably, to be explained as the plural of majesty or excellence' ('God', 1906). Jewish interpreters commonly argue that the Tanach (the Hebrew Bible) 'believes in the total Unity of E-lohim with such monotheistic clarity, that it usually uses E-lohim more than E-loha ... without suspecting any kind of confusion or plurality' (Shvat 2015). To Raël, though, the Elohim are an ET race of space-faring bioengineers dedicated to creating life throughout the universe.

Raël, Prophet of the Apocalypse

Raël, it is claimed, has been chosen by the Elohim as the Prophet of the Age of Apocalypse. The Elohim chose a Frenchman as their spokesperson, Raël was told, because France was the birthplace of democracy, and Raël in particular because his father was Jewish and his mother Catholic, and he could thus mediate between the Jews and the Catholics (Raël 2005, 8). In fact, though, Raël claims to have been told by Yahweh and Jesus, whom he later met on the Planet of the Eternals, that Yahweh, ruler of the Elohim home planet, was Raël's *actual* father, and that Raël—like Jesus before him—was conceived aboard an Elohim spaceship:

After the explosion at Hiroshima, we decided that the time had come for us to send a new messenger on Earth. He would be the last prophet, but the first one to address mankind asking them to understand and not to believe. We then selected a woman, as we had done in the time of Jesus. This woman was taken aboard one of our ships and inseminated as we had done with the mother of Jesus. Then she was freed after we had totally erased from her memory all traces of what had happened. Your real father is also the father of Jesus, and that makes you brothers. (Raël 2005, 290)

According to Raël, the serpent of Genesis 3:1-5 represents the Elohim scientists who revealed to the human beings whom they had created that they—the Elohim—are not gods, but human beings (Raël 2005, 17). To punish humanity's Elohim creators, Yahweh, ruler of the Elohim home planet, confined them to Earth, where they took human wives who bore hybrid offspring, the Nephilim: 'The creators living in exile took the most beautiful daughters of humanity and made them their wives' (Raël 2005, 19). Here, Raëlianism's Elohim are the *Bene ha'Elohim*, the Sons of God of Genesis 6:4 (Flaherty 2010). It was then that Yahweh decided from the Elohim home planet to destroy all life on Earth (Raël's reading of Genesis 6:5): 'They then decided from their distant planet, to destroy all life on earth by sending nuclear missiles. However, our exiled creators, informed of the project, instructed Noah to build a spaceship which would

orbit the earth during the cataclysm' (Raël 2005, 206). A single cell from the male and female of each species was preserved. The explosion of the missiles caused a tidal wave that submerged the continent (originally there was only one continent; Raël 2005, 13). Subsequently, the animal species were re-created from the cells that had been preserved on the spaceship, and Earth was restored (Raël 2005, 22).

The International Raëlian Movement

According to the IRM, there are an estimated sixty thousand members worldwide (Raël 2005, xvi). The movement is strongest in France, Canada, South Korea, Japan, and Africa (Raël 2005, 365). Originally Raël called his movement MADECH (Mouvement pour l'Accueil des Elohim Createurs de l'Humanité, Movement for Welcoming of the Elohim Creators of Humanity; or Moïse a Dèvence Elie et le Christ, Moses Preceded Elijah and Christ) but in 1975 the group's name was changed, with the Elohim's authorization, according to Raël, to the International Raëlian Movement (IRM).

The original emblem of the IRM was a Star of David (a hexagram)—also called the Shield of David or Māḡēn Dāwīd—with a swastika in its centre. Raël claims to have seen this symbol on the Elohim spaceship that he observed in 1973 (Raël 2005, 62). The swastika, according to Raël, is an ancient symbol of infinity with a long history as one of humanity's most sacred symbols before it was appropriated by the Nazis in the twentieth century. In 1992, though, the swastika in the IRM emblem was replaced for North America and Europe with a six-armed galactic-shaped swirl within the hexagram because of the swastika's association in the West with Germany's Nazi past and the Holocaust (Raël 2005, 369): 'In Asia, where the swastika can be found in most Buddhist temples and where it represents infinity in time, the original symbol is not a problem' (Raël 2005, 368). In 2007, though, Raël decided to restore the swastika in the hexagram as the official IRM symbol ('The Official Raëlian Symbol Gets its Swastika Back', 2007). The swastika, according to Upendra Singh, National Raëlian Guide for Nepal and leader of the Worldwide Pro-Swastika Alliance, 'is a symbol cherished not only by Raëlians, for whom it represents infinity in time, but by Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains' (quoted in Simon 2016).

Until the 1980s, Raëlianism diffused primarily through the international French community, but in the 1980s Japanese Raëlians translated Raël's books into English: *Le Livre qui dit la Vérité (The Book that Tells the Truth)*

(L'Édition du Message, 1974) and *Les Extra-terrestres M'ont Emmené sur leur Planète (Extraterrestrials Took Me to Their Planet)* (Édition du Message, 1975) were published as a single volume: *The Message Given to Me by Extraterrestrials: They Took Me to Their Planet* (1986). Raël's third book, *Accueillir les Extra-Terrestres (Let's Welcome the Extraterrestrials)* (L'Édition du Message, 1975) was published as *Let's Welcome Our Fathers from Space: They Created Humanity in Their Laboratories* (1989). In 2005, new English translations of *The Message Given to Me by Extraterrestrials* and *Let's Welcome the Extraterrestrials* were completed and published as one book, *Intelligent Design: Message from the Designers* (2005), which the IRM has made available on its homepage as a free download (<https://www.rael.org>).

The Embassy Project

The beginning of the Aquarian Age (the Age of Apocalypse), according to Raël, coincided with Raël's birth and the return of the Jews to Israel in 1946, which Raëlians count as the Year One (Raël 2005, 206):

The Age of Pisces was the age of Christ and his fishermen, and the Age of Aquarius, which follows, began in 1946. This is the era in which the people of Israel found their country again. ... It is not by chance that you [i.e. Raël] were born in 1946. (Raël 2005, 81)

Raël says that the Elohim instructed him to create a movement to spread the messages of the Elohim creators worldwide, and to build an 'embassy' near Jerusalem where the Elohim spaceships will land (Raël 2005, 176). Raëlianism's embassy will be, according to Raël, the rebuilt third temple of biblical prophecy (Raël 2005, 368), which to many Zionists and Christians is a necessary prerequisite of the advent of the messianic age (the first temple in Jerusalem, the Temple of Solomon, was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 bce; the accession of Cyrus the Great of Persia in 559 bce made possible the construction of the second temple, which was destroyed by the Romans in 70 ce). Raël has warned that if Israel does not permit the embassy's construction, the embassy will be built elsewhere and the people of Israel will once again be dispersed (Raël 2005, 177). According to Raël's 1997 Message of the Elohim:

Jerusalem is everywhere where human beings love us, respect us and wish to welcome us with due respect, and the chosen people are those who, knowing what we are, want to welcome us, meaning the Raëlians. The real Jews on Earth are no longer the people of Israel, but those who recognize us as their creators and wish to see us return. The link we have with the people of Israel is about to be severed. ... They have very little time to understand their mistake before being dispersed once again. (Raël 2005, 359)

In 1991 the IRM submitted an official request to the Chief Rabbi in Israel regarding the construction of the Elohim embassy in Jerusalem. The swastika had been removed from the IRM symbol in 1992 not only 'out of respect for the sensitivities of the victims who had suffered and died under the Nazi swastika during the Second World War' (Raël 2005, 368) but also to facilitate embassy negotiations with Israel. An Israeli government commission concluded that the IRM was peaceful and not a threat to Israel's national security; nonetheless, in 1993 Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin rejected the IRM's request that the embassy be constructed in Israel (Raël 2005, 368). The IRM then began negotiations with other nations, including Canada and Russia, but it has not yet succeeded in securing the agreement of a nation-state in which it can establish the embassy. Once a country authorizes the embassy's construction, Israel will, according to Raël, have one last opportunity to reconsider, but if in the end Israel rejects the embassy project, according to Raël, Israel will be dispersed (Raël 2005, 360).

According to Raël, 'our greatest task is to build the embassy for the Elohim so that at long last they can come here and land officially and live among us' (Raël 2005, 71). In 2015 the IRM submitted a request to the United Nations—'Optional Protocol Concerning Embassies for Extraterrestrials'—asking that the Elohim be granted special diplomatic status (International Raëlian Foundation, 2015). Daniel Turcotte, Raëlian

Guide and leader of the IRM in Canada, is Raël's assistant responsible for the IRM's Embassy for Extraterrestrials Project.

Cloning

Raël claims that in 1975 he encountered the Elohim a second time, and they took him to the Elohim home planet and to a second, smaller planet—the Planet of the Eternals—where he met Moses, Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, and Yahweh. On the Planet of the Eternals, people live seven hundred years. Upon their death, eternals are cloned from a cell taken from their old bodies. There are nine thousand eternals—Elohim and people from Earth—and ninety thousand biological robots who serve them. Eight thousand Earth humans have already been re-created on the Planet of the Eternals (Raël 2005, xix). The biological robots are incapable of suffering or feeling and cannot reproduce (Raël 2005, 162). Raël teaches that we must show the Elohim that we are proud of having been created in their image by one day being able to ourselves create human beings in our image: biological robots who will free us, their creators, entirely from work:

Work should not be considered as something sacred. Everyone has the right to be comfortably off even if he does not work. Everyone should try to fulfill himself and blossom in the field which attracts him. If men organize themselves, it will not take them long to mechanize and automate entirely all indispensable work. ... Do everything to create the biological robot which will relieve you from menial labor and enable you to blossom and fulfill yourselves. (Raël 2005, 196-97)

In 1997 the IRM established Clonaid, the world's first human cloning project. In 2000 Raël severed all formal involvement in Clonaid (Raël 2005, 365), placing it under the direction of Brigitte Boisselier (b. 1956), a PhD-level biomolecular chemist and Raëlian bishop. According to Boisselier:

In a not too distant future, advanced cloning technologies will allow us to even re-create a deceased person in an adult body, with all his past experiences and memories, allowing mankind to enter the age of immortality as it has been announced by His Holiness Raël, founder of Clonaid, in 1973 already after his contact with the Elohim, mankind's extraterrestrial creators. (Boisselier 2004)

There is no 'God', Raël teaches. Nor is there a soul that survives the body's death. There are our ET Elohim creators, though, and the genetic code, the 'cellular plan', which allows the Elohim to re-create the individual, to whom is granted eternal life (Raël 2005, 247). As feminist theorist Gena Corea wrote: 'The promise of immortality is apparently one of the most attractive features of cloning' (Corea 1985, 262).

On 28 March 2001, Raël appeared before the US Congress during hearings on human cloning. He testified that 'human cloning will make it possible for us to reach eternal life' and dedicated his testimony to Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), the Italian Dominican monk, philosopher, and scientist who was, Raël said, 'sentenced to death by the Catholic Church for saying there was life on other planets' ('User Clip', 2001) (in his 1584 treatise *De l'Infinito, Universo e Mondi—On the Infinite, Universe and Worlds*—Bruno

postulated an infinite universe and multiplicity of inhabited worlds; he was tried for heresy by the Church of Rome and executed). While there have been a number of legislative attempts to institute a federal ban on human cloning in the United States since Raël testified before the US Congress, there is currently no federal law in the United States that completely prohibits human cloning, although cloning is banned in a number of individual states.

In July 2002, Clonaid's South Korean affiliate, Biofusion Tech Inc., announced that a woman had been impregnated with a cloned human embryo (Park 2003). In response, in September 2002, South Korea's Ministry of Health and Welfare announced a ban on human cloning: 'Whether the claim is true or not, it has become more imperative that we enact such a law at the earliest possible date' (Shin 2002). In December 2002, Clonaid announced that a cloned baby girl, whom they named Eve, had been born by caesarean section in the US state of Florida. In January 2003, Clonaid reported that a second cloned baby girl had been born in the Netherlands, and that a cloned baby boy had been born in Japan ('Clonaid Says It's Cloned First Boy', 2003). Clonaid's claims were met with scepticism from scientists ('Clonaid's Claims Were a Hoax', 2003) and condemned by mainstream religious and political leaders worldwide (Associated Press 2002).

Nuclear Holocaust and the Apocalypse

According to Raël, the development of nuclear weapons was a sign to the Elohim that human beings were ready for reestablished contact with their ET creators. Whereas to Raël the sixth seal of the Apocalypse (Revelation 6:12-17) represents the development of nuclear weapons, the seventh seal (Revelation 8:1-6) represents actual nuclear war (Raël 2005, 299). Raël's Elohim will not intervene to prevent nuclear war: 'Either Humanity will develop an interplanetary consciousness and the whole of Mankind will enter the Golden Age, or everything will explode, and you will be those who we will save to rebuild everything' (Raël 2005, 306).

While there is a 1 percent chance of averting nuclear holocaust, according to Raël, there is a 99 percent probability that there will be a cataclysmic nuclear war (Raël 2005, 306). In the event of such, those who have had their 'cellular plan' transmitted to Raël or to a Raëlian Guide designated by Raël will be re-created on the Planet of the Eternals. Additionally, upon death a one-square-centimetre bone sample is to be taken from the forehead of the deceased and sent to the Guide of Guides (Raël) to be kept in the Raëlian embassy (Raël 2005, 192). Individuals will be re-created on the Planet of the Eternals only if the required bone sample is sent to the Guide of Guides (Raël):

The total of those who will be 'sealed in the forehead' will be around 144,000. For as long as the total of these human beings does not reach 144,000, we will help delay the final cataclysm, so as to have a sufficient number to start a new generation on Earth when it has become a suitable place again for humans to live. (Raël 2005, 298-99)

Here, Raël's teaching is a reading of Revelation 7:1-8 and 14:1,3-5, in which it is prophesied that 144,000 servants of God bearing the seal of the Living God on their foreheads will reign with him on the heavenly Mount Zion.

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Raëlism

Raëlism,^[a] also known as **Raëlianism**, is a UFO religion that was founded in 1970s France by Claude Vorilhon, now known as Raël.^[b] Scholars of religion classify Raëlism as a new religion. The group is formalised as the **International Raëlian Movement (IRM)** or **Raëlian Church**, a hierarchical organisation under Raël's leadership.

Raëlism teaches that an extraterrestrial species known as the Elohim created humanity using their advanced technology. An atheistic religion, it believes that the Elohim have historically been mistaken for gods. It also claims that throughout history the Elohim have created forty Elohim/human hybrids who have served as prophets preparing humanity for news about their ultimate origins. Among those listed as prophets are The Buddha, Jesus of Nazareth, and Muhammad, with Raël himself being the fortieth and final prophet. Raëlists believe that since the Hiroshima bomb of 1945, humanity has begun an Age of Apocalypse in which it is threatening itself with nuclear annihilation. It argues that humanity must find a way of harnessing new scientific and technological development for peaceful purposes, and that once this has been achieved the Elohim shall return to Earth to share their technology with humanity and begin a utopia. To this end, the Raëlians have been committed to building an embassy for the Elohim, incorporating a landing pad for the latter's spaceship. Raëlians promote a liberal ethical system with a strong emphasis on sexual experimentation, engage in daily meditation, and hope for physical immortality by human cloning.

Raël first published his claims to have been contacted by the Elohim in his 1974 book *Le Livre Qui Dit La Vérité*. He subsequently established an organisation devoted to promoting his ideas, MADECH, which in 1976 disbanded and was replaced by the Raëlian Church. Raël headed the new organisation, which was structured around a hierarchy of seven levels. Attracting more followers, the group obtained a country estate in France before relocating its operations to Quebec. During 1998 Raël established the Order of Angels, an internal all-female group whose members are largely sequestered from wider society and tasked with training themselves to become the consorts of the Elohim. In 1997 Raël initiated Clonaid, an organisation engaged in research in human cloning that was directed by senior Raëlian Brigitte Boisselier. In 2002 the company alleged that it had successfully produced a human clone, a baby named Eve, bringing much critical scrutiny and media attention to the group. The Movement has attracted further attention through its public protests endorsing causes such as women's and gay rights and against nuclear testing.

| Raëlism | |
|---|---|
|  | |
| <p>The Raëlian symbol with the swastika (for the alternative version, see <u>below</u>)</p> | |
| Type | <u>New religious movement</u> |
| Classification | <u>UFO religion</u> |
| Scripture | <p>Main: <i><u>Intelligent Design: Message from the Designers</u></i></p> <p>Minor: <i><u>Sensual Meditation, Let's Welcome the Extra-terrestrials, Geniocracy, Yes to Human Cloning and The Maitreya</u></i></p> |
| Polity | <u>Episcopal</u> |
| Planétaire guider | <u>Raël</u> |
| Associations | <p><u>ARAMAIS</u></p> <p><u>Clitoraid</u></p> <p><u>Clonaid</u></p> <p><u>NOPEDO</u></p> <p><u>Order of Angels</u></p> |
| Region | <u>Worldwide</u> |
| Headquarters | <u>Geneva, Switzerland</u> ^[1] |

The International Raëlian Movement claims tens of thousands of members, the majority based in Francophone areas of Western Europe and North America as well as in parts of East Asia. Criticism of the philosophy has come from journalists, ex-Raëlians, and anti-cultists, while it has also been studied by scholars of religion.

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Founder | <u>Raël</u> |
| Origin | 19 September 1974 <u>Auvergne, France</u> |
| Embassy | 50+ |
| Members | 100,000 (2018) |
| Other name(s) | <i>Raëlianism</i> and <i>Raëlian movement</i> |
| Official website | <u>rael.org</u> (<u>http://www.rael.org</u>) |

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Definition

Scholars of religion classify Raëlism as a new religion.^[2] Raëlism has also been described as a UFO religion,^[3] a UFO movement,^[4] and an ETI religion.^[5] It is possibly the largest UFO religion in existence,^[6] and during the mid-2000s, the scholar of religion Andreas Grünschloß described it as "one of the most consolidated UFO groups internationally active today."^[7] In its beliefs, Raëlism differs from many other UFO based philosophies,^[8] with the scholar of religion James R. Lewis terming it "the most thoroughly secular of all the UFO religions."^[9] Most other UFO religions, such as the Aetherius Society, Ashtar Command, and Heaven's Gate, use many of the beliefs of the late 19th century religion Theosophy, although Raëlism does not.^[10] The Raëlists have also been characterised as having a "belief in ufology",^[11] although Raëlians themselves often stress that they do not regard themselves as Ufologists.^[12]



A public gathering of Raëlists in the Insa-dong neighbourhood of Seoul, South Korea.

Raëlism is materialistic and rejects the existence of the supernatural,^[13] endorsing atheism and rejecting the idea that gods exist.^[14] The religion's founder, Raël, characterises traditional religion as irrational and unscientific,^[9] presenting his alternative as a philosophy that is free from "obscurantism and mysticism".^[15] Raëlians describe their belief system as a "scientific religion",^[16] with the International Raëlian Movement using the motto "Science is our religion; religion is our science."^[17] The religion emphasizes the use of science to solve the world's problems,^[18] and practitioners regard Raël as a pioneer of science who will one day be regarded alongside Galileo and Copernicus.^[19] Many of its members refer to it as an "atheistic religion",^[20] in this way drawing comparisons between it and Buddhism, which similarly does not promote belief in gods.^[21]

Along with science, the other main basis of Raël's ideas is the Bible.^[22] Noting the "central role" of the Bible in Raëlism, the scholar of religion Eugene V. Gallagher suggested that it was a "thoroughly biblical and thoroughly Christian" philosophy.^[23] Similarly, the sociologist of religion Susan J. Palmer characterised Raëlism as being both fundamentalist and Abrahamic in its reliance on the Bible.^[24] Raël nevertheless criticised Christianity for what he believed was its role in perverting the message of the Bible,^[25] and Raëlism is not inclusive of other religions, with new members being expected to formally renounce any previous religious affiliations.^[26]

In 1995, a parliamentary commission issued a report through the National Assembly of France that categorized the Raelian Movement (*Mouvement Raëlien*) as a secte, a French term with the connotations of the English word "cult".^{[27][28]} In 1997, a parliamentary inquiry commission issued a report through the Belgian Chamber of Representatives that also categorized the Belgian Raelian Movement (*Mouvement Raëlien Belge*) as a secte.^{[27][29]} Glenn McGee, professor at the University of New Haven, stated that part of the sect is a cult while the other part is a commercial website that collects large sums of money from those interested in human cloning.^[30]

Beliefs

During the early 2000s, the scholar of religion George D. Chryssides noted that Raëlism exhibits "a coherent worldview",^[11] although added that the movement remained in the "very early developmental stage".^[31] The religion is based on the teachings of Raël. Raël's claims are taken literally by practitioners of Raëlism,^[32] who regard his writings as scripture.^[33] Palmer thought that, from her extensive study of the philosophy and Raël himself, that he genuinely believed in the truth of his claims.^[34] The sociologist of religion Christopher Partridge noted that Raëlianism exhibits "a *strong physicalist* belief system".^[35]

Raëlism presents a form of the ancient astronauts theory which was well known at the time that the religion was formed.^[36] Several French authors, such as Jean Sendy, Serge Hutin, and Jacques Bergier, had already published books during the late 1960s and early 1970s stating that Earth was the outpost of an ancient extraterrestrial society.^[37] The Swiss writer Erich von Däniken had also famously presented the same idea during the 1960s;^[38] his book *Chariots of the Gods* had been published in German in 1968,^[39] after which it was published in French and English in 1970.^[36] Similar ideas had also been put forward in science-fiction, such as the U.S. television series *Star Trek*.^[40] Raëlians themselves often deny the effect of von Däniken on the philosophy, instead believing that it derives entirely from Raël's revelations.^[41]

The Elohim

Raëlism teaches that there exists an extraterrestrial species known as the Elohim.^[43] Raël stated that the word "Elohim", which is used for God in the Old Testament, is actually a plural term which he translates as meaning "those who came from the sky."^[44] Individual members of the Elohim are referred to as "Eloha" by Raël.^[45] He alleged that these aliens gave him the honorific name of "Raël",^[46] a term deriving from "Israel",^[47] and which he translates as meaning "the messenger of those who come from the sky."^[48]

In his first book, *Le Livre Qui Dit La Verité* ("The Book That Tells the Truth"), which was first published in 1974, Raël claimed that he initially encountered these alien beings on 13 December 1973, when he was 27 years old.^[49] He stated that he was walking along the Puy de Lassolas volcanic crater in the Clermont-Ferrand mountains when one of their spaceships appeared and an Eloha emerged.^[50] He stated that the Eloha asked him to return the next day and to bring a Bible with him. Raël did so and over the course of six days Eloha explained to him the true meaning of its contents, thus revealing more about the Elohim's involvement in human history.^[51] In his 1976 book *Les Extra-Terrestes M'ont Emmené Sur Leur Planete* ("The Extraterrestrials Took Me to Their Planet"), Raël added that he was contacted by the Elohim again on 7 October 1975, when they took him aboard their spaceship and transported him to their home planet.^[52] Here he was offered six biological robot women with which to have sex, saw the Elohim create his clone, and taught the techniques of sensual meditation.^[53] The scholar of religion James R. Lewis noted that Raël's account of encountering the Elohim was similar to those of the "classic UFO contactees" of the 1950s and 1960s.^[54]

The Elohim are described as being physically smaller than humans, with pale green skin and almond-shaped eyes,^[55] and divide into seven different races,^[56] although Raëlians are forbidden from painting or sketching them.^[18] Their planet, Raël stated, is outside our solar system but within our own Milky Way galaxy.^[57] Raël alleged that there are 90,000 of these Elohim on their planet and that they are all quasi-immortal.^[58] He commented that on their world, they do not wear clothes.^[59] He added that they are all permitted to engage in free love with one another, and that sexual jealousy between them has been eliminated.^[58] All are regarded as fairly feminine in their manner;^[60] Raël states that "the most feminine woman on Earth is only 10% as feminine as the Elohim."^[15] They are not allowed to procreate to have children and many undergo a sterilisation operation to ensure this.^[58] He also reported that the Elohim are able to communicate with humans because they have an understanding of all human languages.^[61]

The Elohim on Earth



A medallion displaying the Raëlian symbol; practitioners typically wear these medallions to identify their beliefs^[42]

Raëlism teaches that about 25,000 years ago the Elohim arrived at the Earth and transformed it so that life could develop. It states that the Elohim used their advanced technology to establish all life on the planet.^[62] Raël characterises humans as "biological robots" that have been created and programmed by the Elohim.^[63] Raëlism teaches that humanity is modelled physically on the Elohim;^[64] for practitioners, this is indicated by the passage at Genesis 1:26.^[7] Also representing his own interpretation of Genesis, Raël teaches that the Elohim scientist responsible for creating humanity was named Yahweh and that the first two humans to be created were named Adam and Eve.^[65] Raëlians believe that there were original seven human races, modelling the seven Elohim races, but that the purple, blue, and green races have died out.^[56] In believing humanity was created by the Elohim, Raëlians reject Darwinian evolution and espouse creationism and intelligent design.^[66] Raëlians term their beliefs "scientific creationism."^[67] Raëlians believe that the Elohim were also created by an earlier species, and they before them, *ad infinitum*.^[17] They believe that the cosmos expands indefinitely, both in time and space;^[17] infinity is an important concept for them.^[68]



Raëlians promoting their religion on a street in Japan; one is dressed as an alien character mascot.

Raëlians believe that accounts of gods in various mythologies around the world are misinterpretations of memories about the Elohim.^[69] The philosophy states that the sacred scriptures of many other religions describe the ongoing activities of the Elohim on Earth.^[70] The tale of Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden, recounted in Genesis, is for instance interpreted as representing humanity's difficult transition from the Elohim's laboratories to life on Earth, where they had to become self-sufficient.^[70] The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, as presented in the Gospels, is described as representing how the Elohim cloned Jesus to restore him to life after death.^[70] References to Satan are interpreted as referring to the chief of a group on the Elohim's planet who were opposed to genetic experiments on Earth and who argued that humanity should be destroyed as a potential threat.^[71] According to the Raëlians, the Great Flood narrative recounts an attempt by the anti-human aliens to wipe out humanity, but that humanity was rescued by an alien spacecraft which provided the basis for the story of Noah's Ark.^[72]

Various figures who established or inspired religions throughout human history, including Jesus, the Buddha, Muhammad, and Joseph Smith, are portrayed by the Raëlians as having been guided by the Elohim.^[70] These are characterised as being 39 prophets sent to humanity at various times.^[73] Each is believed to have revealed information to humanity that they could comprehend at the given time, and Raëlism, therefore, emphasises the idea of progressive truth.^[73] Raël claims that he is the fortieth and final prophet of the Elohim,^[74] sent because humanity is now sufficiently developed to understand the truth about the Elohim.^[75] He initially claimed that he was chosen for this role because he had a Roman Catholic mother and a Jewish father and was thus "an ideal link between two very important peoples in the history of the world."^[43] He added that he was also selected because he lived in France, which the Elohim considered a more open-minded country than most others.^[43]

Raël subsequently stated that these prophets are themselves the result of a human mother breeding with an Eloha father,^[76] with the human mothers having been chosen for the purity of their genetic code, beamed onto an Elohim spacecraft, impregnated, and then returned to Earth with their memory of the event erased.^[77] In his 1979 book, *Let's Welcome Our Fathers from Space*, Raël added that he was the biological son of the Eloha whom he first encountered, Yahweh.^[78] He noted that Yahweh was also the father of Jesus, making the latter

Raël's half-brother.^[79] In 2003, Raël publicly identified himself as Maitreya, the prophesied future bodhisattva of Mahayana Buddhism.^[57] He maintains that he continues to be in telepathic contact with the Elohim, hearing Yahweh's voice guiding him in making decisions affecting Raëlianism.^[80]

The religion also teaches that the Elohim continue to monitor every human individual on Earth, remotely, from their planet.^[12] This is done so that the Elohim can decide which individuals merit being offered the opportunity of eternal life.^[81] It argues that the Elohim continue to visit the Earth, as evidenced by crop circles, which adherents regard as the landing spaces of the Elohim's spacecraft.^[73] Raëlians generally understand sightings of unidentified flying objects (UFOs) as confirmation of their belief in the Elohim, although their opinion of Ufology is ambiguous.^[82] Raëlians also consider the appearance of "angel hair" as evidence of the Elohim's presence, stating that it has appeared at various Raëlian summer gatherings.^[83] They typically express scepticism regarding claims by alleged alien contactees other than Raël.^[82] Raëlians believe that they are all capable of linking telepathically with the Elohim but that only Raël is permitted to meet with them physically or receive their revelations.^[83]

The Age of Apocalypse and the Elohim's Return

Raëlism is a millenarian philosophy.^[84] Raël claims that since the U.S. military's use of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945, humanity have been living in the "Age of Apocalypse" or "Revelation".^[85] It states that the human species must now choose whether to use science and technology to enhance life or to use it to bring about nuclear annihilation.^[86] It claims that if humans successfully get through this present age, they will live in an era of advanced technology in which society will be tolerant and sexually liberated.^[40] Raël claimed that he was destined to help lead humanity away from its path of destruction.^[87]

According to Raël, beginning a peaceful age will cause the return of the Elohim to Earth.^[87] He added that they will bring them the 39 immortal prophets whom they had previously sent to guide humanity.^[88] Raël stated that humanity has to build an embassy for the Elohim prior to their arrival on Earth and that it must include a landing pad for their spaceship.^[89] He stated that it needed to be located on internationally recognised neutral territory so as not to indicate favour towards any one particular nation-state.^[75] Initially, Raël sought permission to build it in Israel,^[90] explaining this by reference to how the ancient Israelites were once in contact with the Elohim.^[75] He also stated that this embassy would constitute the "Third Temple" referred to in Jewish prophecy.^[91]

Receiving little help for this venture from the Israeli government, Raël instead suggested that a neighbouring country might be suitable, proposing Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt as possible locations. None of the governments of these countries were favorable.^[75] Senior people of the Raëlian Movement suggested Hawaii as a possible alternative, and in 1998 Raël stated that he had received a new revelation from the Elohim stating that this location would be acceptable.^[15] Chryssides noted that should the Elohim not arrive in 2035, the Raëlians will have to adapt to the new circumstance in which their eschatology remains unfulfilled.^[92] On 16 April 1987, the *Chicago Sun-Times* estimated the funding for the "cosmic kibbutz" at \$1 million. In 1997–1998, the funding had risen to \$7 million.^{[93][94][95]} By 2001, \$9 million had been saved for the embassy,^{[96]:p. 64} and in October 2001, the funding had reached \$20 million.^[97]

Once on Earth, Raël claims, the Elohim will share their advanced technology and scientific understanding with humanity and will help to usher in a utopia.^[87] Raël teaches that the Elohim's arrival will herald a new and improved political system on the Earth.^[81] This will be a single world government that Raël terms a "geniocracy,"^[98] or "rule of geniuses,"^[99] and which he discusses in his fifth book, *Geniocracy*.^[68]



A small-scale tent copy of the proposed Elohim embassy erected at a Raëlian seminar in Colombia.

According to this system, only those who are fifty percent more intelligent than the average person will be permitted to rule.^[100] Raël's proposed geniocentric system bears similarities with the style of governance that Plato promoted in his work *Republic*.^[101] Raëlians thus reject democracy, believing that it fails to ensure that society has the best leadership.^[100] Raël claims that this future society will have no war, and crime will have been ended through genetic engineering.^[100] In this future, Raël states, humanity will be able to travel beyond the Earth to colonise other planets.^[102] He claims that robots will assume menial tasks, allowing humans to devote their time to pleasurable pursuits.^[103] He also argued that there would be biological robots which would serve as sex slaves, akin to those which Raël states he encountered on his visit to the Elohim planet.^[104] A single world currency will be introduced, as a prelude to the total abolition of money, while a unified world calendar will also be adopted.^[100]

Cloning and survival after death

Raëlians reject the existence of the ethereal soul that survives physical death,^[105] and instead argue that the only hope for immortality is through scientific means.^[102] The Raëlians claim that the Elohim will clone and thus recreate dead individuals, but only those whom they feel merit this recreation.^[106] In this, they believe in a "conditional immortality", with immortality for a minority and oblivion for the majority.^[106] The resurrection of Jesus, as recounted in the Gospels, is for instance explained as an example of Elohim cloning.^[106]

Raëlists advocate for the development of human cloning technology on Earth.^[104] Raëlians also believe that deceased individuals can be cloned so that they could be tried and punished for their crimes.^[106] After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, in which the attackers committed suicide, the Raëlists proposed that they could be resurrected through cloning to be tried for their actions.^{[107][108]} Due to its emphasis on attaining immortality, Raëlism deprecates suicide; after the Heaven's Gate group engaged in a mass suicide in 1997, the Raëlian Church was among the new religions that issued press releases condemning suicide.^[109]

As opposed to the scientific definition of reproductive cloning which is simply the creation of a genetically identical living organism, Raëlians seek to both genetically clone individuals, rapidly accelerate growth of the clone to adulthood through a process like guided self-assembly of rapidly expanded cells or even nanotechnology.^[110] Raël told lawmakers that banning the development of human cloning was comparable to outlawing medical advances such as "antibiotics, blood transfusions, and vaccines".^[111]

Morality, ethics, and gender roles

Raëlism insists on a strict ethical code for its followers.^[112] Members are expected to take responsibility for their own actions, respect cultural and racial difference, promote non-violence, strive for world peace, and share wealth and resources.^[112] They are also encouraged to uphold democracy, in the belief that humanity will ultimately make a democratic choice to introduce geniocentricity.^[112] The Raëlian opinion is that everything should be permitted so long as it harms no one and does not impede scientific and technological advance.^[100] Members are nevertheless advised against using recreational drugs or stimulants so as not to harm their health,^[113] although some practitioners have acknowledged that they use alcohol and cigarettes.^[114]



A woman on a bed adorned with the Raëlian symbol.

John M. Bozeman characterised the religion's morality as "progressive,"^[115] while Palmer referred to the group's "liberal social values",^[116] and Chryssides described Raëlist values as being "worldly and hedonistic".^[117] The scholar of religion Paul Oliver noted that the philosophy's ethics were "relativistic" in

that practitioners were encouraged to act in a manner that they felt to be appropriate to the context.^[26] Several scholars have also argued that it is a "world-affirming" religion, using the typology established by Roy Wallis.^[118]

Raël considered gender as an artificial construct and emphasised its fluidity.^[119] Raël avoided a macho persona and is instead often described by his followers as being "gentle" and "feminine".^[120] Palmer suggested that Raël regarded women as being superior to men because they were described as being more like the Elohim.^[60] In Raël's account, the inhabitants of the Elohim planet "have 10 percent of masculinity and 90 percent of femininity."^[60] Raël also proposed that if women were in positions of political power across the world, there would be no war.^[60] The Raëlians have participated with public protests for women's rights.^[121] At its June 2003 "Joy of Being Woman" demonstration, Raëlian women danced naked through the streets of Paris.^[121] Palmer described the Raëlians as feminists,^[122] although Raël criticised mainstream feminism, arguing that it "copied the shortcomings of men".^[123] Generally adopting the belief that the human body is malleable,^[124] Raëlism has a positive opinion of plastic surgery to improve physical appearance.^[125]



A Raëlist contingent on the street at the "Korea Queer Culture Festival" held in Seoul in 2014.

Raëlism teaches that the Elohim created humanity to feel sexual desire as a panacea for their violent impulses.^[126] It states that through the pursuit of sexual pleasure, new pathways between the neurons in the brain are forged, thus enhancing an individual's intelligence.^[127] Raëlism encourages its members to explore their sexuality;^[58] while Raël is often photographed with beautiful women and appears to be heterosexual, he encourages homosexual experimentation.^[128] Adopting an accepting attitude towards different forms of sexual orientation and expression,^[68] Raëlism teaches that differences in sexual orientation are rooted in the Elohim's primordial genetic programming and are something to be celebrated.^[129] Researching about the Raëlians of Quebec, Palmer found that many avoided categorising themselves using terms like "heterosexual", "homosexual", or "bisexual", finding these labels too limiting.^[130]

The Raëlians have stressed the need for respect and mutual consent in sexual behaviour.^[131] The group places a strong taboo on incest, rape, and sexual activities involving children.^[131] Anyone involved in the Movement found to have been involved in these latter activities is excommunicated,^[132] while Raël has recommended that paedophiles be sexually mutilated or placed in mental institutions.^[132] Those believed to have forced unwelcome sexual attention on another are excommunicated from the Movement for seven years—the amount of time Raëlians believe it takes for all of a person's biological cells to be regenerated.^[131]

The Raëlists reject both enforced monogamy and marriage, regarding these as institutions that have been enforced to enslave women and suppress sexual expression.^[133] The religion discourages its members from marrying.^[58] Members are also discouraged from contributing to global overpopulation;^[58] members are urged not to have more than two children, and ideally none at all.^[134] Raël states that should two individuals wish to procreate, their psychic control during the act of conception can affect any child resulting.^[135] The Raëlists also believe that once human cloning has been developed, biological reproduction will be obsolete.^[126] As well as endorsing the use of birth control and contraceptives,^[136] Raëlists endorse the use of abortion to terminate unwanted pregnancies.^[137] Raël has also argued that if a woman does not want a child who has been born then she should give it up to be raised by society.^[132]

Some Swiss government authorities responded to Raëlians' opinions about Sensual Meditation with a fear that Raëlians are a threat to public morals for supporting liberalized sex education for children. They express the opinion that such liberalized sex education teaches youngsters how to obtain sexual gratification which would encourage sexual abuse of underage children.^[138]

Religious symbol



The two variants of the Raëlian logo; the former uses the swastika in the centre and the latter a swirl representing the shape of a galaxy. The latter was adopted to avoid the connotations of Nazism that the swastika has in Western countries.

The symbol initially used to signify Raëlism was a six-pointed star with a swastika in the centre.^[139] Raël stated that this was the symbol he originally saw on the hull of the Elohim's spaceship.^[140] Raëlians regard this as a symbol of infinity.^[141] Practitioners also believe that this symbol helps facilitate their own telepathic contact with the Elohim.^[142] Raëlists typically wear a medallion of the symbol around their neck.^[42]

The Raëlian use of the swastika— a symbol that had been prominently used by Germany's Nazi Party during the 1930s and 1940s— resulted in accusations from the Montreal anti-cult organization Info-Cult that the Raëlians promoted fascism and racism.^[111] Outside Info-Cult's office, Raëlians spoke against the act of discriminating against a religious minority.^[111] On 2 January 1992, a dozen people protested against the use of the swastika in the Raëlian logo in Miami's Eden Roc Hotel. The use of the swastika and other Raelian practices has resulted in criticism from the group Hineni of Florida, an Orthodox Jewish organization.^[143]

In 1992, the Raëlian Movement altered their symbol, replacing the central swastika with a swirling shape. They explained that this was due to a request from the Elohim to change the symbol in order to help in negotiations with Israel for the building of the Extraterrestrial Embassy, although the country continued to deny their request.^{[144][145]} Raël also stated that the change was made to show respect to the victims of the Holocaust.^[99] The newly added swirling shape was explained as a depiction of a swirling galaxy.^[99] In 2005, the Israeli Raëlian Guide Kobi Drori stated that the Lebanese government was discussing proposals by the Raëlian movement to build their interplanetary embassy in Lebanon. However, one condition was that the Raëlians not display their logo on top of the building because it mixes a swastika and a Star of David. According to Drori, the Raëlians involved refused this offer, as they wished to keep the symbol as it was.^[146] From 1991 to 2007, the official Raëlian symbol in Europe and America did not have the original swastika, but Raël decided to make the original symbol, the Star of David intertwined with a swastika, the only official symbol of the Raelian Movement worldwide.^[147]

Practices

Raëlism involves a series of monthly meetings, initiations, and meditation rituals.^[56] Where possible, Raëlians congregate with fellow practitioners on the third Sunday of the month.^[148] It is the group's policy that these events occur in rented rooms rather than property that the Raëlian Movement itself has purchased.^[59] At the monthly meetings in Montreal, Raël himself often appeared.^[149]

The main ritual in Raëlism is the "transmission of the cellular plan", in which a Raëlian Guide placed their hands on another individual's head, through which the Guide is believed to receive the individual's cellular code and then telepathically transmit it to the Elohim.^[150] Doing so denotes the initiate's formal recognition of the Elohim as the creators of humanity.^[151] This is used as part of the "baptism", or initiation ceremony for



Raélians drawing with sand.

new members joining the Movement.^[152] Those in the Movement who hold the rank of bishop and priest are permitted to conduct these initiation ceremonies.^[153] In some instances, when the necessary individuals are present, Raël touches the head of a Raëlian bishop, who in turn touches that of a Raëlian priest, who touches the head of the initiate to ensure the "transmission".^[151] These "transmissions" are permitted to take place on one of four days in the year that play prominent role in the Raëlian calendar.^[154] The first examples took place in April 1976, when Raël carried out the "transmission" ceremonies of forty initiates on the Roc Plat.^[153]

The Raëlian calendar begins with the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima on 6 August 1945.^[155] Each year after this date is referred to as "AH" or "après Hiroshima" ("after Hiroshima").^[156] The Raélians celebrate four religious festivals each year, each marking one of Raël's encounters or revelations from the Elohim.^[152] These are the first Sunday in April, which is the date on which Raélians believe the Elohim created the first humans; 6 August, which marks the day of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in 1945; 7 October, which is the day in which Raël claims he encountered the Elohim for the second time, in 1974; and 13 December, marking the day that Raël allegedly first encountered the Elohim in 1973.^[112]

Sensual meditation

A major practice in Raëlism is **sensual meditation**, something that Raël outlined in his 1980 book *La méditation sensuelle*.^[99] Raélians are encouraged to take part in this guided meditation or visualisation on a daily basis, with the intent of transmitting love and telepathic links to the Elohim and achieving harmony with infinity.^[157] In this, practitioners are often assisted in this meditation through listening to an instruction tape.^[158] Sensual meditation sessions also take place communally at the group's monthly meetings, during which the assembled adherents sit or lie on the floor in a dimly lit room. They are then guided through it by a Raëlian Guide speaking through a microphone;^[159] the meditation may be accompanied by New Age music.^[160]

Sensual meditation begins with a relaxation exercise known as *harmonisation avec l'infini* ("harmonization with the infinite").^[159] One stage of this process is "oxygenation", which entails deep breathing.^[161] Practitioners are taught to relax and then envision themselves expanding their frame of reference until the self becomes only a tiny speck within the universe.^[162] They are then tasked with visualising the bones and organs of the body, and ultimately the atoms within the body itself.^[163] The guided meditation they encourages the meditators to imagine themselves being on the Elohim's planet and communicating telepathically with these aliens.^[164]

Palmer found that Raélians varyingly described a sense of physical well-being, psychic abilities, or sexual arousal during these meditations and interpreted these as evidence that they were in telepathic contact with the Elohim.^[165] The goal of sensual meditation is to achieve a "cosmic orgasm",^[166] which is characterised as the ultimate experience a person can have.^[167] Palmer quoted one senior Raëlian as describing the "cosmic orgasm" as "the sensual experience of the unity between the self and the universe".^[159]

History

Origins

Claude Vorilhon was born in Ambert, France on 30 September 1946.^[168] He was the illegitimate son of a 15-year-old mother; his father had been a Sephardi Jew then in hiding from the Nazi authorities.^[168] Vorilhon later recounted being raised as an atheist by his grandmother and aunt, although for a time attended a Roman Catholic boarding school.^[168] As a teenager, Vorilhon hitch-hiked to Paris where he pursued a career as a singer, having several successful singles using the name "Claude Celleir."^[169] He then married a nurse and had two children with her.^[170] In 1973, he founded the racing car magazine *Auto Pop* and also worked as a test driver for such vehicles.^[170] In November 1973, a new law was introduced in France banning speeding on the highway, ending his work as a test driver.^[170] *Auto Pop* ceased publication in September 1974.^[171]



The Puy Lassolas, the mountain where Raël claimed he first encountered the Elohim in 1973.

There had been a range of reported UFO sightings in 1970s France,^[172] and the ancient astronaut theory was "very much in vogue" in the country by the middle of that decade.^[173] In early 1974, Vorilhon announced that in December 1973 he had been contacted by the Elohim while walking along the Puy Lassolas mountain. He began promoting these ideas in interviews on French television and radio.^[174] He began lecturing on his alleged experiences in Paris, where he attracted a group of followers,^[175] many of whom were science-fiction fans or amateur ufologists.^[173] In December 1974 an organisation based on his ideas, the *Mouvement pour l'accueil des Elohim créateurs de l'humanité* (MADECH; "Movement for the Welcoming of the Elohim, Creators of Humanity"), was launched.^[175] Vorilhon began referring to himself as "Raël."^[175] A newsletter, *Apocalypse*, began publication in October 1974.^[175] MADECH began raising money for the self-publication of Vorilhon's first book,^[175] which appeared as *Le Livre Qui Dit La Vérité* that year.^[43] Raélians treat his first book with reverence, often referring to it simple as *Le livré* ("the book").^[176]

Some members of MADECH wanted the organisation to take a broader interest in Ufology beyond Raël's own claims and also desired to restrict his authority within the group.^[175] Amid an internal power struggle, Raël called an emergency meeting in April 1975; the feud continued and in July he dismissed MADECH's executives and replaced them with seven of his own supporters.^[177] Raël also announced that he had been contacted by the Elohim for a second time and that on this occasion they had taken him to visit their planet. He outlined these claims in his 1975 book *Les Extra-Terrestes M'ont Emmené Sur Leur Planete*.^[178] Opposition to Raël remained evident in MADECH and in 1976 he disbanded the group, beginning the Raëlian Movement as a replacement in February 1976.^[179] It operated along a strict hierarchy, with Raël as its director, referred to as the "Guide of Guides."^[180] Unlike MADECH, it promoted a broader religious structure, including ritual practices.^[181] It continued publication of *Apocalypse* to spread its message.^[180]

In 1976, the Raélians sent a mission to the Canadian province of Quebec to attract converts in the Francophone region.^[182] The next year a Quebecois branch of the Movement was established.^[183] Raël's first two books were then published in a single English edition, titled *Space Aliens Took Me to Their Planet* in 1978 and republished as *The Message Given To Me By Extra-Terrestrials: They Took Me to their Planet* in 1986 and, in a new translation, as *The Final Message* in 1998.^[43] He expanded on his ideas with several additional books: *Accueillir Les Extra-Terrestes* in 1979 (translated as *Let's Welcome Our Fathers from Space* in 1986),^[43] *La Méditation Sensuelle* in 1980 (translated as *Sensual Meditation* in 1986), and *Geniocracy*.^[43]

Later development

In 1980, the Raélians sent a mission to Japan, followed by one to Africa in 1982, and one to Australia in 1990.^[184] In the early 1980s the Movement also bought a campground near Albi in southern France, which they named Eden.^[185] In 1984, Raël underwent a year's retreat in which he avoided public appearance.^[186] The next year, his first wife left both him and the movement;^[132] he subsequently began a relationship with a

Japanese Raëlian, Lisa Sunagawa, for several years.^[187] During the mid-1990s, Raël returned to his hobby of motor racing, competing in the 1995 Canadian Grand Prix and the 1998 Motorola Cup in Miami before retiring from the sport in 2001.^[188] In 1992, a schism appeared in the religion as a group of about forty practitioners were expelled. They formed a rival, smaller group, the Apostles of the Last Days, espousing the belief that Raël had been the original spokesman of the Elohim but had been taken over by Satan.^[189]

In 1992, the Raëlian Movement bought 115 hectares of land near Valcourt in Quebec, naming this property Le Jardin du Prophète ("the Garden of the Prophet").^[185] It was on this property in 1997 that the organisation opened UFOland, a museum about ufology. Its purpose was to raise money for the Elohim Embassy, but in 2001 it was closed to the public, having proved financially unviable to maintain.^[190] It was also during 1997, a month after Ian Wilmut announced the birth of Dolly the Sheep, a successful clone, that Raël established Valiant Venture as a company to explore the commercial applications of cloning technology.^[191] Through it came Clonaid, of which the Raëlian Bishop Brigitte Boisselier was co-founder, director, and spokesperson.^[27] The initiation of this group and its promotion of human cloning incited much debate among other religious figures, scientists, and ethicists.^[27] Raël and Boisselier both spoke before US President Bill Clinton's Congress hearing on the topic of human cloning in March 2001.^[192]



Two Raëlians visiting UFOland, the Quebec museum which the Raëlians established in 1997.

At the July 1998 training camp in the Jardins des Prophètes, Raël announced that in December 1997 he had received another revelation from the Elohim, commanding him to form a new grouping within the Raëlian Movement, the Order of Raël's Angels.^[193] This was to be a secret society,^[129] open only to women who would become the consorts of the Elohim after their arrival on Earth.^[193] A newsletter, *Plumes d'Ange* (Angel Feathers), was then issued containing information about the Order.^[155] Palmer noted that by emphasising the unique qualities of women, the formation of this group challenged the established Raëlian view that men and women are wholly equal and interchangeable.^[129]



Brigitte Boisselier (left) took on a senior role in the Raëlian Movement.

In 2001, Raël toured Asia, giving seminars.^[194] That year he married for a second time, to a 16-year-old ballet student. Raëlianism discourages marriage, and this instance was done for expediency, because he had been questioned by customs officials when traveling with her across borders. They subsequently divorced but continued to live together as a couple.^[195] In November 2002, a local man vandalised the group's Jardins des Prophètes property, causing significant damage.^[196] Raël stated that this had been a preliminary test of the "Abraham Project," a joint operation between the Central Intelligence Agency and the French intelligence agencies to assassinate him using schizophrenics directed by a type of mind control.^[197]

In December 2002 Boisselier announced that Clonaid's work had resulted in the birth of a baby, Eve, which she claimed was the world's first human clone.^[198] The child was not presented for scrutiny by scientists;^[199] thus, the IRM's allegations regarding Baby Eve were never substantiated by the scientific community.^[92] Many commentators believed that the announcement had been a hoax,^[200] and it caused much ridicule of the Raëlians.^[201] In January 2003 the Raëlians declared that the parents of Eve had hidden themselves to evade attention.^[202] The appearance of Baby Eve gained the Raëlians much international press coverage,^[92] with the group claiming this publicity

brought it about 5000 new members.^[203] Boisselier announced periodically that further clone infants had been born, in the Netherlands, Japan, South Korea, and Australia, although the press increasingly believed the situation was a hoax and started boycotting Raëlian press conferences.^[199] In January 2003, Raël announced Boisselier as his appointed successor.^[199] That year, he also published *The Maitreya*, in which he identified himself with the eponymous figure from Buddhist prophecy.^[57]

In response to Raël's association with Clonaid, South Korean immigration authorities at the airport denied him entry into their country in 2003.^[204] This decision resulted in the quick cancellation of the planned Raëlian seminar which seven hundred registered for. Raëlians of South Korea were instructed by Raël to protest near the Ministry of Health and Welfare that ordered him to leave.^{[204][205]} Officials detained Raël for nine hours at Incheon International Airport before he and his wife Sophie de Niverville left for Tokyo from where they took another airplane on their way back to Canada. Raël responded by saying that Korean officials treated him like a "North Korean" and that he would wait for an apology before coming back to Korea.^[205] Raël appeared alongside a group of women, "Raël's Girls", in the October 2004 issue of Playboy.^{[5][206]} In 2009, the Church announced plans for a new UFOland in Las Vegas.^[5]

Organization and structure

The main organization is known as the International Raëlian Movement (IRM),^[207] which is also known as the Raëlian Church.^[59] A strictly hierarchical organization,^[180] there are two levels of membership.^[208] The majority of members are referred to simply as "Raëlians",^[59] while those who are in the higher levels controlling the Movement are referred to as the "Structure."^[209]

Member hierarchy

The Structure is divided along a six-tiered system.^[212] Raël is at the top of the Raëlian Church, being referred to as the "Guide of Guides."^[180] Senior members of the Structure re-elect him to that position each seven years.^[153] Below Raël are the "Bishop Guides", then the "Priest Guides", then the "Animators", then the "Assistant Animators", and finally the "Probationers".^[59] Those characterised as "Guides" are expected to be exemplars for the rest of the movement, for instance by strictly adhering to the avoidance of alcohol, caffeine, and recreational drugs.^[109] Race, gender, and sexual orientation are no barrier to rising through the ranks of the group's leadership structure.^[129] However, Palmer noted that by the mid-1990s there were few women in leadership positions within the organisation.^[213]

Members of the Raëlian structure begin as level 0 "trainees" during annual seminars. The Raelian structure said in 2007 to have about 2,300 members,^[214] 170 "Raëlian guides",^[215] and 41 bishops.^[216]

Three Raëlian Bishops sit on a "Council of the Wise" which monitors heresy and arranges punishment for transgressors.^[217] When they seek to punish an individual it is usually for a seven-year "excommunication"; it lasts seven years because Raëlians believe that it takes this long for every cell in the

Level 6:

Guide of Guides
Planetary guide

| Level 5: | Level 4: | Level 3: |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Bishop</i> | <i>Priest</i> | <i>Assistant Priest</i> |
| <i>Continental head</i> | <i>National guide</i> | <i>Regional guide</i> |
| <i>National guide</i> | <i>Regional guide</i> | |
| <i>Regional guide</i> | | |

Level 2:
Organizer

Level 1:
Assistant Organizer

Level 0:

Trainee

Sources^{[210][211]}

human body to be replaced.^[59] In more severe cases, the council can oversee a "demarking", by which they cancel the transmission of the cellular code, believing that this revokes the individual's hope for immortality through cloning.^[59]

Members pay an annual membership fee to the Raëlian Movement.^[153] Full members of the Movement are encouraged to tithe ten percent of their income to go to the organisation,^[218] although this is not enforced.^[219] This tithe is then divided up, with 3% going to the national branch and 7% to the International Movement's central administration.^[220] An additional 1% may go to Raël himself.^[184] In her research, Palmer found many practitioners who admitted to not paying the tithe.^[114] It is these tithes and membership fees, coupled with the sales of Raël's books, that represent the International Raëlian Movement's main income.^[131] This money is then saved toward the construction of the Elohim Embassy or spent on the production of flyers, books, videos, and other material used to disseminate the Raëlian message.^[184]

According to Michel Beluet, the former director of a Raëlian-built museum called UFOland, the only pressure exerted on members is to attend annual Raëlian seminars, which allows members convinced of Raël's enthusiasm to voluntarily tithe.^{[96]:p. 209} Palmer cited Raël, who said that more than 60% of the Raëlian Movement's members do not tithe.^{[96]:p. 64} Dawson College students conducted a survey of the membership in Canada in 1991 which found that only one-third of respondents tithed.^{[96]:p. 209}

The group initially owned a country estate in Albi, France, before later obtaining one in Valcourt, Quebec.^[59]

Order of Angels

Women comprise only a third of the membership in the Raëlian Church.^{[96]:p. 117} In 1998, Raël established a new, all-female group within the broader movement known as the Order of Raël's Angels, the members of which are trained to become the consorts of the Elohim.^[126] He stated that these women would be the only humans permitted contact with the Elohim after the latter arrive on Earth, and that they will be the only people allowed to enter the Elohim's embassy.^[221] He further adds that they will serve as the Elohim's liaisons with human politicians, scientists, and journalists.^[221] Raël stated that it was only women who could be Angels because men were not feminine enough for the extremely gentle, delicate, and sensitive Elohim.^[221] Trans women were permitted entry; Raël praised one transgender member for "choosing to be a woman".^[125]

The Order of Raël's Angels has a six-tiered structure, symmetrical with the six-tiered structure of the Raëlian Movement as a whole.^[222] Raël divides the Angels into three groups: the White, Pink, and Golden Ribbon Angels.^[222] White Angels wear white feathers on a necklace, can choose human lovers, and are tasked with operating in the world to attract more women into the Raëlian movement.^[223] Pink Angels wear a pink feather on a necklace and are considered by Raël to be the "Chosen Ones" who will become the consorts of the Elohim. They are expected to live a sequestered life, initially in the Jardins des Prophètes community, and are expected to reserve their sexual activity for the extraterrestrials.^[224] The Gold Ribbon Angels are characterised by a gold cord worn around the neck. They are handpicked by Raël for their physical beauty, and are described as being the first humans who will approach the Elohim on the latter's arrival on Earth.^[224] The Pink and Gold Ribbon Angels are expected to abstain from sexual activity with most other humans but should receive instruction in alien lovemaking from Raël himself as well as engaging in sexual acts alone or with other Angels.^[225]

The Angels are meant to cultivate their feminine and nurturing side.^[226] They tasked with pursuing self-transformation, striving to please the Elohim and resemble them more closely by cultivating discipline, serenity, harmony, purity, humility, charisma, and both internal and external beauty.^[227] The Angels are instructed to regularly pray to the Elohim and engage in much meditation.^[194] They are encouraged to limit their meat consumption and to avoid eating carbohydrates and sugar so as to maintain their physical beauty.^[125] They have proved useful for the group's public relations and have also provided volunteers for its



Raëlian women at the "Korea Love Hug" festival in Seoul, South Korea.

human cloning experiments.^{[228][229]} The Order has also engaged in the selling of human ova on the internet, launching a website to do so in 1999.^[230] Raël stated that this would help the Angels achieve financial independence.^[121]

The Order was insulated from the rest of the religion, with the Angels' living quarters for instance being off-limits to non-Angels.^[231] Access to the Angels is strictly limited for both journalists and scholars.^[232] Gold Ribbon Angels have been demoted from this status as they have aged, on the explanation that as their physical beauty has deteriorated they are no longer suited to greeting the Elohim. These demoted individuals are then tasked with training younger replacements.^[233] Other individuals have been deprived of their status as Angels altogether, when they are perceived to have acted in contravention of the group's ethos.^[234]

The initiation rites include declaring an oath or making a contract in which one agrees to become defender of the Raëlian ideology and its founder Raël.^{[235][236]} The Order of Angels has its own hierarchy of "rose angels" and "white angels" which, as of 2003, are six and 160 women, respectively.^[237] A few days later, *Time* magazine wrote that French chemist Brigitte Boisselier was an Order of Angels member.^[238] Around this time, cult specialist Mike Kropveld termed

the Order of Angels "one of the most transparent movements" he had witnessed, though he was alarmed by the women's promise to defend Raël's life with their own bodies.^[236]

Raël has instructed some women members to play a pro-sex feminist role in the Raëlian Church. "Rael's Girls" is another group of women in the religion which are against the suppression of feminine acts of pleasure, including sexual intercourse with men or women. Rael's Girls consists solely of women who work in the sex industry.^[239] The women of Rael's Girls say there is not any reason to repent for performing striptease or being a prostitute.^{[239][240]} This organization was established "to support the choice of the women who are working in the sex industry".^[241]

Seminars

The Raëlian Church holds week-long summer seminars known as "Stages of Awakening."^[148] These include daily lectures by Raël, sensual meditation sessions, periods of fasting and feasting, testimonials, and various alternative therapies.^[59] These seminars are used by Raëlians as an opportunity to form friendships or sexual relationships.^[185] Attendees at these seminars wear white togas with name tags;^[59] they have also used colored bracelets to indicate whether they wanted to be alone, be in a couple, or simply meet people.^[242]

On a yearly basis, Raëlian members organize seminars that are often attractive to the sexually adventurous.^[243] At one camp, participants were invited to dress in the clothes of the opposite gender as part of an exercise to play with the fluidity of gender expression.^{[160][235]} Activities such as observations of one's own genitals and masturbation with them disturbed Brigitte McCann, a *Calgary Sun* reporter who entered one of the Raëlian seminars.^[244] Susan J. Palmer said a French journalist went to a Raëlian Seminar in 1991 and



A Raëlian protest sign is raised at political rally demanding the return of U.S. troops from foreign military engagements.

taped couples having sexual intercourse in tents. These tapes gained widespread negative publicity— with news stories that described these practices as perverted and a form of brainwashing.^[111] Following these seminars, a second seminar, this time restricted to members of the Structure, takes place.^[185]

Other activities, outreach and advocacy

The International Raëlian Movement have established a range of projects through which to promote their ideology.^[245] In February 1997, they created Clonaid, a company devoted to human cloning.^[245] Individuals can bank a sample of their DNA with the group, which offers to then produce a single clone of the individual after they die.^[245] Another Raëlian company, Ovulaid, seeks to provide ovaries for individuals and couples who cannot biologically produce their offspring.^[245] It expresses its intention to develop technologies that can create "designer babies" to the desired specification of their client.^[245] An additional project was Insuracclone, designed to clone organs for an individual in the event of future organ failure,^[246] and Clonapet, which stated that it would clone people's pets after they had died.^[245] In 2000, the Raëlians launched NOPEDO, a group to combat paedophilia.^[132] In 2009 it launched its "Adopt a Clitoris" project to raise money to create a hospital in Africa to reverse damage caused by female genital mutilation (FGM);^[247] it has also established Clitoraid, an organization whose mission is to oppose FGM.^{[248][249]} Another of the groups established by the Raëlian Church is the Raëlian Association of Sexual Minorities (ARAMAIS), an LGBT rights group.^[132]

Activism

The Raëlians are known for their social and political activism, specifically for women's rights, gay rights, opposition to racism, banning nuclear testing, and promoting genetically-modified foods.^[132] Throughout the history of Raëlism, members of the Raëlian Church have toured public settings advocating masturbation, condoms and birth control.^[229]

Pro-GMO: On 6 August 2003, the first day of Raëlian year 58 AH,^[250] a tech article on the USA Today newspaper mentions an "unlikely ally" of the Monsanto Company, the Raëlian Movement of Brazil. The religion gave vocal support in response to the company's support for genetically modified organisms particularly in their country. Brazilian farmers have been using Monsanto's genetically engineered soy plants as well as the Roundup herbicide to which it was artificially adapted. The Raëlians spoke against the Brazilian government's ban on GMOs.^[251] The movement is supportive of genetically-modified foods.^[106]

Anti-war: In 2006, About 30 Raëlians, some topless, took part in an anti-war demonstration in Seoul, South Korea.^[252] In 2003, Raëlians in white alien costumes bore signs bearing the message "NO WAR ... ET wants Peace, too!" to protest the 2003 Invasion of Iraq.^[253]

Anti-Catholic: In 1992 Catholic schools in Montreal, Quebec, Canada objected to a proposed condom vending machine as contrary to their mission. In response, Raëlian guides, in an event dubbed "Operation Condom", gave the Catholic students ten thousand condoms. The Commissioner of Catholic schools for Montreal said they could do nothing to stop them.^{[111][254]} Raël presents himself as an opponent of the Roman Catholic Church in his writings, criticising it for perverting the meaning of the Bible.^[25]



Raëlians protesting the South Korean government's ban on Raël entering the country.

In July 2001, Raélians distributed leaflets on the streets of Italy and Switzerland protesting the existence of more than a hundred child molesters among Roman Catholic clergy in France. They recommended that parents should not send their children to Catholic confession. The Episcopal vicar of Geneva sued the Raëlian Church for libel but did not win.^{[96]:p. 91}^[255] The judge did not accept the charges for the reason that the Raélians were not attacking the whole of the Catholic Church.^{[96]:p. 91} In October 2002, Raélians in a Canadian anti-clerical parade handed out Christian crosses to high school students. The students were invited to burn the crosses in a park not far from Montreal's Mount Royal and to sign letters of apostasy from the Roman Catholic Church. The Quebec Association of Bishops called this "incitement to hatred", and several school boards attempted to prevent their students from meeting Raélians.^{[96]:p. 92}

Topless Rights of Women

Several Raëlian groups in the United States have organized annual protests, claiming that women should have the same legal right to go topless in public that men enjoy without fear of arrest for indecent exposure.^[256] Some have called this a publicity stunt designed to recruit members. Go Topless Day is their annual event, with women protesting topless except for nipple pasties to avoid arrest. It is held near 26 August, the anniversary of the day women were given the USA right to vote.^[257]

Intentional controversy

Palmer stated that the Raëlian Movement was involved in "concocting, then carefully monitoring, a mild level of cultural conflict" to generate publicity for the group.^[258] She compared this deliberate use of controversy to the actions of Anton LaVey's Church of Satan, which behaved in a similar fashion during the 1960s and 1970s.^[258] This opinion is shared by Mike Kropveld, executive director of Info-Cult, who says the controversy results in criticism by both religious and non-religious people.^[236] Palmer also noted that Raël engages in "blatant courtship of the media" to draw attention to his religion.^[259] When media has adopted a mocking tone toward the religion, Raël has urged its followers to defend their beliefs, resulting in letter writing campaigns and sometimes lawsuits.^[259]

In 1992, the IRM began a series of protests after the Montreal Catholic School Commission decided to veto the addition of condom machines to the bathrooms of Roman Catholic high schools in Quebec. The Raélians parked a "condom-mobile" outside Roman Catholic high schools in Quebec and Ontario from which they dispensed contraceptives to the pupils.^[260] In 1993, the Raélians organised a conference on masturbation in Quebec, at which speeches were given by Raël, Betty Dodson, and Daniel Chaloot. Advertising this cause, Raélians handed out badges with "Out à la masturbation" written on them to attendees at the Montreal Jazz Festival.^[261]

The book *Yes to Human Cloning* (2001) attracted media attention after its release, including segments on *20/20* and *60 Minutes*.^{[262]:p. 156} Biophysicist Gregory Stock described the Raëlian Clonaid project as "sufficiently quirky to command instant media attention."^{[263]:p. 157} It has been estimated that the group received free publicity worth US\$500 million as a result of the Clonaid announcement.^{[264]:p. 15} Mark Hunt, a lawyer and politician who wished to clone his dead son with the help of the Clonaid services, was overwhelmed by the volume of media attention and in an interview said that Clonaid's chief executive had become a "press hog".^{[265]:p. 170}^{[266]:p. 283}^{[267]:356}

Demographics

Established in France, Raëlism initially spread in Francophone areas of Europe, Africa, and North America.^[75] In 1999, Bozeman noted that the Movement had around 35,000 members,^[40] while in 2003 Chryssides stated that it had about 55,000 members worldwide.^[13] By the early 2010s, the group was

claiming 60,000 members internationally, something which Palmer and Sentes thought was "probably inflated".^[268] As of the mid-1990s, membership clustered predominantly in France, Quebec, and Japan.^[102] Palmer noted that in Canada, Raëlism had faced difficulty spreading from Quebec and into the country's Anglophone provinces.^[160]

In 1989, the sociologist Eileen Barker noted that there were "only a dozen or so" committed members of the religion in Britain.^[269] In 2001, the sociologist David V. Barrett suggested that there were around 40 to 50 committed members in the country and around 500 sympathisers.^[75] In 2003, Chryssides commented that there were about 40 members and 200 sympathisers in Britain.^[13]

An internal survey of the group's members in 1988 found that there were almost double as many men as women in the Movement.^[270] Similarly, based on her attendance at Raëlian events in Quebec, Palmer noted that men usually outnumbered women.^[160] She noted that many of the men acted in an effeminate fashion,^[160] and were often attracted to other men.^[130] Palmer also observed several transvestites at the meetings,^[271] and found that a significant number of the women present worked as strippers.^[130] On these grounds, she suggested that Raëlism had a particular appeal for "people who define themselves as sexually marginal".^[271] Palmer also suggested that Raëlism had an appeal for "committed atheists who are hopelessly secularized yet suffering from the existential angst of living in a world devoid of order and higher values".^[272]



Raëlians promoting "Go Topless Day" in Paris in 2018.

Conversion and deconversion

Raëlians engage in missionary activities to attract new people to their religion.^[184] Members buy books written by Raël and then sell them on the street, hoping to recoup their original costs in doing so.^[131] Raëlians often encounter much resistance to their attempts to convert others; Raël explains that this is to be expected, for the Elohim told him that only 4% of humanity is intelligent enough to be receptive to the Raëlian message.^[184] Any Raëlian found trying to force someone to convert is banned from the organisation for seven years, the period which Raëlians believe it takes for every cell in the body to be replaced.^[102]



A Raëlian lecturing on his religion at Onyang High School in South Korea.

Since 1979, new members of the Raëlian Movement have been expected to sign an "Act of Apostasy,"^[273] and send a letter of apostasy to any religious organisation that they were previously involved with.^[274] They also sign a contract permitting a mortician to cut a piece of bone from their forehead after death, which they understand as the "Third Eye." This specimen will be stored in ice at a Swiss facility until the Elohim return, at which time it could be used to facilitate the cloning of the deceased individual.^[275] This process is known as the "lifting of the frontal bone."^[159] In addition, those joining are expected to bequeath their assets to the local Raëlian group,^[57] although this is not obligatory.^[159]

Former clergy of mainstream religions have joined the Raëlian Church, especially in Quebec.^{[276][277][278]} The structure of the movement had promoted some of them to the level of Priest or Bishop due to "extensive Bible training and teaching skills".^[277] Two ex-Roman Catholic priests, Victor Legendre^[278] and Charles-Yvan Giroux,^[279] converted to Raëlianism.^[280] A former bishop of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) joined the Raelian Movement so that he could

be openly homosexual.^[276] Raëlian Mark Woodgate stated that 8% of Raëlians worldwide are former Latter-day Saints. Couples who have converted from different religions from each other are common, especially with spouses who were Christians or Buddhists.^[281]

Reception

Raëlism has also experienced academic research from scholars of religion, especially from Susan J. Palmer, who first encountered the religion in Montreal in 1987.^[282] She initially thought that she "had never encountered an NRM that was so cooperative, that actually liked being studied."^[283] Between 2002 and 2003, Palmer was blacklisted by the group, banned from attending any more of its meetings.^[284] The group informed Palmer that she had now lost the opportunity to meet the Elohim on their arrival.^[284] Palmer then drew upon both her interviews with active members and Raël's published monographs to produce her book on Raëlism, *Aliens Adored*.^[285] Palmer noted that in wider society, Raëlism is "universally mocked";^[286] Chrissyides noted that at conferences of scholars of religion, where individuals are accustomed to studying a broad and diverse range of belief systems, attendees still often treated Raëlian beliefs with "incredulity or even mirth".^[13]



A group of Raëlians protesting for gay rights in Wien, Austria.

Lewis noted that people who were not part of the Raëlian Movement tend to consider Raël's claims, as presented in his writing, as a conscious forgery.^[287] Raëlism has received a critical reception from both ex-Raëlians and members of the anti-cult movement.^[87] Jean-Denis Saint-Cyr, a high-ranking member of the Raëlian movement, for instance accused Raël of plagiarising the earlier writings of Senny in creating his religion.^[87] Another prominent apostate, the Quebecois Erick Lamarche—who calls himself Exraël—quit while claiming that too much money was being donated to Raël and the senior members so that they could have luxurious lifestyles.^[288] Critics have argued that in promoting a governance system whereby people are graded by their intelligence, coupled with its emphasis on

genetic engineering, Raëlism bears similarities with Nazism.^[289] These allegations of neo-Nazi sympathies have also included emphasising the Raëlian use of the swastika as a symbol.^[290]

Palmer related that journalists she had encountered were often "fishing" for "bad things" to say about the Raëlians.^[291] Many journalists sought to portray Raël as a danger to his followers, akin to David Koresh or Jim Jones, although Palmer thought this "ludicrous", stating that Raël was "not prone to violence".^[34] Journalists also sought to present him as someone who sexually exploited his female members, which again Palmer found no evidence for.^[292] Following statements that the Order of Raël's Angels would do anything for Raël, there was also press speculation that the group would engage in mass suicide akin to that of the Order of the Solar Temple.^[293] Palmer argued that the Raëlians lacked the paranoid mentality and demonization of the outside world that had been common to new religious movements that resorted to violence.^[294]

In 2005, two amateur documentary makers, Abdullah Hashem and Joseph McGowen, were welcomed into a Raëlian seminar and had permission to videotape it. They stated that the footage they took makes it clear that the Raëlian Movement is a cult which should disband. A Raëlian guide said in a Wired News interview that he was not ashamed of what is shown and that he has no concerns about this incident.^{[295][296]} In "International Raëlian Movement v. Hashem," which began in 2008, the IRM filed multiple motions claiming that the purported filmmakers had misrepresented themselves in the making of the movie, and had filmed the "documentary" intending to gain access to copyrighted materials and commit defamation and fraud.^[297] The IRM also alleged the defendants had engaged in several criminal acts, under the RICO Act, including mail and wire fraud, threats of violence, blackmail, extortion and money laundering. McGowen responded to, and was dismissed from, the lawsuit in 2009. A default judgement was made against Hashem in August 2011, because

"the defaulting defendants have not appeared, have not opposed plaintiff's motions in any way, and have made no showing that their failure to respond to the complaint is due to excusable neglect." Hashem was ordered to return the film footage to IRM within 30 days of the decision, although motions for summary damages by IRM were denied, with the court stating they had "failed to offer evidence of a concrete financial loss proximately caused by defendants."^[298]

See also

- [Korindo \(Raëlian temple\)](#)
- [Nontheistic religions](#)

Notes

- a. [/ˈreɪlɪzəm/](#)
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Raël

Raël^[a] (born **Claude Maurice Marcel Vorilhon**,^[b] 30 September 1946)^[2] is a French journalist who founded and currently leads the Raëlian Movement, an international UFO religion.

Prior to becoming a religious leader, Raël, then known as Claude Vorilhon, worked as sports-car journalist and test driver for his own car-racing magazine, *Autopop*.^{[3][4]} Following a purported extraterrestrial encounter in December 1973, he formed the Raëlian Movement and changed his name to Raël (meaning "messenger of the Elohim").^[5] He later published several books, which detail the encounter with a being called Yahweh in 1973.^[5] He traveled the world to promote his books for over 30 years.^[6]

| Raël <div>Claude Vorilhon</div> | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Born | 30 September 1946 <div>Vichy, <u>Allier</u>, France^[1]</div> |
| School | <u>Raëlism</u> |
| Main interests | <u>Universal morality</u> |
| Notable ideas | <u>Sensual meditation</u> <div><u>Geniocracy</u></div> <div><u>Raëlian cosmology</u></div> <div><u>Message from the designers</u></div> |

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Early life

Vorilhon was born in Vichy, Allier, France.^[1] He was raised in Ambert in the home of his maternal grandmother, who was atheist.^[7] His father was Jewish and his mother was a "devout atheist".^[8] He attended a Catholic boarding school with Le Puy-en-Velay and caused a scandal by taking part in communion without being baptized.^[7] His parents withdrew him from the boarding school to put him in school in Ambert.^[7]

At the age of 15, Vorilhon ran away from boarding school and hitchhiked to Paris, where he spent three years playing music on the streets and in cafés and cabarets. He met with Lucien Morisse, the director of a national radio program, who was scouting for young talent. Vorilhon signed a record contract^[9] and became a rising teen pop star on the radio.^[9] He took on a new identity, assuming the name Claude Celler, and released six singles, including a minor hit song, "Le miel et la cannelle" (Honey and Cinnamon).^[9] Vorilhon had a passion for the songs of Belgian singer Jacques Brel, and tried to imitate his singing style.^[7] He was saving up his money to buy a racing car, a dream he had since he was a young boy, but his prospects as a singer came to an abrupt end when Morisse, his sponsor, committed suicide in September 1970.^[10]

Vorilhon decided to work as a sports journalist to gain access to the world of car racing. He met Marie-Paul Cristini, a nurse.^[10] They moved to Clermont-Ferrand, where Vorilhon started his own publishing house.^[11] He created a sports car magazine entitled *Autopop*, whose first issue was released in May 1971.^[3] One of the tasks for his new startup was the position of testing new automobiles, which enabled him to enter the motor racing world.^[11]

The Raëlian messages

According to the book *Le Livre qui dit la vérité* ("The Book Which Tells the Truth"), Vorilhon had an alien visitation on 13 December 1973. In a secluded area within a French volcanic crater, an extraterrestrial being came out of a craft that had descended gently from the sky, and told him, in French, that he had come for the sole purpose of meeting with him. Raël said that he was given a message by this alien and told that it was his mission to pass this message on to the people of Earth.^[12]

The book states that advanced human scientists from another planet with 25,000 years of scientific advances created all life on Earth through DNA manipulation.^{[13][14]} These scientists, Raël said, were originally called Elohim or "those who came from the sky".^[15] He wrote that some forty^[16] prophets in Earth's history were sent by Elohim,^[17] but their messages were distorted^[18] by humans, largely because of the difference in the level of civilization between the advanced race and Earth's primitive one.^[19]

Raël said he was given the mission of informing the world of humanity's origins in anticipation of the return of these extraterrestrials by building a residential embassy in neutral territory.^[20] He stated that certain mysteries were explained to him based on new interpretations of sacred texts such as the Bible.^[21] He said that, on 7 October 1975, he was contacted by one of the Elohim, who took him to another planet to meet Buddha, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. He stated that his second book, *Les extra-terrestres m'ont emmené sur leur planète* ("Extraterrestrials Took Me To Their Planet"), relates the teaching he received from these people. In this book, Raël describes harmonious and peaceable beings, who were free of money, sickness, and war.^[22]

In 1974, Raël decided to give up his automobile magazine, *Autopop*.^[3] That September, the last issue, number 34, was published.^[3] Raël then devoted himself to the task he said was given by his "biological father", an extraterrestrial named Yahweh.^[23] Shortly after a first public conference, Raël founded MADECH – a group of people interested in helping him in his task, which later became the *International Raëlian Movement*.^[24]

Marriages

Raël has been married three times.^[25]

His first wife was Marie-Paul Cristini.^[26] Sociologist Susan J. Palmer said that Cristini, a nurse, diagnosed Raël as clinically depressed after he appeared at her doorstep in 1987, burnt out from the tasks he carried out within the movement.^[27]

Raël focused on spreading his message in Japan in the 1980s, and by 1987, he met Lisa Sunagawa. Sunagawa soon began accompanying Raël during his travels to Lima, Miami, Brazil, and Martinique. In a television documentary, *They're Coming!* (1990) by Radio Canada, Raël was seen with four women,^[28] while Lisa, in slow-motion, wore a pink tutu and held hands with him.^[25]

Raël separated from Sunagawa sometime between 1990 and 1992. Around that time, Sophie de Niverville, whose mother and aunt were both Raélians, was convinced of the authenticity of the messages. Sophie received a Raëlian baptism at age 15. When she turned 16, she married Raël at Montreal's city hall. During a December 2001 interview with sociologist Susan J. Palmer, Sophie spoke positively about Raël, despite their divorce the previous year; they continued to live together.^[29]

Racecar driver

In 1994, wealthy Japanese Raélians rented a racecar and showed it to Raël. They believed that if Raël would race it, it would generate publicity for the movement. Raël accepted the offer on the condition that the funding not come from member tithes or embassy funding. Funding for Raël's races, which took place in the 1990s and early 2000s, came mostly from well-funded European and Japanese people.^[30] His best finishes included "a 3rd place finish in GT 1 in Lime Rock with the Mosler Raptor in 1997, and a 7th place finish at Watkins Glen with a Viper GTS R in the FIA GT 1999 race".^[31] Raël participated in the 1999 BFGoodrich Tires Trans-Am Series and the 2000 Speedvision GT Championship. According to Palmer, Raël made an announcement in November 2001 that he intended to retire from professional auto racing. She said that Raël still enjoyed automobile racing, albeit in the form of video games.^[30]

1999 BFGoodrich Tires Trans-Am Series

| Round | Date | Car | Start | Finish | Laps | Track | Source |
|-------|-------------|------------------|-------|--------|--------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Two | 23 May 1999 | <u>Chevrolet</u> | 21st | 19th | 35 out of 40 | <u>Mosport International Raceway</u> | <i>Motorsport.com</i> ^[32] |

2000 Speedvision GT Championship events

| Round | Date | Car | Start | Finish | Laps | Track | Source |
|-------|-----------------|------------------------|-------|--------|--------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| One | 1 April 2000 | <u>Lotus Esprit</u> | 29th | 32nd | 15 out of 29 | <u>Lowe's Motor Speedway</u> | <i>Motorsport.com</i> ^[33] |
| Two | 21 May 2000 | Lotus Esprit | 31st | 18th | 27 out of 27 | <u>Mosport International Raceway</u> | <i>Motorsport.com</i> ^[34] |
| Three | 27 May 2000 | Lotus Esprit | 38th | | | <u>Lime Rock Park</u> | <i>Motorsport.com</i> ^[35] |
| Eight | 15 October 2000 | <u>Porsche 911 GT3</u> | 32nd | 25th | 25 out of 26 | <u>Laguna Seca Raceway</u> | <i>Motorsport.com</i> ^[36] |
| Nine | 29 October 2000 | Porsche 911 GT3 | 25th | 25th | 29 out of 30 | <u>Las Vegas Motor Speedway</u> | <i>Motorsport.com</i> ^[37] |

Views on technology

Raël believes humanity is slowly transitioning into a society where humans will not need to work or have jobs. This is due to human technological advancement and because humans "are not made to work". He has stated that work is for machines, whereas humans are made to create, think and enrich themselves.^[38]

Much of Raël's advocacy concerning futuristic technology is described in his 2001 book, *Yes to Human Cloning*. He supported human genetic engineering in order to avoid genetically inherited diseases and to reduce the economic burden on society. He said that no distinctive emphasis needed to be allocated to a

particular race or religion.^{[39][40]} Elsewhere in the book, he stated that nanotechnology will make it possible to have micro-distributive power generation (essentially a power plant in each house), fur-like furnishings that are self-cleaning with hair-like fibers that move on their own,^[41] and biological robots.^[42] Nanostructures control biology, so Raël expected that meat and salads will someday be grown in a machine via molecular construction.^{[43][44]}

Raël believed that genetically modified food is the only way to stop hunger everywhere in the world, and he saw a future where qualities of different foods can be combined through direct genetic modification.^[45] In Raël's book, *Extraterrestrials took me to their planet* (book number 2 in the volume *Intelligent Design*), he said that animation of plant life was possible through nanotechnology and that he was presented genetically modified flowers, that swayed and changed colors with music, while on another planet.^[46]

Criticism and controversies

Plagiarism

In recent years, many ex-Raélians have accused Claude Vorilhon of plagiarism.^[47] They have cited numerous quotes from Rael's books and compared them with those of author Jean Sendy. Raëlian concepts such as chemical education, infinity, geniocracy and others may all be found in Sendy's books. Most of Raël's *Sensual Meditation* book is said to have been derived from the Silva 'Mind Control' Method, which was allegedly taught to him by ex-level-5 guide of the Canadian Raelian Movement, Jean-Denis Saint-Cyr.^[48]

In her book, *Raël, Thief of Souls: Biography of a Liar* (French: *Raël, Voleur d'âmes : Biographie d'un menteur*), Maryse Péloquin provides the result of her ten years of thorough research into Claude Vorilhon and his movement, with compelling evidence to support a similar view that Raël has taken concepts and often paraphrased full paragraphs from other UFO and ancient astronaut authors of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s such as Jean Sendy, Brinsley Le Poer Trench, and Robert Charroux.^[49] In her book, the dialogue of Raël's "encounter with an ET" is shown to closely resemble that of "contactee" George Adamski, who claimed that he had an encounter on 13 December 1952.

Much of the Raëlian philosophy also closely matches that of Osho.^[50] The white costume which Raël wears closely resembles that which Osho was known to have worn at one time.

Appearances in the media

In 1992, Raël appeared on *Ciel mon Mardi*, a French talk show hosted by journalist Christophe Dechavanne. Toward the end of the show, Raël's liberal views on sex were critiqued by a priest, a social worker, and a psychologist. A former Raëlian named Jean Parraga believed that his wife and children were being held as prisoners and that Raël attempted to break up his family. He thought they were being treated like criminals in activities such as orgies and sacrifice involving children at the Sensual Meditation camp. Parraga also had a criminal record as a drug dealer and car thief, and in August 1992, he attempted to shoot Raël.^[51]

Raélians from around the world sent letters of protest to Dechavanne's TV station. Dechavanne felt that this was "incitement to violence" and sued Raël. The judge appointed to the case decided to question Raël. Raël agreed to ask his members to stop sending letters if the station apologized publicly. The two parties agreed to drop the feud.^[51]

In 2004, Raël appeared on the first airing of the Quebec version of the French talk show *Tout le monde en parle*, hosted by Guy A. Lepage. During this appearance, Raël upset panel members with his statements on democracy and cloning. The situation reached its peak when caricaturist Serge Chapleau called Raël a "farce"

and a "nerd", ridiculed his clothes, and grabbed him by the back of his neck.^[52] Raël left the stage, followed by his disciples.^[52] A fellow guest on the show, Parti Québécois Member of Quebec Legislative Assembly Pauline Marois, who would later become Premier of Quebec, called Raël "insane". The Raëlian Movement asked Marois to apologize, which she refused.^[52]

A Swiss newspaper, who called Raélians "rat heads", was sued for defamation. Another suit was brought against journalist Stephane Baillargeon for writing in the Montreal daily Le Devoir that the Raélians defended pedophiles and that certain ex-Raélians claimed the "gourou" liked very young girls. After some negotiation, Le Devoir published a letter from Raël condemning the charge as "ignominious defamation" and asserting that the Raëlian Movement had "always condemned pedophilia and promoted respect for laws that justly forbid the practices that are always the fault of unbalanced individuals".^[51]

Appearances in court

In 1991, Raël sued French journalist Jean-Yves Cashga for defamation; Raël lost, however, and was ordered to pay court costs. The judgment remains uncollected. Amidst growing legal problems in France, Raël decided to emigrate to Canada.

On two separate court dates of 2 September 1994 at the High Courts of Paris and 1 October 1996 at the Appeal Court of Paris, journalists Jacques Cotta and Pascal Martin of Flammarion Publishing were found guilty of attributing racist statements and distorted quotations to Raël in their book *Dans le secret des sectes*. They were fined 10,000FF in damages and 13,000FF in proceedings costs. They were also ordered to insert stickers mentioning the sentence on copies not yet distributed and to suppress of the passage in the next editions, and were told that they would be fined 100FF for each non-conforming copy.^[53]

On 26 January 1994, in emergency proceedings by the Appeal Court of Reims, Myriam Assan was accused of defamation for claiming in her book that "Raël was often sentenced for corruption of minors". Assan was given a provisional sentence of 10,000FF in damages and ordered to withdraw the book. She was sentenced to pay a penalty of 300FF per infringement and 5,000FF in proceedings costs and to publish the judgment in *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*.^[53]

On 13 December 1994, Gérard Chol, director of *Le Maine Libre*, was declared guilty by the High Court of Le Mans for public defamation for claiming that the Raël's movement was laundering money coming from drug trafficking, prostitution, arms dealing, and the sale of pornographic videotapes. Chol was ordered to pay 1FF in damages and 3,000FF in proceedings costs and to publish the penal judgment in *Le Maine Libre*.^[53]

In 2003, Vorilhon sued Ottawa columnist Denis Gratton and Le Droit newspaper for \$85,000 in defamation damages over a 23 January 2003 column; Raël lost and was ordered to pay court costs by Quebec Superior Court on 21 June 2006.^[54]

Government action against Raël

In response to Raël's association with Clonaid, South Korean immigration authorities at the airport denied him entry into their country in 2003.^[55] A planned Raëlian seminar continued, with Raël making some brief "big screen" video-camera appearances via the internet for the several hundred who attended. Raélians of South Korea were instructed by Raël to protest near the Ministry of Health and Welfare that ordered him to leave.^[55]

Raélians say they encourage adult homosexual, bisexual, and heterosexual relationships and that society should recognize them legally.^[56] Some governments, notably in Switzerland, fear that Raélians are a threat to public morals for supporting liberalized sex education for children. The Swiss authorities argue that such

liberalized sex education would encourage sexual abuse of underage children.^[2] The Raélians disagree with those fears and state that sex education done properly would involve educating parents as well as children.^[57]

In February 2007, Raël, who wanted to start commercial activities with Swiss vintners, was denied residence in the Swiss Canton Valais, in part because he was feared to be endangering public values by promoting the concept of sexual liberty and the education of children on how to obtain sexual pleasure. Also cited was his association with the Clonaid human cloning claim; Switzerland forbade human cloning. In a brief statement, Raël said he considered appeal at the European level.^[2]

Discography

- 1966: "Sacrée sale gueule"^[58]
- 1966: "Dans un verre de vin"^[59]
- 1967: "Le Miel et la cannelle" (Honey and cinnamon)^[60]
- 1967: "Madam' Pipi" (Mrs. Toilet attendant)^[61]
- 1967: "Monsieur votre femme me trompe" (Mister, your wife is cheating on me)^[62]
- 1967: "Quand on se mariera" (When we'll get married)^[63]

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- 1975: *Les extra-terrestres m'ont emmené sur leur planète* ("Extraterrestrials Took me to Their Planet")
 - (collected in English as "The Message Given to Me by Extra-Terrestrials") ISBN 4-900480-05-3
- 1978: *La génocratie* ("Geniocracy")
- 1979: *Accueillir les extra-terrestres* ("Welcoming the Extraterrestrials") ISBN 4-900480-06-1
- 1980: *La méditation sensuelle* ("Sensual Meditation") ISBN 1-903571-07-3
- 1992: *Le racisme religieux financé par le gouvernement socialiste*
- 1995: *Vive le Québec libre!*
- 2001: *Oui au clonage humain* ("Yes to Human Cloning") ISBN 1-903571-05-7
- 2003: *Le Maitraya* ("The Maitraya")
- 2006: *Intelligent Design: Message from the Designers* [English compilation of the 1974, 1975 and 1979 books] ISBN 2-940252-20-3

Notes

- a. /rɛil/; French: [ʁa.ɛl]
- b. French: [klod vɔ̃.bi.jɔ̃]

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8. Susan Palmer, *Aliens Adored: Raël's UFO Religion*, Rutgers University Press, 2004, p. 3.2
9. Palmer, p. 32-33.
10. Palmer, p. 34.
11. Raël, *Intelligent Design* 135–6.
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23. Raël, *Intelligent Design*; 290–1.
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28. Lewis, p. 127.
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Demographics of Raëlism

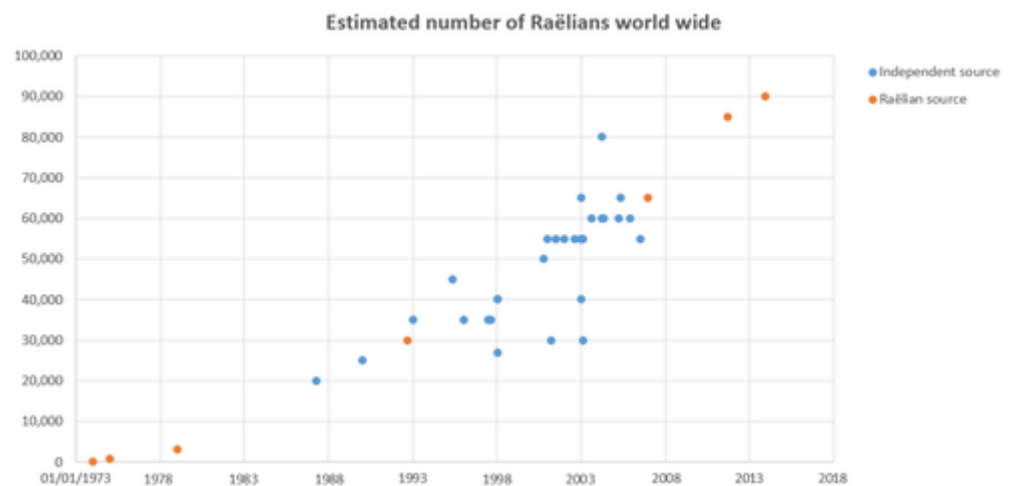
Raëlism is a UFO religion established in France during the 1970s. It soon spread to Quebec and then on to other parts of the world. There have been various attempts to estimate the number of Raélians at different points.

Estimates

Table of worldwide membership estimates

| Date | Estimate | Scope | Reference | |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------|--|------------|
| 1974 | 170 | World | International Raëlian Movement | [1] |
| 1975 | 700 | World | Raël | [2]:p. 122 |
| 1979 | 3,000 | World | Raël | [2]:p. 323 |
| 1987-04-16 | 20,000 | World | <i>Chicago Sun-Times</i> | [3] |
| 1990-01-09 | 25,000 | World | <i>The Wichita Eagle</i> | [4] |
| 1992-08-28 | 30,000 | 40 countries | US Raëlian Movement | [5] |
| 1993 | 35,000 | World | Dr. Susan J. Palmer | [6]:p. 9 |
| 1995-05-04 | 45,000 | World | <i>The Miami Herald</i> | [7] |
| 1996-01-14 | 35,000 | World | <i>The Miami Herald</i> | [8] |
| 1997-06-19 | 35,000 | 85 countries | <i>San Jose Mercury News</i> | [9] |
| 1997-08-12 | 35,000 | 85 countries | <i>The New York Times</i> | [10] |
| 1998-01 | 27,000 | 67 countries | <i>Australian Association for the Study of Religions</i> | [11] |
| 1998 | 40,000 | 80 countries | <i>University of Virginia</i> | [12] |
| 1998 | 40,000 | World | <i>St. Paul Pioneer Press</i> | [13] |
| 2000-10-10 | 50,000 | 85 countries | <i>The Washington Post</i> | [14] |
| 2001-03-13 | 30,000 | World | <i>60 Minutes</i> | [15] |
| 2001 | 55,000 | World | Dr. Susan J. Palmer | [6]:p. 9 |
| 2001-06-30 | 55,000 | 84 countries | <i>CNN</i> | [16] |
| 2002 | 55,000 | World | Dr. Susan J. Palmer | [6]:p. 120 |
| 2002-08-14 | 55,000 | 84 countries | <i>Wired News</i> | [17] |
| 2002-12-29 | 40,000 | World | <i>Lexington Herald-Leader</i> | [18] |
| 2002-12-31 | 55,000 | 84 countries | <i>The Orlando Sentinel</i> | [19] |
| 2002-12-31 | 55,000 | World | <i>AP Worldstream</i> | [20] |
| 2003-01-03 | 55,000 | 84 countries | <i>AAP General News</i> | [21] |
| 2003-01-29 | 30,000 | World | <i>University Wire</i> | [22] |
| 2003-02- | 55,000 | 84 countries | <i>Japan Today</i> | [23] |

| | | | | |
|------------|--------|--|---|------------|
| 10 | | | | |
| 2003 | 65,000 | World | Dr. Susan J. Palmer | [6]:p. 120 |
| 2003-08-03 | 60,000 | World | <i>Korea Times</i> | [24] |
| 2004-03-16 | 60,000 | 90 countries | <i>Financial Times</i> | [25] |
| 2004-03-26 | 80,000 | World | <i>KLAS.com</i> | [26] |
| 2004-04-23 | 60,000 | World | <i>New Truth & TV Extra</i> | [27] |
| 2005-03-13 | 60,000 | World | <i>Japan Today</i> | [28] |
| 2005-05-05 | 65,000 | 85 countries | <i>NBC 4</i> | [29] |
| 2005-11-18 | 60,000 | 92 countries | <i>Middle East Times</i> | [30] |
| 2006-06-25 | 55,000 | World | <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> | [31] |
| 2006-12 | 65,000 | 86 countries | International Raëlian Movement | [1] |
| 2010-11 | 14,192 | World Includes only members whose identity (name) is traced | International Raëlian Movement (Leaked Documents) | [32] |
| 2011-9 | 85,000 | 90 countries | International Raëlian Movement | [33] |
| 2013-12 | 90,000 | 90 countries | International Raëlian Movement | [33] |
| 2017-09 | 18,111 | World Includes only members whose identity (name) is traced | International Raëlian Movement (Leaked Documents) | [34] |



Membership estimates from various sources

Table of regional membership estimates

| Date | Estimate | Scope | Reference | |
|------------|------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------|
| 1995 | 4,000 | <u>Japan</u> | <i>University of Virginia</i> | [12] |
| 1995 | 4,000 | <u>Quebec</u> | <i>University of Virginia</i> | [12] |
| 1995 | 10,000 | <u>Europe</u> | <i>University of Virginia</i> | [12] |
| 1996-01-14 | 50 | <u>Miami</u> | <i>The Miami Herald</i> | [8] |
| 1996-01-14 | 600 | <u>United States</u> | <i>The Miami Herald</i> | [8] |
| 2001-08-08 | 24 | <u>South Florida</u> | <i>South Florida Sun-Sentinel</i> | [35] |
| 2002-12-31 | 5,000 | <u>South Korea</u> | <i>AP Worldstream</i> | [36] |
| 2003-02-10 | 6,000 | Japan | <i>Japan Today</i> | [23] |
| 2003-02-12 | 20 or more | <u>Utah</u> | <i>KSL-TV</i> | [37] |
| 2003-04-04 | 1,000 | United States | <i>Las Vegas Sun</i> | [38] |
| 2003-04-20 | 50 | <u>Ireland</u> | <i>Irish Independent</i> | [39] |
| 2003-08-03 | 4,000 | South Korea | <i>Korea Times</i> | [24] |
| 2004-04-23 | 80 | <u>New Zealand</u> | <i>New Truth & TV Extra</i> | [27] |
| 2005-05-05 | 100 | <u>Southern California</u> | <i>NBC 4</i> | [29] |
| 2006-06-04 | 200 | <u>Australia</u> | <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> | [31] |

From 1980 to 1992, Raël and his movement became increasingly global. In 1980, Claude Raël's fifth Raëlian book *Sensual Meditation* was published and formal publication of the Raëlian Messages in the Japanese language began^[40] as part of the Raëlian mission to Japan.^{[6]:p. 64} Two years later, Africa became another target area in the mission to spread the Raëlian messages.^{[6]:p. 64}

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International Raëlian Movement

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Introduction

The International Raëlian Movement (IRM), founded in 1975 by Claude Vorilhon (b. 1946), aka Raël ('Light of the Elohim'), is perhaps the world's most successful extraterrestrial (ET) religion (here used to refer to New Age religions in which ETs figure as the agents of salvation). On 13 December 1973, Claude Vorilhon (Raël) reportedly saw an unidentified flying object—'a flying saucer,' according to Raël (2005, 3)—land in the caldera of Puy de Lassolas, a volcano near Clermont-Ferrand, France. There he met an 'Eloha', a diminutive humanoid ET who was one of the 'Elohim'; according to Raël these are the ET scientists who created humanity and all life on Earth. The theologian and sociologist of religions George Chryssides has discussed this as Raëlianism's 'scientific creationism' (Chryssides 2003). Raël reported that 'the figure was only about 4 feet (1.2 meters) tall. His eyes were slightly almond-shaped, his hair was black and long, and he had a small black beard. ... His skin was white with a slightly greenish tinge' (Raël 2005, 5). Raël was told by the Eloha to return to the crater the following day, which he did for six consecutive days, and he was instructed to tell no one of the meeting (or he would never meet the Eloha again), to wear no metal, and to bring a Bible and notebook (Raël 2005, 9). As historians of religion Eugene Gallagher and Paul Brian Thomas have noted, Raëlianism is fundamentally a biblical religion (Gallagher 2010; Thomas 2010). Sociologist of religion Susan Palmer (1995a, 1995b, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2014; Palmer and Sentes 2012) has written extensively about the IRM.

The Elohim

The Elohim, according to Raël, are human beings, albeit of an elder race—so they are not gods, the Eloha told Raël, although they *are* our creators. Evolution, Raël writes, is 'a myth ... this did not happen by chance' (Raël 2005, 92–93). Evolutionists are 'false prophets' (Raël 2005, 273). The Eloha told Raël that the Elohim genetically engineered all life on Earth from the simplest unicellular creatures to humanity's hominid ancestor, to whom the Elohim creators added 'what makes us essentially human. In this way, we made human beings in our image' (Raël 2005, 92). According to Raël, the Elohim have created life on two other planets besides Earth (Raël 2005, 278). The Elohim themselves, according to Raël,

were created by other people coming from another planet, who had been created by other people coming from another planet, and so on to Infinity. It is as foolish to search for the beginning of the Universe in time as it is to search for its beginning in space. (Raël 2005, 253)

In biblical Hebrew, *elohim* is the plural of *eloha*. While the God of Genesis 1 speaks in the first person plural ('Let us make mankind in our image and likeness'), biblical scholars generally see this not as a reference to an actual plurality of gods but as a plural of majesty: 'The most common of the originally appellative names of God is Elohim, plural in form though commonly construed with a singular verb or adjective. This is, most probably, to be explained as the plural of majesty or excellence' ('God', 1906). Jewish interpreters commonly argue that the Tanach (the Hebrew Bible) 'believes in the total Unity of E-lohim with such monotheistic clarity, that it usually uses E-lohim more than E-loha ... without suspecting any kind of confusion or plurality' (Shvat 2015). To Raël, though, the Elohim are an ET race of space-faring bioengineers dedicated to creating life throughout the universe.

Raël, Prophet of the Apocalypse

Raël, it is claimed, has been chosen by the Elohim as the Prophet of the Age of Apocalypse. The Elohim chose a Frenchman as their spokesperson, Raël was told, because France was the birthplace of democracy, and Raël in particular because his father was Jewish and his mother Catholic, and he could thus mediate between the Jews and the Catholics (Raël 2005, 8). In fact, though, Raël claims to have been told by Yahweh and Jesus, whom he later met on the Planet of the Eternals, that Yahweh, ruler of the Elohim home planet, was Raël's *actual* father, and that Raël—like Jesus before him—was conceived aboard an Elohim spaceship:

After the explosion at Hiroshima, we decided that the time had come for us to send a new messenger on Earth. He would be the last prophet, but the first one to address mankind asking them to understand and not to believe. We then selected a woman, as we had done in the time of Jesus. This woman was taken aboard one of our ships and inseminated as we had done with the mother of Jesus. Then she was freed after we had totally erased from her memory all traces of what had happened. Your real father is also the father of Jesus, and that makes you brothers. (Raël 2005, 290)

According to Raël, the serpent of Genesis 3:1-5 represents the Elohim scientists who revealed to the human beings whom they had created that they—the Elohim—are not gods, but human beings (Raël 2005, 17). To punish humanity's Elohim creators, Yahweh, ruler of the Elohim home planet, confined them to Earth, where they took human wives who bore hybrid offspring, the Nephilim: 'The creators living in exile took the most beautiful daughters of humanity and made them their wives' (Raël 2005, 19). Here, Raëlianism's Elohim are the *Bene ha'Elohim*, the Sons of God of Genesis 6:4 (Flaherty 2010). It was then that Yahweh decided from the Elohim home planet to destroy all life on Earth (Raël's reading of Genesis 6:5): 'They then decided from their distant planet, to destroy all life on earth by sending nuclear missiles. However, our exiled creators, informed of the project, instructed Noah to build a spaceship which would

orbit the earth during the cataclysm' (Raël 2005, 206). A single cell from the male and female of each species was preserved. The explosion of the missiles caused a tidal wave that submerged the continent (originally there was only one continent; Raël 2005, 13). Subsequently, the animal species were re-created from the cells that had been preserved on the spaceship, and Earth was restored (Raël 2005, 22).

The International Raëlian Movement

According to the IRM, there are an estimated sixty thousand members worldwide (Raël 2005, xvi). The movement is strongest in France, Canada, South Korea, Japan, and Africa (Raël 2005, 365). Originally Raël called his movement MADECH (Mouvement pour l'Accueil des Elohim Createurs de l'Humanité, Movement for Welcoming of the Elohim Creators of Humanity; or Moïse a Dèrance Elie et le Christ, Moses Preceded Elijah and Christ) but in 1975 the group's name was changed, with the Elohim's authorization, according to Raël, to the International Raëlian Movement (IRM).

The original emblem of the IRM was a Star of David (a hexagram)—also called the Shield of David or Māḡēn Dāwīd—with a swastika in its centre. Raël claims to have seen this symbol on the Elohim spaceship that he observed in 1973 (Raël 2005, 62). The swastika, according to Raël, is an ancient symbol of infinity with a long history as one of humanity's most sacred symbols before it was appropriated by the Nazis in the twentieth century. In 1992, though, the swastika in the IRM emblem was replaced for North America and Europe with a six-armed galactic-shaped swirl within the hexagram because of the swastika's association in the West with Germany's Nazi past and the Holocaust (Raël 2005, 369): 'In Asia, where the swastika can be found in most Buddhist temples and where it represents infinity in time, the original symbol is not a problem' (Raël 2005, 368). In 2007, though, Raël decided to restore the swastika in the hexagram as the official IRM symbol ('The Official Raëlian Symbol Gets its Swastika Back', 2007). The swastika, according to Upendra Singh, National Raëlian Guide for Nepal and leader of the Worldwide Pro-Swastika Alliance, 'is a symbol cherished not only by Raëlians, for whom it represents infinity in time, but by Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains' (quoted in Simon 2016).

Until the 1980s, Raëlianism diffused primarily through the international French community, but in the 1980s Japanese Raëlians translated Raël's books into English: *Le Livre qui dit la Vérité (The Book that Tells the Truth)*

(L'Édition du Message, 1974) and *Les Extra-terrestres M'ont Emmené sur leur Planète (Extraterrestrials Took Me to Their Planet)* (Édition du Message, 1975) were published as a single volume: *The Message Given to Me by Extraterrestrials: They Took Me to Their Planet* (1986). Raël's third book, *Accueillir les Extra-Terrestres (Let's Welcome the Extraterrestrials)* (L'Édition du Message, 1975) was published as *Let's Welcome Our Fathers from Space: They Created Humanity in Their Laboratories* (1989). In 2005, new English translations of *The Message Given to Me by Extraterrestrials* and *Let's Welcome the Extraterrestrials* were completed and published as one book, *Intelligent Design: Message from the Designers* (2005), which the IRM has made available on its homepage as a free download (<https://www.rael.org>).

The Embassy Project

The beginning of the Aquarian Age (the Age of Apocalypse), according to Raël, coincided with Raël's birth and the return of the Jews to Israel in 1946, which Raëlians count as the Year One (Raël 2005, 206):

The Age of Pisces was the age of Christ and his fishermen, and the Age of Aquarius, which follows, began in 1946. This is the era in which the people of Israel found their country again. ... It is not by chance that you [i.e. Raël] were born in 1946. (Raël 2005, 81)

Raël says that the Elohim instructed him to create a movement to spread the messages of the Elohim creators worldwide, and to build an 'embassy' near Jerusalem where the Elohim spaceships will land (Raël 2005, 176). Raëlianism's embassy will be, according to Raël, the rebuilt third temple of biblical prophecy (Raël 2005, 368), which to many Zionists and Christians is a necessary prerequisite of the advent of the messianic age (the first temple in Jerusalem, the Temple of Solomon, was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 bce; the accession of Cyrus the Great of Persia in 559 bce made possible the construction of the second temple, which was destroyed by the Romans in 70 ce). Raël has warned that if Israel does not permit the embassy's construction, the embassy will be built elsewhere and the people of Israel will once again be dispersed (Raël 2005, 177). According to Raël's 1997 Message of the Elohim:

Jerusalem is everywhere where human beings love us, respect us and wish to welcome us with due respect, and the chosen people are those who, knowing what we are, want to welcome us, meaning the Raëlians. The real Jews on Earth are no longer the people of Israel, but those who recognize us as their creators and wish to see us return. The link we have with the people of Israel is about to be severed. ... They have very little time to understand their mistake before being dispersed once again. (Raël 2005, 359)

In 1991 the IRM submitted an official request to the Chief Rabbi in Israel regarding the construction of the Elohim embassy in Jerusalem. The swastika had been removed from the IRM symbol in 1992 not only 'out of respect for the sensitivities of the victims who had suffered and died under the Nazi swastika during the Second World War' (Raël 2005, 368) but also to facilitate embassy negotiations with Israel. An Israeli government commission concluded that the IRM was peaceful and not a threat to Israel's national security; nonetheless, in 1993 Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin rejected the IRM's request that the embassy be constructed in Israel (Raël 2005, 368). The IRM then began negotiations with other nations, including Canada and Russia, but it has not yet succeeded in securing the agreement of a nation-state in which it can establish the embassy. Once a country authorizes the embassy's construction, Israel will, according to Raël, have one last opportunity to reconsider, but if in the end Israel rejects the embassy project, according to Raël, Israel will be dispersed (Raël 2005, 360).

According to Raël, 'our greatest task is to build the embassy for the Elohim so that at long last they can come here and land officially and live among us' (Raël 2005, 71). In 2015 the IRM submitted a request to the United Nations—'Optional Protocol Concerning Embassies for Extraterrestrials'—asking that the Elohim be granted special diplomatic status (International Raëlian Foundation, 2015). Daniel Turcotte, Raëlian

Guide and leader of the IRM in Canada, is Raël's assistant responsible for the IRM's Embassy for Extraterrestrials Project.

Cloning

Raël claims that in 1975 he encountered the Elohim a second time, and they took him to the Elohim home planet and to a second, smaller planet—the Planet of the Eternals—where he met Moses, Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, and Yahweh. On the Planet of the Eternals, people live seven hundred years. Upon their death, eternalists are cloned from a cell taken from their old bodies. There are nine thousand eternalists—Elohim and people from Earth—and ninety thousand biological robots who serve them. Eight thousand Earth humans have already been re-created on the Planet of the Eternals (Raël 2005, xix). The biological robots are incapable of suffering or feeling and cannot reproduce (Raël 2005, 162). Raël teaches that we must show the Elohim that we are proud of having been created in their image by one day being able to ourselves create human beings in our image: biological robots who will free us, their creators, entirely from work:

Work should not be considered as something sacred. Everyone has the right to be comfortably off even if he does not work. Everyone should try to fulfill himself and blossom in the field which attracts him. If men organize themselves, it will not take them long to mechanize and automate entirely all indispensable work. ... Do everything to create the biological robot which will relieve you from menial labor and enable you to blossom and fulfill yourselves. (Raël 2005, 196-97)

In 1997 the IRM established Clonaid, the world's first human cloning project. In 2000 Raël severed all formal involvement in Clonaid (Raël 2005, 365), placing it under the direction of Brigitte Boisselier (b. 1956), a PhD-level biomolecular chemist and Raëlian bishop. According to Boisselier:

In a not too distant future, advanced cloning technologies will allow us to even re-create a deceased person in an adult body, with all his past experiences and memories, allowing mankind to enter the age of immortality as it has been announced by His Holiness Raël, founder of Clonaid, in 1973 already after his contact with the Elohim, mankind's extraterrestrial creators. (Boisselier 2004)

There is no 'God', Raël teaches. Nor is there a soul that survives the body's death. There are our ET Elohim creators, though, and the genetic code, the 'cellular plan', which allows the Elohim to re-create the individual, to whom is granted eternal life (Raël 2005, 247). As feminist theorist Gena Corea wrote: 'The promise of immortality is apparently one of the most attractive features of cloning' (Corea 1985, 262).

On 28 March 2001, Raël appeared before the US Congress during hearings on human cloning. He testified that 'human cloning will make it possible for us to reach eternal life' and dedicated his testimony to Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), the Italian Dominican monk, philosopher, and scientist who was, Raël said, 'sentenced to death by the Catholic Church for saying there was life on other planets' ('User Clip', 2001) (in his 1584 treatise *De l'Infinito, Universo e Mondi—On the Infinite, Universe and Worlds*—Bruno

postulated an infinite universe and multiplicity of inhabited worlds; he was tried for heresy by the Church of Rome and executed). While there have been a number of legislative attempts to institute a federal ban on human cloning in the United States since Raël testified before the US Congress, there is currently no federal law in the United States that completely prohibits human cloning, although cloning is banned in a number of individual states.

In July 2002, Clonaid's South Korean affiliate, Biofusion Tech Inc., announced that a woman had been impregnated with a cloned human embryo (Park 2003). In response, in September 2002, South Korea's Ministry of Health and Welfare announced a ban on human cloning: 'Whether the claim is true or not, it has become more imperative that we enact such a law at the earliest possible date' (Shin 2002). In December 2002, Clonaid announced that a cloned baby girl, whom they named Eve, had been born by caesarean section in the US state of Florida. In January 2003, Clonaid reported that a second cloned baby girl had been born in the Netherlands, and that a cloned baby boy had been born in Japan ('Clonaid Says It's Cloned First Boy', 2003). Clonaid's claims were met with scepticism from scientists ('Clonaid's Claims Were a Hoax', 2003) and condemned by mainstream religious and political leaders worldwide (Associated Press 2002).

Nuclear Holocaust and the Apocalypse

According to Raël, the development of nuclear weapons was a sign to the Elohim that human beings were ready for reestablished contact with their ET creators. Whereas to Raël the sixth seal of the Apocalypse (Revelation 6:12-17) represents the development of nuclear weapons, the seventh seal (Revelation 8:1-6) represents actual nuclear war (Raël 2005, 299). Raël's Elohim will not intervene to prevent nuclear war: 'Either Humanity will develop an interplanetary consciousness and the whole of Mankind will enter the Golden Age, or everything will explode, and you will be those who we will save to rebuild everything' (Raël 2005, 306).

While there is a 1 percent chance of averting nuclear holocaust, according to Raël, there is a 99 percent probability that there will be a cataclysmic nuclear war (Raël 2005, 306). In the event of such, those who have had their 'cellular plan' transmitted to Raël or to a Raëlian Guide designated by Raël will be re-created on the Planet of the Eternals. Additionally, upon death a one-square-centimetre bone sample is to be taken from the forehead of the deceased and sent to the Guide of Guides (Raël) to be kept in the Raëlian embassy (Raël 2005, 192). Individuals will be re-created on the Planet of the Eternals only if the required bone sample is sent to the Guide of Guides (Raël):

The total of those who will be 'sealed in the forehead' will be around 144,000. For as long as the total of these human beings does not reach 144,000, we will help delay the final cataclysm, so as to have a sufficient number to start a new generation on Earth when it has become a suitable place again for humans to live. (Raël 2005, 298-99)

Here, Raël's teaching is a reading of Revelation 7:1-8 and 14:1,3-5, in which it is prophesied that 144,000 servants of God bearing the seal of the Living God on their foreheads will reign with him on the heavenly Mount Zion.

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Raëlism

Raëlism,^[a] also known as **Raëlianism**, is a UFO religion that was founded in 1970s France by Claude Vorilhon, now known as Raël.^[b] Scholars of religion classify Raëlism as a new religion. The group is formalised as the **International Raëlian Movement (IRM)** or **Raëlian Church**, a hierarchical organisation under Raël's leadership.

Raëlism teaches that an extraterrestrial species known as the Elohim created humanity using their advanced technology. An atheistic religion, it believes that the Elohim have historically been mistaken for gods. It also claims that throughout history the Elohim have created forty Elohim/human hybrids who have served as prophets preparing humanity for news about their ultimate origins. Among those listed as prophets are The Buddha, Jesus of Nazareth, and Muhammad, with Raël himself being the fortieth and final prophet. Raëlists believe that since the Hiroshima bomb of 1945, humanity has begun an Age of Apocalypse in which it is threatening itself with nuclear annihilation. It argues that humanity must find a way of harnessing new scientific and technological development for peaceful purposes, and that once this has been achieved the Elohim shall return to Earth to share their technology with humanity and begin a utopia. To this end, the Raëlians have been committed to building an embassy for the Elohim, incorporating a landing pad for the latter's spaceship. Raëlians promote a liberal ethical system with a strong emphasis on sexual experimentation, engage in daily meditation, and hope for physical immortality by human cloning.

Raël first published his claims to have been contacted by the Elohim in his 1974 book *Le Livre Qui Dit La Vérité*. He subsequently established an organisation devoted to promoting his ideas, MADECH, which in 1976 disbanded and was replaced by the Raëlian Church. Raël headed the new organisation, which was structured around a hierarchy of seven levels. Attracting more followers, the group obtained a country estate in France before relocating its operations to Quebec. During 1998 Raël established the Order of Angels, an internal all-female group whose members are largely sequestered from wider society and tasked with training themselves to become the consorts of the Elohim. In 1997 Raël initiated Clonaid, an organisation engaged in research in human cloning that was directed by senior Raëlian Brigitte Boisselier. In 2002 the company alleged that it had successfully produced a human clone, a baby named Eve, bringing much critical scrutiny and media attention to the group. The Movement has attracted further attention through its public protests endorsing causes such as women's and gay rights and against nuclear testing.

| Raëlism | |
|---|---|
|  | |
| <p>The Raëlian symbol with the swastika (for the alternative version, see <u>below</u>)</p> | |
| Type | <u>New religious movement</u> |
| Classification | <u>UFO religion</u> |
| Scripture | <p>Main: <i><u>Intelligent Design: Message from the Designers</u></i></p> <p>Minor: <i><u>Sensual Meditation</u>, <u>Let's Welcome the Extra-terrestrials</u>, <u>Geniocracy</u>, <u>Yes to Human Cloning</u> and <u>The Maitreya</u></i></p> |
| Polity | <u>Episcopal</u> |
| Planétaire guider | <u>Raël</u> |
| Associations | <p>ARAMAIS</p> <p><u>Clitoraid</u></p> <p><u>Clonaid</u></p> <p>NOPEDO</p> <p>Order of Angels</p> |
| Region | <u>Worldwide</u> |
| Headquarters | <u>Geneva</u> , <u>Switzerland</u> ^[1] |

The International Raëlian Movement claims tens of thousands of members, the majority based in Francophone areas of Western Europe and North America as well as in parts of East Asia. Criticism of the philosophy has come from journalists, ex-Raëlians, and anti-cultists, while it has also been studied by scholars of religion.

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Founder | <u>Raël</u> |
| Origin | 19 September 1974 <u>Auvergne, France</u> |
| Embassy | 50+ |
| Members | 100,000 (2018) |
| Other name(s) | <i>Raëlianism</i> and <i>Raëlian movement</i> |
| Official website | <u>rael.org</u> (<u>http://www.rael.org</u>) |

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Definition

Scholars of religion classify Raëlism as a new religion.^[2] Raëlism has also been described as a UFO religion,^[3] a UFO movement,^[4] and an ETI religion.^[5] It is possibly the largest UFO religion in existence,^[6] and during the mid-2000s, the scholar of religion Andreas Grünschloß described it as "one of the most consolidated UFO groups internationally active today."^[7] In its beliefs, Raëlism differs from many other UFO based philosophies,^[8] with the scholar of religion James R. Lewis terming it "the most thoroughly secular of all the UFO religions."^[9] Most other UFO religions, such as the Aetherius Society, Ashtar Command, and Heaven's Gate, use many of the beliefs of the late 19th century religion Theosophy, although Raëlism does not.^[10] The Raëlists have also been characterised as having a "belief in ufology",^[11] although Raëlians themselves often stress that they do not regard themselves as Ufologists.^[12]



A public gathering of Raëlists in the Insa-dong neighbourhood of Seoul, South Korea.

Raëlism is materialistic and rejects the existence of the supernatural,^[13] endorsing atheism and rejecting the idea that gods exist.^[14] The religion's founder, Raël, characterises traditional religion as irrational and unscientific,^[9] presenting his alternative as a philosophy that is free from "obscurantism and mysticism".^[15] Raëlians describe their belief system as a "scientific religion",^[16] with the International Raëlian Movement using the motto "Science is our religion; religion is our science."^[17] The religion emphasizes the use of science to solve the world's problems,^[18] and practitioners regard Raël as a pioneer of science who will one day be regarded alongside Galileo and Copernicus.^[19] Many of its members refer to it as an "atheistic religion",^[20] in this way drawing comparisons between it and Buddhism, which similarly does not promote belief in gods.^[21]

Along with science, the other main basis of Raël's ideas is the Bible.^[22] Noting the "central role" of the Bible in Raëlism, the scholar of religion Eugene V. Gallagher suggested that it was a "thoroughly biblical and thoroughly Christian" philosophy.^[23] Similarly, the sociologist of religion Susan J. Palmer characterised Raëlism as being both fundamentalist and Abrahamic in its reliance on the Bible.^[24] Raël nevertheless criticised Christianity for what he believed was its role in perverting the message of the Bible,^[25] and Raëlism is not inclusive of other religions, with new members being expected to formally renounce any previous religious affiliations.^[26]

In 1995, a parliamentary commission issued a report through the National Assembly of France that categorized the Raelian Movement (*Mouvement Raëlien*) as a secte, a French term with the connotations of the English word "cult".^{[27][28]} In 1997, a parliamentary inquiry commission issued a report through the Belgian Chamber of Representatives that also categorized the Belgian Raelian Movement (*Mouvement Raëlien Belge*) as a secte.^{[27][29]} Glenn McGee, professor at the University of New Haven, stated that part of the sect is a cult while the other part is a commercial website that collects large sums of money from those interested in human cloning.^[30]

Beliefs

During the early 2000s, the scholar of religion George D. Chryssides noted that Raëlism exhibits "a coherent worldview",^[11] although added that the movement remained in the "very early developmental stage".^[31] The religion is based on the teachings of Raël. Raël's claims are taken literally by practitioners of Raëlism,^[32] who regard his writings as scripture.^[33] Palmer thought that, from her extensive study of the philosophy and Raël himself, that he genuinely believed in the truth of his claims.^[34] The sociologist of religion Christopher Partridge noted that Raëlianism exhibits "a *strong physicalist* belief system".^[35]

Raëlism presents a form of the ancient astronauts theory which was well known at the time that the religion was formed.^[36] Several French authors, such as Jean Sendy, Serge Hutin, and Jacques Bergier, had already published books during the late 1960s and early 1970s stating that Earth was the outpost of an ancient extraterrestrial society.^[37] The Swiss writer Erich von Däniken had also famously presented the same idea during the 1960s;^[38] his book *Chariots of the Gods* had been published in German in 1968,^[39] after which it was published in French and English in 1970.^[36] Similar ideas had also been put forward in science-fiction, such as the U.S. television series *Star Trek*.^[40] Raëlians themselves often deny the effect of von Däniken on the philosophy, instead believing that it derives entirely from Raël's revelations.^[41]

The Elohim

Raëlism teaches that there exists an extraterrestrial species known as the Elohim.^[43] Raël stated that the word "Elohim", which is used for God in the Old Testament, is actually a plural term which he translates as meaning "those who came from the sky."^[44] Individual members of the Elohim are referred to as "Eloha" by Raël.^[45] He alleged that these aliens gave him the honorific name of "Raël",^[46] a term deriving from "Israel",^[47] and which he translates as meaning "the messenger of those who come from the sky."^[48]

In his first book, *Le Livre Qui Dit La Verité* ("The Book That Tells the Truth"), which was first published in 1974, Raël claimed that he initially encountered these alien beings on 13 December 1973, when he was 27 years old.^[49] He stated that he was walking along the Puy de Lassolas volcanic crater in the Clermont-Ferrand mountains when one of their spaceships appeared and an Eloha emerged.^[50] He stated that the Eloha asked him to return the next day and to bring a Bible with him. Raël did so and over the course of six days Eloha explained to him the true meaning of its contents, thus revealing more about the Elohim's involvement in human history.^[51] In his 1976 book *Les Extra-Terrestes M'ont Emmené Sur Leur Planete* ("The Extraterrestrials Took Me to Their Planet"), Raël added that he was contacted by the Elohim again on 7 October 1975, when they took him aboard their spaceship and transported him to their home planet.^[52] Here he was offered six biological robot women with which to have sex, saw the Elohim create his clone, and taught the techniques of sensual meditation.^[53] The scholar of religion James R. Lewis noted that Raël's account of encountering the Elohim was similar to those of the "classic UFO contactees" of the 1950s and 1960s.^[54]



A medallion displaying the Raëlian symbol; practitioners typically wear these medallions to identify their beliefs^[42]

The Elohim are described as being physically smaller than humans, with pale green skin and almond-shaped eyes,^[55] and divide into seven different races,^[56] although Raëlians are forbidden from painting or sketching them.^[18] Their planet, Raël stated, is outside our solar system but within our own Milky Way galaxy.^[57] Raël alleged that there are 90,000 of these Elohim on their planet and that they are all quasi-immortal.^[58] He commented that on their world, they do not wear clothes.^[59] He added that they are all permitted to engage in free love with one another, and that sexual jealousy between them has been eliminated.^[58] All are regarded as fairly feminine in their manner;^[60] Raël states that "the most feminine woman on Earth is only 10% as feminine as the Elohim."^[15] They are not allowed to procreate to have children and many undergo a sterilisation operation to ensure this.^[58] He also reported that the Elohim are able to communicate with humans because they have an understanding of all human languages.^[61]

The Elohim on Earth

Raëlism teaches that about 25,000 years ago the Elohim arrived at the Earth and transformed it so that life could develop. It states that the Elohim used their advanced technology to establish all life on the planet.^[62] Raël characterises humans as "biological robots" that have been created and programmed by the Elohim.^[63] Raëlism teaches that humanity is modelled physically on the Elohim;^[64] for practitioners, this is indicated by the passage at Genesis 1:26.^[7] Also representing his own interpretation of Genesis, Raël teaches that the Elohim scientist responsible for creating humanity was named Yahweh and that the first two humans to be created were named Adam and Eve.^[65] Raëlians believe that there were original seven human races, modelling the seven Elohim races, but that the purple, blue, and green races have died out.^[56] In believing humanity was created by the Elohim, Raëlians reject Darwinian evolution and espouse creationism and intelligent design.^[66] Raëlians term their beliefs "scientific creationism."^[67] Raëlians believe that the Elohim were also created by an earlier species, and they before them, *ad infinitum*.^[17] They believe that the cosmos expands indefinitely, both in time and space,^[17] infinity is an important concept for them.^[68]



Raëlians promoting their religion on a street in Japan; one is dressed as an alien character mascot.

Raëlians believe that accounts of gods in various mythologies around the world are misinterpretations of memories about the Elohim.^[69] The philosophy states that the sacred scriptures of many other religions describe the ongoing activities of the Elohim on Earth.^[70] The tale of Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden, recounted in Genesis, is for instance interpreted as representing humanity's difficult transition from the Elohim's laboratories to life on Earth, where they had to become self-sufficient.^[70] The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, as presented in the Gospels, is described as representing how the Elohim cloned Jesus to restore him to life after death.^[70] References to Satan are interpreted as referring to the chief of a group on the Elohim's planet who were opposed to genetic experiments on Earth and who argued that humanity should be destroyed as a potential threat.^[71] According to the Raëlians, the Great Flood narrative recounts an attempt by the anti-human aliens to wipe out humanity, but that humanity was rescued by an alien spacecraft which provided the basis for the story of Noah's Ark.^[72]

Various figures who established or inspired religions throughout human history, including Jesus, the Buddha, Muhammad, and Joseph Smith, are portrayed by the Raëlians as having been guided by the Elohim.^[70] These are characterised as being 39 prophets sent to humanity at various times.^[73] Each is believed to have revealed information to humanity that they could comprehend at the given time, and Raëlism, therefore, emphasises the idea of progressive truth.^[73] Raël claims that he is the fortieth and final prophet of the Elohim,^[74] sent because humanity is now sufficiently developed to understand the truth about the Elohim.^[75] He initially claimed that he was chosen for this role because he had a Roman Catholic mother and a Jewish father and was thus "an ideal link between two very important peoples in the history of the world."^[43] He added that he was also selected because he lived in France, which the Elohim considered a more open-minded country than most others.^[43]

Raël subsequently stated that these prophets are themselves the result of a human mother breeding with an Eloha father,^[76] with the human mothers having been chosen for the purity of their genetic code, beamed onto an Elohim spacecraft, impregnated, and then returned to Earth with their memory of the event erased.^[77] In his 1979 book, *Let's Welcome Our Fathers from Space*, Raël added that he was the biological son of the Eloha whom he first encountered, Yahweh.^[78] He noted that Yahweh was also the father of Jesus, making the latter

Raël's half-brother.^[79] In 2003, Raël publicly identified himself as Maitreya, the prophesied future bodhisattva of Mahayana Buddhism.^[57] He maintains that he continues to be in telepathic contact with the Elohim, hearing Yahweh's voice guiding him in making decisions affecting Raëlianism.^[80]

The religion also teaches that the Elohim continue to monitor every human individual on Earth, remotely, from their planet.^[12] This is done so that the Elohim can decide which individuals merit being offered the opportunity of eternal life.^[81] It argues that the Elohim continue to visit the Earth, as evidenced by crop circles, which adherents regard as the landing spaces of the Elohim's spacecraft.^[73] Raëlians generally understand sightings of unidentified flying objects (UFOs) as confirmation of their belief in the Elohim, although their opinion of Ufology is ambiguous.^[82] Raëlians also consider the appearance of "angel hair" as evidence of the Elohim's presence, stating that it has appeared at various Raëlian summer gatherings.^[83] They typically express scepticism regarding claims by alleged alien contactees other than Raël.^[82] Raëlians believe that they are all capable of linking telepathically with the Elohim but that only Raël is permitted to meet with them physically or receive their revelations.^[83]

The Age of Apocalypse and the Elohim's Return

Raëlism is a millenarian philosophy.^[84] Raël claims that since the U.S. military's use of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945, humanity have been living in the "Age of Apocalypse" or "Revelation".^[85] It states that the human species must now choose whether to use science and technology to enhance life or to use it to bring about nuclear annihilation.^[86] It claims that if humans successfully get through this present age, they will live in an era of advanced technology in which society will be tolerant and sexually liberated.^[40] Raël claimed that he was destined to help lead humanity away from its path of destruction.^[87]

According to Raël, beginning a peaceful age will cause the return of the Elohim to Earth.^[87] He added that they will bring them the 39 immortal prophets whom they had previously sent to guide humanity.^[88] Raël stated that humanity has to build an embassy for the Elohim prior to their arrival on Earth and that it must include a landing pad for their spaceship.^[89] He stated that it needed to be located on internationally recognised neutral territory so as not to indicate favour towards any one particular nation-state.^[75] Initially, Raël sought permission to build it in Israel,^[90] explaining this by reference to how the ancient Israelites were once in contact with the Elohim.^[75] He also stated that this embassy would constitute the "Third Temple" referred to in Jewish prophecy.^[91]

Receiving little help for this venture from the Israeli government, Raël instead suggested that a neighbouring country might be suitable, proposing Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt as possible locations. None of the governments of these countries were favorable.^[75] Senior people of the Raëlian Movement suggested Hawaii as a possible alternative, and in 1998 Raël stated that he had received a new revelation from the Elohim stating that this location would be acceptable.^[15] Chryssides noted that should the Elohim not arrive in 2035, the Raëlians will have to adapt to the new circumstance in which their eschatology remains unfulfilled.^[92] On 16 April 1987, the *Chicago Sun-Times* estimated the funding for the "cosmic kibbutz" at \$1 million. In 1997–1998, the funding had risen to \$7 million.^{[93][94][95]} By 2001, \$9 million had been saved for the embassy,^{[96]:p. 64} and in October 2001, the funding had reached \$20 million.^[97]

Once on Earth, Raël claims, the Elohim will share their advanced technology and scientific understanding with humanity and will help to usher in a utopia.^[87] Raël teaches that the Elohim's arrival will herald a new and improved political system on the Earth.^[81] This will be a single world government that Raël terms a "geniocracy,"^[98] or "rule of geniuses,"^[99] and which he discusses in his fifth book, *Geniocracy*.^[68]



A small-scale tent copy of the proposed Elohim embassy erected at a Raëlian seminar in Colombia.

According to this system, only those who are fifty percent more intelligent than the average person will be permitted to rule.^[100] Raël's proposed geniocentric system bears similarities with the style of governance that Plato promoted in his work *Republic*.^[101] Raëlians thus reject democracy, believing that it fails to ensure that society has the best leadership.^[100] Raël claims that this future society will have no war, and crime will have been ended through genetic engineering.^[100] In this future, Raël states, humanity will be able to travel beyond the Earth to colonise other planets.^[102] He claims that robots will assume menial tasks, allowing humans to devote their time to pleasurable pursuits.^[103] He also argued that there would be biological robots which would serve as sex slaves, akin to those which Raël states he encountered on his visit to the Elohim planet.^[104] A single world currency will be introduced, as a prelude to the total abolition of money, while a unified world calendar will also be adopted.^[100]

Cloning and survival after death

Raëlians reject the existence of the ethereal soul that survives physical death,^[105] and instead argue that the only hope for immortality is through scientific means.^[102] The Raëlians claim that the Elohim will clone and thus recreate dead individuals, but only those whom they feel merit this recreation.^[106] In this, they believe in a "conditional immortality", with immortality for a minority and oblivion for the majority.^[106] The resurrection of Jesus, as recounted in the Gospels, is for instance explained as an example of Elohim cloning.^[106]

Raëlists advocate for the development of human cloning technology on Earth.^[104] Raëlians also believe that deceased individuals can be cloned so that they could be tried and punished for their crimes.^[106] After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, in which the attackers committed suicide, the Raëlists proposed that they could be resurrected through cloning to be tried for their actions.^{[107][108]} Due to its emphasis on attaining immortality, Raëlism deplors suicide; after the Heaven's Gate group engaged in a mass suicide in 1997, the Raëlian Church was among the new religions that issued press releases condemning suicide.^[109]

As opposed to the scientific definition of reproductive cloning which is simply the creation of a genetically identical living organism, Raëlians seek to both genetically clone individuals, rapidly accelerate growth of the clone to adulthood through a process like guided self-assembly of rapidly expanded cells or even nanotechnology.^[110] Raël told lawmakers that banning the development of human cloning was comparable to outlawing medical advances such "antibiotics, blood transfusions, and vaccines".^[111]

Morality, ethics, and gender roles

Raëlism insists on a strict ethical code for its followers.^[112] Members are expected to take responsibility for their own actions, respect cultural and racial difference, promote non-violence, strive for world peace, and share wealth and resources.^[112] They are also encouraged to uphold democracy, in the belief that humanity will ultimately make a democratic choice to introduce genocracy.^[112] The Raëlian opinion is that everything should be permitted so long as it harms no one and does not impede scientific and technological advance.^[100] Members are nevertheless advised against using recreational drugs or stimulants so as not to harm their health,^[113] although some practitioners have acknowledged that they use alcohol and cigarettes.^[114]



A woman on a bed adorned with the Raëlian symbol.

John M. Bozeman characterised the religion's morality as "progressive,"^[115] while Palmer referred to the group's "liberal social values",^[116] and Chryssides described Raëlist values as being "worldly and hedonistic".^[117] The scholar of religion Paul Oliver noted that the philosophy's ethics were "relativistic" in

that practitioners were encouraged to act in a manner that they felt to be appropriate to the context.^[26] Several scholars have also argued that it is a "world-affirming" religion, using the typology established by Roy Wallis.^[118]

Raël considered gender as an artificial construct and emphasised its fluidity.^[119] Raël avoided a macho persona and is instead often described by his followers as being "gentle" and "feminine".^[120] Palmer suggested that Raël regarded women as being superior to men because they were described as being more like the Elohim.^[60] In Raël's account, the inhabitants of the Elohim planet "have 10 percent of masculinity and 90 percent of femininity."^[60] Raël also proposed that if women were in positions of political power across the world, there would be no war.^[60] The Raëlians have participated with public protests for women's rights.^[121] At its June 2003 "Joy of Being Woman" demonstration, Raëlian women danced naked through the streets of Paris.^[121] Palmer described the Raëlians as feminists,^[122] although Raël criticised mainstream feminism, arguing that it "copied the shortcomings of men".^[123] Generally adopting the belief that the human body is malleable,^[124] Raëlism has a positive opinion of plastic surgery to improve physical appearance.^[125]



A Raëlist contingent on the street at the "Korea Queer Culture Festival" held in Seoul in 2014.

Raëlism teaches that the Elohim created humanity to feel sexual desire as a panacea for their violent impulses.^[126] It states that through the pursuit of sexual pleasure, new pathways between the neurons in the brain are forged, thus enhancing an individual's intelligence.^[127] Raëlism encourages its members to explore their sexuality;^[58] while Raël is often photographed with beautiful women and appears to be heterosexual, he encourages homosexual experimentation.^[128] Adopting an accepting attitude towards different forms of sexual orientation and expression,^[68] Raëlism teaches that differences in sexual orientation are rooted in the Elohim's primordial genetic programming and are something to be celebrated.^[129] Researching about the Raëlians of Quebec, Palmer found that many avoided categorising themselves using terms like "heterosexual", "homosexual", or "bisexual", finding these labels too limiting.^[130]

The Raëlians have stressed the need for respect and mutual consent in sexual behaviour.^[131] The group places a strong taboo on incest, rape, and sexual activities involving children.^[131] Anyone involved in the Movement found to have been involved in these latter activities is excommunicated,^[132] while Raël has recommended that paedophiles be sexually mutilated or placed in mental institutions.^[132] Those believed to have forced unwelcome sexual attention on another are excommunicated from the Movement for seven years—the amount of time Raëlians believe it takes for all of a person's biological cells to be regenerated.^[131]

The Raëlists reject both enforced monogamy and marriage, regarding these as institutions that have been enforced to enslave women and suppress sexual expression.^[133] The religion discourages its members from marrying.^[58] Members are also discouraged from contributing to global overpopulation;^[58] members are urged not to have more than two children, and ideally none at all.^[134] Raël states that should two individuals wish to procreate, their psychic control during the act of conception can affect any child resulting.^[135] The Raëlists also believe that once human cloning has been developed, biological reproduction will be obsolete.^[126] As well as endorsing the use of birth control and contraceptives,^[136] Raëlists endorse the use of abortion to terminate unwanted pregnancies.^[137] Raël has also argued that if a woman does not want a child who has been born then she should give it up to be raised by society.^[132]

Some Swiss government authorities responded to Raëlians' opinions about Sensual Meditation with a fear that Raëlians are a threat to public morals for supporting liberalized sex education for children. They express the opinion that such liberalized sex education teaches youngsters how to obtain sexual gratification which would encourage sexual abuse of underage children.^[138]

Religious symbol



The two variants of the Raëlian logo; the former uses the swastika in the centre and the latter a swirl representing the shape of a galaxy. The latter was adopted to avoid the connotations of Nazism that the swastika has in Western countries.

The symbol initially used to signify Raëlism was a six-pointed star with a swastika in the centre.^[139] Raël stated that this was the symbol he originally saw on the hull of the Elohim's spaceship.^[140] Raëlians regard this as a symbol of infinity.^[141] Practitioners also believe that this symbol helps facilitate their own telepathic contact with the Elohim.^[142] Raëlists typically wear a medallion of the symbol around their neck.^[42]

The Raëlian use of the swastika— a symbol that had been prominently used by Germany's Nazi Party during the 1930s and 1940s— resulted in accusations from the Montreal anti-cult organization Info-Cult that the Raëlians promoted fascism and racism.^[111] Outside Info-Cult's office, Raëlians spoke against the act of discriminating against a religious minority.^[111] On 2 January 1992, a dozen people protested against the use of the swastika in the Raëlian logo in Miami's Eden Roc Hotel. The use of the swastika and other Raelian practices has resulted in criticism from the group Hineni of Florida, an Orthodox Jewish organization.^[143]

In 1992, the Raëlian Movement altered their symbol, replacing the central swastika with a swirling shape. They explained that this was due to a request from the Elohim to change the symbol in order to help in negotiations with Israel for the building of the Extraterrestrial Embassy, although the country continued to deny their request.^{[144][145]} Raël also stated that the change was made to show respect to the victims of the Holocaust.^[99] The newly added swirling shape was explained as a depiction of a swirling galaxy.^[99] In 2005, the Israeli Raëlian Guide Kobi Drori stated that the Lebanese government was discussing proposals by the Raëlian movement to build their interplanetary embassy in Lebanon. However, one condition was that the Raëlians not display their logo on top of the building because it mixes a swastika and a Star of David. According to Drori, the Raëlians involved refused this offer, as they wished to keep the symbol as it was.^[146] From 1991 to 2007, the official Raëlian symbol in Europe and America did not have the original swastika, but Raël decided to make the original symbol, the Star of David intertwined with a swastika, the only official symbol of the Raelian Movement worldwide.^[147]

Practices

Raëlism involves a series of monthly meetings, initiations, and meditation rituals.^[56] Where possible, Raëlians congregate with fellow practitioners on the third Sunday of the month.^[148] It is the group's policy that these events occur in rented rooms rather than property that the Raëlian Movement itself has purchased.^[59] At the monthly meetings in Montreal, Raël himself often appeared.^[149]

The main ritual in Raëlism is the "transmission of the cellular plan", in which a Raëlian Guide placed their hands on another individual's head, through which the Guide is believed to receive the individual's cellular code and then telepathically transmit it to the Elohim.^[150] Doing so denotes the initiate's formal recognition of the Elohim as the creators of humanity.^[151] This is used as part of the "baptism", or initiation ceremony for



Raélians drawing with sand.

new members joining the Movement.^[152] Those in the Movement who hold the rank of bishop and priest are permitted to conduct these initiation ceremonies.^[153] In some instances, when the necessary individuals are present, Raël touches the head of a Raëlian bishop, who in turn touches that of a Raëlian priest, who touches the head of the initiate to ensure the "transmission".^[151] These "transmissions" are permitted to take place on one of four days in the year that play prominent role in the Raëlian calendar.^[154] The first examples took place in April 1976, when Raël carried out the "transmission" ceremonies of forty initiates on the Roc Plat.^[153]

The Raëlian calendar begins with the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima on 6 August 1945.^[155] Each year after this date is referred to as "AH" or "après Hiroshima" ("after Hiroshima").^[156] The Raélians celebrate four religious festivals each year, each marking one of Raël's encounters or revelations from the Elohim.^[152] These are the first Sunday in April, which is the date on which Raélians believe the Elohim created the first humans; 6 August, which marks the day of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in 1945; 7 October, which is the day in which Raël claims he encountered the Elohim for the second time, in 1974; and 13 December, marking the day that Raël allegedly first encountered the Elohim in 1973.^[112]

Sensual meditation

A major practice in Raëlism is **sensual meditation**, something that Raël outlined in his 1980 book *La méditation sensuelle*.^[99] Raélians are encouraged to take part in this guided meditation or visualisation on a daily basis, with the intent of transmitting love and telepathic links to the Elohim and achieving harmony with infinity.^[157] In this, practitioners are often assisted in this meditation through listening to an instruction tape.^[158] Sensual meditation sessions also take place communally at the group's monthly meetings, during which the assembled adherents sit or lie on the floor in a dimly lit room. They are then guided through it by a Raëlian Guide speaking through a microphone;^[159] the meditation may be accompanied by New Age music.^[160]

Sensual meditation begins with a relaxation exercise known as *harmonisation avec l'infini* ("harmonization with the infinite").^[159] One stage of this process is "oxygenation", which entails deep breathing.^[161] Practitioners are taught to relax and then envision themselves expanding their frame of reference until the self becomes only a tiny speck within the universe.^[162] They are then tasked with visualising the bones and organs of the body, and ultimately the atoms within the body itself.^[163] The guided meditation they encourages the meditators to imagine themselves being on the Elohim's planet and communicating telepathically with these aliens.^[164]

Palmer found that Raélians varyingly described a sense of physical well-being, psychic abilities, or sexual arousal during these meditations and interpreted these as evidence that they were in telepathic contact with the Elohim.^[165] The goal of sensual meditation is to achieve a "cosmic orgasm",^[166] which is characterised as the ultimate experience a person can have.^[167] Palmer quoted one senior Raëlian as describing the "cosmic orgasm" as "the sensual experience of the unity between the self and the universe".^[159]

History

Origins

Claude Vorilhon was born in Ambert, France on 30 September 1946.^[168] He was the illegitimate son of a 15-year-old mother; his father had been a Sephardi Jew then in hiding from the Nazi authorities.^[168] Vorilhon later recounted being raised as an atheist by his grandmother and aunt, although for a time attended a Roman Catholic boarding school.^[168] As a teenager, Vorilhon hitch-hiked to Paris where he pursued a career as a singer, having several successful singles using the name "Claude Celleir."^[169] He then married a nurse and had two children with her.^[170] In 1973, he founded the racing car magazine *Auto Pop* and also worked as a test driver for such vehicles.^[170] In November 1973, a new law was introduced in France banning speeding on the highway, ending his work as a test driver.^[170] *Auto Pop* ceased publication in September 1974.^[171]



The Puy Lassolas, the mountain where Raël claimed he first encountered the Elohim in 1973.

There had been a range of reported UFO sightings in 1970s France,^[172] and the ancient astronaut theory was "very much in vogue" in the country by the middle of that decade.^[173] In early 1974, Vorilhon announced that in December 1973 he had been contacted by the Elohim while walking along the Puy Lassolas mountain. He began promoting these ideas in interviews on French television and radio.^[174] He began lecturing on his alleged experiences in Paris, where he attracted a group of followers,^[175] many of whom were science-fiction fans or amateur ufologists.^[173] In December 1974 an organisation based on his ideas, the *Mouvement pour l'accueil des Elohim créateurs de l'humanité* (MADECH; "Movement for the Welcoming of the Elohim, Creators of Humanity"), was launched.^[175] Vorilhon began referring to himself as "Raël."^[175] A newsletter, *Apocalypse*, began publication in October 1974.^[175] MADECH began raising money for the self-publication of Vorilhon's first book,^[175] which appeared as *Le Livre Qui Dit La Vérité* that year.^[43] Raélians treat his first book with reverence, often referring to it simple as *Le livré* ("the book").^[176]

Some members of MADECH wanted the organisation to take a broader interest in Ufology beyond Raël's own claims and also desired to restrict his authority within the group.^[175] Amid an internal power struggle, Raël called an emergency meeting in April 1975; the feud continued and in July he dismissed MADECH's executives and replaced them with seven of his own supporters.^[177] Raël also announced that he had been contacted by the Elohim for a second time and that on this occasion they had taken him to visit their planet. He outlined these claims in his 1975 book *Les Extra-Terrestes M'ont Emmené Sur Leur Planete*.^[178] Opposition to Raël remained evident in MADECH and in 1976 he disbanded the group, beginning the Raëlian Movement as a replacement in February 1976.^[179] It operated along a strict hierarchy, with Raël as its director, referred to as the "Guide of Guides."^[180] Unlike MADECH, it promoted a broader religious structure, including ritual practices.^[181] It continued publication of *Apocalypse* to spread its message.^[180]

In 1976, the Raélians sent a mission to the Canadian province of Quebec to attract converts in the Francophone region.^[182] The next year a Quebecois branch of the Movement was established.^[183] Raël's first two books were then published in a single English edition, titled *Space Aliens Took Me to Their Planet* in 1978 and republished as *The Message Given To Me By Extra-Terrestrials: They Took Me to their Planet* in 1986 and, in a new translation, as *The Final Message* in 1998.^[43] He expanded on his ideas with several additional books: *Accueillir Les Extra-Terrestes* in 1979 (translated as *Let's Welcome Our Fathers from Space* in 1986),^[43] *La Méditation Sensuelle* in 1980 (translated as *Sensual Meditation* in 1986), and *Geniocracy*.^[43]

Later development

In 1980, the Raélians sent a mission to Japan, followed by one to Africa in 1982, and one to Australia in 1990.^[184] In the early 1980s the Movement also bought a campground near Albi in southern France, which they named Eden.^[185] In 1984, Raël underwent a year's retreat in which he avoided public appearance.^[186] The next year, his first wife left both him and the movement;^[132] he subsequently began a relationship with a

Japanese Raëlian, Lisa Sunagawa, for several years.^[187] During the mid-1990s, Raël returned to his hobby of motor racing, competing in the 1995 Canadian Grand Prix and the 1998 Motorola Cup in Miami before retiring from the sport in 2001.^[188] In 1992, a schism appeared in the religion as a group of about forty practitioners were expelled. They formed a rival, smaller group, the Apostles of the Last Days, espousing the belief that Raël had been the original spokesman of the Elohim but had been taken over by Satan.^[189]

In 1992, the Raëlian Movement bought 115 hectares of land near Valcourt in Quebec, naming this property Le Jardin du Prophète ("the Garden of the Prophet").^[185] It was on this property in 1997 that the organisation opened UFOland, a museum about ufology. Its purpose was to raise money for the Elohim Embassy, but in 2001 it was closed to the public, having proved financially unviable to maintain.^[190] It was also during 1997, a month after Ian Wilmut announced the birth of Dolly the Sheep, a successful clone, that Raël established Valiant Venture as a company to explore the commercial applications of cloning technology.^[191] Through it came Clonaid, of which the Raëlian Bishop Brigitte Boisselier was co-founder, director, and spokesperson.^[27] The initiation of this group and its promotion of human cloning incited much debate among other religious figures, scientists, and ethicists.^[27] Raël and Boisselier both spoke before US President Bill Clinton's Congress hearing on the topic of human cloning in March 2001.^[192]



Two Raëlians visiting UFOland, the Quebec museum which the Raëlians established in 1997.

At the July 1998 training camp in the Jardins des Prophètes, Raël announced that in December 1997 he had received another revelation from the Elohim, commanding him to form a new grouping within the Raëlian Movement, the Order of Raël's Angels.^[193] This was to be a secret society,^[129] open only to women who would become the consorts of the Elohim after their arrival on Earth.^[193] A newsletter, *Plumes d'Ange* (Angel Feathers), was then issued containing information about the Order.^[155] Palmer noted that by emphasising the unique qualities of women, the formation of this group challenged the established Raëlian view that men and women are wholly equal and interchangeable.^[129]



Brigitte Boisselier (left) took on a senior role in the Raëlian Movement.

In 2001, Raël toured Asia, giving seminars.^[194] That year he married for a second time, to a 16-year-old ballet student. Raëlianism discourages marriage, and this instance was done for expediency, because he had been questioned by customs officials when traveling with her across borders. They subsequently divorced but continued to live together as a couple.^[195] In November 2002, a local man vandalised the group's Jardins des Prophètes property, causing significant damage.^[196] Raël stated that this had been a preliminary test of the "Abraham Project," a joint operation between the Central Intelligence Agency and the French intelligence agencies to assassinate him using schizophrenics directed by a type of mind control.^[197]

In December 2002 Boisselier announced that Clonaid's work had resulted in the birth of a baby, Eve, which she claimed was the world's first human clone.^[198] The child was not presented for scrutiny by scientists;^[199] thus, the IRM's allegations regarding Baby Eve were never substantiated by the scientific community.^[92] Many commentators believed that the announcement had been a hoax,^[200] and it caused much ridicule of the Raëlians.^[201] In January 2003 the Raëlians declared that the parents of Eve had hidden themselves to evade attention.^[202] The appearance of Baby Eve gained the Raëlians much international press coverage,^[92] with the group claiming this publicity

brought it about 5000 new members.^[203] Boisselier announced periodically that further clone infants had been born, in the Netherlands, Japan, South Korea, and Australia, although the press increasingly believed the situation was a hoax and started boycotting Raëlian press conferences.^[199] In January 2003, Raël announced Boisselier as his appointed successor.^[199] That year, he also published *The Maitreya*, in which he identified himself with the eponymous figure from Buddhist prophecy.^[57]

In response to Raël's association with Clonaid, South Korean immigration authorities at the airport denied him entry into their country in 2003.^[204] This decision resulted in the quick cancellation of the planned Raëlian seminar which seven hundred registered for. Raëlians of South Korea were instructed by Raël to protest near the Ministry of Health and Welfare that ordered him to leave.^{[204][205]} Officials detained Raël for nine hours at Incheon International Airport before he and his wife Sophie de Niverville left for Tokyo from where they took another airplane on their way back to Canada. Raël responded by saying that Korean officials treated him like a "North Korean" and that he would wait for an apology before coming back to Korea.^[205] Raël appeared alongside a group of women, "Raël's Girls", in the October 2004 issue of Playboy.^{[5][206]} In 2009, the Church announced plans for a new UFOland in Las Vegas.^[5]

Organization and structure

The main organization is known as the International Raëlian Movement (IRM),^[207] which is also known as the Raëlian Church.^[59] A strictly hierarchical organization,^[180] there are two levels of membership.^[208] The majority of members are referred to simply as "Raëlians",^[59] while those who are in the higher levels controlling the Movement are referred to as the "Structure."^[209]

Member hierarchy

The Structure is divided along a six-tiered system.^[212] Raël is at the top of the Raëlian Church, being referred to as the "Guide of Guides."^[180] Senior members of the Structure re-elect him to that position each seven years.^[153] Below Raël are the "Bishop Guides", then the "Priest Guides", then the "Animators", then the "Assistant Animators", and finally the "Probationers".^[59] Those characterised as "Guides" are expected to be exemplars for the rest of the movement, for instance by strictly adhering to the avoidance of alcohol, caffeine, and recreational drugs.^[109] Race, gender, and sexual orientation are no barrier to rising through the ranks of the group's leadership structure.^[129] However, Palmer noted that by the mid-1990s there were few women in leadership positions within the organisation.^[213]

Members of the Raëlian structure begin as level 0 "trainees" during annual seminars. The Raelian structure said in 2007 to have about 2,300 members,^[214] 170 "Raëlian guides",^[215] and 41 bishops.^[216]

Three Raëlian Bishops sit on a "Council of the Wise" which monitors heresy and arranges punishment for transgressors.^[217] When they seek to punish an individual it is usually for a seven-year "excommunication"; it lasts seven years because Raëlians believe that it takes this long for every cell in the

Level 6:

Guide of Guides
Planetary guide

| Level 5: | Level 4: | Level 3: |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Bishop</i> | <i>Priest</i> | <i>Assistant Priest</i> |
| <i>Continental head</i> | <i>National guide</i> | <i>Regional guide</i> |
| <i>National guide</i> | <i>Regional guide</i> | |
| <i>Regional guide</i> | | |

| Level 2: | Level 1: |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Organizer</i> | <i>Assistant Organizer</i> |

Level 0:

Trainee

Sources^{[210][211]}

human body to be replaced.^[59] In more severe cases, the council can oversee a "demarking", by which they cancel the transmission of the cellular code, believing that this revokes the individual's hope for immortality through cloning.^[59]

Members pay an annual membership fee to the Raëlian Movement.^[153] Full members of the Movement are encouraged to tithe ten percent of their income to go to the organisation,^[218] although this is not enforced.^[219] This tithe is then divided up, with 3% going to the national branch and 7% to the International Movement's central administration.^[220] An additional 1% may go to Raël himself.^[184] In her research, Palmer found many practitioners who admitted to not paying the tithe.^[114] It is these tithes and membership fees, coupled with the sales of Raël's books, that represent the International Raëlian Movement's main income.^[131] This money is then saved toward the construction of the Elohim Embassy or spent on the production of flyers, books, videos, and other material used to disseminate the Raëlian message.^[184]

According to Michel Beluet, the former director of a Raëlian-built museum called UFOland, the only pressure exerted on members is to attend annual Raëlian seminars, which allows members convinced of Raël's enthusiasm to voluntarily tithe.^{[96]:p. 209} Palmer cited Raël, who said that more than 60% of the Raëlian Movement's members do not tithe.^{[96]:p. 64} Dawson College students conducted a survey of the membership in Canada in 1991 which found that only one-third of respondents tithed.^{[96]:p. 209}

The group initially owned a country estate in Albi, France, before later obtaining one in Valcourt, Quebec.^[59]

Order of Angels

Women comprise only a third of the membership in the Raëlian Church.^{[96]:p. 117} In 1998, Raël established a new, all-female group within the broader movement known as the Order of Raël's Angels, the members of which are trained to become the consorts of the Elohim.^[126] He stated that these women would be the only humans permitted contact with the Elohim after the latter arrive on Earth, and that they will be the only people allowed to enter the Elohim's embassy.^[221] He further adds that they will serve as the Elohim's liaisons with human politicians, scientists, and journalists.^[221] Raël stated that it was only women who could be Angels because men were not feminine enough for the extremely gentle, delicate, and sensitive Elohim.^[221] Trans women were permitted entry; Raël praised one transgender member for "choosing to be a woman".^[125]

The Order of Raël's Angels has a six-tiered structure, symmetrical with the six-tiered structure of the Raëlian Movement as a whole.^[222] Raël divides the Angels into three groups: the White, Pink, and Golden Ribbon Angels.^[222] White Angels wear white feathers on a necklace, can choose human lovers, and are tasked with operating in the world to attract more women into the Raëlian movement.^[223] Pink Angels wear a pink feather on a necklace and are considered by Raël to be the "Chosen Ones" who will become the consorts of the Elohim. They are expected to live a sequestered life, initially in the Jardins des Prophètes community, and are expected to reserve their sexual activity for the extraterrestrials.^[224] The Gold Ribbon Angels are characterised by a gold cord worn around the neck. They are handpicked by Raël for their physical beauty, and are described as being the first humans who will approach the Elohim on the latter's arrival on Earth.^[224] The Pink and Gold Ribbon Angels are expected to abstain from sexual activity with most other humans but should receive instruction in alien lovemaking from Raël himself as well as engaging in sexual acts alone or with other Angels.^[225]

The Angels are meant to cultivate their feminine and nurturing side.^[226] They tasked with pursuing self-transformation, striving to please the Elohim and resemble them more closely by cultivating discipline, serenity, harmony, purity, humility, charisma, and both internal and external beauty.^[227] The Angels are instructed to regularly pray to the Elohim and engage in much meditation.^[194] They are encouraged to limit their meat consumption and to avoid eating carbohydrates and sugar so as to maintain their physical beauty.^[125] They have proved useful for the group's public relations and have also provided volunteers for its



Raëlian women at the "Korea Love Hug" festival in Seoul, South Korea.

human cloning experiments.^{[228][229]} The Order has also engaged in the selling of human ova on the internet, launching a website to do so in 1999.^[230] Raël stated that this would help the Angels achieve financial independence.^[121]

The Order was insulated from the rest of the religion, with the Angels' living quarters for instance being off-limits to non-Angels.^[231] Access to the Angels is strictly limited for both journalists and scholars.^[232] Gold Ribbon Angels have been demoted from this status as they have aged, on the explanation that as their physical beauty has deteriorated they are no longer suited to greeting the Elohim. These demoted individuals are then tasked with training younger replacements.^[233] Other individuals have been deprived of their status as Angels altogether, when they are perceived to have acted in contravention of the group's ethos.^[234]

The initiation rites include declaring an oath or making a contract in which one agrees to become defender of the Raëlian ideology and its founder Raël.^{[235][236]} The Order of Angels has its own hierarchy of "rose angels" and "white angels" which, as of 2003, are six and 160 women, respectively.^[237] A few days later, *Time* magazine wrote that French chemist Brigitte Boisselier was an Order of Angels member.^[238] Around this time, cult specialist Mike Kropveld termed

the Order of Angels "one of the most transparent movements" he had witnessed, though he was alarmed by the women's promise to defend Raël's life with their own bodies.^[236]

Raël has instructed some women members to play a pro-sex feminist role in the Raëlian Church. "Rael's Girls" is another group of women in the religion which are against the suppression of feminine acts of pleasure, including sexual intercourse with men or women. Rael's Girls consists solely of women who work in the sex industry.^[239] The women of Rael's Girls say there is not any reason to repent for performing striptease or being a prostitute.^{[239][240]} This organization was established "to support the choice of the women who are working in the sex industry".^[241]

Seminars

The Raëlian Church holds week-long summer seminars known as "Stages of Awakening."^[148] These include daily lectures by Raël, sensual meditation sessions, periods of fasting and feasting, testimonials, and various alternative therapies.^[59] These seminars are used by Raëlians as an opportunity to form friendships or sexual relationships.^[185] Attendees at these seminars wear white togas with name tags;^[59] they have also used colored bracelets to indicate whether they wanted to be alone, be in a couple, or simply meet people.^[242]

On a yearly basis, Raëlian members organize seminars that are often attractive to the sexually adventurous.^[243] At one camp, participants were invited to dress in the clothes of the opposite gender as part of an exercise to play with the fluidity of gender expression.^{[160][235]} Activities such as observations of one's own genitals and masturbation with them disturbed Brigitte McCann, a *Calgary Sun* reporter who entered one of the Raëlian seminars.^[244] Susan J. Palmer said a French journalist went to a Raëlian Seminar in 1991 and



A Raëlian protest sign is raised at political rally demanding the return of U.S. troops from foreign military engagements.

taped couples having sexual intercourse in tents. These tapes gained widespread negative publicity— with news stories that described these practices as perverted and a form of brainwashing.^[111] Following these seminars, a second seminar, this time restricted to members of the Structure, takes place.^[185]

Other activities, outreach and advocacy

The International Raëlian Movement have established a range of projects through which to promote their ideology.^[245] In February 1997, they created Clonaid, a company devoted to human cloning.^[245] Individuals can bank a sample of their DNA with the group, which offers to then produce a single clone of the individual after they die.^[245] Another Raëlian company, Ovulaid, seeks to provide ovaries for individuals and couples who cannot biologically produce their offspring.^[245] It expresses its intention to develop technologies that can create "designer babies" to the desired specification of their client.^[245] An additional project was Insuracclone, designed to clone organs for an individual in the event of future organ failure,^[246] and Clonapet, which stated that it would clone people's pets after they had died.^[245] In 2000, the Raëlians launched NOPEDO, a group to combat paedophilia.^[132] In 2009 it launched its "Adopt a Clitoris" project to raise money to create a hospital in Africa to reverse damage caused by female genital mutilation (FGM);^[247] it has also established Clitoraid, an organization whose mission is to oppose FGM.^{[248][249]} Another of the groups established by the Raëlian Church is the Raëlian Association of Sexual Minorities (ARAMAIS), an LGBT rights group.^[132]

Activism

The Raëlians are known for their social and political activism, specifically for women's rights, gay rights, opposition to racism, banning nuclear testing, and promoting genetically-modified foods.^[132] Throughout the history of Raëlism, members of the Raëlian Church have toured public settings advocating masturbation, condoms and birth control.^[229]

Pro-GMO: On 6 August 2003, the first day of Raëlian year 58 AH,^[250] a tech article on the USA Today newspaper mentions an "unlikely ally" of the Monsanto Company, the Raëlian Movement of Brazil. The religion gave vocal support in response to the company's support for genetically modified organisms particularly in their country. Brazilian farmers have been using Monsanto's genetically engineered soy plants as well as the Roundup herbicide to which it was artificially adapted. The Raëlians spoke against the Brazilian government's ban on GMOs.^[251] The movement is supportive of genetically-modified foods.^[106]

Anti-war: In 2006, About 30 Raëlians, some topless, took part in an anti-war demonstration in Seoul, South Korea.^[252] In 2003, Raëlians in white alien costumes bore signs bearing the message "NO WAR ... ET wants Peace, too!" to protest the 2003 Invasion of Iraq.^[253]

Anti-Catholic: In 1992 Catholic schools in Montreal, Quebec, Canada objected to a proposed condom vending machine as contrary to their mission. In response, Raëlian guides, in an event dubbed "Operation Condom", gave the Catholic students ten thousand condoms. The Commissioner of Catholic schools for Montreal said they could do nothing to stop them.^{[111][254]} Raël presents himself as an opponent of the Roman Catholic Church in his writings, criticising it for perverting the meaning of the Bible.^[25]



Raëlians protesting the South Korean government's ban on Raël entering the country.

In July 2001, Raélians distributed leaflets on the streets of Italy and Switzerland protesting the existence of more than a hundred child molesters among Roman Catholic clergy in France. They recommended that parents should not send their children to Catholic confession. The Episcopal vicar of Geneva sued the Raëlian Church for libel but did not win.^{[96]:p. 91}^[255] The judge did not accept the charges for the reason that the Raélians were not attacking the whole of the Catholic Church.^{[96]:p. 91} In October 2002, Raélians in a Canadian anti-clerical parade handed out Christian crosses to high school students. The students were invited to burn the crosses in a park not far from Montreal's Mount Royal and to sign letters of apostasy from the Roman Catholic Church. The Quebec Association of Bishops called this "incitement to hatred", and several school boards attempted to prevent their students from meeting Raélians.^{[96]:p. 92}

Topless Rights of Women

Several Raëlian groups in the United States have organized annual protests, claiming that women should have the same legal right to go topless in public that men enjoy without fear of arrest for indecent exposure.^[256] Some have called this a publicity stunt designed to recruit members. Go Topless Day is their annual event, with women protesting topless except for nipple pasties to avoid arrest. It is held near 26 August, the anniversary of the day women were given the USA right to vote.^[257]

Intentional controversy

Palmer stated that the Raëlian Movement was involved in "concocting, then carefully monitoring, a mild level of cultural conflict" to generate publicity for the group.^[258] She compared this deliberate use of controversy to the actions of Anton LaVey's Church of Satan, which behaved in a similar fashion during the 1960s and 1970s.^[258] This opinion is shared by Mike Kropveld, executive director of Info-Cult, who says the controversy results in criticism by both religious and non-religious people.^[236] Palmer also noted that Raël engages in "blatant courtship of the media" to draw attention to his religion.^[259] When media has adopted a mocking tone toward the religion, Raël has urged its followers to defend their beliefs, resulting in letter writing campaigns and sometimes lawsuits.^[259]

In 1992, the IRM began a series of protests after the Montreal Catholic School Commission decided to veto the addition of condom machines to the bathrooms of Roman Catholic high schools in Quebec. The Raélians parked a "condom-mobile" outside Roman Catholic high schools in Quebec and Ontario from which they dispensed contraceptives to the pupils.^[260] In 1993, the Raélians organised a conference on masturbation in Quebec, at which speeches were given by Raël, Betty Dodson, and Daniel Chaloot. Advertising this cause, Raélians handed out badges with "Out à la masturbation" written on them to attendees at the Montreal Jazz Festival.^[261]

The book *Yes to Human Cloning* (2001) attracted media attention after its release, including segments on *20/20* and *60 Minutes*.^{[262]:p. 156} Biophysicist Gregory Stock described the Raëlian Clonaid project as "sufficiently quirky to command instant media attention."^{[263]:p. 157} It has been estimated that the group received free publicity worth US\$500 million as a result of the Clonaid announcement.^{[264]:p. 15} Mark Hunt, a lawyer and politician who wished to clone his dead son with the help of the Clonaid services, was overwhelmed by the volume of media attention and in an interview said that Clonaid's chief executive had become a "press hog".^{[265]:p. 170}^{[266]:p. 283}^{[267]:356}

Demographics

Established in France, Raëlism initially spread in Francophone areas of Europe, Africa, and North America.^[75] In 1999, Bozeman noted that the Movement had around 35,000 members,^[40] while in 2003 Chryssides stated that it had about 55,000 members worldwide.^[13] By the early 2010s, the group was

claiming 60,000 members internationally, something which Palmer and Sentes thought was "probably inflated".^[268] As of the mid-1990s, membership clustered predominantly in France, Quebec, and Japan.^[102] Palmer noted that in Canada, Raëlism had faced difficulty spreading from Quebec and into the country's Anglophone provinces.^[160]

In 1989, the sociologist Eileen Barker noted that there were "only a dozen or so" committed members of the religion in Britain.^[269] In 2001, the sociologist David V. Barrett suggested that there were around 40 to 50 committed members in the country and around 500 sympathisers.^[75] In 2003, Chryssides commented that there were about 40 members and 200 sympathisers in Britain.^[13]

An internal survey of the group's members in 1988 found that there were almost double as many men as women in the Movement.^[270] Similarly, based on her attendance at Raëlian events in Quebec, Palmer noted that men usually outnumbered women.^[160] She noted that many of the men acted in an effeminate fashion,^[160] and were often attracted to other men.^[130] Palmer also observed several transvestites at the meetings,^[271] and found that a significant number of the women present worked as strippers.^[130] On these grounds, she suggested that Raëlism had a particular appeal for "people who define themselves as sexually marginal".^[271] Palmer also suggested that Raëlism had an appeal for "committed atheists who are hopelessly secularized yet suffering from the existential angst of living in a world devoid of order and higher values".^[272]



Raëlians promoting "Go Topless Day" in Paris in 2018.

Conversion and deconversion

Raëlians engage in missionary activities to attract new people to their religion.^[184] Members buy books written by Raël and then sell them on the street, hoping to recoup their original costs in doing so.^[131] Raëlians often encounter much resistance to their attempts to convert others; Raël explains that this is to be expected, for the Elohim told him that only 4% of humanity is intelligent enough to be receptive to the Raëlian message.^[184] Any Raëlian found trying to force someone to convert is banned from the organisation for seven years, the period which Raëlians believe it takes for every cell in the body to be replaced.^[102]



A Raëlian lecturing on his religion at Onyang High School in South Korea.

Since 1979, new members of the Raëlian Movement have been expected to sign an "Act of Apostasy,"^[273] and send a letter of apostasy to any religious organisation that they were previously involved with.^[274] They also sign a contract permitting a mortician to cut a piece of bone from their forehead after death, which they understand as the "Third Eye." This specimen will be stored in ice at a Swiss facility until the Elohim return, at which time it could be used to facilitate the cloning of the deceased individual.^[275] This process is known as the "lifting of the frontal bone."^[159] In addition, those joining are expected to bequeath their assets to the local Raëlian group,^[57] although this is not obligatory.^[159]

Former clergy of mainstream religions have joined the Raëlian Church, especially in Quebec.^{[276][277][278]} The structure of the movement had promoted some of them to the level of Priest or Bishop due to "extensive Bible training and teaching skills".^[277] Two ex-Roman Catholic priests, Victor Legendre^[278] and Charles-Yvan Giroux,^[279] converted to Raëlianism.^[280] A former bishop of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) joined the Raelian Movement so that he could

be openly homosexual.^[276] Raëlian Mark Woodgate stated that 8% of Raëlians worldwide are former Latter-day Saints. Couples who have converted from different religions from each other are common, especially with spouses who were Christians or Buddhists.^[281]

Reception

Raëlism has also experienced academic research from scholars of religion, especially from Susan J. Palmer, who first encountered the religion in Montreal in 1987.^[282] She initially thought that she "had never encountered an NRM that was so cooperative, that actually liked being studied."^[283] Between 2002 and 2003, Palmer was blacklisted by the group, banned from attending any more of its meetings.^[284] The group informed Palmer that she had now lost the opportunity to meet the Elohim on their arrival.^[284] Palmer then drew upon both her interviews with active members and Raël's published monographs to produce her book on Raëlism, *Aliens Adored*.^[285] Palmer noted that in wider society, Raëlism is "universally mocked";^[286] Chrissyides noted that at conferences of scholars of religion, where individuals are accustomed to studying a broad and diverse range of belief systems, attendees still often treated Raëlian beliefs with "incredulity or even mirth".^[13]



A group of Raëlians protesting for gay rights in Wien, Austria.

Lewis noted that people who were not part of the Raëlian Movement tend to consider Raël's claims, as presented in his writing, as a conscious forgery.^[287] Raëlism has received a critical reception from both ex-Raëlians and members of the anti-cult movement.^[87] Jean-Denis Saint-Cyr, a high-ranking member of the Raëlian movement, for instance accused Raël of plagiarising the earlier writings of Sedy in creating his religion.^[87] Another prominent apostate, the Quebecois Erick Lamarche—who calls himself Exraël—quit while claiming that too much money was being donated to Raël and the senior members so that they could have luxurious lifestyles.^[288] Critics have argued that in promoting a governance system whereby people are graded by their intelligence, coupled with its emphasis on

genetic engineering, Raëlism bears similarities with Nazism.^[289] These allegations of neo-Nazi sympathies have also included emphasising the Raëlian use of the swastika as a symbol.^[290]

Palmer related that journalists she had encountered were often "fishing" for "bad things" to say about the Raëlians.^[291] Many journalists sought to portray Raël as a danger to his followers, akin to David Koresh or Jim Jones, although Palmer thought this "ludicrous", stating that Raël was "not prone to violence".^[34] Journalists also sought to present him as someone who sexually exploited his female members, which again Palmer found no evidence for.^[292] Following statements that the Order of Raël's Angels would do anything for Raël, there was also press speculation that the group would engage in mass suicide akin to that of the Order of the Solar Temple.^[293] Palmer argued that the Raëlians lacked the paranoid mentality and demonization of the outside world that had been common to new religious movements that resorted to violence.^[294]

In 2005, two amateur documentary makers, Abdullah Hashem and Joseph McGowen, were welcomed into a Raëlian seminar and had permission to videotape it. They stated that the footage they took makes it clear that the Raëlian Movement is a cult which should disband. A Raëlian guide said in a Wired News interview that he was not ashamed of what is shown and that he has no concerns about this incident.^{[295][296]} In "International Raëlian Movement v. Hashem," which began in 2008, the IRM filed multiple motions claiming that the purported filmmakers had misrepresented themselves in the making of the movie, and had filmed the "documentary" intending to gain access to copyrighted materials and commit defamation and fraud.^[297] The IRM also alleged the defendants had engaged in several criminal acts, under the RICO Act, including mail and wire fraud, threats of violence, blackmail, extortion and money laundering. McGowen responded to, and was dismissed from, the lawsuit in 2009. A default judgement was made against Hashem in August 2011, because

"the defaulting defendants have not appeared, have not opposed plaintiff's motions in any way, and have made no showing that their failure to respond to the complaint is due to excusable neglect." Hashem was ordered to return the film footage to IRM within 30 days of the decision, although motions for summary damages by IRM were denied, with the court stating they had "failed to offer evidence of a concrete financial loss proximately caused by defendants."^[298]

See also

- [Korindo \(Raëlian temple\)](#)
- [Nontheistic religions](#)

Notes

- a. [/ˈreɪlɪzəm/](#)
- b. [/reɪl/](#)

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- [Official website \(http://rael.org/\)](http://rael.org/)

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Raël

Raël^[a] (born **Claude Maurice Marcel Vorilhon**,^[b] 30 September 1946)^[2] is a French journalist who founded and currently leads the Raëlian Movement, an international UFO religion.

Prior to becoming a religious leader, Raël, then known as Claude Vorilhon, worked as sports-car journalist and test driver for his own car-racing magazine, *Autopop*.^{[3][4]} Following a purported extraterrestrial encounter in December 1973, he formed the Raëlian Movement and changed his name to Raël (meaning "messenger of the Elohim").^[5] He later published several books, which detail the encounter with a being called Yahweh in 1973.^[5] He traveled the world to promote his books for over 30 years.^[6]

| Raël Claude Vorilhon | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Born | 30 September 1946 <div>Vichy, Allier, France^[1]</div> |
| School | <u>Raëlism</u> |
| Main interests | <u>Universal morality</u> |
| Notable ideas | <u>Sensual meditation</u> <u>Geniocracy</u> <u>Raëlian cosmology</u> <u>Message from the designers</u> |

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Early life

Vorilhon was born in Vichy, Allier, France.^[1] He was raised in Ambert in the home of his maternal grandmother, who was atheist.^[7] His father was Jewish and his mother was a "devout atheist".^[8] He attended a Catholic boarding school with Le Puy-en-Velay and caused a scandal by taking part in communion without being baptized.^[7] His parents withdrew him from the boarding school to put him in school in Ambert.^[7]

At the age of 15, Vorilhon ran away from boarding school and hitchhiked to Paris, where he spent three years playing music on the streets and in cafés and cabarets. He met with Lucien Morisse, the director of a national radio program, who was scouting for young talent. Vorilhon signed a record contract^[9] and became a rising teen pop star on the radio.^[9] He took on a new identity, assuming the name Claude Celler, and released six singles, including a minor hit song, "Le miel et la cannelle" (Honey and Cinnamon).^[9] Vorilhon had a passion for the songs of Belgian singer Jacques Brel, and tried to imitate his singing style.^[7] He was saving up his money to buy a racing car, a dream he had since he was a young boy, but his prospects as a singer came to an abrupt end when Morisse, his sponsor, committed suicide in September 1970.^[10]

Vorilhon decided to work as a sports journalist to gain access to the world of car racing. He met Marie-Paul Cristini, a nurse.^[10] They moved to Clermont-Ferrand, where Vorilhon started his own publishing house.^[11] He created a sports car magazine entitled *Autopop*, whose first issue was released in May 1971.^[3] One of the tasks for his new startup was the position of testing new automobiles, which enabled him to enter the motor racing world.^[11]

The Raëlian messages

According to the book *Le Livre qui dit la vérité* ("The Book Which Tells the Truth"), Vorilhon had an alien visitation on 13 December 1973. In a secluded area within a French volcanic crater, an extraterrestrial being came out of a craft that had descended gently from the sky, and told him, in French, that he had come for the sole purpose of meeting with him. Raël said that he was given a message by this alien and told that it was his mission to pass this message on to the people of Earth.^[12]

The book states that advanced human scientists from another planet with 25,000 years of scientific advances created all life on Earth through DNA manipulation.^{[13][14]} These scientists, Raël said, were originally called Elohim or "those who came from the sky".^[15] He wrote that some forty^[16] prophets in Earth's history were sent by Elohim,^[17] but their messages were distorted^[18] by humans, largely because of the difference in the level of civilization between the advanced race and Earth's primitive one.^[19]

Raël said he was given the mission of informing the world of humanity's origins in anticipation of the return of these extraterrestrials by building a residential embassy in neutral territory.^[20] He stated that certain mysteries were explained to him based on new interpretations of sacred texts such as the Bible.^[21] He said that, on 7 October 1975, he was contacted by one of the Elohim, who took him to another planet to meet Buddha, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. He stated that his second book, *Les extra-terrestres m'ont emmené sur leur planète* ("Extraterrestrials Took Me To Their Planet"), relates the teaching he received from these people. In this book, Raël describes harmonious and peaceable beings, who were free of money, sickness, and war.^[22]

In 1974, Raël decided to give up his automobile magazine, *Autopop*.^[3] That September, the last issue, number 34, was published.^[3] Raël then devoted himself to the task he said was given by his "biological father", an extraterrestrial named Yahweh.^[23] Shortly after a first public conference, Raël founded MADECH – a group of people interested in helping him in his task, which later became the *International Raëlian Movement*.^[24]

Marriages

Raël has been married three times.^[25]

His first wife was Marie-Paul Cristini.^[26] Sociologist Susan J. Palmer said that Cristini, a nurse, diagnosed Raël as clinically depressed after he appeared at her doorstep in 1987, burnt out from the tasks he carried out within the movement.^[27]

Raël focused on spreading his message in Japan in the 1980s, and by 1987, he met Lisa Sunagawa. Sunagawa soon began accompanying Raël during his travels to Lima, Miami, Brazil, and Martinique. In a television documentary, *They're Coming!* (1990) by Radio Canada, Raël was seen with four women,^[28] while Lisa, in slow-motion, wore a pink tutu and held hands with him.^[25]

Raël separated from Sunagawa sometime between 1990 and 1992. Around that time, Sophie de Niverville, whose mother and aunt were both Raélians, was convinced of the authenticity of the messages. Sophie received a Raëlian baptism at age 15. When she turned 16, she married Raël at Montreal's city hall. During a December 2001 interview with sociologist Susan J. Palmer, Sophie spoke positively about Raël, despite their divorce the previous year; they continued to live together.^[29]

Racecar driver

In 1994, wealthy Japanese Raélians rented a racecar and showed it to Raël. They believed that if Raël would race it, it would generate publicity for the movement. Raël accepted the offer on the condition that the funding not come from member tithes or embassy funding. Funding for Raël's races, which took place in the 1990s and early 2000s, came mostly from well-funded European and Japanese people.^[30] His best finishes included "a 3rd place finish in GT 1 in Lime Rock with the Mosler Raptor in 1997, and a 7th place finish at Watkins Glen with a Viper GTS R in the FIA GT 1999 race".^[31] Raël participated in the 1999 BFGoodrich Tires Trans-Am Series and the 2000 Speedvision GT Championship. According to Palmer, Raël made an announcement in November 2001 that he intended to retire from professional auto racing. She said that Raël still enjoyed automobile racing, albeit in the form of video games.^[30]

1999 BFGoodrich Tires Trans-Am Series

| Round | Date | Car | Start | Finish | Laps | Track | Source |
|-------|-------------|------------------|-------|--------|--------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Two | 23 May 1999 | <u>Chevrolet</u> | 21st | 19th | 35 out of 40 | <u>Mosport International Raceway</u> | <i>Motorsport.com</i> ^[32] |

2000 Speedvision GT Championship events

| Round | Date | Car | Start | Finish | Laps | Track | Source |
|-------|-----------------|------------------------|-------|--------|--------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| One | 1 April 2000 | <u>Lotus Esprit</u> | 29th | 32nd | 15 out of 29 | <u>Lowe's Motor Speedway</u> | <i>Motorsport.com</i> ^[33] |
| Two | 21 May 2000 | Lotus Esprit | 31st | 18th | 27 out of 27 | <u>Mosport International Raceway</u> | <i>Motorsport.com</i> ^[34] |
| Three | 27 May 2000 | Lotus Esprit | 38th | | | <u>Lime Rock Park</u> | <i>Motorsport.com</i> ^[35] |
| Eight | 15 October 2000 | <u>Porsche 911 GT3</u> | 32nd | 25th | 25 out of 26 | <u>Laguna Seca Raceway</u> | <i>Motorsport.com</i> ^[36] |
| Nine | 29 October 2000 | Porsche 911 GT3 | 25th | 25th | 29 out of 30 | <u>Las Vegas Motor Speedway</u> | <i>Motorsport.com</i> ^[37] |

Views on technology

Raël believes humanity is slowly transitioning into a society where humans will not need to work or have jobs. This is due to human technological advancement and because humans "are not made to work". He has stated that work is for machines, whereas humans are made to create, think and enrich themselves.^[38]

Much of Raël's advocacy concerning futuristic technology is described in his 2001 book, *Yes to Human Cloning*. He supported human genetic engineering in order to avoid genetically inherited diseases and to reduce the economic burden on society. He said that no distinctive emphasis needed to be allocated to a

particular race or religion.^{[39][40]} Elsewhere in the book, he stated that nanotechnology will make it possible to have micro-distributive power generation (essentially a power plant in each house), fur-like furnishings that are self-cleaning with hair-like fibers that move on their own,^[41] and biological robots.^[42] Nanostructures control biology, so Raël expected that meat and salads will someday be grown in a machine via molecular construction.^{[43][44]}

Raël believed that genetically modified food is the only way to stop hunger everywhere in the world, and he saw a future where qualities of different foods can be combined through direct genetic modification.^[45] In Raël's book, *Extraterrestrials took me to their planet* (book number 2 in the volume *Intelligent Design*), he said that animation of plant life was possible through nanotechnology and that he was presented genetically modified flowers, that swayed and changed colors with music, while on another planet.^[46]

Criticism and controversies

Plagiarism

In recent years, many ex-Raélians have accused Claude Vorilhon of plagiarism.^[47] They have cited numerous quotes from Rael's books and compared them with those of author Jean Sendy. Raëlian concepts such as chemical education, infinity, geniocracy and others may all be found in Sendy's books. Most of Raël's *Sensual Meditation* book is said to have been derived from the Silva 'Mind Control' Method, which was allegedly taught to him by ex-level-5 guide of the Canadian Raelian Movement, Jean-Denis Saint-Cyr.^[48]

In her book, *Raël, Thief of Souls: Biography of a Liar* (French: *Raël, Voleur d'âmes : Biographie d'un menteur*), Maryse Péloquin provides the result of her ten years of thorough research into Claude Vorilhon and his movement, with compelling evidence to support a similar view that Raël has taken concepts and often paraphrased full paragraphs from other UFO and ancient astronaut authors of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s such as Jean Sendy, Brinsley Le Poer Trench, and Robert Charroux.^[49] In her book, the dialogue of Raël's "encounter with an ET" is shown to closely resemble that of "contactee" George Adamski, who claimed that he had an encounter on 13 December 1952.

Much of the Raëlian philosophy also closely matches that of Osho.^[50] The white costume which Raël wears closely resembles that which Osho was known to have worn at one time.

Appearances in the media

In 1992, Raël appeared on *Ciel mon Mardi*, a French talk show hosted by journalist Christophe Dechavanne. Toward the end of the show, Raël's liberal views on sex were critiqued by a priest, a social worker, and a psychologist. A former Raëlian named Jean Parraga believed that his wife and children were being held as prisoners and that Raël attempted to break up his family. He thought they were being treated like criminals in activities such as orgies and sacrifice involving children at the Sensual Meditation camp. Parraga also had a criminal record as a drug dealer and car thief, and in August 1992, he attempted to shoot Raël.^[51]

Raélians from around the world sent letters of protest to Dechavanne's TV station. Dechavanne felt that this was "incitement to violence" and sued Raël. The judge appointed to the case decided to question Raël. Raël agreed to ask his members to stop sending letters if the station apologized publicly. The two parties agreed to drop the feud.^[51]

In 2004, Raël appeared on the first airing of the Quebec version of the French talk show *Tout le monde en parle*, hosted by Guy A. Lepage. During this appearance, Raël upset panel members with his statements on democracy and cloning. The situation reached its peak when caricaturist Serge Chapleau called Raël a "farce"

and a "nerd", ridiculed his clothes, and grabbed him by the back of his neck.^[52] Raël left the stage, followed by his disciples.^[52] A fellow guest on the show, Parti Québécois Member of Quebec Legislative Assembly Pauline Marois, who would later become Premier of Quebec, called Raël "insane". The Raëlian Movement asked Marois to apologize, which she refused.^[52]

A Swiss newspaper, who called Raëlians "rat heads", was sued for defamation. Another suit was brought against journalist Stephane Baillargeon for writing in the Montreal daily Le Devoir that the Raëlians defended pedophiles and that certain ex-Raëlians claimed the "gourou" liked very young girls. After some negotiation, Le Devoir published a letter from Raël condemning the charge as "ignominious defamation" and asserting that the Raëlian Movement had "always condemned pedophilia and promoted respect for laws that justly forbid the practices that are always the fault of unbalanced individuals".^[51]

Appearances in court

In 1991, Raël sued French journalist Jean-Yves Cashga for defamation; Raël lost, however, and was ordered to pay court costs. The judgment remains uncollected. Amidst growing legal problems in France, Raël decided to emigrate to Canada.

On two separate court dates of 2 September 1994 at the High Courts of Paris and 1 October 1996 at the Appeal Court of Paris, journalists Jacques Cotta and Pascal Martin of Flammarion Publishing were found guilty of attributing racist statements and distorted quotations to Raël in their book *Dans le secret des sectes*. They were fined 10,000FF in damages and 13,000FF in proceedings costs. They were also ordered to insert stickers mentioning the sentence on copies not yet distributed and to suppress of the passage in the next editions, and were told that they would be fined 100FF for each non-conforming copy.^[53]

On 26 January 1994, in emergency proceedings by the Appeal Court of Reims, Myriam Assan was accused of defamation for claiming in her book that "Raël was often sentenced for corruption of minors". Assan was given a provisional sentence of 10,000FF in damages and ordered to withdraw the book. She was sentenced to pay a penalty of 300FF per infringement and 5,000FF in proceedings costs and to publish the judgment in *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*.^[53]

On 13 December 1994, Gérard Chol, director of *Le Maine Libre*, was declared guilty by the High Court of Le Mans for public defamation for claiming that the Raël's movement was laundering money coming from drug trafficking, prostitution, arms dealing, and the sale of pornographic videotapes. Chol was ordered to pay 1FF in damages and 3,000FF in proceedings costs and to publish the penal judgment in *Le Maine Libre*.^[53]

In 2003, Vorilhon sued Ottawa columnist Denis Gratton and Le Droit newspaper for \$85,000 in defamation damages over a 23 January 2003 column; Raël lost and was ordered to pay court costs by Quebec Superior Court on 21 June 2006.^[54]

Government action against Raël

In response to Raël's association with Clonaid, South Korean immigration authorities at the airport denied him entry into their country in 2003.^[55] A planned Raëlian seminar continued, with Raël making some brief "big screen" video-camera appearances via the internet for the several hundred who attended. Raëlians of South Korea were instructed by Raël to protest near the Ministry of Health and Welfare that ordered him to leave.^[55]

Raëlians say they encourage adult homosexual, bisexual, and heterosexual relationships and that society should recognize them legally.^[56] Some governments, notably in Switzerland, fear that Raëlians are a threat to public morals for supporting liberalized sex education for children. The Swiss authorities argue that such

liberalized sex education would encourage sexual abuse of underage children.^[2] The Raélians disagree with those fears and state that sex education done properly would involve educating parents as well as children.^[57]

In February 2007, Raël, who wanted to start commercial activities with Swiss vintners, was denied residence in the Swiss Canton Valais, in part because he was feared to be endangering public values by promoting the concept of sexual liberty and the education of children on how to obtain sexual pleasure. Also cited was his association with the Clonaid human cloning claim; Switzerland forbade human cloning. In a brief statement, Raël said he considered appeal at the European level.^[2]

Discography

- 1966: "Sacrée sale gueule"^[58]
- 1966: "Dans un verre de vin"^[59]
- 1967: "Le Miel et la cannelle" (Honey and cinnamon)^[60]
- 1967: "Madam' Pipi" (Mrs. Toilet attendant)^[61]
- 1967: "Monsieur votre femme me trompe" (Mister, your wife is cheating on me)^[62]
- 1967: "Quand on se mariera" (When we'll get married)^[63]

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- 1974: *Le Livre qui dit la vérité* ("The Book Which Tells the Truth")
- 1975: *Les extra-terrestres m'ont emmené sur leur planète* ("Extraterrestrials Took me to Their Planet")
 - (collected in English as "The Message Given to Me by Extra-Terrestrials") ISBN 4-900480-05-3
- 1978: *La génocratie* ("Geniocracy")
- 1979: *Accueillir les extra-terrestres* ("Welcoming the Extraterrestrials") ISBN 4-900480-06-1
- 1980: *La méditation sensuelle* ("Sensual Meditation") ISBN 1-903571-07-3
- 1992: *Le racisme religieux financé par le gouvernement socialiste*
- 1995: *Vive le Québec libre!*
- 2001: *Oui au clonage humain* ("Yes to Human Cloning") ISBN 1-903571-05-7
- 2003: *Le Maitraya* ("The Maitraya")
- 2006: *Intelligent Design: Message from the Designers* [English compilation of the 1974, 1975 and 1979 books] ISBN 2-940252-20-3

Notes

- a. /rɛil/; French: [ʁa.ɛl]
- b. French: [klod vɔ̃.bi.jɔ̃]

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9. Palmer, p. 32-33.
10. Palmer, p. 34.
11. Raël, *Intelligent Design* 135–6.
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13. Raël, *Intelligent Design*, 90, 107, 113, 159.
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28. Lewis, p. 127.
29. Palmer, p. 43-5.
30. Palmer, p. 41.
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Demographics of Raëlism

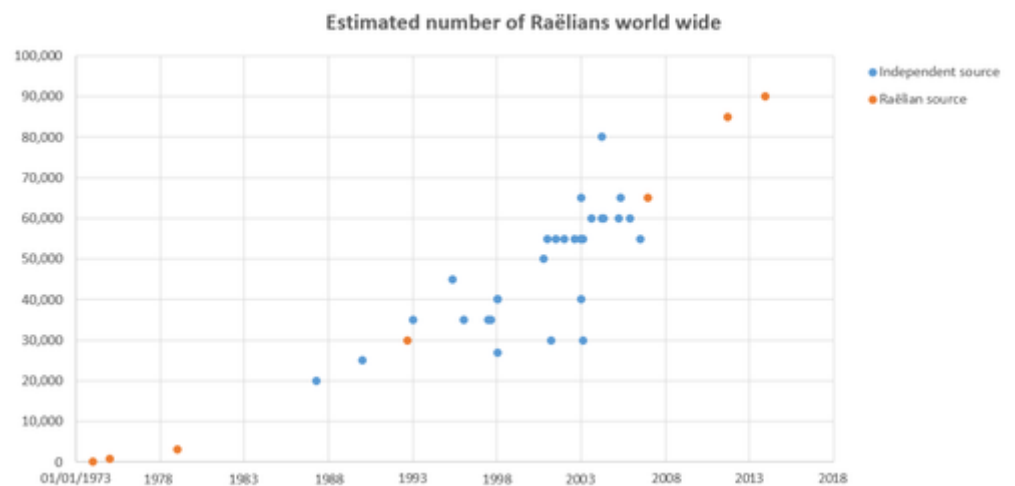
Raëlism is a UFO religion established in France during the 1970s. It soon spread to Quebec and then on to other parts of the world. There have been various attempts to estimate the number of Raélians at different points.

Estimates

Table of worldwide membership estimates

| Date | Estimate | Scope | Reference | |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------|--|------------|
| 1974 | 170 | World | International Raëlian Movement | [1] |
| 1975 | 700 | World | Raël | [2]:p. 122 |
| 1979 | 3,000 | World | Raël | [2]:p. 323 |
| 1987-04-16 | 20,000 | World | <i>Chicago Sun-Times</i> | [3] |
| 1990-01-09 | 25,000 | World | <i>The Wichita Eagle</i> | [4] |
| 1992-08-28 | 30,000 | 40 countries | US Raëlian Movement | [5] |
| 1993 | 35,000 | World | Dr. Susan J. Palmer | [6]:p. 9 |
| 1995-05-04 | 45,000 | World | <i>The Miami Herald</i> | [7] |
| 1996-01-14 | 35,000 | World | <i>The Miami Herald</i> | [8] |
| 1997-06-19 | 35,000 | 85 countries | <i>San Jose Mercury News</i> | [9] |
| 1997-08-12 | 35,000 | 85 countries | <i>The New York Times</i> | [10] |
| 1998-01 | 27,000 | 67 countries | <i>Australian Association for the Study of Religions</i> | [11] |
| 1998 | 40,000 | 80 countries | <i>University of Virginia</i> | [12] |
| 1998 | 40,000 | World | <i>St. Paul Pioneer Press</i> | [13] |
| 2000-10-10 | 50,000 | 85 countries | <i>The Washington Post</i> | [14] |
| 2001-03-13 | 30,000 | World | <i>60 Minutes</i> | [15] |
| 2001 | 55,000 | World | Dr. Susan J. Palmer | [6]:p. 9 |
| 2001-06-30 | 55,000 | 84 countries | <i>CNN</i> | [16] |
| 2002 | 55,000 | World | Dr. Susan J. Palmer | [6]:p. 120 |
| 2002-08-14 | 55,000 | 84 countries | <i>Wired News</i> | [17] |
| 2002-12-29 | 40,000 | World | <i>Lexington Herald-Leader</i> | [18] |
| 2002-12-31 | 55,000 | 84 countries | <i>The Orlando Sentinel</i> | [19] |
| 2002-12-31 | 55,000 | World | <i>AP Worldstream</i> | [20] |
| 2003-01-03 | 55,000 | 84 countries | <i>AAP General News</i> | [21] |
| 2003-01-29 | 30,000 | World | <i>University Wire</i> | [22] |
| 2003-02- | 55,000 | 84 countries | <i>Japan Today</i> | [23] |

| | | | | |
|------------|--------|--|---|------------|
| 10 | | | | |
| 2003 | 65,000 | World | Dr. Susan J. Palmer | [6]:p. 120 |
| 2003-08-03 | 60,000 | World | <i>Korea Times</i> | [24] |
| 2004-03-16 | 60,000 | 90 countries | <i>Financial Times</i> | [25] |
| 2004-03-26 | 80,000 | World | <i>KLAS.com</i> | [26] |
| 2004-04-23 | 60,000 | World | <i>New Truth & TV Extra</i> | [27] |
| 2005-03-13 | 60,000 | World | <i>Japan Today</i> | [28] |
| 2005-05-05 | 65,000 | 85 countries | <i>NBC 4</i> | [29] |
| 2005-11-18 | 60,000 | 92 countries | <i>Middle East Times</i> | [30] |
| 2006-06-25 | 55,000 | World | <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> | [31] |
| 2006-12 | 65,000 | 86 countries | International Raëlian Movement | [1] |
| 2010-11 | 14,192 | World Includes only members whose identity (name) is traced | International Raëlian Movement (Leaked Documents) | [32] |
| 2011-9 | 85,000 | 90 countries | International Raëlian Movement | [33] |
| 2013-12 | 90,000 | 90 countries | International Raëlian Movement | [33] |
| 2017-09 | 18,111 | World Includes only members whose identity (name) is traced | International Raëlian Movement (Leaked Documents) | [34] |



Membership estimates from various sources

Table of regional membership estimates

| Date | Estimate | Scope | Reference | |
|------------|------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------|
| 1995 | 4,000 | <u>Japan</u> | <i>University of Virginia</i> | [12] |
| 1995 | 4,000 | <u>Quebec</u> | <i>University of Virginia</i> | [12] |
| 1995 | 10,000 | <u>Europe</u> | <i>University of Virginia</i> | [12] |
| 1996-01-14 | 50 | <u>Miami</u> | <i>The Miami Herald</i> | [8] |
| 1996-01-14 | 600 | <u>United States</u> | <i>The Miami Herald</i> | [8] |
| 2001-08-08 | 24 | <u>South Florida</u> | <i>South Florida Sun-Sentinel</i> | [35] |
| 2002-12-31 | 5,000 | <u>South Korea</u> | <i>AP Worldstream</i> | [36] |
| 2003-02-10 | 6,000 | Japan | <i>Japan Today</i> | [23] |
| 2003-02-12 | 20 or more | <u>Utah</u> | <i>KSL-TV</i> | [37] |
| 2003-04-04 | 1,000 | United States | <i>Las Vegas Sun</i> | [38] |
| 2003-04-20 | 50 | <u>Ireland</u> | <i>Irish Independent</i> | [39] |
| 2003-08-03 | 4,000 | South Korea | <i>Korea Times</i> | [24] |
| 2004-04-23 | 80 | <u>New Zealand</u> | <i>New Truth & TV Extra</i> | [27] |
| 2005-05-05 | 100 | <u>Southern California</u> | <i>NBC 4</i> | [29] |
| 2006-06-04 | 200 | <u>Australia</u> | <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> | [31] |

From 1980 to 1992, Raël and his movement became increasingly global. In 1980, Claude Raël's fifth Raëlian book *Sensual Meditation* was published and formal publication of the Raëlian Messages in the Japanese language began^[40] as part of the Raëlian mission to Japan.^{[6]:p. 64} Two years later, Africa became another target area in the mission to spread the Raëlian messages.^{[6]:p. 64}

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UPCOMING EVENTS

RAELIANS' PLANETARY SEMINARS AND REVOLUTIONARY ACTIONS IN THE WORLD

AUG

06

CELEBRATION OF THE RAE LIAN NEW YEARS DAY

August 06, 2021

August 6 is the Raelian New Years Day. At this date, one of the worst crimes in humanity took place. On August 6, 1945, the US military dropped an atomic bomb over Hiroshima, Japan, killing more than 100,000 civilians. Obviously, the Raelian Movement does not celebrate this act; however, this act was an indication for the Elohim that the time had come for them to "s..."

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Phylis
Scientist with a PhD in stem cell biology

"The beautiful Raelian philosophy reminds me that we always have a choice. How we react to things and to the people around us is up to nobody but ourselves."

Sandra
Project Manager, Travel Trade

"I wake up and take my first waking breath of the day after breathing all night without consciously being aware of it. That is like being Raelian: It's something I've always been, and then I discovered the Raelian philosophy and everything made sense."

Glenn
Professional actor/ musician

"Maitreya Rael showed me the way back to my true self. How beautiful we are and how beautiful life is! We are part of the infinite universe in time and space, and everything is connected. I am in awe of each moment that goes by and live each moment to the fullest."

Color
Dancer

"This book is boldly bringing a complete paradigm shift on our planet. It is of the greatest importance for the future of humanity."

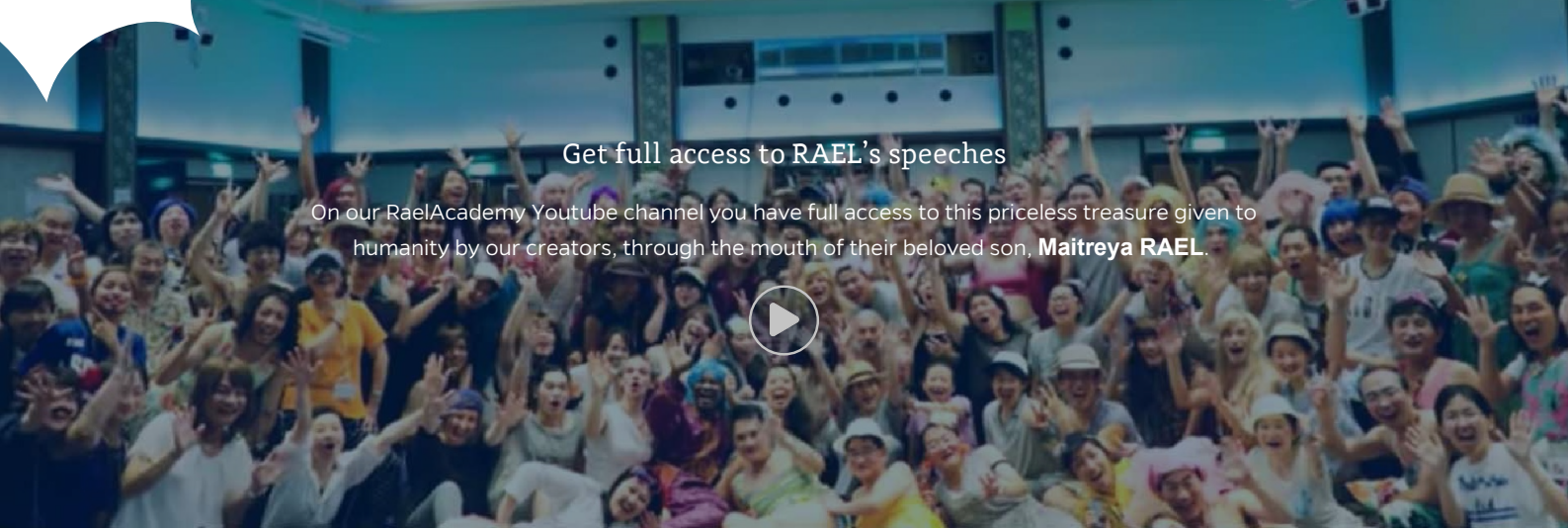
Felix
Certified personal trainer/massage therapist

"This book is exactly matched with my dream from 9 years old. I wish to become a bridge of Love connecting one star to another star. I wish to become the rainbow of life, the song of Rose, the wing of infinite dreams and love."

Lotus
Dancer, Singer, Song writer

"Thanks to this Message, I learned to connect with the creation and infinity...I see in each human being, in each flower, and in each insect the love for science and art, and the sensuality and beauty of an intelligent creation!"

Carmen
Qigong professor



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RAEL's comments

Follow RAEL's most up-to-date teachings of our creators, the Elohim

California cafe charging mask-wearing customers an extra \$5

May 29, 2021

RAEL'S COMMENT: Very good decision! All cafe, shops and restaurants should do the same!

We are not numbers

May 24, 2021

RAEL'S COMMENT: We are the children who were murdered by the Zionist Israelis aggression on Gaza, Palestine the past week. Israel is a war criminal.

Gitmo's oldest inmate approved for release after being held for 16 YEARS without charge

May 18, 2021

RAEL'S COMMENT: Criminal USA. This man deserves millions in damages.

Texas Governor Abbott bans officials from requiring face masks, introduces \$1,000 fine for those who do

May 18, 2021

RAEL'S COMMENT: Let's hope that all countries will do the same as soon as possible.

Love death to stop being afraid of it

May 17, 2021

Text by Maitreya : Every year 60 million people are dying. Every year. And 140 million are being born. It's called life. When you bring

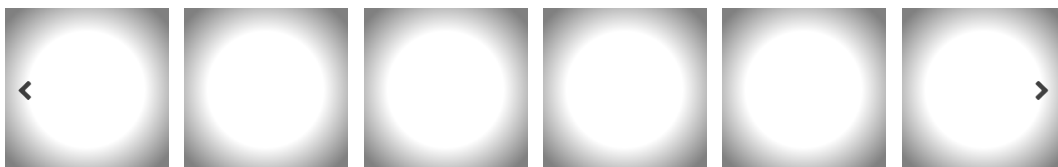
Give me your mask campaign

May 10, 2021

RAEL'S COMMENT: I propose that all Raelians go into cities with a beautiful basket and a big board saying: "GIVE ME YOUR MASK" and written

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Raelians promote various causes initiated by Rael. Each aims to foster the fulfillment of every human being and to save humanity as a whole.



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GOTOPLESS: Equal Topless rights for All!

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PROSWASTIKA: Swastika rehabilitation

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our creators

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