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**CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE RELIGIOUS KIND?:
IDENTIFYING THE RELIGIOUS COMPONENTS IN THE
LITERATURE OF THE ALIEN CLOSE ENCOUNTER PHENOMENON**

by

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PhD in Theology and Religious Studies by research and thesis

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2000

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Finally, I dedicate this thesis to Chris Walton. It was the research for this thesis that brought us together, and I am so glad I embarked upon this course of study for that reason alone. His quiet, unshakeable belief in my abilities is still a wonderful mystery to me. Yet, without his loving patience, understanding and devotion to me I would not have been able to complete this research, regain my health, and look positively to the future. Thank you, my love. Your tender faithfulness has been a rock of security and comfort. I have asked much of you and you have never failed me:

*"I love thee to the depth and breadth, and height
My soul can reach...."*

*So we have pathologized the experience of
every saint, prophet and shaman throughout history.
They have all been treated as psychotics who, sadly,
did not have the benefits of modern psychiatric treatment
to sort them out.
Meanwhile, we long to ride the waves ourselves
but have forgotten how.*

- Leslie Kenton: *Journey to Freedom*

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THESIS ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to establish whether there is any justification for regarding the alleged alien close encounter experience as a contemporary category of traditional religious experience. The development of the phenomenon is examined against the background of its historical context. Accounts of such meetings are methodically analysed, and content, structure, and symbolism are identified. This same analysis is applied to a range of experiences reported in traditional religious contexts to identify possible parallels and dissimilarities.

In the light of this systematic comparative and phenomenological approach it has become apparent that a unifying thread runs through the alleged alien encounter reports and the traditional religious contexts. Despite certain dissimilarities, it is shown that the content of these various experiences also exhibit a homogeneity: the stories conform in their type of setting; their sequence of events; the messages the individual receives; the individual's reaction to the events; and the long term effects of these events on the individual.

The religious experiences selected for comparison are Rites of Passage; Shamanism; Medieval Otherworld Journeys; Marian Revelations; and Near-Death Experiences; all are respected and accepted expressions of religious sentiment. Given the acceptance of these experiences and the strong kinship with the close encounter claims, it would appear that there is justification for more regard to be accorded to the contemporary close encounter experience.

Generally treated as the fantasies of attention-seeking individuals, this modern phenomenon apparently shares some of the same life-enhancing and transformative aspects of traditional religious experiences, directing the individual towards a more fulfilling and defined sense of self, and a more encompassing and compassionate view of the cosmos. The modern close encounter claimant shares with his fellow, more traditional, otherworld travellers a sense of purpose, and the belief that he belongs to something much greater than himself.

INTRODUCTION

My attention was drawn to the phenomenon of close encounters during my research into shamanism. In the course of my research I noted a number of references to Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) either as observed objects in the sky or during shamanic journeying and vision quests. It became apparent that there were some strong parallels between stories of alien contact and abduction, and the supernatural encounters and religious experiences recounted in more traditional sources. Despite the fact that this subject has attracted derision in the past, I believe it has far-reaching effects on the individuals concerned and warrants further systematic research. This thesis is therefore an exploration of the nature of the close encounter phenomenon. By a systematic, analytical review of close encounter material available in the public domain I will attempt to discover the irreducible components of close encounter events and determine whether these components suggest kinship with a range of experiences reported in respected religious traditions. If kinships can be established we would be justified in according to the contemporary close encounter experience more respect than it has received in the past. Reassessment of the close encounter witnesses must follow; instead of regarding them as 'eccentric' 'fantasy prone' individuals, they may be regarded in the same way as the respected and venerated visionaries of traditional religions. The essence of their experience simply being couched in terms relating to life in a more modern age.

In order to test the above theory I begin by describing the close encounter event as reported by the individuals themselves. Then I identify the essential components which appear to comprise the close encounter phenomenon. Once identified, I will argue that a connection between these components and selected categories of traditional respected religious phenomena may be established. I perceive a unifying thread running through the alleged close encounter reports and these selected traditional categories; they conform in type of setting, sequence of events, communication received, and reaction to, and long term effects of, the events. I will focus particularly upon the repercussions of the experience on the close encounter witness as, I believe, this aspect sheds the greatest light upon whether we should regard the close encounter experience as a modern expression of a respected religious tradition. Observing the religious and transformative nature of the encounter upon the daily life of the close encounter witness, how it has far-reaching effects and may alter his intellectual approach to life, will allow detailed comparison with the reactions of the experiencer of religious traditions. If we discover that all these individuals are imbued with a sense of purpose and belief in something greater than themselves, that they become empowered and lead more spiritual lives, the argument that the close encounter is an event akin to respected religious traditions may be strengthened.

The study of the close encounter phenomenon has been much neglected; there has been no comprehensive investigation devoted to the analysis of both abduction and contact phenomena as specifically religious experiences. This, however, does not imply that the religious nature of close encounters has been disregarded altogether. Despite there being very few systematic and comprehensive articles or full-length books devoted to this research, there are three particularly relevant studies concerning aspects within this subject area: Hilary Evans's *Gods, Spirits, Cosmic Guardians*, Kenneth Ring's *The Omega Project* and *The Gods Have Landed: New Religions from Other Worlds* edited by J. R. Lewis. Although I will review in more detail these papers throughout this thesis, a brief presentation of the theories raised can be given here as a preliminary guide to the argument which follows.

Hilary Evans was one of the first researchers to note that reports of close encounter experiences exhibit similarities to other types of encounters with supposedly 'superior beings' reported throughout the history of religion. He examines close encounter reports of meetings with divinities, gods, angels, demons, and the Virgin Mary and spreads his field of investigation wider to include encounters with folklore entities, spirits, crisis apparitions, seance-room spirits and ghosts. Evans examines many extraordinary encounter claims whilst attempting to reach an understanding of what such experiences have in common and what might lie behind them. He pays particular attention to the personal, social and cultural contexts in which such encounters take place and eventually offers a model for understanding how and why these encounters occur, and what we may be able to learn from them.

Broadly speaking, Evans proposes that these events are all 'need-based experiences'. He suggests that what may be happening is that an individual may have a need, conscious or unconscious, which can either be an immediate crisis; a temporary awkward phase in his life (i.e. adolescence or menopause); a long term doubt (i.e. of a religious nature); or a chronic frustration (i.e. unfulfilling relationship). Being unable to resolve such a need by normal means the individual's subconscious mind devises a dramatic episode which is then projected to his conscious mind. This projection appears as real as any other event in ordinary everyday reality yet, instead of encountering friends or family, otherworldly beings appear. To make the experience both credible and effective this otherworldly entity is clothed in the most appropriate disguise for the circumstances, thereby inducing respect from individual together with whatever other attributes are needed e.g. advanced knowledge in the case of alien encounters. By the way it behaves and/or the emotions it produces the entity aids the individual to resolve, satisfy or redirect his specific need. Evans argues that often the mere declaration that the individual is 'loved' or 'chosen' is enough, although sometimes a specific change of direction is encouraged.

Why some individuals may experience communion with the 'Almighty' whilst others meet aliens is, according to Evans, simply to do with the level of problems experienced. A substantial problem may require a corresponding 'substantial' entity such as a god; a lesser problem would be met with a lesser entity e.g. an angel. However, this does not suggest that some experiences are more important than others. Each event has impact upon the individual concerned and must, therefore, be treated with equal respect and value.

Cultural milieu and personal belief or non-belief also play their part. Those persons who subscribe to a specific belief, religious or otherwise, are more likely to believe that their encounter event was staged by beings associated with those belief systems: being either gifts of comfort or concern, malevolent demonic pranks or morbid expressions of psychosis. Other individuals, such as Evans himself, may conclude that each of us at times of need are able to subconsciously fabricate within ourselves an encounter experience, drawing on our cultural background for its characters and content. Such fabrications induce our conscious minds to take comfort in a situation or force us to change our lives in some way.

Evans' work is a comprehensive and open-minded attempt at surveying encounter material throughout the ages, and merits reading by those wishing to obtain a solid background to entity contact before embarking on specific close encounter research. However, Evans does not attempt a systematic review of the similarities of close encounters with religious experiences. He is mainly concerned with comparing a host of extraordinary encounter reports in order to produce a psychological model of the experiencer. He is interested in the psychological processes behind the encounters, whereas I am concerned with describing alleged close encounter reports, and ascertaining their effects upon the experiencer in order to identify the essence of the event itself. I will clarify this stance below. Notwithstanding our different objectives Evans' discussion of various aspects of the close encounter event remains invaluable, paving the way for a deeper exploration of the phenomenon. For example, Evans was one of the first researchers to notice a parallel with alien and Marian revelations. In Chapter Three I show how he develops the findings of French ufologist Gilbert Cornu, arguing a kinship exists which, with further study, might assist the discovery of the nature of these experiences. Evans also observes that close encounter experiences exhibit archetypal initiation themes, an issue which I develop, paying particular attention to Evans' discussion, in Chapter Four.

In *The Omega Project*, professor of psychology Kenneth Ring specifically compares contemporary Near-Death Experiences (NDEs) and UFO experiences in an attempt to determine whether they are, in effect, catalysts inducing psychospiritual transformation in the experiencer. Having studied NDEs for many years, on reading Whitley Strieber's own story of alien contact, *Communion*, Ring was struck by how both experiences apparently promoted a similar kind of spiritual transformation in the individuals concerned. Ring's *Omega Project* analyses reports from both near-death and UFO experiencers and discovers, like Evans, that despite the different emotional response to these encounters both forms apparently manifest a common underlying structure: that of an archetypal initiatory journey. Again this supposition will be expanded in my research, especially in Chapter Four. Ring had the foresight to investigate the lasting effects of these extraordinary encounters on the experiencer, an important aspect mostly disregarded in previous UFO studies. The project showed that near-death and UFO percipients assert that their experiences have changed them, often quite fundamentally, and generally in positive ways. These changes will be analysed in more detail in Chapter Five but, in summary, Ring observed that both types of subject become more spiritual, charitable, altruistic, and increasingly concerned about environmental and ecological issues. This exploration of the witness' transformation is one of the few studies of its kind involving close encounters.

I have expanded upon this research in Chapters Five and Six by enlarging the investigation to include experiencers from other traditional religions e.g. Christian converts and medieval visionaries. As mentioned above, I consider the transformative effect of the close encounter experience to be of major importance in determining the essence of the phenomenon itself, it being supporting evidence for suggesting kinship with more established religious traditions. Despite my incorporating into my study Ring's invaluable findings concerning spiritual transformation, and his investigations into the type of person who experiences near-death and UFO events, my research is more specifically directed to the religious nature of the close encounter event. Ring only touches on the religious aspect of these reports, simply concluding that near-death and close encounter experiencers are likely to become more spiritual individuals after their encounters. It is not Ring's intention to compare these experiences with acknowledged religious themes. He also prefers to analyse all types of UFO experience, not just close encounter reports. Yet I would argue here that there is a major difference between seeing an 'unidentified flying object' and concluding that it is a flying saucer from a distant planet containing alien beings. We may in fact be inferring a link between UFO sightings and close encounters where, in reality, there is none. Ring's *The Omega Project* is a landmark study of the UFO experience, providing us with a solid empirical base for analysing the individual's experience of such phenomena. As with Evans, I will be expanding upon his observations by providing additional religious material for comparison with alleged alien encounter reports whilst also offering a new classification for the close encounter event phenomenon.

One of the most important recent studies of the close encounter experience in relation to religion is *The Gods Have Landed*, edited by James R. Lewis. This collection of essays examines the religious meanings attached to all aspects of the UFO phenomenon, including alleged close encounter reports. Not only does it examine various UFO religions, it also addresses the religious aspects of those encounters known as 'alien abductions', and the impact of extraterrestrial life on Christian theology. Two articles are particularly concerned with the religious components of the close encounter experience: John A. Saliba's 'Religious Dimensions of UFO Phenomena' and John Whitmore's 'Religious Dimensions of the UFO Abductee Experience'. Saliba's paper is a comprehensive introduction to the various ways in which UFO contacts could be regarded as religious. He distinguishes the different types of people interested in the UFO phenomenon e.g. natural and social scientists, government officials, military experts, adventurers and hobbyists, and religious peoples. He then proceeds to define three categories of UFO groups, movements, or cults, giving examples of each, which I analyse in Chapter One when outlining the history of, and background to, the close encounter report. Briefly, Saliba identifies those movements which rely heavily on the Theosophical tradition; those stemming directly from the spiritualist tradition; and those essentially Christian movements who interpret UFO experiences within the context of biblical teaching. The first two movements believe that aliens in spaceships contact humanity, primarily through mediums, in order to convey important beneficial information to Earth's population. The Christian movements tend to believe in aliens as supernatural agents akin to angels or demons depending on their specific interpretations.

Saliba establishes that the messages at the core of these movements are structurally similar to those present in many of our traditional religions. He thus contributes to the debate about the essence of the close encounter which I elaborate on in Chapter One. Saliba strengthens this comparison by listing the major religious themes he detects as being essential elements in the UFO culture, stating that one of the most appealing aspects of UFO encounters is their religious content and structure. He identifies seven major themes or elements which dominate accounts of UFO sightings and contacts: Mystery, Transcendence, Belief in Spiritual Entities, Perfection, Salvation, Worldview and Spirituality, aspects which I pursue during this work. Saliba's paper is an impressive attempt at examining the way in which UFO experiences may be regarded as religious. Yet, as with Ring's survey, the terms 'UFO phenomena', 'abduction experiences', and 'contactee experiences' are used interchangeably throughout with no attempt being made to differentiate between these different facets of the 'UFO phenomena'; Saliba apparently assumes that they need no differentiation. The interchangeability of such terms does facilitate the meshing of the elements with his theories yet, on analysis, only the close encounter episodes display the characteristics of Saliba's seven elements. Whilst Saliba's review highlights religious thematic parallels he does not go far enough in analysing specifically the abduction and contact encounters. Nor does he compare in any great detail the components of such encounters with those found in other religious traditions.

Unlike Saliba, John Whitmore's paper focuses directly upon one of the experiences I concern myself with in this thesis: the abduction event. Like Saliba he concludes that abduction reports have religious overtones or similarities with more traditional accounts of religious experience. In addition, he observes that these close encounters are often accorded a religious meaning by the experiencer himself which tends to be overlooked or even ignored by UFO investigators. Whitmore also compares the aliens with religious entities i.e. angels, demons and gods. In many reports of abduction the abductee talks of one alien being the 'leader' (see Chapter Two) and Whitmore suggests that this alien authority figure is analogous with a Supreme Being or God, an idea I explore in greater detail. Whitmore also notes the parallels with traditional accounts of shamanic initiations, Faery and cultural folklore, and the more spiritual outlook of the abductees after their experiences. What is new in Whitmore's study is his analysis of the alien messages allegedly received by the abductee. Whitmore clearly sees the content as eschatological in nature with warnings of a coming catastrophe and the dawning of a New Age. In Chapter Three I offer further material for analysing the eschatological nature of alien revelation. Although both Evans and Whitmore notice similarities with accepted religious revelation and alien messages, neither develops this idea in any great detail. My exploration is essential in testing the hypothesis that the close encounter is a contemporary category of religious experience.

Whitmore's paper concludes that humanity has little choice but to evaluate all confrontations with the 'Other' or 'numinous' in terms of religious experience. He believes it is virtually impossible to ignore this connection whilst investigating abductions, that if one were to do so, it would not be conducive to a complete understanding of this type of close encounter. He adds, that although abduction accounts differ in detail, thus resisting any attempt to pigeonhole them neatly, there is always one consistent thread, that of religion.

Saliba also concludes that the UFO phenomenon is complex and amenable to various interpretations. Yet for him the phenomenon reflects both cultural and religious trends, and thus it becomes an extreme example of humanity's attempt to make religion relevant to contemporary life by providing an updated picture of the cosmos. My argument is somewhat similar although, as mentioned above, I am not interested in explaining away the close encounter phenomenon but rather in reaching some understanding of the nature of the experience. This thesis will, therefore, continue where the papers by Whitmore and Saliba conclude, investigating whether alleged accounts of contact with, and abduction by, aliens whilst being shaped by the cultural context, may share kinship with traditional religious experience.

As my intention within this thesis is to establish whether the close encounter is a modern form of religious expression my aim is to a) identify the essential components of the close encounter event and b) demonstrate the fundamental kinship between the close encounter and established religious experiences. The structure that I perceive in the close encounter seems to me to be present in a specific range of religious phenomena: that of religious visions and otherworld journeys. I have, therefore, deliberately chosen aspects from this range for comparison, these are: Rites of Passage, particularly the phases of the initiation ritual, with emphasis on the liminal stage in this process; Shamanism; Medieval Otherworld Journeys, Near-Death Experiences; and Revelations, particularly the communications received from the Virgin Mary, and also biblical and intertestamental visionary material where appropriate. My comparative selection may initially seem surprising; I wish, for example, to compare modern close encounter reports with respected medieval visionary material, however I believe the phenomenon concerns aspects of the human predicament relevant in very many cultures today and throughout history. Whilst each category belongs to its own specific culture, they each also show a striking structural resemblance to the others, despite the differences in cultural background and historical time.

As well as being a comparative study my approach is also phenomenological. The phenomenological method allows me to compare the above categories with close encounter claims in order to test my hypothesis. I am not interested in trying to determine these experiences' greater or lesser religious value, but the value that they have had for the experiencer himself. By comparing themes and content from these categories it may be possible to gain a deeper, more accurate insight, into the phenomenon as a whole than if each experience is considered by itself. Information from one religious category can shed light on information in another category, if the meaning of the first should appear clearer than that of the latter. The phenomenological method may thus be employed to gain an overall view of the essential structures and relationships of the phenomena under investigation and determine whether a common thread in these experiences exist. This will help me conclude whether the close encounter can be regarded as a modern form of an ancient religious tradition.

Phenomenological study methods may be applied in certain stages; a model which I have chosen to follow within this thesis. I am primarily concerned with describing what the alien close encounter phenomenon is, as described by the close encounter experiencer. I am not concerned with the validity of the claims. In other words I will focus solely on the written reports of close encounter experiences as they have presented themselves to the consciousness of the experiencer. In order for me to do this I have adopted the first stage of the phenomenological method and applied *epoché*.

Epoché is a term first adopted by the philosophical phenomenologist Edmund Husserl. The term literally means 'putting into brackets' or 'suspending' one's own personal judgement, conviction or ideas about what is under investigation in order to rid oneself of obvious biases and presuppositions about the phenomenon. Bracketing out such questions as 'existence' allows the witnesses to speak clearly for themselves about what has been experienced. An objective assessment of their experience of the phenomenon may then be shaped, whilst setting aside the questions of truth or falsehood.

So, for example, during the course of this thesis, I will seek to suspend my judgement concerning alien contact in order that I can discern the views of the close encounter witness. I may be convinced that alien beings do not exist, yet, by employing the phenomenological method, I will be suspending this viewpoint, seeking instead to achieve an understanding and appreciation of what the close encounter witness believes about his experience and what he does in consequence to this experience. *Epoché* enables me to explore the alien close encounter phenomenon and the selected categories of religious visions and otherworld journeys without the intrusion of personal or academic suppositions about the value of the data.

The suspension of personal judgement also enables me to take an empathetic stance in regard to the close encounter witness, despite the strangeness of his experience. I will endeavour to perceive the world the way the close encounter witness does, in order to gain an 'inside' perspective of the phenomenon and, from this, a greater understanding of the witness and the experience, as well as the comparative aspects under investigation. This empathetic stance does not, of course, demand that I adopt the actual beliefs of the close encounter experiencer, or the beliefs involved in the other phenomena under investigation. To do so would be to block understanding of the meaning of the events from a phenomenological standpoint. The truth claims of the experiencer must remain firmly bracketed out of the investigation, emphasis being placed solely on the witnesses' experiences.

Having applied the first stages of the phenomenological method, *epoché* and empathetic attitude, I will then be in a position to accurately describe the essence of the close encounter phenomenon. In describing the close encounter event I will endeavour to understand this phenomenon and why the witness behaves the way he does after the event. After describing what has reportedly been observed (Chapter Two) I will be able to analyse the material in order to establish certain patterns, symbolism, types, and morphologies within the experience, with a view to identifying a model of the phenomenon itself. Applying this, through comparative technique, to my selected categories of religious traditions will test whether alleged close encounter events may be regarded as a contemporary form of traditional religious experience.

By discerning such interrelationships and underlying themes in the facts of each experience, a greater understanding of both the close encounter phenomenon and the other categories may be developed. Here I am applying yet another stage in phenomenological study – eidetic reduction. I am endeavouring to see into (inuit) the essence (*eidos*) of the selected phenomena, by employing both attitudinal and descriptive techniques. My theories concerning the essence of the close encounter event, through application of the phenomenological method, will be verified or falsified by testing it against the other selected categories.

This thesis begins with a brief history of the UFO phenomenon and includes examples of UFO new religious movements. I also include in Chapter One definitions of the subject matter, the specific religious categories I have selected and specific close encounter terminology. Chapter Two is devoted to detailing the major aspects of the two types of close encounter, examining reports in order to highlight several important thematic and structural aspects. At this time we will briefly observe how certain elements of the close encounter experiences compare with the selected religious visions and otherworld journeys. After having established in detail what contactee and abductee reports contain, Chapter Three is devoted to the comparison of revelations received from the Virgin Mary, with those bestowed by alien entities. The reports of revelations throughout the ages are numerous, so for the sake of clarity and brevity, given the underlying similarity between such reports, I have limited the discussion to these particular groups. These Virgin Mary and alien revelations are analysed in the context of the decades in which they were received in order to determine whether the content reflects contemporary human preoccupations. Chapter Four is concerned with analysing the form, content and structure of the close encounter experiences and comparing these with the selected religious traditions, specifically with regard to one particular archetypal motif: the Otherworld Journey. Chapter Five will examine the effect of the close encounter upon the individual. Chapter Six examines whether the changes the close encounter individual experiences parallels those of the traditional religious experiencer. Finally, in this chapter, I shall summarise the material considered and examine the extent to which, in the light of this systematic phenomenological study, the close encounter event can usefully be interpreted as a category of religious experience.

CHAPTER ONE

A BACKGROUND TO CLOSE ENCOUNTER REPORTS

A kindergarten teacher asked the children in her class to paint whatever they wished. Later, she inquired of each child what subject he or she was painting. 'A picture of mommy', or 'my cat' were typical answers. One child, however, said, 'I'm painting a picture of God.' 'How can you paint God?' the teacher asked. 'No one knows what God looks like.' 'Wait till I finish my painting,' the child replied.

- Budd Hopkins: *Sacred Spaces*

Any investigation into UFOs (Unidentified Flying Objects) and/or close encounters must acknowledge that a burgeoning interest in UFOs and their alleged alien occupants has spread rapidly throughout the world today, especially in America and Western Europe.¹ Regardless as to whether individual members of the public believe in the reality of UFOs there is unquestionably a market for all types of information concerning this phenomenon. Films, TV series and documentaries, specialist magazines, videos, and innumerable books continue to appear on the UFO subject. They not only give detailed accounts of strange objects seen in the sky but also personal statements claiming communion with alien intelligences and even, in some circumstances, abduction by these elusive beings. In fact, due to the public interest in ufological material generating a previously unknown tolerance for the subject matter, supposed witnesses are now more inclined than ever before to emerge with their own accounts of contact with alien entities - some incidents having allegedly taken place years before, when the public seemed less inclined to listen sympathetically to the individual.

Despite this general tolerance for the subject and the numerous investigations conducted over a period of fifty years into many aspects of the UFO phenomenon, no comprehensive explanation for these experiences has yet been proposed (if indeed *one* explanation can suffice for such a metamorphic subject). Neither has serious scientific and academic study been conducted into every aspect of the phenomenon, with some UFO-related subjects being completely ignored. One area which has received little serious attention from academics in the humanities and social sciences is that of the *close encounter experience*. Paradoxically, this is the same area where books written on the subject in recent years have outnumbered books on all other aspects related to UFOs combined. This literature mainly consists of detailed personal accounts and descriptions of the messages and missions allegedly passed to the individuals by alien beings. It is this type of literature which will be analysed during the course of this work.²

Many non-academic attempts at analysing such close encounter material have, until now, concluded that these experiences are consistent with what has come to be known as the 'Extraterrestrial Hypothesis' (ETH). This persistent and quite prevalent hypothesis - maybe because people want it to be true - proposes that alien intelligences are responsible for piloting craft known as flying saucers. It is believed that they visit Earth in order to interact with various humans in a number of ways for a variety of purposes, be they scientific, political, educational, recreational or even, as we shall observe later, salvific.

Unfortunately, these alleged aliens leave little or no conclusive evidence of their visits, any traces of their presence are readily given a more mundane provenance. For example, landing marks have been confused with 'fairy rings', fungus growths which form expanding rings in lawns and grassland; sightings of UFOs can be explained as resulting from misidentification of astronomical and meteorological phenomena (planets, comets etc.), as bioluminescence and swamp gas, or man-made objects such as aircraft, balloons, and artificial satellites; claims of fetus harvesting can be explained by gynaecological disorders such as miscarriage, blighted ovum, and pseudocyesis (false pregnancy).³ This being so the ETH is easily discredited and dismissed. However, although little or not physical proof exists it would be unscientific to reject the theory totally because of this lack. *Something* however does have a profound effect on those involved, if we are unable to examine the cause we can nonetheless study the effect.

Definition of the Close Encounter Phenomenon

When investigating close encounters we must initially clarify what is commonly meant by the term 'close encounter phenomenon'. The most comprehensive - and most commonly used - definition of the close encounter phenomenon was coined by astronomer J. Allen Hynek in his book *The UFO Experience: A Scientific Inquiry* (pp.31-34). He classifies the variety of UFO experiences in the following way:

Close Encounters of the First Kind (CEI): A UFO is sighted at close proximity but there is no interaction between the UFO and the environment or the observer(s) i.e. the UFO leaves no tangible evidence other than in the memories of the observer(s).

Close Encounters of the Second Kind (CEII): This encounter is similar to the above category except that the UFO leaves a visible (permanent or semi-permanent) record of its visit with the observer(s). For example, vehicle and electronic instruments may experience interference or malfunction, marks may be observed on the ground, there may be crushed or burnt vegetation, the observer may experience temporary paralysis or some other type of physical discomfort, and any animal in the vicinity may manifest agitation.

Close Encounters of the Third Kind (CEIII): Contact with 'animated' alien beings, possibly more intelligent than ourselves, is made by the observer(s). (Hynek uses the word 'animated' here instead of 'animate' to "keep open the possibility of robots or something other than 'flesh and blood'.") It is presumed that these beings pilot the UFOs, and there are many observer reports of soil, rock or animal samples being collected by these aliens. Some investigators, myself included, are of the opinion that we are dealing

with two different phenomena here: those *sightings* cases where an unidentified object or light is observed in the sky and those *experience* cases where contact is claimed to be made with alien beings. It has been strongly argued, especially by investigators in Europe, that the two phenomena have been artificially linked because they 'fit' the popular ETH.

It is surmised that the evidence supports the ETH so well because the researchers make the data fit the hypothesis, that is they are biased and selective in their use of the data, that they use the hypothesis as their starting point rather than the evidence. In fact, when the sighting reports are analysed, it has been shown that they are viewed by an average of around 2.5 witnesses. Similar analysis of the contact experience indicates an average of not more than 1 witness.⁴ In other words the contact phenomenon is an experience of a single individual whereas the sighting phenomenon is, in the main, a shared experience.⁵

Later investigators have found it necessary to add a fourth category to Hynek's classification: Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind (CEIV). In this instance the individual claims to be abducted, usually against their will, by alien beings. Many individuals report being taken at night from their car, bed, or home to an alien craft and subjected to a variety of what they claimed to be medical tests and experiments. Memories of such encounters are usually believed to be erased by the aliens; it is rare for the 'abductee' to consciously remember their experience in great detail before they have undergone regression hypnosis. Some abductees have reported memories of having monitoring devices implanted in their bodies - usually in their nasal cavity - and, recently, American investigators claim to have removed such implants from the bodies of certain abductees. However, at present, all scientific testing of the alleged implants remains inconclusive (see Chapter Two).⁶

As can be observed from the above definitions, although there is a classification specifically designed to describe the abduction experience (CEIV) this is definitely not the case when we consider the contactee experience. In fact, it is when we try to place the contactee event within one of the above categories that we encounter a minefield of ambiguities and acute disagreements. A contactee is, generally, acknowledged to be an individual who claims to have entered "into a friendly relationship with UFO humanoids, engages in extended conversation with them, and may even be taken on rides in their vehicles".⁷ It might seem reasonable that these claimed reports should be placed in the CEIII category as "contact with animated alien beings". However, Hynek categorically refused to include the contactee experience in his definition as he believed the individuals who filed such reports were "pseudoreligious fanatics" with low credibility value. He wrote, "It is unfortunate to say the least that reports such as these have brought down upon the entire UFO problem the opprobrium and ridicule of scientists and public alike keeping alive the popular notion of 'little green men' and the fictional atmosphere surrounding that aspect of the subject."⁸

I would argue that Hynek's dismissal of the contactee phenomenon is not only patronising but short-sighted, rejecting as he does contactee claims as nothing more than the unsubstantiated reports of mentally unstable individuals. This negative view of the contactees is an expression of a zeitgeist, wherein everything must have a rational or explainable cause; those experiences which have no apparently rational explanation or cause being dismissed as the products of unhealthy or abnormal minds. Deviation from the perceived mentally healthy norm is viewed as a condition that needs treatment.⁹

Hynek, using this western psychological and cultural framework, pathologizes his interpretation of the contact experience. Yet in so doing Hynek's cultural perspectives about how to view the nature of reality have blinded him to seeing the contactee as being anything other than mentally unstable. In fact, as we shall observe throughout this thesis, alien contact experiences may actually have a transformative effect upon the individual involved. Hynek's biased approach shows how invaluable the phenomenological method of research is. By applying *epoché*, concern about whether the individual may or may not be mentally ill becomes irrelevant. The researcher's cultural judgement is suspended, allowing the alleged alien contact reports to be analysed objectively.

Although frequently used for many years by UFO researchers, Hynek's definitions of UFO events fall short when the phenomenological and transformational components of the close encounter are analysed, because of this it is difficult to accurately place the contactee experience within any of his categories. Although some researchers claim they should be classified as CEIIs, others state they should be CEIVs and still more believe, like Hynek, that they should be separately categorised altogether.¹⁰ Due to the confusion and misinterpretation of the contactee phenomenon, and as this thesis confines itself to analysing only the contactee and abductee claims, I have decided to categorise these separate close encounter events in the following way:

An abductee is one who, as described in the tailor-made definition above, claims to be abducted against their will by aliens, are transported to some type of alien craft where they are subjected to medical and mental procedures without their consent.

A contactee is one who claims contact, (often repeated), with benevolent aliens who may take the individual to their planet or for a journey around the solar system.

To identify between these separate witnesses I will refer to them as either 'contactee' or 'abductee'. When referring to the two phenomena together I will use the term 'close encounter'. In both cases the entities encountered are usually identified by the individual concerned as 'alien' or 'extraterrestrial' because of the information proffered by these beings about where they come from and why they are here. When such revelations are not forthcoming, however, it is difficult to identify whether the witness has decided, consciously or unconsciously, to identify these entities as aliens or whether he may be directly influenced by the beliefs of those he may turn to for help (i.e. family and friends, but especially ufologists - those individuals who study all or various aspects of the UFO phenomenon.) Finally, certain contactees and abductees can be classed as 'repeaters' i.e. they claim to have experienced more than one interaction with aliens.

The important thing to note concerning the above definitions, which influenced the selection of primary and secondary abductee and contactee literature in this thesis, is that I *only* consider those close encounter events where the individual reports, at least initially, *visual* as well as auditory interaction with aliens. In other words, in both close encounter events the individual claims physical, face-to-face contact with otherworld beings, even though subsequent communications might be confined to auditory contact.¹¹

This distinction automatically excludes individuals who, for many years, have been associated with the contactee phenomenon. Daniel Fry is frequently referred to as a famous 1950s 'contactee' although he did not actually see an alien being. It was only his understanding that the voice he heard belonged to an alien yet he had no visual identification of the being. Whilst the hearing of voices has a respected tradition in mainstream religions e.g. in the lives of saints Joan of Arc, Augustine of Hippo, Francis of Assisi, Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila, I make this distinction particularly for two reasons. This first is that the specific religious categories selected for comparison with the contactee and abductee phenomena consist primarily of reported 'visionary' material i.e. visual contact with the Virgin Mary, or saints, angels, etc.; near-death visions of tunnels, lights, otherworld beings and other realms; medieval mystical accounts of heaven and hell; and shamanic journeys to helper spirits in an otherworld. It is appropriate that the emphasis should, therefore, be placed on the visual when comparing these religious experiences.

By insisting that there is reported visual contact in close encounter material we are also distinguishing between those experiences which are obviously 'contactee' and 'abductee' events as previously defined and those experiences which may be placed together under the title 'mediumship'. Mediumship (which, in recent years, has also been called 'channelling' within certain esoteric groups) is defined as a process "in which a person writes or speaks material that he does not recognise as coming from his own mind. Such material is often thought to emanate from some other being, who is acting as an information transmitter, but it may actually originate in the mind of the channeler [sic]."¹² Mediumship is not confined to communication with aliens; messages have been received from entities claiming to be, among others, nature spirits, spirit guides, and the souls of dead relatives.¹³ The messages received by each medium may be similar in essence and comparable with those reported in close encounter experiences, however it is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse the multitude of alleged entity communication.

Despite my distinction between 'contactee' and 'abductee' and my intent to use these terms throughout the thesis, I acknowledge that there is a school of thought amongst the more enlightened investigators today who refrain from using the word 'abductee'. This is due to the negative image it portrays i.e. that the individual has no control over their experience, that they are a 'victim' and thus in a subordinate, negative relationship with the alien and unable to improve this position. However, it became obvious during my assessment of available close encounter literature that the two terms are now established in UFO literature, and are widely known to identify two distinct experiences, therefore I feel their use in my thesis can only aid clarity when I am referring to these experiences.

Contactee and Abduction Reports in Historical Context

Any attempt to place encounter experiences within the historical framework of the modern UFO phenomenon show a clear observable evolution from simple UFO sighting reports (CEI and CEII) to the more complex contactee and abductee reports. However, the latter experiences have never totally superseded the former UFO sighting. Although some studies¹⁴ theorise that alien encounters have occurred for thousands of years, and that the extraterrestrials encountered today are simply a more updated version - Jung's 'technological angels'¹⁵ - of the Faery, demons, angels and other entities previously recorded, the close encounter phenomenon is generally acknowledged to have officially begun in its present form in the 1950s. Prior to this time Kenneth Arnold, a light aircraft pilot, is generally and, especially in ufological circles, acknowledged to have reported the first UFO sighting of the modern era.

On the 24 June 1947, whilst flying over Mount Rainier, Washington, U.S., Arnold saw what he assumed at first were jet aircraft. However, closer observation revealed that the objects behaved in a strange way, he later described them as moving "like a saucer would if you skipped it across the water". Immediately the press coined the phrase 'flying saucer' and this term was soon to be popularly associated with, more often than not, the ETH i.e. that flying saucers are apparently operated by intelligent extraterrestrial entities who have travelled to Earth from a different planet or solar system.¹⁶

After Arnold's sighting there followed a great wave of flying saucer/UFO sightings throughout that year, followed with waves reported from around the world in 1952, 1957, 1961, 1964-8 and 1973-4.¹⁷ Even during lulls in sightings the idea of alien contact in one form or another remained fixed in the public's mind. At the start of the modern era of UFO sightings no one claimed interaction with an alien. As the press continued to promote the ETH and it permeated popular consciousness it was only a matter of time before someone posed the question: 'If flying saucers are really craft from other planets who, or what, is actually piloting them?' It was, therefore, not surprising that claims of alien encounters were alleged and in 1953, six years after Arnold's sighting, the contactee George Adamski published his book *Flying Saucers Have Landed*, in which he claimed he had been frequently contacted by Nordic-looking aliens from Venus. Adamski's book was quickly followed by others including Orfeo Angelucci's *Secret of the Saucers*, (1955) and Howard Menger's *From Outer Space to You* (1959).

These were not the only claims of the time, but in September 1961, with the experience of Betty and Barney Hill we witness the initial claim to the modern abduction episode. The Hill encounter remains a paradigm for all future abduction scenarios, particularly concerning the small grey type of aliens which are so often reported by abductees (particularly in America). It should, therefore, be observed that the modern form of the close encounter phenomenon did not begin at the same time as the flying saucer wave of 1947.

UFOs, Close Encounters and Academic Study

Despite the progression of ufological events throughout the last fifty years, and the influence of UFO concepts and ideas upon many areas of our culture, the UFO phenomenon has often been viewed with contempt by scientists and academics throughout the world. The subject is frequently derided by intellectuals and academics and it is also viewed as a highly popular source of entertainment by the media. Those who claim close encounter experiences have also been subjected to insensitive handling by the press and professionals alike, with their experiences either being misrepresented or viewed as fantasies issuing from the minds of mentally unstable individuals. Admittedly it is tempting to assume that all close encounter experiences fall into the category of mental illness thus the lack of physical evidence is readily explained, no one is at risk of being subjected to such an experience, there is nothing for anyone else to fear. It would be more comfortable to believe that the experience is due to the psychological instability of the individual than seek an alternative hypothesis.

As already briefly discussed in this chapter, the western view of reality has traditionally focused on the ordinary state of reality, our everyday conscious state. All that takes place within this state is viewed as valid; reports of other altered state experiences are viewed with suspicion and distrust. Yet this is only one cultural perspective of the nature of reality. Other cultures have different, yet equally valid, ways of viewing reality. For example, whilst the western world has diagnosed individuals who report seeing otherworld entities as being psychotic since these beliefs are not part of our everyday consensus view, in shamanic cultures this would be considered the norm. In fact those individuals who did not believe in otherworld beings would be considered strange. What is thought of as normal and desirable in one culture appears dangerous and disturbing in another. This cultural perspective can be applied to a period of history in the same country as well as to different cultures: In western Europe from 500 to 1500 A.D. people who saw visions were considered by their contemporaries to have actually experienced either divine or demonic encounters. In that age they were not thought of as mad, whereas in Europe today such reports would be considered evidence of mental illness.¹⁸

Just because we consider certain acts or beliefs to be products of mental illness does not warrant our dismissing as mad those cultures, historic communities, or even different segments of our contemporary society who believe in otherworld beings and different states of reality. By pathologizing and reducing these experiences we lose awareness of the possible uniqueness and value of these states, cut short open-minded research, and assume that we have nothing to learn from those who experience such states. We end up misinterpreting unusual phenomena by the inappropriate application of psychoanalytical views and theories. This is an example of what Michael Harner calls 'cognicentrism', the tendency to interpret and denigrate alternate states from the limited perspective and experience of our own state.¹⁹

However, by applying *epoché* we avoid falling into this trap. Whatever the investigator's opinion might be about the mental health of the experiencer is suspended, bracketed out of the study. Research centres only upon identifying the essence of the close encounter phenomenon, so as to gain understanding of these events and why the witness behaves the way he does after the event. In this thesis I do not attempt to discover the mental health of the individual. Instead, I wish to gain a greater understanding of the close encounter phenomenon and thus apply the phenomenological approach to this study.

Despite my disinterest in diagnosing close encounter witnesses as mentally certifiable or not, another reason why the 'mental health' argument is of no consequence here is that throughout this thesis I will be discussing the liminal nature of the close encounter event as well as the religious experiences under scrutiny. I will argue that this liminal period is outside the structured order of everyday society and, as such, the standards which we apply in our everyday life cannot be applied here. It is a state where identity, rules and boundaries are stripped away. In this respect 'madness' has no meaning here. This is one of the reasons why it is easier to maintain the idea that individuals who enter the liminal, and report bizarre experiences there, are mentally ill. Western civilization generally fears, and thus is unwilling to submit to, anything outside the normal state of reality. To enter the liminal state, where there are no rules or boundaries, where our identity we have worked so hard to gain and maintain in the ordinary realm is stripped away, is thus something to avoid. It is far easier to resort to psychological diagnosis than begin to construct a new way of viewing the world, a world where there are no absolutes; where all that is valid in one state of consciousness is worthless in another, thus we may view individuals and cultures who have experience of other altered states as primitive, regressive and even abnormal.

Many scientists refuse to accept 'ufology' – the study of UFO and close encounter reports – as a serious subject for investigation simply because it challenges our theories about the universe and reality. Yet another argument for dismissing this area of study is that no one knows who should be investigating the subject. The phenomenon is so elusive no one exactly knows what *type* of phenomenon we are encountering. UFO sightings are notoriously unpredictable and leave very little evidence of ever having taken place. The putative aliens do not make themselves readily available for study, nor seem to want to engage in dialogue with individuals other than those they select. Years of research have shown the problems in trying to repeat paranormal phenomena e.g. Russian telepathy experiments have shown the poor repeatability of results.²⁰ Due to the lack of serious academic study of the phenomenon and the inability, up until very recently, to view close encounter witnesses as credible individuals, there have been few people these witnesses could turn to for professional, sympathetic understanding and encouragement to help analyse their experiences. Instead, priests, spiritualists, and amateur UFO investigators have been the main contacts for the close encounter experiencer. Unfortunately, despite many of these individuals being reasonable, knowledgeable, and well-informed, their explanations for the close encounter phenomenon are frequently coloured by their own personal beliefs and may tend to be dismissive of the areas of the phenomenon which do not 'fit' their own personal theories - this is also true of some academics who have attempted to analyse this subject. This is not a basis for sound academic evaluation.²¹

Initially the close encounter phenomenon appears to harbour little which may be viewed as religiously significant. Reports of aliens who enter people's properties without invitation, or interrupt their car journeys, who generally confer a succinct warning about the future of humanity and/or the Earth, or forcibly abduct individuals exposing them to a brutal medical examination, would not normally be regarded as being 'religious' in nature. However, a more detailed examination of the close encounter phenomenon does identify a continuity with those experiences we generally view as 'religious'. It may be argued that not only can contactee and abductee experiences be regarded as a form of contact with otherworld entities but they can also be seen as encounters with that which our society deems 'Sacred'.

In western society the 'Sacred' or 'numinous' is generally divorced from our ordinary, everyday existence. In this respect the Sacred is 'liminal' territory which has to be 'entered into', either through unconscious or conscious means, in order to experience it. As such a state is extrinsic to the ordinary levels of existence it is quite commonly feared and held in reverence. Our inability to truly express such encounters with the Sacred using our somewhat limited language leaves us feeling dumb in the face of such mystery, in much the same way as witnesses to a close encounter feel confused, afraid or unable to express what they have experienced. Not only do we apparently experience the Sacred as something outside of our everyday normality but sacred or divine sites are commonly physically separated from our profane living spaces. Humankind has found spiritual meaning in all aspects of the environment, but it is from the higher regions of the cosmos, above sky level - an area which for so long was out of our reach - that many religions repeatedly locate their divinities: their sky gods and goddesses. Mircea Eliade observed symbolic significance in this differentiation between sky and earth: "Archaic myths worldwide speak of an extremely close proximity that existed primordially between Heaven and Earth. In *illo tempore*, the gods came down to Earth and mingled with men and men, for their part, could go up to Heaven by climbing the mountain, tree creeper or ladder, or might even be taken up by birds."²² It takes only a small leap of the imagination to view reports of contact with alien astronauts as a continuation of such ancient religious traditions involving communication between human and supposedly 'superior' otherworld entities. In fact, it is in the literature of religion that "flying objects from celestial countries are most commonly encountered, along with descriptions of the organization, nature, and philosophy of their occupants."²³

It may be argued that the Old Testament prophets Ezekiel and Elijah were subjected to divine abductions and witness to unusual objects descending from above. Ezekiel received his spiritual call by the river Chebar. He suddenly observed an object that came as a whirlwind and:

...in the middle of the fire, something like gleaming amber. In the middle of it was something like four living creatures....Over the heads of the living creatures there was something like a dome, shining like crystal, spread out above their heads.... And there came a voice from above the dome over their heads....

He said to me: Mortal, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart and hear with your ears; then go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them. Say to them, "Thus says the Lord God";

Then the spirit lifted me up, and as the glory of the Lord rose from its place, I heard behind me the sound of loud rumbling; it was the sound of the wings of the living creatures brushing against one another, and the sound of the wheels beside them, that sounded like a loud rumbling. The spirit lifted me up and bore me away; I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit, the hand of the Lord being strong upon me.

I came to the exiles at Tel-abib, who lived by the river Chebar. And I sat there among them, stunned, for seven days. [Ezekiel 1:4-3:15]

The prophet Elijah was given little warning of his permanent removal from earth in a fiery flying chariot:

As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" but when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. [II Kings 2:11]

'Fiery Chariots' in which Yahweh and his angels supposedly ride out from Heaven are repeatedly mentioned in the Old Testament e.g. Ps.68:17; 2Kings 6:17; Isa.66:15. A pillar shaped cloud which concealed the form of God is recorded in Exodus 13:21,22 and Numbers 12:5 to be leading the marching tribes of Israel. Unusual aerial phenomena in the New Testament include the 'star' that announced the birth of Jesus reported in the gospel of Matthew (2:2,9). This heavenly object moved slowly across the skies guiding the "wise men from the East" to Jesus' birthplace. Later we are told that the resurrected Jesus ascended into a 'cloud' (Acts 1:9f).

Throughout the Middle Ages (and for some time after) the belief that people were under scrutiny of aerial entities whose home was in the skies persisted, and many strange aerial phenomena were observed. In fact, Pierre Boaistau, in 1575, remarked:

The face of heaven has been so often disfigured by bearded, hairy comets, torches, flames, columns, spears, shields, dragons, duplicate moons, suns, and other similar things, that if one wanted to tell in an orderly fashion those that have happened since the birth of Jesus Christ only, and inquire about the causes of their origin, the lifetime of a single man would not be enough.²⁴

In his introduction to *Plutarch's Lives*, A. H. Clough includes an account of how Agobard, the respected Archbishop of Lyons, intercedes on behalf of three men and a woman who were accused by the populace of having just landed in a "cloudship" from a legendary celestial region known as Magonia:

One day, among other instances, it chanced at Lyons that three men and a woman were seen descending from...wonderfully constructed aerial ships, whose flying squadrons roved at the will of the Zephyrs....The entire city gathered around them, crying out that they were magicians....In vain the four innocents sought to vindicate themselves by saying that they were their own country-folk, and had been carried away a short time since by miraculous men who had shown them unheard-of marvels....²⁵

In the nineteenth century Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon faith, experienced an extraordinary close encounter when just fourteen years old. The Mormon text *The Pearl of Great Price* relates how, whilst praying in the wood, Joseph witnessed an object descending from above:

I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me....When the light rested on me I saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defy all descriptions, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me.²⁶

As we shall see in Chapter Three the miracles of Fatima, Portugal have parallels with UFO sightings and close encounter reports. On closer inspection it is, therefore, not surprising that some close encounter experiences become invested with religious meaning. In its most overt form we can discover religious organisations and associations which, having accepted the alleged reports and communications given by close encounter experiencers, devote themselves to spreading these revelations whilst preparing for some type of alien salvation. The acceptance of a primary contactee by a number of individuals validates the close encounter experience. (Jacques Vallee calls these followers 'indirect contactees' as, although they do not experience a close encounter, they feel personally linked to the cause of spreading the supposedly alien messages. In so doing they feel, with their direct contactee leader, a special destiny among humankind.²⁷) These indirect contactees need no proof of the claims made by the contactee, trusting in his sincerity.

Central to many of these groups is the moral, metaphysical, and spiritual message related by the extraterrestrials encountered (as we shall see in Chapter Three), and so the formation of groups prepared to propagate these revelations can be regarded as a new type of religious movement. Many of the UFO new religious movements (NRMs) have appeared in the United States (host to a variety of unusual spiritual and philosophical groups).²⁸ The growth of UFO new religions is an important indicator to the growing trend in contemporary society to view close encounter experiences as *religious* experiences. I feel that it is important to briefly mention the types of UFO religions which have developed since the 1940s, and how the synthesis of UFO/close encounter themes with traditional religious beliefs have created religions which appeal to contemporary society.

It is difficult to identify the distinguishing features of the various UFO groups due to the fact that: a) it can be hard to distinguish whether groups follow the same master or if the same name in fact refers to a different entity and b) the religious messages and spiritual instructions are very similar in essence. This is compounded by the fact that groups are not always able, or willing, to clarify the origins of flying saucers or the nature of their occupants. Whilst UFOs are said to originate from either planets or galaxies unknown to the people of Earth, the majority of UFO religions assume the flying saucers originate within our solar system. Despite scientific opinion which considers these planets to be uninhabitable, these groups insist that the aliens have adapted to the conditions of their home planet, and have avoided detection by inquisitive astronomers.

Primary contactees usually insist that the UFOs they have observed are physical in nature, as are the aliens that contact them, and their bodies are material in substance and are similar to our own human anatomy. However, there are contactees who describe UFOs and aliens as being a type of psychic phenomenon belonging to a different time/space dimension which modern science is unable to detect.²⁹ It is interesting to note that primary experiencers involved in UFO religions tend to be contactees not abductees. Despite there being supposed evidence of abductees on occasion receiving revelatory messages from their alien contacts they rarely become prophets of a UFO religion. This is possibly because abduction experiences are usually traumatic in nature, and it can take months, maybe years, to understand or at least come to terms with what has happened; some people never do. Although it will be noted that, especially in shamanism, the ordeal experience can serve as a crucial aid to spiritual growth many abductees are unable, at least initially, to view their experience in this manner. When, or if, the abductee does eventually interpret his experience as a form of spiritual awakening, he tends to favour a more individualistic approach to his new spirituality and any altruistic acts evolving from these new beliefs.

John Saliba loosely, and neatly, divides UFO movements into three major types which relate to the observation made by theologian J. Gordon Melton, that many of those participating in the formation of UFO religions have previously been involved with spiritualist, occult or Theosophical groups - this will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. As we shall discover, material from such belief systems has been adapted from these former ideologies - e.g. the concepts of cosmic wisdom and cosmic masters who exist on other planets - and incorporated into the belief systems of the new UFO spiritual movements. Thus Saliba identifies:

- a) those [UFO movements] that rely heavily on the Theosophical tradition...;
- b) those whose roots stem more directly from the spiritualist tradition and have accepted the belief that superior beings in flying saucers are in touch with the human race through selected mediums; and
- c) those that are essentially Christian movements, since they endeavor [sic] to interpret their UFO sightings and experiences within the context of Christian teachings. The last mentioned groups need not be cults in the strict sense, since their members do not abandon their previous religious affiliations and are not required to commit themselves to and accept a relatively new ideology, religious practice, and lifestyle.³⁰

The first two groups claim that aliens piloting the flying saucers have selected humans to convey information that relates to the well-being of humanity and/or the Earth. As we shall observe in Chapter Three these messages apparently contain answers to some of the ultimate questions about life and the fate of the planet. The substance of these revelations suggests a correlation with traditional religious or supernatural experiences. It also emphasises that the primary contactees who often lead these groups feel the need to propagate the revelatory messages of the aliens and to prepare themselves and the human race for an apocalyptic future. These charismatic and prophetic bearers of alien instruction find they are able to influence their followers to do the same.

The mission of the group is generally kept alive by the primary contactee occasionally with a number of close devotees, who receive fresh communications through some psychic means (such as telepathy) or by entering into a trance-like state. When we try to pinpoint what elements distinguish those UFO religions influenced by Theosophy from those stemming more from the spiritualist movement, the most obvious factor is that groups from the former tradition claim to be in contact with aliens who are, by and large, the Masters of the Theosophical Society.

These superior beings visit the Earth in flying saucers or at least oversee its inhabitants from their vantage point in space. They deliver their messages...usually on a regular basis. In general the mediums of each movement hold a monopoly over access to the space relatives. They play the role of "mystagogues" in Weber's use of the word; in other words their function is to perform sacraments, that is, "magical actions that contain the boons of salvation."³¹

An example of a UFO religion in this group is the Aetherius Society whose founder, the late George King, we will meet in Chapter Two. This religious movement is sometimes classified in the spiritualist type of UFO group identified by Saliba, as George King asserted that he was frequently in direct contact with UFO beings whilst in trance. Yet, because belief in flying saucers and the Great White Brotherhood is central to its religious ideology, the Aetherius Society should primarily be considered a UFO religion that relies on Theosophical philosophies. Not only did several cosmic masters communicate through George King, but the Society believes that other space entities frequently visit Earth in order to protect it from evil forces and warn humans of immanent disasters. George King was allegedly selected by a 3,456 year-old Venusian, named Aetherius, as a spokesperson for the Great White Brotherhood. This Brotherhood operates under the direction of highly evolved extraterrestrials, known as the Cosmic Masters.

The Aetherius Society, established in London in 1955, is a registered church and has a string of centres worldwide promoting the type of belief system commonly found amongst individual close encounter subjects - see Chapter Five - i.e. that all beings are interconnected, and evolve from the same divine source: "Man came forth from God and all things are part of God."³² The Society states that everything in the cosmos is part of God, and that the whole cosmos is governed by the Law of Karma, and all life continues through reincarnation. The aim of life is to progress through reincarnation towards a higher spiritual development and ultimately to reach enlightenment, which is the mental, spiritual and psychic realisation that everything is part of the divine. Only at this stage can we evolve back into God.³³ Followers believe that nuclear war threatens civilisation and ecological imbalance has been caused by our exploitation of the Earth. The Cosmic Masters can no longer watch us destroy ourselves and so, by communicating through King, they have attempted to steer mankind away from self-destruction through the revelation of a salvific message.³⁴ By practising selfless service humanity will inaugurate the heaven upon earth as prophesied in ancient writings. Those who do not co-operate will be removed from this Earth to continue their cycle of karmic development on another planet in this solar system.³⁵ In accordance with this means of salvation followers, aided by the Brotherhood, direct spiritual energy to help save the planet.³⁶

It is interesting to note that central themes found in individual close encounter episodes are found here in a world-affirming, salvific religion which has at its centre a Godhead who is served, in particular, by a superior group named the Great White Brotherhood. The Society's worldview which works on the basis of communicator, messages, and tasks, appears to be a successful combination. As Kevin McClure observes, "Few UFO cults last as long as the Aetherius Society - and few are so well-meaning, or so concerned about the wider issues and concerns in the world outside their group."³⁷

When we analyse the second group defined by Saliba - those UFO groups which are directly related to the spiritualist tradition - we find that, although visual contact with aliens is also central to their ideology, it is usually through mediumship, that is only aural as opposed to face-to-face communication. Although communication with alien beings is central to these UFO groups, the belief in spacecraft travelling from other planets or solar systems to Earth plays little or no role in their view of the cosmos. The emphasis, instead, is placed upon the leader of the group who acts as a vessel to receive revelations from alien beings whom he may never have seen, just as a spiritualist medium relays messages from the dead, the difference being that the leaders communicate with animate, intelligent cosmic beings. They differ from the Theosophical based UFO religions in that their beliefs and practices do not centre around the existence of flying saucers. They do not track UFO sightings, regarding them as symbolic and not needed to validate their religious beliefs.³⁸

Mark-Age is one organisation which demonstrates how belief in extraterrestrials can be incorporated into what is essentially a spiritualist belief. Yolanda, also known as Pauline Sharpe, is a telepathic medium and a major figure in Mark-Age. She claims that Theosophical Masters who live on other planets (amongst whom are El Morya, Lady Nada, and Sananda or Jesus) regularly transmit to her. Yolanda also receives messages from the "Hierarchal Board", the spiritual government of the solar system, by automatic writing and telepathic communication.³⁹ Mark-Age believes that Sananda has been orbiting Earth since 1885 in a spacecraft from the etheric realms and will manifest in material form when our planet is cleansed. This will be attained by raising humanity's spiritual consciousness - a common theme in close encounter literature - as the Aquarian Age dawns in preparation for Sananda's second coming, expected around the year 2000. Note the presence of a millennial Christian apocalyptic theme in the salvific aspect of the group.⁴⁰

The final type of UFO group identified by Saliba, those that are essentially Christian based, tend to be easier to describe as they generally interpret their UFO sightings and experiences within the frame of reference of Christian teaching, often linking them to apocalyptic times. For these groups:

Unidentified flying saucers need not be physical entities containing aliens from some other planet. They could be the product of supernatural forces and their occupants supernatural beings. They are, basically, signs or symbols whose meaning and/or message needs to be interpreted rather than channeled [sic]. Those who decipher the signs are exegetes, or theologians, not mediums; they are preachers rather than seers or shamans.

Consequently, the tendency to form cults or new religious movements that center [sic] around the teachings of a particular leader, though not completely absent, is less strong....Those Christians who accept the presence of UFOs as a religious event are not necessarily changing their religious affiliation, even though their understanding of flying saucers may place them on the fringes of Christianity. Unlike psychic contactees, Christian believers in UFOs do not usually suggest that flying saucers come from any particular region of the universe. Rather, they maintain that UFOs are being sent by God or the devil, depending on whether their mission is beneficent or nefarious. In like manner, these Christians do not claim that they have contacted the occupants of alien spaceships. Nor do they usually provide us with novel and vivid descriptions of the aliens. Because their interpretation of UFOs is colored [sic] by their Christian worldview, they are more likely to view the aliens in those traditional forms in which angels and/or devils have been illustrated in Christian art.⁴¹

Generally, as Saliba indicates, Christians who interpret the presence of UFOs from a biblical perspective usually remain within their original church, only rarely forming new religious movements. However, if there is a particularly strong belief that UFOs are performing a central part in God's salvific plan, and this Christian message is preached by charismatic leaders, then new Christian UFO movements can evolve.

One such movement is the Human Individual Metamorphosis (HIM) which came to worldwide attention in 1997 when one of its former leaders, Herff Applewhite, then leading the new religious group 'Heaven's Gate', committed suicide with a number of his fellow followers. The group HIM appeared in California in 1975 and flourished during this decade. It was led by the middle-aged couple, Applewhite, and his partner Bonnie Nettles, who adopted a variety of exotic names such as "Bo and Peep", "the Two", and "Pig and Sow", and gathered around them a group of people who felt drawn to their teaching. Bo and Peep claimed that they had personally travelled to Earth in a UFO in order to prepare individuals for an imminent New Age which would be announced by the arrival of UFOs come to rescue humanity.⁴² The members of HIM were expected to literally abandon all that they had and were before they joined the group including their names and possessions, and even sexual activity. By overcoming all their human emotions and worldly attachments they purified themselves for the Kingdom of God which they believed was a physical place located outside the Earth's atmosphere. In true *Star Trek* mode those who were to be saved would be "beamed up" by a flying saucer to experience a spiritual evolutionary process becoming immortal, androgynous beings living in a "state of perpetual growth."⁴³ HIM's theological view was apparently supported by biblical passages. For example, Bo and Peep identified themselves as the two witnesses prophesied in Revelation: "After spreading God's word, they would be assassinated and their bodies would lie in the street for three and a half days. Then they would rise from the dead and 'ascend up to heaven in a cloud'" (Rev. 11:12 - a prognostication of what would ultimately occur amongst the ranks of Heaven's Gate.⁴⁴)

Bo and Peep initially travelled with their devotees around the country preaching their salvific message. In the autumn of 1975 they went into seclusion and, as a direct result, by February of 1976 at least half of HIM's demoralised followers had left (leaving about 100 members). However, the Two reappeared and set about renting houses for their remaining members in Denver and the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Members were soon asked to don a uniform and to adhere to a strict daily regime which included learning computer technology.⁴⁵ Beyond divulging this information the group revealed little else about their lifestyle and beliefs. It seems that during this period of secrecy HIM began its metamorphosis into Heaven's Gate.

Later, in the 1990s the group began to lift its veil of secrecy, and once more started preaching their gospel. Although the message they preached was ostensibly the same as that of the 1970s there was a greater stress on apocalyptic events, with God's Kingdom being expected daily.⁴⁶ Peep died of cancer in 1985 yet Applewhite, referred to now as Do, continued to lead the group, which moved to a ranch in San Diego. As the world now knows after a "last supper" at a local restaurant, three days later, on 26 March 1997, Do and 38 devotees committed suicide, believing they would be spirited up to a UFO they thought was flying behind the Hale-Bopp comet (which they saw as "the marker" for them to join "the Kingdom of Heaven"). In a video left at the ranch, the composed and smiling members explained their reasons for leaving Earth in this way: to start their new lives in the Kingdom of Heaven.⁴⁷

Applewhite's group was not, therefore, so different from many other Christian apocalyptic groups who chose to leave an unredeemable world and devote themselves to the task of purifying themselves for the next world....If we see the Heaven's Gate theology only in terms of 'cult' mentality or 'brainwashing', we miss the point. The dangerous elements in their world-view were not the 'occult' ones derived from ufology or from Eastern mysticism. Rather they were precisely those that link them with evangelical Christianity. The videotaped testimonies left behind were another indication that they saw themselves as joyfully boarding the ol' spaceships of Zion to leave this corrupt world behind and go sailing through the sky.⁴⁸

Saliba argues that HIM/Heaven's Gate rightly belongs in the Christian UFO group section of his classification as, "although many Christians would disagree with their theological stance, their message can be interpreted as an attempt to relate some basic Christian beliefs with current human conditions and problems and to present the Christian message in the language of the contemporary myth of flying saucers."⁴⁹

This brief survey of UFO NRMs identifies that at the core of these alien focused religions there are messages that are structurally similar to those present in many of our traditional religions. By associating with, or believing, a contactee or, more rarely, an abductee, a member of an UFO religion believes, in much the same way as a member of a traditional Christian church does, that he might secure his and others' salvation. Whether his action is one of sending out spiritual energy, raising his spiritual consciousness in order to enter a New Age, or even the dramatic act of self-sacrifice, the individual will seek to change those aspects in his life which do not harmonise with his new belief system.

The Appeal of UFO Religious Movements

Indirect contactees, that is those who join a movement lead by a direct contactee, may be attracted to such a group for a variety of reasons. The most obvious one is that they believe the message: that spiritually superior aliens are in communication with selected individuals and that they wish to help mankind. Belief in aliens as cosmic saviours may appeal to those spiritual seekers who find themselves living in an increasingly "high-tech" society where "conventional religions are progressively failing either to produce a convincing God or to bring the people near to a real God."⁵⁰ The Church's decreasing influence has meant that mankind's modern spiritual needs have not been met, allowing unorthodox beliefs to emerge. Yet these unorthodox beliefs do, as some argue, enable the individual to express his spiritual side in a manner appropriate for our materialistic and scientific age. As Ted Peters claims, western civilization believes it has become so intellectually mature that a belief in God can only be regarded as childish or primitive. Society places too great a virtue on what can be seen, explained and thus understood. To speak, therefore, of a God is to speak of things unknown. Yet, if God is replaced by aliens from far off galaxies we are allowed to express our religious frustration without rejecting altogether our scientized worldview, as there may be the possibility of seeing UFOs and aliens. At the same time, due to their remoteness and mysterious activities aliens can still be rendered divine. "Covert UFO theology is the attempt to relieve the tension and make peace with science. It is the attempt to construct a wholesome unitary horizon for self-understanding - a myth which incorporates both our religious feelings and our naturalistic assumptions."⁵¹

UFO religions allow the individual to believe in a redemptive power greater than ourselves whilst placing it firmly within the parameters of the science and technology of our future. Other than shifting the emphasis from a Christ-like figure returning to save the Earth to one of technologically and spiritually superior aliens from outer space, UFO religions are not very different from other religious movements which have appeared over the past two millennia.⁵² For those individuals who feel that traditional religions are outdated whilst feeling the need to believe in redemption by an external saviour, UFOs become the perfect vehicles in which superior alien intelligences may offer a solution to our worldly troubles: pollution, ill-health, war, etc..⁵³ UFOs and aliens act as reconciliatory agents between humanity and the Sacred. Finally, the appeal of UFO religions may also lie in the fact that members can feel they are directly helping their cosmic saviours to avert disasters and may, in some small way, prevent annihilation. Active participation in the alleviation of suffering and the restoration of balance upon Earth is an attractive proposition for those individuals.

This review has, I believe, been necessary in order to highlight the fact that, for many of those reporting them, extraterrestrial contacts have features closely paralleling those present in more traditional religions. Possibly, UFO religions present an opportunity for individuals, be they direct or indirect contactees, to interpret close encounter experiences within a religious framework. This is the basis for my analysis of the religious nature of contactee and abductee experiences.

As mentioned in the introduction I have selected five expressions of religious experience in order to assist my analysis of both contexts of experience. These are Rites of Passage, particularly initiatory rites; Shamanism; Medieval Otherworld Journeys; Contemporary Near-Death Experiences; and Revelations (particularly concerning those of the Virgin Mary). Although these religious experiences will be defined and analysed in much greater detail throughout the following chapters, particularly Chapters Three and Four, I feel that it will be beneficial if in the next chapter, whilst defining the specific stages of both types of close encounter event, we briefly note some parallels with the selected religious experiences. In order to do this a brief definition of each selected expression now follows in preparation for the later, more thorough discussion. (It should also be noted that each experience shares themes which can be found in, if not all, then at least one, of the other categories. For example, although *gnosis* - secret knowledge - is a particularly strong theme when we deal with alien and Marian revelations we also find that it plays its part in all the other categories of experience. Such secondary themes will, therefore, be dealt with separately where necessary.)

Rites of Passage

Rites of passage are found in most cultures; that is ceremonies which are associated with crucial stages in an individual's life, for example changes of social status such as puberty rites and marriage. In small-scale societies such rites are emphatically adhered to. There are myriad ways in which a rite of passage may be recognised, yet they often involve unforgettable, awe-inspiring and, commonly, terrifying episodes, all designed to leave an indelible mark upon the individual. Anthropologist Maurice Bloch's ideas concerning rites of passage are particularly germane to this study.⁵⁴ Bloch developed fellow anthropologist Arnold van Gennep's model of the three stage ritual process: separation, margin (or liminality) and reintegration (or aggregation/incorporation) emphasising the profound, markedly violent, internal transformational process such rituals are able to induce in the individual. He argues that, through the ritual process, individuals feel they encounter some transcendental source, power or dimension which touches them so deeply that they feel different in some way ever afterwards. Spiritually revitalised they feel driven to outwardly demonstrate their inner transformation. Bloch attaches a different content to each of the three stages of the ritual process, stages which remain unchanged through time, and comprise a central structure or 'core'.

The first stage, separation, is for Bloch not necessarily an outward separation between the individual undergoing the rite of passage and his social group. Whilst the outward ritual event may demand the individual's physical removal from his profane living space to a more fitting place to encounter otherworld entities, Bloch argues that, on an internal level, the individual may experience a dramatic pulling apart of himself without being physically removed to a more sacred space. Separation rites usually involve a number of long mental and physical ordeals intended to distance the initiand irrevocably from his former existence. In fact, the separation stage is believed by many societies to be the point when, removed from his society, the initiand 'dies' to his old life. (In some societies the initiand is actually considered dead at the time of separation, relatives mourn his demise, he remains 'dead' for the duration of the rite.)

Bloch acknowledges the themes of 'death' and 'rebirth' or 'resurrection' which underlie a great many, if not all, rites of passage, applying them to the individual's internal spiritual state. During the internal division of the initiand he is violently 'taken out of' himself, is severed from his mundane world, and enters an alternate realm of consciousness. Bloch argues this violent internal assault is essential for the initiand's old personality to be driven out, leaving him, for a time, entirely transcendental i.e. of the sacred realm. Symbolically, the individual's spiritual self appears to consume the old mundane self.⁵⁵

The liminal or marginal stage of the ritual begins when the individual is totally consumed by transcendent power. He has, in effect, left his old status behind and is in the process of being 'made anew'. The period of liminality is an ambiguous and complex state. Having died to his old self, the initiand is, for the moment, 'status-less', and is deemed to be 'invisible' in the eyes of the community; he is considered neither dead nor alive, but at the same time he is both. It is during this interval between life and death that, in the external drama of the ritual, the initiand is introduced to the positive part of the rite: instruction in the knowledge of the community's sacred history, laws and ceremonial customs. In many instances it is through this disclosure of knowledge, quite often through the recitation of the community's myth of origin, that the individual learns who he is and what he should become.⁵⁶ It is at this time that the initiand encounters the transcendental dimension, and is profoundly transformed, not only socially, but also existentially, and spiritually. Again, this radical transformation is almost universally symbolized by images of death and rebirth. Having been killed, the individual is now made anew by consuming the sacred essence which replaces the profane essence driven out. He is 'reborn' in the image of his gods or mythological ancestors. He is believed to resemble a superhuman being, having been 'formed' by those members of the society who are considered the spiritual elite, in accordance with the models revealed by divine beings from ages past.⁵⁷ By receiving this sacred vitality the initiand becomes part of the eternal, unchangeable whole; a timeless realm uniting the living and the dead, the past, present and future, gods and mortals. The individual is overwhelmed with this divine encounter that he becomes 'possessed' with this sacredness.⁵⁸

Yet the initiand cannot stay in this otherworld, there would be no point to the ritual if he did so. He must return to his profane life in a way that acknowledges his new status. In the first stage of the ritual the profane is simply left behind as the individual is consumed by the Sacred. On returning, the Sacred is not left behind, it continues to be an essential part of the individual who possesses it. The initiate returns from the other realm so empowered with the sacred essence that he must demonstrate his change of status within his mundane life. The final ritual act is therefore usually a violent religious ceremony which, especially in puberty initiation rites, involves ritual operations and ordeals including the cutting, scarring, branding, or tattooing of the body in a variety of ways. Such acts brand the individual, differentiating him from the uninitiated, as well as permanently incorporating him in a new group, a group which, like him, has survived the sacred ordeal. The painful operations and violent treatment form a symbolic drama, the outward acknowledgement of the initiate's triumphant sacred conquest of the mundane, having gained for himself a new identity incorporating the essence of the otherworld he has been thrust into.⁵⁹

In some societies once the individual returns he acts as if he can no longer remember his previous existence, refusing to recognise his relatives or answer to his own name. Sometimes the individual is even expected to display no knowledge of the community's language. The individual 're-learning' the social norms of his society brings this period of forgetfulness to an end.⁶⁰ Whatever symbolic rite is performed, after initiation the individual is as he will be for the rest of his life. He will never again fully leave the Sacred, achieving, as he has, a special combination of the Sacred and the profane.⁶¹

Shamanism

The shaman, as Carol Zaleski aptly observes can be classed as "the prototypical otherworld traveler [sic]"⁶² The term 'shaman' originates from the Tunguso-Manchurian *saman* which translates as 'he who knows' and, in this classical understanding, a shaman is a medicine man, priest and psychopomp. In other words, he is believed to have the power to heal the sick, direct communal sacrifices and escort the souls of the dead to the Otherworld. He is able to do all this by his distinctive techniques of ecstasy - the power to leave his body at will during a trancelike state. Ecstasy is an important and distinguishing feature of the shaman's vocation. While in an ecstatic state the shaman undergoes a visionary experience which invariably includes recurring symbolic themes of death, voyage of the soul to the Otherworld, contact with otherworld beings, return, and application of the knowledge acquired in the sacred world to a particular cause (for example, fighting disease).⁶³ What confirms this vocation is that the shaman is able, after many months, usually years, of severe training, to undertake his ecstatic otherworld journey *at will* whenever called upon to do so by his community. As Mircea Eliade writes:

...the shaman is above all the specialist in ecstasy. It is owing to his capacity for ecstasies - that is, because he is able, at will, to pass out of his body and undertake mystical journeys through all the cosmic regions - that the shaman is a healer, and a director of souls as well as a mystic and visionary. Only the shaman is able to pursue the wandering soul of the sick person, capture it and bring it back to the body: it is the shaman who accompanies the souls of the dead to their new dwelling-places, and he, again, who embarks on long, ecstatic journeys in Heaven to present the soul of the sacrificed animal to the gods, and implore their divine benediction.⁶⁴

An individual may become a shaman by several routes, the most common being through the hereditary transmission of the shamanic profession, and the spontaneous vocation - 'call' or 'election' - of the individual. In the latter situation the individual might find his shamanic role revealed during a sudden illness or "during dreams or other visionary states, such as an experience with hallucinogenic substances; or in the course of a traditional vision quest associated with a rite of passage, such as we find among many Native American peoples, the neophyte learns that the life he or she is to follow is that of the Holy One."⁶⁵

However, there are also individuals who become shamans of their own volition (as, for example, among the Altaic Turkic peoples) or by the will of the clan (as with the Tungus). Self-elected shamans are, however, considered to be less powerful than those who have inherited the profession or who have been called, and thus singled-out, by the gods and spirits. An accident or a highly unusual event may also initiate the individual's entry into shamanism, such an occurrence being viewed as an ordeal analogous to that encountered during an initiatory ordeal. For example, among the Buryats an individual who survives being struck by lightning is viewed as being 'divinely selected'.⁶⁶

Medieval Otherworld Journeys

The literature which describes visions during the Middle Ages is vast and flourished in both sacred and secular form. During the course of this thesis we will only consider the literature of the medieval Christian West in which may be observed the distinctive features of the otherworld journey, especially the journey to heaven and hell. These visions have long been recognised as an important form and expression of thought in Middle Ages. The medieval reader was drawn to the vivid accounts of what was in store for him at death in the period before the *parousia*, Christ's Second Coming, and the Final Judgement.

The full flowering of this tradition however, occurred in the period from the tenth to the mid-thirteenth centuries, which saw the development of long, almost novelistic accounts of journeys to the beyond and back, and increasing mention of otherworld visions in chronicles, sermons, and books of *exempla* for preachers. During that time, the otherworld journey found favor [sic] with monastic and clerical authors as a way of expressing their views of penance, intercession, and religious vows.⁶⁷

Despite such visions developing varied eschatological content, the otherworld journey story showed continuity in a number of respects. This was mainly due to "literary limitation,...the pious conservation of traditional forms of expression, and...the universality of its themes."⁶⁸ It is, therefore, possible to identify certain themes in the many accounts of medieval otherworld journeys that flourished throughout Europe and persisted throughout the Middle Ages. Accounts of medieval visions tell of the "sudden exit from the body; travel across tunnels, paths, or fields; encounters with luminous guides and spirits; glimpses of heavenly bliss; reluctant re-entry into life; and an aftermath of psychological and spiritual transformation" as well as "bad deaths, harsh judgement scenes, purgatorial torments, and infernal terrors".⁶⁹ These themes appear especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and follow the ritual pattern of passage as already noted above. In these types of narrative (examples of which are given later in Chapter Four):

...typically the visionary is told, after viewing purgatorial torments and mistaking them for the punishment of the damned, that there is far worse sights to come; he sees souls tossed between fire and ice and rising like sparks from the pit of hell; he is temporarily deserted by his guide; he finds paradise surrounded by or on top of a wall, which he surmounts without knowing how; at the end, after a brief taste of heavenly joys, he is compelled against his will to return to life; and after he revives, his newly austere mode of life testifies to the authenticity of his vision.⁷⁰

Near-Death Experiences

The Near-Death Experience (for brevity's sake known as NDE) is a term coined to explain the experiences reported by some of those who have apparently died and then recovered. For centuries cultures throughout the world have recorded accounts of individuals who believe they have returned from the land of the dead. I have, however, limited this religious experience to contemporary accounts of NDEs in order to differentiate it from the medieval otherworld journey, with which it has close parallels in content although the context is dissimilar. We have only to glance through the Bible to find traces of resuscitation of those thought to be dead. As Carl Becker documents:

In the Old Testament there is the report of Elisha resuscitating the Shunammite widow's son [2Kings 4:32]. Jesus' raising of Jairus's daughter is reported by two synoptic gospels, while John says that the raising of Lazarus after four days was one of the direct causes of the priest's plan to do away with Jesus [Mk.5; Lk.8; 2Jn. esp. v.47-48]. Peter brought the weaver Dorcas back to life, and Paul resuscitated Eutychus, who had fallen from a loft [Acts 9 & 20].

Unfortunately, Jairus's daughter, Lazarus, Dorcas, and Eutychus failed to record their experiences for posterity, if indeed they experienced anything while they were dead.⁷¹

Due to the ability of medical science to recover an increasing number of patients from the brink of death, it is not surprising that tales of NDEs are increasing. It is estimated that 40 percent of these patients experience an NDE even though some may not at first remember it.⁷² The features that embody the 'standard NDE pattern', more commonly known as the 'theoretical ideal', 'prototypic' or 'core' NDE, were initially identified by Raymond Moody Jr., and published in his best-selling work *Life after Life* in 1975. On analysis Moody was able to identify fifteen commonly occurring features⁷³ in these episodes which he then used to construct what he calls a "theoretically 'ideal' or 'complete' experience which embodies all of the common elements, in the order in which it is typical for them to occur."⁷⁴ This theoretical model will be quoted in full in Chapter Four when a more detailed comparative study will be made of close encounters and NDEs. The fifteen commonly occurring elements of the modern NDE will be used as correlative material throughout this thesis.

Revelations

Individuals have claimed to have received revelations over thousands of years from a wide variety of non-human beings. Historians agree that at least the *idea* of revelation is present in all cultures and in all religions.⁷⁵ Such a widespread belief in the concept of revelation is reasonable if we consider that "no god is worth worshipping who is unable or unwilling to help his worshippers, and that help, to be effective, implies a revelation of the divine nature and purpose."⁷⁶ Many revelations have been considered to be the direct instructions of God transmitted through his messengers, principally the angels. Some religions were founded on revelations made to individuals who, through a sense of divine compulsion, felt called to disseminate this knowledge.

'Revelation' literally means the 'unveiling' of that which has formerly remained hidden. Here the emphasis is on *disclosed* as opposed to *discovered* as it is not the individual who discovers divine revelation, the recipient is a passive vessel. Instead, it is the revelation or secret knowledge (*gnosis*) which is the active element being delivered to the individual via some otherworld entity.⁷⁷ As Romans 16:25f states, 'revelation' in its proper and exalted sense is "revelation of [a] mystery which was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed". When revelation is interpreted in a religious context the disclosed 'mystery' is believed to be the will or purpose of God and of great human significance. "If we look broadly at the history of religion, we see that what is believed to be revealed is always some clue to a deeper significance of the human situation than appears upon the surface, and at the same time a way of easement or deliverance from the evil of that situation."⁷⁸

Revelation, therefore, is transmission of knowledge from the divine to the human, yet it is not just esoteric knowledge which is disclosed, revelation is also practical in nature. Thus, as we see in the Bible, what is revealed by God is not just the knowledge of how to be saved from sin and, ultimately, hell, but salvation itself. In much the same way, the knowledge which was revealed in the Greek mysteries was knowledge of how to achieve union with God, a union which *itself* would generate the desired deliverance.⁷⁹

Revelation always intimately concerns humankind and offers humanity salvation. However, although the recipient is passive during the act of revelation, ultimately the individual, as well as the rest of humanity, must actively embrace these divine instructions to achieve salvation. Individuals are as free to reject divine disclosures as they are to act upon them, although the promised fate of those who decline is usually annihilation. Moses was directed by God to lead the tribes of Israel out of Egypt through the wilderness into the promised land, but God could not have fulfilled his promise if the Israelites had not had faith in his revealed word. Similarly, if Jesus had refused his divine commission the subsequent sequence of revelations and their outcome could not have occurred.⁸⁰

The ultimate human response to revelation must therefore be either rejection of the message or acceptance through *faith* that what has been communicated *is* divine truth. Faith is of supreme importance if the revelation is to be assimilated in the individual's life. For example, for many Christians an individual is not saved, despite having read and understood New Testament Scripture unless they have faith that Jesus has the power to save. Finally, although the faithful individual may be secure in the knowledge that they are saved, the consummating act of salvific revelation, in certain religions, is still awaited. New Testament revelation, for example, will be fulfilled at the time of the *parousia*, when it is believed Jesus will return heralding the New Age which the saved will experience, whilst the damned are sent to hell. In Chapter Three this will be discussed further in reference to revelation delivered by the Virgin Mary, visions of whom have occurred throughout history, up to the present time.

This survey shows that in western contemporary society there is much interest in the UFO and close encounter phenomenon; interest not only in the vast array of literature, videos and films concerning these experiences but also in new religious movements which have developed in the last fifty years. The beliefs of these new religions highlight a fusion of traditional religious themes with those alleged alien revelations. Despite, the interest in alien contact and the fact that a large number of individuals believe such contact to be religiously significant there is still little academic research into the many areas of UFO and close encounter experiences. Within the parameters of the selected religious categories of experience defined we will now begin an analysis of the alleged contactee and abductee episodes.

¹ Although 'UFO' actually stands for 'unidentified flying object' i.e. an object which the witness *at that time* is unable to identify, the term has now become synonymous with 'flying saucer'. Therefore, throughout this thesis when referring to a UFO it is used only in the sense of 'flying saucer'.

² There are many books and articles written regarding the close encounter subject and I was able to initially gain knowledge of what literature exists through a number of book lists, especially those compiled by J. Gordon Melton and George M. Eberhart 'The Flying Saucer Contactee Movement, 1950-1994' in *The Gods Have Landed* (Ed. James R. Lewis) pp.251-332 and Eberhart's work, *UFOs and the ET Contact Movement: A Biography - Volume One: UFOs*. My primary source was the ASSAP library. ASSAP (the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomenon) is an educational charity involved in the investigation and documentation, by strict scientific means, of those anomalous experiences which are frequently classed as 'paranormal'. On becoming a member of the association I was able to gain access to its growing library, which also holds invaluable UFO titles for BUFORA (the British UFO Research Association) and SPR (the Society for Psychical Research). Without this major source I would have had greater difficulty in tracking down source material. Even with access to this library I was still unable to find many titles. A major problem with obtaining primary close encounter source material is that if such reports are published at all they are either published informally or in rather limited editions. I have often had to resort to other titles in which the primary material is replicated. The fact that there are few UFO titles available in university and other academic libraries in Britain reflects just how little academic inquiry has been pursued concerning this subject. Indeed, there are few close encounter sources which have been written from a strict academic standpoint and many of the primary sources are, on investigation, found to be memories more often than not uncovered in a clinical situation, often accessible only through the use of 'regression hypnosis'. Regression hypnosis (or memory) therapy [RMT] refers to an attempt to recover long forgotten, repressed or only partially recalled memories through the process of hypnosis. Whilst in an hypnotic state of mind the subject is regressed in order to relive the event. As hypnosis places the subject in a heightened suggestible state experiments indicate that, without focused recall, he can quite easily begin to confabulate (i.e. invent) event. These confabulations are so vivid that external supporting evidence is needed to distinguish them from true memories. The frequent use of RMT in close encounter investigations has received criticism. Although some therapists believe traumatic events to be subconsciously repressed and remain so without recourse to RMT, other memory researchers now believe that traumatic events are actually quite difficult to forget. The debate continues concerning RMT's reliability and UFO researchers are advised of its' restrictions. The use of hypnosis material within this thesis is part of the close encounter witness' understanding of their experience. It is not offered as unproblematic evidence, but is part of the fieldwork in this phenomenological study, to be discussed and theorised.

For a more indepth discussion of RMT see for example: Ernest R. Hilgard, *Hypnotic Suggestibility*; John Hochman, 'Recovered Memory Therapy and False Memory Syndrome'; Martin Orne, 'On the Simulating Subject as a Quasi-Control Group in Hypnosis Research'; Carol Travis, 'The Freedom to Change'.

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- ³ Margaret Sachs, *The UFO Encyclopedia* pp.99,200-201
C. D. B. Bryan, *Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind* p.99
- ⁴ These figures are taken from John Spencer, *Gifts of the Gods?* p.10.
- ⁵ At the present time no reliable witness has actually reported a sighting of an object which developed into a landing of some alien craft which then resulted in any type of close encounter which was witnessed by a third party. Due to the lack of evidence supporting the theory that sightings and experience cases are linked we must surely examine these phenomena separately until we can prove that they are in fact connected. By divorcing these artificially connected ideas we are able to focus on other hypotheses.
- ⁶ D. Sims & M. J. Florey, 'Evidence For and Implications Of Medically Unexplained Implants in Abductees' p.9
Bryan, op. cit., pp.50,231-232
- ⁷ Richard L. Thompson, *Alien Identities* p.44
- ⁸ J. Allen Hynek, *The UFO Experience* p.34
- ⁹ Roger Walsh, *The Spirit of Shamanism* p.72
- ¹⁰ Keith Thompson, author of *Angels and Aliens*, is one of those individuals who believe contactee cases should be placed within the CEIII definition. He writes, "Close Encounter of the Third Kind (CEIII): 'Intelligent beings' are reported in or around the UFO, sometimes apparently collecting rock samples or 'repairing' their craft. Interactions between human 'contactees' and UFO occupants fall into this category" (p.144). J. Gordon Melton agrees that individuals who claim direct contact with flying saucer entities are designated as experiencing a close encounter of the third kind. [J. Gordon Melton, 'The Contactees: A Survey' p.1] Ufologist John Keel, however, makes no distinction between contactees and abductees, believing the encounters to be so similar that they should not be divided. [Jim Schnabel, *Dark White* p.153] The vast majority of individuals who write about contactee and abductee phenomena tend to differentiate between the two types of close encounter either for clarity's sake or to continue the distinction made by Hynek. [For example, see Richard L. Thompson op. cit., p.44]
- ¹¹ Auditory revelation by aliens after an initial physical contact with an individual is sometimes reported. It is claimed that the subsequent auditory form of communication is easier for the aliens to achieve and safer, as they do not have to land their spacecraft in order to visit the contactee, which involves the risk of undesirable attention.
- ¹² Richard L. Thompson, op. cit., p.174
- ¹³ Many books are available today featuring a variety of diffuse channelled communications, prophecies and warnings delivered by many entity types including those beings claiming to be 'extraterrestrial' in origin. For example: E. Norman, *The Voice of Venus*; R. Norman, *Conclave of Light Beings*; P. Shockley, *Cosmic Awareness Speaks* (3 Vols.); Diane Tessman and Tibus, *We Are Among You*; Jane Roberts, *Seth Speaks*; Bartholomew, *I Come As A Brother*; and Lazaris *Lazaris, Interviews Book I and II*.
- ¹⁴ For examples see:
Raymond W. Drake, *Gods and Spacemen in the Ancient East*
Hilary Evans, *Visions, Apparitions, Alien Visitors & Gods Spirits, Cosmic Guardians*
Paul Thomas, *Flying Saucers Through the Ages*
Keith Thompson, op. cit.
Arthur Tomlinson, 'Look Back in Astonishment'
Jacques Vallee, *Passport to Magonia*
- ¹⁵ Carl G. Jung, *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth* p.12

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- ¹⁶ Sachs, op. cit., pp.207-208
John Spencer, *Perspectives* pp.17-20
Keith Thompson, op. cit., pp.1-4, 11-13
- ¹⁷ Schnabel, op. cit., pp.19-20
A 'wave' is the term generally used in ufology to describe a period of several weeks or months during which multiple nationwide and/or worldwide UFO sightings occur. A wave is distinguished from a 'flap' which denotes a highly publicized concentration of UFO sightings within a small geographical area or a short time period. [Sachs, op. cit., p.363]
- ¹⁸ J. Kroll & B. Bachrach, 'Medieval Visions and Contemporary Hallucinations' pp.712,715
- ¹⁹ Michael Harner, *The Way of the Shaman* p.xx
- ²⁰ For Example:
L. N. Pyatnitsky & V. A. Fonkin, 'Human Consciousness Influence on Water Structure' pp.89-105
N. E. Sviderskaya, T. A. Korolkova & A. G. Lee, 'Potentials of Topographic Mapping of Bioelectric Processes in Parapsychological Research' pp.45-52
- ²¹ For example see:
C. D. B. Bryan's interview with Richard J. Boylan Ph.D. in op. cit., pp.237-249
Donald Menzel, *The World of Flying Saucers: A Scientific Examination of a Major Myth of a Space Age and UFO Enigma*
- ²² Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries* p.59 quoted in John Mack, *Abduction* p.5
- ²³ Vallee, op. cit., p.3
- ²⁴ Ibid. p.7
- ²⁵ Keith Thompson op. cit., p.120
- ²⁶ Quoted in Jacques Vallee, *Dimensions* p.189
- ²⁷ Jacques Vallee, *Messengers of Deception* pp.54-56
- ²⁸ There are a growing number of new religions with UFO belief systems including: the One World Family; the Institute of Cosmic Research; the Raelian Movement; Cosmic Circle of Fellowship; Delval UFO, Inc.; Cosmic Star Temple; Unarius-Science for Life; and the Universe Society Church (UNISOC).
- ²⁹ John Saliba, 'Religious Dimensions of UFO Phenomena' p.25
- ³⁰ Ibid., pp.27-28
- ³¹ Ibid., p.28 quoting Max Weber, *Sociology of Religion* p.54
- ³² Leaflet entitled *The Aetherius Society: Some Basic Principles included in its Teaching*.
- ³³ Ibid.
Roy Wallis, 'The Aetherius Society' pp.21,23-24
- ³⁴ Leaflet: *The Aetherius Society*, Ibid.
Wallis, Ibid., pp.21,22

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- ³⁵ Leaflet: *The Aetherius Society*, Ibid.
Richard Lawrence, *The Theology of Aetherius* p.15
- ³⁶ Lawrence, Ibid., pp.6,12
Leaflet entitled *The Aetherius Society: A Brief Introduction*
- ³⁷ Kevin McClure, 'UFO Cults' p.352
- ³⁸ Saliba, op. cit., p.29
- ³⁹ J. Gordon Melton, 'Mark-Age, Inc.' pp.731-732.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ Saliba, op. cit., p.26
- ⁴² Ibid., p.31
- ⁴³ Ibid.
Robert Balch, 'Waiting for the Ships' p.143
McClure, op. cit., p.349
- ⁴⁴ Balch, Ibid., p.142
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p.163
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ David Gardner, 'The Internet Freaks' pp.6-7
Brendan Bourne & David Gardner, 'The Nurse from Hell' pp.18-19
Bruce Wright, 'Just Do It' p.32
- ⁴⁸ Bill Ellis, 'American Gothic' p.36
- ⁴⁹ Saliba, op. cit., p.31
- ⁵⁰ Spencer, *Gifts of the Gods* p.126
- ⁵¹ Ted Peters, 'UFOs: The Religious Dimension' pp.277-278
- ⁵² Some UFO religions believe salvation will be brought about solely by extraterrestrials, rejecting God completely. Yet, in the majority of cases, UFO NRMs and close encounter witnesses do not dismiss God altogether. As we will observe in Chapter Five there is a strong belief in a divine force from which we were all created. Where this view is prevalent, aliens tend to be looked upon as 'angels' or 'messengers' who serve this divine power and help us to reunite with it.
- ⁵³ Hilary Evans, 'UFOs as Social and Cultural Phenomena' p.360
- ⁵⁴ For a full discussion of Bloch's ideas concerning rites of passage refer to his book *Prey into Hunter*.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., pp.4,5,6
- ⁵⁶ Mircea Eliade, 'Initiation: An Overview' p.230
- ⁵⁷ Eliade, 'Initiation' p.226

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- ⁵⁸ Bloch, op. cit., pp.6,21
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., p.5
- ⁶⁰ Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism* p.65
- ⁶¹ Bloch, op. cit., pp.9,15,16
- ⁶² Carol Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys* p.13
- ⁶³ For a deeper understanding of the shaman's vocation see Mircea Eliade's classic work *Shamanism*.
- ⁶⁴ Quoted in Zaleski, op. cit., p.13 from 'Nostalgia for Paradise' in Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries*, trans. Philip Mairet, p.61
- ⁶⁵ Joan Halifax, *Shamanic Voices* p.5
- ⁶⁶ Mircea Eliade, 'Shamanism: An Overview' pp.202-203
- ⁶⁷ Zaleski, op. cit., p.33
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., p.7
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., p.33
- ⁷¹ Carl B. Becker, *Paranormal Experience and Survival of Death* p.82
- ⁷² Keith Thompson, op. cit., p.156
- ⁷³ In his book Moody presents these features in a roughly chronological order. He lists them in the table of contents as follows: 1. Ineffability 2. Hearing the News 3. Feelings of Peace and Quiet 4. The Noise 5. The Dark Tunnel 6. Out of the Body 7. Meeting Others 8. The Being of Light 9. The Review 10. The Border or Limit 11. Coming Back 12. Telling Others 13. Effects on Lives 14. New Views on Death 15. Corroboration.
- ⁷⁴ Raymond Moody, *Life after Life* p.21
- ⁷⁵ John Baillie, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought* p.43
- ⁷⁶ H. Wheeler Robinson, *Redemption and Revelation in the Actuality of History* p.161
- ⁷⁷ Baillie, op. cit., pp.19,28
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., p.42
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., p.46
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., p.68

CHAPTER TWO

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS: CONTACT AND ABDUCTION

If there is any factual content to the stories of abductions and close encounters,...that content must first be tested in the light of equally strong content from competing accounts of close encounters with unusual beings by mediums, shamans and visionaries.

- J. Gordon Melton: 'The Contactees'

After Kenneth Arnold's UFO sighting, more people began claiming personal contact with the pilots of these 'flying saucers'. These 'contactees', as they came to be known, asserted that benevolent aliens had travelled from distant planets and delivered important messages about humanity's survival. Many contactees claimed that they had travelled in the spacecraft, sometimes journeying to their alien visitor's planet. Once these encounter reports entered the public domain the contactees' stories were almost universally rejected and ridiculed. They were an embarrassment to some UFO researchers whose investigations found evidence and corroboration generally severely lacking. Many, on hearing such reports, believed them to be the results of the overactive imagination of a few people who presented themselves as the prophets of a superior alien race.

As we shall observe, abductees initially also faced the same derision; since the 1980s, however, abduction reports have been accorded more respect. However, whilst there has been serious investigation of abduction experiences the contactee claims have never received the same attention. This attitude must have been incredibly frustrating for contactees and undeserved for, once these reports are analysed dispassionately, it may be observed that there are a number of strong arguments for re-appraising the material. Contactee and abductee episodes are difficult to clearly separate as many features found in contactee reports may also be discovered in abduction accounts. The unifying theme of both experiences is their detailed communication between humans and what appear to be otherworld entities.

This chapter presents a systematic overview of the 'typical' contactee and abductee encounters of the modern era UFO claims. I will examine some of the contactee reports of the 1950s, highlighting as I do the central characteristics of their claims and analysing any patterns which may connect with our selected religious categories of experience. The increase in abduction claims reported since the 1960s will then be discussed and analysed.

The Contactees

George Adamski

The modern form of the close encounter experience began on November 20, 1952 when George Adamski reported meeting a Venusian named Orthon in the Californian desert. Adamski was Polish by birth but had lived from the age of two in America. After a couple of duty tours in the army he eventually settled in Laguna Beach, California. Although lacking a formal education Adamski seems to have been a charismatic individual who founded a sect called the Royal Order of Tibet. Lacking the appropriate qualifications, he also promoted himself as a professor of oriental mystical philosophy, writing a pamphlet *Questions and Answers by the Royal Order of Tibet*. As the Order's spokesman Adamski lectured on 'Universal Law' and he also briefly attended the Order of Loving service, another metaphysical group centred in Laguna Beach.¹

In 1940 Adamski moved his Order to the Valley Center, and began farming on a small scale. Sometime later he disassociated himself from the group and moved to the southern slope of Mount Palomar, where he worked as a handyman. Since the 1940s Adamski had claimed to have witnessed many hundreds of UFO flights and was able to produce photographs of spacecraft (his best-known picture showing a bell-shaped object with portholes around the upper part and three balls underneath which are supposed to be landing gear). He sold these photographs on the burgeoning UFO lecture circuits as well as publishing articles in *Fate* magazine. In the late 1940s Adamski wrote an unsuccessful science fiction novel, *Pioneers of Space*, involving an imaginary trip to the Moon, Venus and Mars.²

In his book *Flying Saucers Have Landed* (co-authored with Desmond Leslie) Adamski describes his alleged first encounter with a member of a group of Venusian space travellers. According to this account on November 20, 1952, Adamski drove into the Californian desert accompanied by anthropologist George Hunt Williamson; his wife Betty, (also an anthropologist and chemist); Mr and Mrs Al Bailey; Lucy McGinnis; and Alice K. Wells. The purpose of this journey was to sight a UFO and this aim was fulfilled: a cigarshaped UFO was spotted and, whilst the others waited in the car watching through binoculars, Adamski went to investigate alone on foot. He spotted someone waving to him and as he approached he realised that he "was in the presence of a man from space - A HUMAN BEING FROM ANOTHER WORLD! [sic]".³ On approaching Adamski claims to have met a tall, slim, male Venusian who looked about 28 years old. Clothed in an one piece chocolate-brown outfit the Venusian, named Orthon, is described as having an average mouth with beautiful white teeth, calm grey-green eyes, long flowing blonde hair and tanned skin. Adamski declared that "The beauty of his form surpassed anything I had ever seen....I felt like a little child in the presence of one with great wisdom and much love, and I became very humble within myself...for from him was radiating a feeling of infinite understanding and kindness, with supreme humanity."⁴

Adamski claimed they communicated through a combination of telepathy and sign language about highly topical earthly concerns, Orthon explaining that his mission to Earth was friendly. He wished to stop atomic testing as radiation from fallout endangered other planets in the solar system and would upset the harmony of the universe. This important message was communicated to Adamski by Orthon throwing up his hands and crying "Boom! Boom!". Adamski interpreted this to mean that atomic testing would endanger the world. Orthon also claimed that the humanoid form was universal and that Venusians believed in God too, but followed a more devoted path than Earthlings.⁵ Adamski later claimed that many 'space brothers' were walking the Earth unnoticed by the majority of the population, and that he had communicated with these aliens in a variety of Californian bars and cafes.

Adamski's second book, *Inside the Spaceships* (1955), dealt with his alleged UFO voyages to the other side of the Moon where he saw forests, lakes, snow-capped mountains and cities where people strolled along sidewalks.⁶ Adamski also claimed to have met beings from other planets in the solar system. The space brother with whom he claimed the most contact, and who taught him about the aliens' mission was known as 'the Master'. It was he who told Adamski that the 'space brothers' wished to save humanity from nuclear devastation. Jesus had been just such a messenger and now Adamski had been chosen for the same task.⁷ During 1959 Adamski began a world tour to publicize his alien encounters and their communications. He appeared on television and radio shows, and met various world celebrities including, allegedly, Pope John XXIII who presented him with a medallion. Just four years before his death in 1965, Adamski's third book, *Flying Saucers Farewell*, was published. Up until his death he was offering to teach people how to use self-hypnosis to visit Venus and Mars.⁸

What is immediately apparent throughout Adamski's report of alien contact is the revelatory nature of the encounters he claimed, particularly during his initial meeting with Orthon. This meeting took place in the Californian desert. I suggest this type of terrain is highly significant when discussing the religious themes of such encounters, as solitary regions have often been the sites of divine encounters throughout religious history. The desert is often considered to be a place of divine revelation. Its inhospitable and harsh climate defines it as a place of solitude where an individual may confront the elements, both natural and supernatural.

In the Jewish faith the desert is a place where, through solitude and serenity, man can feel closer to Yahweh, who may reveal Himself through revelation. Such desert theophanies include Elijah being tended by an angel as he flees from Jezebel (1 Kings 19:4-6) and God's appearance at Horeb (Exo.31:1ff; 1 Kings 19:11-18) and Sinai (Exo.19). Israel's forty years of wandering in the wilderness (Exodus – Deuteronomy) can also be viewed as a time of particular closeness to Yahweh (Hos.9:10; 11:1; 12:10). The desert is also the place where Israel finally finds salvation (Ezek.34:25; Hos.2:16). Prophets such as Isaiah, Micah, Hosea and Jeremiah all spent periods of reflection in the desert, associating this terrain with the hope of eschatological salvation (Isa.40:3; Jer.31:2; Ezek.34:25; Hos.2:16-25). In much the same way the later Essenes retreated to the wilderness in Qumran in the belief that they were preparing the way for the coming New Age, which was to be ushered in by divine outside agents (1QS8, 12ff; 9:19f).

The idea of eschatological movements beginning in the desert is still prevalent in the New Testament (Matt.24:26; Acts 21:38). Just as the Jewish prophets spend time in the desert so do the New Testament prophets. John the Baptist hid in the desert (Lk.1:80) and develops his own eschatological mission there (Matt.3:1/Mk.1:4). Jesus in his role as prophet and messiah is also linked with the desert; for example it is the setting for his defeating satanic temptation (Matt.14:13/Mk.6:32/Lk.9:12). It is also interesting to note that the synoptic stories of Jesus' childhood have his messianic entitlement proclaimed to those who live in the rugged inhospitable locates e.g. the solitary shepherds in the fields (Lk.2:8-14).

Christian visionaries throughout the ages have reported that they were alone when they encountered the divine. When Saint Francis of Assisi engaged in solitary prayer on Mount Alburna in 1224 he "saw a seraph with six fiery wings coming down from the highest point in the heavens" and received the stigmata.⁹ More modern visionaries have also experienced connection with the divine whilst alone. One gentleman after demobilization and resumption of a university career was seeking a faith and philosophy he felt comfortable with:

During this emotional upheaval I returned to my digs one evening and as I sat resting after the evening meal on my own in my room I saw a vision very clearly of myself wearing a clerical collar and in a pulpit in the act of preaching. As the vision faded I was rather disturbed at such an unusual and unexpected event....

Shortly after, I borrowed a new translation of the Bible from the library and as I was reading a passage from it one night I felt for the first time in my life that God was speaking to me in the words that I was reading.¹⁰

Another experiencer was alone in her flat in London coping with unemployment, financial insecurity and the breakup of a relationship:

One evening I was going to bed in a very low frame of mind and as I was undressing I 'prayed' very hard to be given a sign....

I then sat on my bed, the bedside light was on, my eyes were wide open. It then seemed as if the wall directly in front of me had disappeared, I was looking out into a vast night sky, the walls of the bedroom were still perfectly visible on either side. I could see the stars and a round blue ball, very beautiful, which was the Earth. A large, rounded man with a round, beaming face was sprawled across the sky holding this ball between his thumb and forefinger. I understood that this was God.¹¹

Marian contactees invariably claim that at least their initial encounter occurred in seclusion. Although Bernadette Soubirous was with her sisters near a grotto at Lourdes prior to her first Marian vision, she had at the time of the encounter been left alone whilst trying to cross a canal:

Hardly had the child begun to take off her stockings before she heard a loud noise like the advent of a storm....Frightened and apprehensive she hurriedly rose, and searched with her eyes to the right and left....On the other side of the canal...a golden cloud arose from the opening of the rock...and a woman appeared....¹²

It is interesting to note that even when there are multiple witnesses to a Marian vision the group is isolated from other people at the time. For example the three children, Francisco and Jacinto Marto and Lucia Santos, experienced their first meeting with the Virgin Mary while they were alone grazing their parent's sheep at the Cova da Iria, Fatima, Portugal. A "brilliantly white lady" appeared to them.¹³ The four female Garabandal visionaries, Conchita Gonzalez, Loli Mazon, Jacinta Gonzalez and Mari Cruz, had encountered an angel before a succession of visions of the Virgin. All four had met in their schoolmaster's garden to scump apples. After they had collected enough they left and then, according to Conchita's diary, "a very beautiful figure appeared to me, shining brilliantly, without hurting my eyes. The other girls...on seeing me in that state...were going to call my mother [but] they found themselves in the same state I was. And they exclaimed together: 'Oh an angel!'"¹⁴ Finally, as we shall observe throughout this thesis it is not uncommon for shamans, particularly during their initiation rites, to isolate themselves, at which time they encounter beings who take them to an otherworld.

Parallels can be drawn between these types of divine contact and those encounters reported by the 1950s contactees. Each contactee, as will be observed, was alone at the time of encounter (although it is claimed that Adamski was observed from a great distance) in a remote locale, where an otherworld being makes contact either verbally or physically, warning of imminent danger to humanity and delivering a means of ultimate redemption. The message revealed to Adamski is essentially one of compassion and concern for humanity and is strongly apocalyptic in content. Orthon warns of the untimely destruction of humanity primarily via the use of atomic and nuclear weaponry, which were of deep concern to people in the 1950s.

As we shall detail further in Chapter Three, with America and Europe just starting to recover from the devastation of World War II and learning to live with the Cold War and its threat of nuclear weaponry (the destructive powers of which had been so forcefully demonstrated at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945), any further threats of war were viewed with understandably profound fear. Orthon had travelled many miles in order to warn humanity of the danger of such warfare. If we could avert such disaster we would be rewarded by a life of peace and happiness having restored universal harmony. This prophetic encounter may be compared with many Christian examples of divine revelation: the bestowal of *gnosis* (secret knowledge) from the divine realm in order for individuals or humanity as a whole to attain salvation. This theme of salvation will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, however, it may be noted here that Adamski (along with other 1950s contactees) is provided with a 'Last Days' scenario allowing him and other individuals who believe his apocalyptic message the possibility of entering a new age where their salvation is assured.

"Man is ultimately concerned about what determines his ultimate destiny beyond all preliminary necessities and accidents."¹⁵ It is this concern which many of our religions seek to answer by providing a route to salvation which, in turn, appeals to the ceaseless primordial human quest for security and meaning to our existence. As we continue to expand our knowledge of the universe we realize just how small and fragile Earth is. We must also acknowledge how violent and disharmonious we can be, a trait which is continuing in a terrifying and increasingly destructive way. It is thus not surprising that 'salvation' remains prominent in many individuals' minds.

In the majority – if not all – of the world’s religions we find that the salvific transformation of the individual is usually one where they are either led to a place of perfection and eternal harmony, love and peace or the individual undergoes a personal evolution. These forms of salvation are attained through either the individual’s own striving for spiritual perfection, normally through strict adherence to a particular religious path, or through salvific intervention delivered by some supernatural agent as in Judeo-Christian eschatology.

In Orthon’s salvific message perfection can be obtained if humanity as a whole sets aside barbaric instincts and learns to live in peace and harmony with each other and the rest of the universe. In order to save ourselves we must adhere more strongly to God’s laws, or the laws of the ‘Creator of All’ as the space brothers refer to God, instead of the laws of materialism.¹⁶ Orthon’s race can thus be viewed as celestial saviours for our technological world. They come to rescue us from the cycle of destruction which we have been instrumental in creating. These sins find absolution at the hands of the otherworld beings who apparently do not come to judge or criticize us, but to show us compassion, the error of our ways and a path which if followed will lead to salvation. This agenda entrusted to Adamski is recurrent in the gnosis allegedly bestowed on other contactees discussed here.

Orfeo Angelucci

Two other contactees who published their experiences in the 1950s were Orfeo Angelucci and Howard Menger. Angelucci, a mechanic who describes himself as a self-taught, nervous individual suffering from ‘constitutional inadequacy’, wrote about his contact with extraterrestrials which initially took place in a remote field in Los Angeles on 4 August, 1946. Angelucci found these close encounters (which included journeys around the solar system onboard the aliens’ spacecraft) to be of great personal spiritual value and believes he experienced several stages of enlightenment during such contact. His first encounter is worth quoting in detail.

On May 23, 1952, around eleven in the evening Angelucci claims to have felt unwell, experiencing a ‘prickling’ sensation in the upper half of his body. Driving home from working a nightshift he observed a glowing object hovering over the horizon. (Light is a common feature in close encounter reports, discussed in more detail in the outline of the Villas-Boas abduction case.) The object suddenly ascended with great speed and then disappeared towards the west, releasing two balls of green fire from which issued a man’s voice speaking ‘perfect English’: “Don’t be afraid, Orfeo, we are friends!”¹⁷ After being asked to get out of the car, whilst the balls of light were hovering a short distance in front of him, the voice explained to Angelucci that he was in direct communication with “friends from another world”. Suddenly feeling very thirsty Angelucci was told to “Drink from the crystal cup you will find on the fender of your car”. This drink Angelucci described as being the “most delicious beverage I had ever tasted”.¹⁸ The glowing green lights widened and there appeared the head and shoulders of two humanoids, a man and a woman, “being the ultimate in perfection”. They watched Angelucci for a while then vanished.¹⁹ The voice continued telling him amongst other things that “we feel a deep sense of brotherhood toward Earth’s inhabitants because of an ancient kinship of our planet with Earth...We ask that you look upon us simply as older brothers.”²⁰

After this Angelucci describes feeling exalted and strengthened. It was “as though momentarily I had transcended mortality and was somehow related to these superior beings”.²¹ Later, Angelucci claimed he was entrusted with a prophecy with a specific deadline: if the Earth people did not try to improve themselves a major catastrophe would befall the planet in 1986. On another occasion Angelucci claims to have met Jesus, who revealed himself to be ‘Lord of the Flame’, “an infinite entity of the Sun”, not of earthly origin, who told him that the aliens were here to help humankind adding “this is the beginning of the New Age.”²² Like Adamski, Angelucci also met his alien friends in public places. On one voyage to the aliens’ planet he met an attractive woman called Lyra and her companion Orion, who explained to him that he, Angelucci, had once been an alien named Neptune. Angelucci’s aliens also warned that our civilization’s ‘material advancement’ was threatening our evolution. In an effort to educate him in their technology the space people revealed to Angelucci the propulsion system of the spacecraft he travelled in, describing how the system converted magnetic energy “inherent in all the universe”.²³ This fascinated Angelucci who, at the time of his encounters, was writing a book entitled *The Nature of Infinite Entities* which he later published at his own expense. Later, Angelucci, like many other contactees, attended UFO conventions, lectured widely and published his own newspaper.

As with Adamski’s alien encounter claims, Angelucci’s experiences feature strong prophetic and revelatory symbolism. Contact is made on an isolated stretch of road at night, without witnesses. As with Orthon and his race the aliens who approach Angelucci are “harmless and filled with the best intentions.”²⁴ When he is taken onboard their spacecraft Angelucci sees Earth from a great distance and is told: “Weep Orfeo...we weep with you for earth and her children. For all its apparent beauty earth is a purgatorial world among the planets evolving intelligent life. Hate, selfishness and cruelty rise from many parts of it like a dark mist.”²⁵ Angelucci claimed that the gnosis needed for humanity to find salvation was bestowed on him: Individuals must re-unite with the ‘immortal consciousness’ humanity was once all part of, this will initiate the individual on his spiritual evolutionary journey, leading to unification with the Divine.²⁶ Angelucci felt called to evangelize this salvific message to the rest of the world.

There is much religious symbolism in Angelucci’s reports too. The crystal cup from which Angelucci is ordered to drink could be viewed as quenching his spiritual thirst; it is reminiscent of the ritual of the Eucharist, the transubstantiation of communion wine into Christ’s blood in order to promote a spiritual union of the divine and the devotee. After Angelucci had drunk from the crystal cup he reports being “refreshed and strengthened”.²⁷ Angelucci also claims baptism by the aliens onboard their spacecraft:

“Beloved friend of Earth, we baptize you now in the true light of the worlds eternal.” A white flash of lightning blazed forth: his life lay clear before his eyes, and the remembrance of all his previous existences came back to him. He understood “the mystery of life.” He thought he was going to die, for he knew that at this moment he was wafted into “eternity, into a timeless sea of bliss.”²⁸

The flashback experience of this incident is similar to the panoramic life review reported by many near-death experiencers. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four but here it is worth noting that the near-death experiencer commonly reports that his whole life is replayed before him apparently in an instantaneous fashion. After Angelucci's baptism he is returned to Earth and, after feeling a burning sensation on the left side of his chest, found "a stigma the size of a 25 cent bit, an inflamed circle with a dot in the middle. He interpreted this as the 'symbol of the hydrogen atom.'"²⁹ This signified the beginning of Angelucci's career as a prophet. (Physical branding after a divine encounter is discussed later in this chapter.)

Howard Menger

Howard Menger, a Brooklyn sign painter, claimed his first encounter with an alien occurred when, aged ten, wandering through a wooded (and isolated) glade near his home in New Jersey, he met a beautiful spacewoman. She wore a translucent ski-suit which showed the "curves of her lovely body" and Menger reports feeling "a tremendous surge of warmth, love and physical attraction which emanated from her to me." The spacewoman told him that her people had "come a long way" in order to contact "their own" and that they would always watch over him.³⁰ Menger was also told that the woman knew what his purpose would be on Earth and that he would "grow to know [this] purpose".³¹ Ten years later Menger joined the Army. Whilst stationed with a tank unit on manoeuvres in a desert in the south west States, Menger experienced a series of UFO sightings, followed closely by regular social calls from the aliens. He became a messenger-boy for them, even cutting their long blonde hair so that they could pass unnoticed among Earth people. In return for his troubles Menger was rewarded by a trip to the Moon, where he claimed to have breathed easily in an Earth-like atmosphere. He brought back some lunar potatoes which reportedly contained five times the amount of protein found in earthly potatoes.³² This could not be proved, however, as Menger claims to have handed the vegetables over to the government whereupon they disappeared.

During these many contacts Menger learnt that his alien friends had selected him "out of many thousands for contact" and that he would consequently receive "enlightenment".³³ Like the aliens contacted by Angelucci and Adamski, Menger's space brothers were concerned for the population of Earth: "We have much work to do on your planet among your people, and we must do it quickly – *while there is still a planet and people to work with!*" they informed him.³⁴ These space brothers had an essentially dualistic eschatological view of the Earth's future, centring upon the battle between good and evil souls. Two young aliens meeting Menger at a restaurant described to him what was happening to Earth's population:

My friend, this earth is the battlefield of Armageddon, and the battle is for men's minds and souls. Prayer, good thoughts and caution are your best insulation.

You don't know, Howard, that there is a very powerful group on this planet, which possesses tremendous knowledge of technology, psychology, and most unfortunate of all, advanced brain therapy. They are using certain key people in the governments of your world. This group is anti-God, and might be termed instruments of your mythical 'Satan'....

[This group use] OTHER PEOPLE OF YOUR OWN PLANET – PEOPLE YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT [sic]. People who live unobserved and undiscovered as yet. It is a kind of 'underground' in your popular terminology. This group has been infiltrating religious organizations to dupe your peoples into a distorted concept of a truth which enveloped your planet thousands of years ago. They are using the credulity and simple faith of many people to attain their own ends.³⁵

The aliens told Menger that many Mexicans knew about UFOs and “long before the time of the Conquistadores [they i.e. the aliens] made contact with the Aztecs.” They had shared their secrets with many of Earth's other ancient civilizations but in every case this knowledge, including marvellous technology, had been lost in conquests by warlike creatures.³⁶ Menger's aliens said that their mission was of a salvific nature with Menger being the chosen prophet. He explained that the aliens were trying to “awaken within us a yearning for higher understanding, so we can help ourselves in preventing any further destruction of our planet, which could conceivably have a bad effect in our solar system. It is about time we grew up as a humanity.”³⁷ These aliens wished only to serve the Infinite Father, the same divine being we call God, attaining further knowledge so that they might serve the Father to a higher degree.³⁸

In August, 1956, once again in a remote location, Menger claimed to encounter one particularly advanced alien who proceeded to 'enlighten' him concerning the meaning of life. Note the similarities of this experience with Angelucci's baptism and the way Menger describes his assimilation of this gnosis with the life review which is, as discussed already, a predominant part of a NDE:

The moment he raised his arms, he began to communicate with me telepathically, and in five minutes of such transmission he gave me more knowledge than one could absorb in a week or more of solid study and oral transmission. One might compare it with the same situation ascribed to a drowning person, whereby an entire life is said to flash before him in a few brief seconds. In the same manner, certain knowledge was transmitted to me in a few minutes which would pertain to life and the future.³⁹

As we shall observe, armed with this gnosis Menger decided to undertake many tours and lectures to spread his alien gospel.

George King

We have already encountered George King in Chapter One with reference to the Aetherius Society. King was born on 23 January, 1919 in Wellington, Shropshire. As his grandmother was a respected medium and his mother a psychic and clairvoyant who practised spiritual healing, it was perhaps unsurprising that at the age of twelve or thirteen King apparently experienced a vision and healed his sick mother through prayer.⁴⁰ He developed a fascination for yoga and Eastern philosophy and the works of Madame Blavatsky, founder of Theosophy. (As noted in Chapter One the Aetherius Society incorporated many Theosophical themes in its philosophy such as the belief in a Great White Brotherhood, secret immortal and spiritual masters residing in the Himalayas.)

On the 8 May, 1954, unemployed King experienced his first contact with the aliens who were to change his life. Whilst washing up in his Maida Vale bedsit he heard a disembodied command: "Prepare yourself! You are to become the voice of Interplanetary Parliament."⁴¹ Eight days after this communication an oriental figure dressed all in white is reported to have entered King's home *through* the front door. King somehow recognized this individual as one of the great yogic masters mentioned by Blavatsky. King claimed that the oriental confided that the world was in danger due to misguided atomic research and failing morals. King must be prepared to act as the 'Primary Terrestrial Channel' for the Interplanetary Parliament which has its headquarters on Saturn and is the tribunal court for all our solar system. To aid him in this important undertaking King was advised to learn Prana-Yoga, a practice believed to control the universal life-force or spiritual energy which resides in each one of us. After King had mastered this breathing technique he was used as a medium receiving a 3,456 year old Venusian named Aetherius.⁴²

Although Aetherius is a member of the highly advanced Great White Brotherhood which operates under the direction of the Cosmic Masters it was, in fact, another Cosmic Master, Saint Goo-Ling, who communicated with King and helped him establish the Aetherius Society in London in 1956. King was told that he had been specifically chosen to help them as he was able to maintain a trance-like state for up to ten hours, thus enabling these aliens to communicate their messages either through the use of his vocal chords or transferring thoughts telepathically.⁴³ The messages King received were always meticulously recorded so that Earth's population could learn the 'true' history of the human race and the real identity of the Cosmic Masters, as well as the universal Law of Karma. In addition to these frequent communications King claimed he had been summoned by the Cosmic Masters to attend conferences onboard their spacecraft where he met members of the Interplanetary Parliament face-to-face.⁴⁴

We note once more that King's contact experience parallels those of the other contactees reviewed here. His alien contacts are benevolent, they are concerned about the future of the human race and planet Earth and wish to avert disaster selecting King as the messenger for their salvific communications. As observed in Chapter One this form of redemption involves practising selfless service and observing the Law of Karma (that what you sow you shall reap). Individuals attain enlightenment by realizing that everything is part of the divine. On attaining this knowledge humanity will enter the heaven upon earth prophesied in ancient writings. As with the warnings of Menger's aliens, communications received by King feature a strong dualistic eschatology. We are told that in 1954 the Evil Fiends of Garouche, an intelligent species of fish, had visited Earth intent on annihilating all humanoid life. Earth was saved by the Cosmic Masters who fought a great space battle and defeated the Fiends. However, there are other 'black magicians' from all over the cosmos who are attracted to man's evil nature and seek to employ this evil for their own end by enslaving man. Despite these evil entities most planets in our solar system are evidently inhabited by highly cultured races millions of years ahead of us both spiritually and scientifically.⁴⁵

Personal and Public Consequences of the Contactee Experience

This analysis of the contactee experience indicates that whilst religious themes can be discerned within the encounter claims they are mainly implicit, and not conspicuously religious in nature. However, the way the contactees discussed here chose to lead their lives subsequently indicates that, in the majority of cases, they interpreted their experiences in a more overtly religious context. Although Chapter Five is specifically concerned with analysing the lifestyles of individuals after their close encounter experiences, it is worth summarizing here the reactions of each contactee after their alien encounters.

Firstly, it should be noted that the aliens' recipient was not exceptional in any particular way. Of our four contactees (and these are not the only contactees of the 1950s) none had benefitted from a high standard of formal education, nor were they from privileged or influential families. From the time of their initial contact their lives changed: believing themselves to be chosen individuals, they felt called to convey the aliens' eschatological messages as widely as possible, to bring about the New Age, or change of consciousness, which would ultimately lead to salvation and a new way of living. All four contactees became disseminators and prophets of their individual alien revelations with varying degrees of success, and incurring their fair share of public ridicule and criticism.

Angelucci began preaching the gospel described to him by the aliens Orion and Lyra. Despite his attempts at spreading their message little was heard from Angelucci after a number of initial lectures and appearances on radio and television. Menger's personal life changed in direct consequence of his encounters. Whilst on a lecture tour describing the contact made with his particular alien community, he met a woman named Marla whom he immediately recognized from a previous life on another planet. (Marla was, apparently, unaware of this at the time.) Menger divorced his wife and married Marla.⁴⁶ Menger also created a mail-order course based upon the alien teachings and authored another book *The Carpenter Returns*.

It is especially from the experiences of Adamski and King that we find structured religious organizations evolving. King's founding of the Aetherius Society is described in the previous chapter. Even after his death on 12 July, 1997, it continues to operate the initiatives established by its founder. Regarding Adamski, we must acknowledge that, prior to his contact with Orthon, he was already involved in metaphysical teaching through his promotion of the Royal Order of Tibet and his association with the Order of Loving Service. Despite this, and his strong desire to promote the Venusians' message of global disaster, he never founded an organization based on the aliens' teachings, this was left to two of his followers. In 1965 Alice Wells, one of the alleged witnesses to Adamski's first meeting with Orthon, and Charlotte Blob, his secretary and editor, both formed organizations to keep the space brothers' teachings alive.

The largest organisation was the George Adamski Foundation created by Wells, the smaller UFO Education Center [sic] was an organization similar to the Foundation, both promoting the 'Laws of the Cosmos' as expounded by the space brothers. These teachings were also available in a telepathy course devised by Adamski and later in a more systematic form in *Cosmic Philosophy* and the *Science of Life Study Course*. (It is interesting to note that the Venusian teachings resemble the beliefs held by the Royal Order of Tibet.) Adamski worked hard to publicize his experiences and promote the aliens' messages and he certainly achieved a worldwide celebrity. He claimed that 100,000 copies of his book, *Flying Saucers Have Landed*, were sold during his lifetime.⁴⁷

Although now defunct, the Brotherhood of the Seven Rays was founded by another witness to Adamski's initial contact, George Hunt Williamson. In 1953 he published his own story, *The Saucers Speak*, in which he claimed contact with Martians via automatic writing. The messages were sent initially by Kadur Laqu, head of the Interplanetary Council. They contained the, by then, standard call for co-operation to prevent humanity's destruction. Williamson also claimed to be in communication with the ascended masters first described by Guy W. Bullard, founder of the I AM religious movement.

The Brotherhood of the Seven Rays was founded for dedicated individuals to work with the ascended masters and the space confederation in order to learn the 'spiritual realities' of the cosmos, and to help cure humanity's ills. Williamson, under his religious name Brother Philip, founded a monastery in Peru where students came to live an Essene way of life: communal meals were partaken daily, with meditation, fasting and contemplation comprising the greater part of the day's activity. All students believed that the cosmic Christ had already visited Earth and would return in the near future to usher in the New Age. The organization managed to survive into the early 1980s.⁴⁸

Such overt religious developments indicate how the primary contactees' experiences could influence other members of their communities. As noted in Chapter One (p.11) Jacques Vallee calls these non-experiencers 'indirect contactees'. This group can include the followers of the 1950s contactees who promulgated a message they believed to be of worldwide significance. Their acceptance of the validity of these events sometimes led to the formation of organizations and associations whose specific tasks were the propagation of the alien messages of redemption, and preparation to lead a new way of life in a transformed world. These associations, therefore, were likely to be religious in nature, with their emphasis centring on a moral, metaphysical and spiritual message perpetuating the traditional religious themes of salvation, individual and world spiritual evolution, healing, perfection and harmony. The popularity of such groups, which blossomed especially across America in the 1950s,⁴⁹ is not difficult to understand: the concerns of the aliens were those of the humans. The messages contained elements of an already familiar theology - the eternal fight between Good and Evil, with Love and Brotherhood battling against materialism, war, nuclear forces and radioactive fallout. The God the various extraterrestrials worshipped, although referred to in some cases by a different name, was the God familiar to the Judeo-Christian tradition. It was claimed that Jesus Christ was alive and well, continuing his mission on other planets in the solar system.

Theologian J. Gordon Melton observes in his article 'The Contactees: A Survey' in *The Gods Have Landed* that, despite the 1950s being the decade when the contactee phenomenon began, there is little that is new in the religions which subsequently developed around the celebrity contactees. Many of those involved in the formation of these religions had come from spiritualist churches or occult groups and:

With material from spiritualism, Theosophy, and the Great I AM, they found in the flying saucer a new image and a new concept around which to build their peculiar variations of occult belief....They found in Adamski and other early contactees their prophets (and it matters little whether the prophets really believed their messages), and in Van Tassel and Green⁵⁰ their organizers, their bishops, and overseers. (p.8)

These UFO sects followed the same pattern as other new religious and occult movements, becoming institutionalized with strong followings flourishing around some contactees, with weak ones ceasing when enthusiasm was lost or the leader died.

The aliens allegedly encountered by the 1950s contactees differed little in intention, appearance or character. The intergalactic visitors were apparently so human in appearance that they were able, maybe with only a quick haircut, to mix with western populations without attracting attention. They were of unusual beauty with, in many cases, long flowing hair, and of a healthy tanned appearance and, although their apparel was normally described as being a type of ski-suit, it was obviously not wildly dissimilar to the fashions of the time. The extraterrestrials had no trouble breathing in Earth's atmosphere nor in partaking of terrestrial food and drink. In all cases they were benevolent, loving and kind, wishing as they did to avert the untimely destruction of our civilization by improving our spiritual and moral evolution. They were patient and caring, with no hint of condescension or resentment towards our level of ethical, moral, medical and scientific ignorance. Their humane character, messages and metaphysical teachings inspired the founding of organizations dedicated to the propagation of harmonious understanding amongst fellow men and otherworld beings.

By the end of the decade the UFO phenomenon had progressed from Arnold's initial sighting of some unidentifiable objects which moved in seemingly inexplicable ways to what were to be regarded as 'nuts and bolts' spacecraft delivering benevolent aliens on salvific missions to chosen individuals. However, claims began to occur of a new type of alien encounter, one which would soon replace the contactee experience of benign, benevolent, humanlike aliens. Instead we find sinister, malevolent, ugly grey beings with disproportionate bodies and incomprehensible missions who initiated cruel and impersonal contact with selected individuals. The new decade of the 1960s brought a new form of close encounter: that of the alien abduction phenomenon.

The Abductees

In the late 1950s/early 1960s, the abduction phenomenon was virtually unheard of until details of two abduction cases came to public attention: those of Antonio Villas-Boas in 1957 and, a few years later in 1961, Betty and Barney Hill. Although Villas-Boas' experience predated the Hills', it was the New England couple who gained the most attention and, just as Kenneth Arnold signified the start of the modern era of UFOs, the Hills' claims can be said to represent the start of the modern era of the abduction phenomenon.⁵¹

It has long been acknowledged by the majority of serious UFO researchers that the Hills' claims "contained for the first time the details which have become so familiar in studying the abduction phenomenon".⁵² In the 1990s the literature available to the general public concerning alien abduction - which includes primary accounts, UFO investigators' case reports, and academic analyses -outnumbers all other published UFO material combined. When these publications are added to other media accounts of such phenomenon, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that the majority of the western population is familiar with the concept of alien abduction. As the Villas-Boas and Hill cases represent such an important turning point in the history of modern ufology I will begin by presenting detailed descriptions of these events.

Antonio Villas-Boas

Antonio Villas-Boas, then 23, worked on his brother's farm in the town of Sao Francisco de Salles, in the State of Minas Gerais. On 5 October 1957, from his bedroom window, Villas-Boas "saw a silvery fluorescent reflection, brighter than moonlight....It was as if it came from on high, like the headlight of a car shining downward, spreading its light around."⁵³ Nine days later he was ploughing a field at night with his brother - due to the intense summer heat it was easier to work in the late evening - when the bright light appeared again. Villas-Boas chased the light about the field until he was exhausted. Becoming unnerved by this light show he and his brother started to leave the field when the light "suddenly disappeared, as if it had been turned off."⁵⁴ The following night, October 15, Villas-Boas was again ploughing, this time alone, when the light reappeared. He watched as the light began to glow red, growing larger as it approached him and Villas-Boas soon realised that the light was in fact "a very bright egg-like object".⁵⁵ He watched it land on three metal legs quite close to him. While the terrified Villas-Boas was trying to start the tractor to head home, four figures emerged from the craft, three males and a female, all wearing "a very tight-fitting siren-suit, made of soft, thick, unevenly striped gray material. This garment reached right up to their necks where it was joined to a kind of helmet...[that] hid everything except their eyes...."⁵⁶ The beings grabbed the shocked farmer from his tractor and dragged him into their vehicle where they proceeded to forcibly undress him, smearing his naked body with a liquid which "was clear as water but much thicker and odorless" [sic].⁵⁷ Although Villas-Boas later believed this to be an aphrodisiac, investigators have suggested that it could have been a disinfectant or deodorizer.⁵⁸

Blood samples were taken from either side of his chin, and then Villas-Boas was left in a small room furnished with only a couch. He noticed that "a thick smoke...[which] smelled like painted cloth burning" was seeping through tiny metal pipes in the walls.⁵⁹ Breathing with difficulty, Villas-Boas vomited. A while later the female who had aided in Villas-Boas' capture entered the room completely naked. He noted that:

She was beautiful....Her hair was blond, nearly white...and she had big blue eyes, rather longer than round....Her nose was straight, not pointed, nor turned-up, nor too big....She had very high, prominent cheekbones....Her body was much more beautiful than any I have ever seen before. It was slim, and her breasts stood up high and well-separated. Her waistline was thin, her belly flat, her hips well developed, and her thighs were large.⁶⁰

She began caressing Villas-Boas who later claims that:

...I became uncontrollably sexually excited, something that had never before happened to me....We ended up on the couch, where we lay together for the first time. It was a normal act and she reacted as any other woman would. Then we had some petting, followed by another act, but by now she had begun to deny herself to me, trying to avoid me and to escape, to end the matter. When I noticed that, I too became frigid, seeing that that was all they wanted, a good stallion to improve their own stock....

I was angry, but decided not to attach any importance to the fact, for anyhow I had spent a few agreeable moments with the woman....[But] some of the growls that came from her at certain times nearly spoiled everything, as they gave me the disagreeable impression of lying with an animal.⁶¹

As the woman was about to leave she smiled at Villas-Boas, patted her stomach and pointed to the stars, as if to imply that she would soon bear their child on another planet. One of the males then returned with Villas-Boas' clothes who, after dressing, was escorted around the spacecraft, during which he tried to remove a clock-like object but the artifact was retrieved from him. He returned to his farm, whereupon he discovered he had spent four hours and fifteen minutes aboard the craft. During the following two weeks unusual lesions appeared on his hands, forearms and legs which, when healed, left purple scars.⁶² Investigators were impressed by Villas-Boas' sincerity and intelligence and although the case, perhaps not surprisingly, has received a certain amount of ridicule, he maintained the veracity of his account until his death.

The most noteworthy feature of this case, which appears time and again throughout both types of close encounter reports, as evidenced in this chapter, is the startling bright light at the onset of Villas-Boas' encounter experience. Light is not only a common and constant feature in the close encounter phenomenon, it has also been reported in hundreds of occult, religious, and unexplainable experiences throughout the ages and may, in many cases, be recognized as the 'light of revelation'. John Whitmore observes, "bright lights and their attendant effects are stock harbingers of the numinous experience".⁶³ Light phenomena have engulfed saints, prophets and visionaries alike immediately before and during their theophanic experiences. In the Old Testament we are told that when Moses descended Mount Sinai with Yahweh's commandments he "did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God" [Exo.34:29]. Jesus' contact with God produced similar effects:

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light. [Matt.17:1-2]

Saul's theophanic episode was more violent in nature, leaving him temporarily blind:

Now as he journeyed he approached Damascus and suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him. And he fell to the ground....Saul arose from the ground; and when his eyes were opened, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight; and neither ate nor drank. [Acts 9:3-9]

Saint Joan of Arc, speaking at her trial in 1436, describes one of her earliest supernatural encounters when she was thirteen years old:

God sent a voice to guide me. At first, I was very much frightened. The voice came towards the hour of noon, in summer, in my father's garden. I had fasted the preceding day. I heard the voice on my right hand, in the direction of the church. I seldom hear it without [seeing] a light. That light always appears on the side from which I hear the voice.⁶⁴

Saint Simeon, whilst praying in his room one night, revealed that he had been illuminated by an intense light as bright as day. During this time Simeon described how he watched his cell vanish, whilst he felt himself floating in the air.⁶⁵ Not only great saints and mystics report that a bright light features in their religious experiences. Ordinary individuals who have undergone intense spiritual events also speak of such a light:

I was living in a hostel. On a Saturday afternoon I was lying on my bed feeling depressed and lonely. Although I wanted to get up and go out to buy some cigarettes, I felt unable to move because of the feeling of depression. Instead, I continued to lie on the bed and began to wish fervently and with all my strength that I had some religion to help me. Within a few minutes a very bright light appeared in the opposite corner of the room near to the ceiling and I heard a voice say 'Take up your bed and walk.'⁶⁶

Many years ago I was very low in mind and body – for the first time I doubted God. As I lay propped up in bed I sent out a wordless plea for help. I became aware that there was a faint light in the room, which deepened until the room was full of a deep golden light and I knew I was in the presence of an immense power and love, and I felt the peace of God, which does indeed pass all understanding. I have never lost that inner peace.⁶⁷

Light is also a pervasive part of a NDE. As we will observe in Chapter Four the appearance of a bright light which does not dazzle the individual but which radiates unconditional love and wisdom is reported regularly by near-death witnesses marking, it is felt, a new stage in their experience or a new state of being. Just like the contactees, most abductees encounter their otherworld beings in remote locations and Villas-Boas is no exception. Although he encountered the light on 15th October when out ploughing with his brother, the initial light phenomenon ten days before and the light which signals the onset of his abduction both occur at night: the former when he is alone in his bedroom and the latter while he is alone ploughing.

Betty and Barney Hill

At the time of their experience Betty and Barney Hill lived in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and were 41 and 39 years old respectively. Barney, an Afro-Caribbean, worked for the United States Post Office and Betty, a Caucasian, was employed by the state of New Hampshire as a child social worker. For both of them this was their second marriage, Barney having two children from his first marriage.⁶⁸ On the night of 19 September 1961 the couple were returning to Portsmouth after a holiday in Canada.

They decided to travel through the night to avoid the hurricane which reports warned would soon hit New Hampshire. Having crossed the Canadian border at approximately 9.00 p.m., they stopped for an hour at a restaurant at Colebrook. On resuming their journey Barney said "It looks like we should be home by 2.30 in the morning - or 3.00 at the latest." Betty agreed.⁶⁹

After the couple drove past the village of Lancaster they noticed that "to the left of the moon, and slightly below it, was a particularly bright star, perhaps a planet, Betty Hill thought, because of its steady glow."⁷⁰ A short while later "Betty was a little startled to notice that another star or planet, a bigger one, had appeared above the other....The new celestial visitor clearly appeared to be getting bigger and brighter."⁷¹ After a while the baffled couple stopped the car in order to observe the lights through their binoculars. By now, Barney believed the object to be some kind of terrestrial aircraft, although Betty was not convinced. They continued their journey, but the object, which they now discerned as being a large disk-shaped craft with windows around its rim, simply continued to track them, gradually advancing nearer to the car. By this time they were becoming slightly unnerved, Barney's apprehension increasing because there were no other cars on the road. (This was, however, typical for that isolated stretch of highway in September.) Again, Barney stopped the car to observe the craft. "Fully gripped with fear now, but for a reason that he cannot yet explain, he found himself moving across the road,...on to the field, and across the field, directly toward it....Shaken, but still finding an irresistible impulse to move closer to the craft, he continued on across the field, coming within fifty feet of it, as it dropped down to the height of a single tall tree."⁷²

Barney claims to have caught sight of at least six figures wearing dark uniforms and staring at him through the windows. Behind them, Barney could make out a control panel which all but one of the figures returned to. The craft began a gradual descent, and fins bearing a red light began to extend from either side of the vehicle, as if to steady the craft for landing. This finally convinced Barney that he was about to be captured. He ran back to the car screaming hysterically. As they drove off a strange electronic beeping sound could be heard emanating from the boot of the car and Betty and Barney "each began to feel an odd tingling drowsiness come over them. From that moment, a sort of haze came over them".⁷³ These conditions indicated that the couple may have entered into a new state of consciousness, the 'haze' suggestive of a induced trance-like condition. UFO researcher Jenny Randles has frequently referred to a condition in close encounter cases which she has named the 'Oz Factor'. In her own words:

The 'Oz Factor' is a set of symptoms very commonly reported by a witness to an abduction, which creates the impression of temporarily having left our material world and entered another dream-like place with magical rules. The onset happens rapidly, just as it did to Dorothy in the famous fantasy story *The Wizard of Oz*, hence the now commonly used name for this experience. It tells us several important things about what is occurring, most notably that the percipient has changed their state of consciousness....The result is a dreamy and weirdly silent state of mind that is recognized as peculiar by the baffled abductee even though they do not appreciate what it implies.⁷⁴

I would argue here that the onset of the Oz Factor experienced by the Hills (and many other abductees) indicates that they may have both embarked upon what, as we have already observed in Chapter One, is recognized as the 'marginal' or 'transitional' stage which, in the rite or initiation process, marks 'the point of no return'. The first stage, that of separation, has been accomplished, with the individual being divorced from the mundane. In the marginal state the subject has relinquished his 'old self' but has yet to gain his new state or identity, becoming 'reintegrated' into society.⁷⁵ Betty and Barney, with the onset of the Oz Factor, have reached the point in their experience marking the true beginning of their close encounter.

This observation invites the comparison that the Hills were joint experiencers, maybe even self-initiators, of an episode very similar to, if not identifiable with, an archetypal initiation process. Whilst this hypothesis will be examined in much greater detail in Chapter Four it is advantageous to recognize here that most rites of passage involve the individual experiencing a symbolic, violent death and the rebirth into a new state of being. For example, a shaman, at his initiation, journeys to other realms and encounters spirits or otherworld beings who inflict great physical suffering upon him. In many cases this suffering involves dismemberment and reconstruction of the shaman's body before he can return home in his changed state.⁷⁶ The individual undergoes a period of spiritual crisis during rites of passage and initiation ceremonies comparable with the hardships experienced by mystics whilst attempting to attain enlightenment.

Stanislav and Christina Grof believe the "individuals whose spiritual crises follow this pattern [i.e. the death/rebirth themes of shamanic initiation] are thus involved in an ancient process that touches the deepest foundations of the psyche".⁷⁷ During the marginal point of the Hills' joint experience, they appear to lose awareness of what is taking place around them. After more beeping noises arouse them, they discover they have travelled over 35 miles without either of them being able to recall doing so. Also both of their watches had stopped. "Betty remembers saying to her husband: 'Now do you believe in flying saucers?' And he recalls answering: 'Don't be ridiculous. Of course not.'"⁷⁸ Arriving home they discovered that it was 5.00 a.m., yet other than Barney exclaiming that they had arrived home "a little later than expected", neither of them registered any time discrepancy at this stage.⁷⁹

In the days that followed Betty became obsessed with the idea that the couple had witnessed a UFO, and decided to file a report with the Air Police at Pease Air Force Base, Portsmouth. However, she omitted to describe the craft, nor did she mention any windows or occupants. Betty's interest in this UFO sighting was not satiated with filing a report; two days after the sighting she researched UFOs at her local library. Having read Major Donald Keyhoe's book entitled *The Flying Saucer Conspiracy*, just one week after the event she wrote to him describing her experience. Later Betty began to experience a series of vivid dreams in which she and Barney are driving their car when they see a group of men standing in the middle of the road. The car stalls and the men immediately surround it, pull Betty and Barney out, and escort them to a waiting UFO.

Onboard the couple is led to separate rooms, where they are stripped and undergo a medical examination. The aliens assure them “that no harm would come to them and that they would be released without any conscious memory of the strange happening.”⁸⁰ The couple are finally reunited and escorted back to their car, Betty talking with the alien leader and begging him to return. She experienced these dreams on five successive nights and even discussed them with her friends and colleagues, whilst making a written record of their details.

One month later, on 25 November, Betty and Barney were interviewed by civilian UFO investigators from NICAP (National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena, an organisation headed at that time by Major Keyhoe). During this discussion the couple realised that their journey had taken at least two hours longer than it should have done. Barney reported: “They were mentally reconstructing the whole trip. One of them said, ‘What took you so long to get home?’... Well, when they said this,...I realized for the first time that at the rate of speed I always travel, we should have arrived home at least two hours earlier than we did.”⁸¹ In order to recover the missing time the NICAP researchers suggested that the Hills try hypnotic regression, neither Betty nor Barney immediately followed this advice. Barney was now suffering from a number of anxiety induced illnesses including ulcers and high blood pressure. A ring of warts also began to appear around his genitals. His continued mental and physical deterioration caused him, in the summer of 1962, to seek psychiatric treatment with physician Duncan Stephens. Barney rarely referred to his UFO experience but eventually asked Stephens about regression hypnosis. Stephens decided to refer Barney to the eminent Boston psychiatrist and neurologist, Benjamin Simon. Barney first visited Simon in December 1963 - Betty accompanied him for support. Simon quickly deduced that both needed help and so, over a number of visits, they independently underwent regression hypnosis.⁸²

During their regression Betty and Barney described being taken onboard a spacecraft shortly after they had heard the first series of beeps - the point of no return in their ‘initiation’ experience. The details they reported under hypnosis matched those in Betty’s dreams, although Barney did not recall as much, having kept his eyes tightly shut during most of the experience. Regression enabled the couple to recall telepathic communication with alien beings who were humanoid in appearance yet had “grayish, almost metallic looking” skin, whose eyes “continued around to the sides of their heads”, and whose mouths were merely slits without lip muscles.⁸³

About their separate medical examinations Barney recalled “someone...putting a cup around my groin”,⁸⁴ whilst Betty described a long needle being inserted in her navel. She was told it was a pregnancy test, (despite having had a hysterectomy).⁸⁵ After her medical examination whilst still on the alien craft Betty was shown a map of dots linked together by lines apparently representing travel routes. Like Villas-Boas, Betty also tried to remove a “big book”, yet the aliens would not allow her, as it would constitute proof of their visitation.⁸⁶ They told her that neither she nor Barney would remember their experience; however Betty was determined that she would. As in Betty’s dreams, under hypnosis the couple could describe being returned to their car and resuming their journey as the craft disappeared into the sky.

Despite subsequent abduction claims seeming to mirror the Hill case in sequence and event, and irrespective of all the publicity the case brought the couple⁸⁷, this is one of the most controversial cases on record. After their regression hypnosis sessions, Simon concluded that both Betty and Barney had experienced a shared fantasy, a condition known as *folie à deux*, caused by fear triggered by an actual close UFO sighting.⁸⁸ Although the couple's credibility was above reproach, both being respected churchgoing members of their community, Simon also concluded that longstanding racial tensions in a far from (at the time) tolerant and puritan, New England, had probably exacerbated Barney's emotional condition. Simon suggested that Barney's ring of warts was a psychosomatic symptom induced by his obvious emotional distress during hypnosis. However, these appeared in 1962, before Barney's appointment with Simon.⁸⁹ Simon also observed that most of the abduction details described by Barney were present in Betty's regression account, but her recall contained many details not mentioned by Barney.⁹⁰ It is possible that, since Betty spoke about her early sequence of dreams to friends and colleagues when Barney was present, he might have assimilated the abduction scenario exclusively from her. Simon noted that there was evidence to suggest parts of the experience was absorbed by Barney from Betty. There was also indications that her colleagues had suggested her dreams might be real.⁹¹

There are many contradictory elements in the Hills' experience. During regression Barney described the craft as having "rows of windows...[which] curve around the side of this [craft]", yet moments later he only mentions a single row of windows.⁹² Betty, meanwhile, maintains she saw a double row of windows.⁹³ Betty also initially claimed that the alien leader had spoken to her in English with a "sort of a foreign accent".⁹⁴ Later she relates he communicated telepathically.⁹⁵ Over all, "any full analysis of the case must take into account the fact that Betty Hill, in particular, had shown great interest in UFO material in the years intervening between the event and the regression hypnosis sessions, and that this material may have affected the recall".⁹⁶

Betty has also claimed to be a repeater witness i.e. someone who reports more than one, often a series of, UFO sightings or encounters during their lifetime. In an interview with UFO researcher John Spencer, she "stated that there was a period of her life when she could not go outside her house without being followed by UFOs in the sky".⁹⁷

Public Perception of the Abduction Experience

The Hill and Villas-Boas cases differed from previous contact experiences in that, as well as being forcibly taken onboard an alien craft and being subjected to medical tests (in Villas-Boas' case, what amounts to sexual assault), no message or mission was offered by the aliens. Neither the Hills nor Villas-Boas saw themselves as being specifically chosen to experience what they did. Despite this, the individuals were destined for media attention as their close encounters became internationally recognized as marking the beginning of the 'abduction era'. Villas-Boas, although encountering his alien kidnappers four years prior to the Hills, received only a fraction of the media attention devoted to Betty and Barney. As Budd Hopkins asserts, the Hill case "was read, argued about, attacked and defended, but it remains a watershed event in the history of our awareness of the UFO phenomenon as something intimately connected, for better or worse, with the human race."⁹⁸

The experiences of Betty and Barney Hill have become legendary in the field of ufology; a legend which was to almost become “timeless from the moment its images entered the collective imagination.”⁹⁹ By the mid-1960s the gentle and benevolent aliens encountered by the contactees had become an historical curiosity - although many of the occult groups and New Age philosophies evolving around the contactees and their alien messages still thrived.

Despite the increased media attention on the abduction subject, the number of reported cases were still small. Many UFO researchers refused to attach much importance to these extraordinary claims of human abduction by little grey male or voluptuous female aliens. The most sceptical investigators thought it more beneficial to focus their continued efforts on finding hard physical evidence i.e. radar reports, photographs, and the rare UFO ‘landing marks’, for the large numbers of CEI sightings still being reported. It was easier to assume that abduction claims were erroneous than address the problems and contradictions generated by such reports. Although a few abductions continued to be reported and investigations made, the apparent extent of the phenomenon – referred to by Budd Hopkins as an ‘invisible epidemic’ – remained unknown.¹⁰⁰ In 1973, during one of the biggest waves in UFO history, the public were told of another abduction experience involving two men fishing on the River Pas, Pascagoula. This was closely followed, in 1975, by the abduction of Travis Walton in Snowflake, Arizona. During the early 1980s the proper investigation of abductions was initiated due, not only to the unavoidable media coverage, but also to a dramatic increase in the number of reported abduction claims. There are two reasons in particular for this increase, both of which revolve around the publication of abduction material.

1981 saw the publication in America of *Missing Time*, a compilation of several dozen alleged alien abductions, written by UFO investigator Budd Hopkins, one of the first to initiate serious abduction research. The late 1970s saw a growth in the number of investigators who, although considered to be on the fringe of ufological studies, had conscientiously begun to investigate the abduction phenomenon. Many had written, or were writing, books about their findings.¹⁰¹ Yet, these publications presented little systematic detail concerning alien abduction. *Missing Time* was different: Hopkins had thoroughly analysed 19 abductions since beginning his investigations in 1976, and had discerned a number of features which appeared in many, if not all, abduction accounts - features discussed in ‘The Abduction Experience’ section of this chapter. Despite Hopkins’ book making little impact on the general public he embarked on a lecture tour with his initial findings. His analysis caused many in the UFO community to view the abduction experience with increased respect, and to consider whether these accounts were more common than they had first thought. Although only a few abduction reports had drawn media attention since the Hill case, Hopkins stated that as of 1981 about 500 abduction claims had been studied. This estimate was based on 300 cases from HUMCAT, a catalogue of humanoid reports compiled by Ted Bloecher and David Webb, plus cases investigated by engineer James Harder and psychologist Leo Sprinkle.¹⁰² This figure was supported by Jacques Vallee who, in 1990, reported that at his time of writing over 600 abductees had been interrogated by UFO researchers.¹⁰³

It was evident that abductees were being treated with more sympathy. This encouraged more individuals to reveal their own experiences, having previously kept silent for fear of ridicule.¹⁰⁴ Although Hopkins' research encouraged the UFO fraternity to treat alien abduction claims with a new respect:

The event which catapulted the abduction into public prominence and led to the furore of global interest in 1987 and 1988 was the amazing story of best-selling novelist Whitley Strieber. For the first time a public personality had gone on record to say that he was an abductee and was willing to take the consequences.¹⁰⁵

The media attention surrounding Strieber's alleged abduction, by those he calls the 'visitors', was vast. Strieber has undergone lie-detector tests and brain scans to prove his sincerity and these details were painstakingly reported, providing Strieber with a perfectly primed and expectant public audience (and market) for the journal of his close encounter experiences entitled *Communion*. Published in 1987 it was an instant success, retailing up to half a million copies in the first few months. With Strieber promoting his book by appearing on live television and radio shows, the concept of alien abduction became familiar to the public. It should be observed that the number of reported abduction claims had swelled in *direct response* to the growing social awareness of alien phenomenon.

The Abduction Experience

As the abduction phenomenon was investigated in America and Europe during the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was noted that most abductions tended to follow a pattern, and included several characteristics which allowed investigators to specifically differentiate this type of encounter from other reports of preternatural encounters. Analysis of these characteristics now follows.

Bedroom Visitations and Abductions Whilst Driving

People report being abducted from a variety of sites, but especially from their homes (commonly from their beds at night-time), whilst out walking alone, and from their cars generally whilst driving along a lonely road at night. A typical bedroom abduction includes the commonly reported initial light source flooding the bedroom, and waking the individual. The individual then finds that, either entities float/materialise into the room, apparently having passed through solid objects, or they are already present. The entities approach the bed and may touch the abductee who as a result becomes paralyzed or numb. Many individuals claim that they are floated out of bed and are drawn up towards the light; they rarely remember how they are actually transported from the bedroom. The assumption is that they are floated out through the window or through walls and ceilings in the same manner as they are floated out of their beds, the beam of light acting as a 'tractor beam'. Jenny Randles discusses such a visitation which occurred in February 1976, in Keighley, West Yorkshire:

Reg, an ambulance driver, was supposedly visited in his bedroom by two beings who were tall, had grey faces and large, cat-like eyes....He was then told to lie prone on his bed, whereupon he was paralysed and felt himself float up through the ceiling into the sky where a UFO (like a bath tub) was hovering. His next memory is of being on board....undergoing (familiar) medical examinations.¹⁰⁶

Barbara Archer, a 21 year old university student, described her abduction to UFO investigator David Jacobs in a hypnosis session in 1987. One night Barbara (aged 16) was preparing for bed when she noticed a light shining through the window which, although she closed the shades, continued to illuminate her room. During the hypnosis session Jacobs asked her how she felt when she saw the light:

Well, I think when I first realized that the light was in my room it made me feel scared, but like I couldn't figure it out....The light seems to be going away. It's not filling the whole room as much anymore. When I turn around there's somebody standing over by the closet....He's smaller than me. I'm not all that shocked to see him standing there...I think he came toward me when I was standing there by the window...I think he touches my arm. He sort of touches me around my wrist area, between my elbow and my wrist sort of. It feels better then, I mean, I'm not scared or anything now.

When he touches your wrist, what happens next?

Well, I turn around toward the window again, the side window that I had been looking out of. I just sort of go [straight] up....

Can you get a sense of movement, or do you just feel that you're going up?

I feel sort of like I'm on an elevator except there's no walls or anything around it, it's just up, fast....¹⁰⁷

One final example of a bedroom visitation concerns Jerry, a 30 year old housewife from Kansas City, Missouri, who recalled her experience for psychiatrist John Mack:

Under hypnosis Jerry's first recollection was of awakening to discover bright, white light illuminating her room. She felt a presence that frightened her and thought, "If I'm just real quiet they won't get me." The beings tried to reassure her by telling her not to be afraid, but this did not work because "they're so full of lies." Although "I don't want to see them," Jerry noted two beings, "one behind me and one over here [to her side]." They told her she must go with them and ignored her protests. "They grab me by my arms," Jerry said, and she felt a "gentle, soft, like velvety, cold" contact. This touch seemed to relax her, and next Jerry found herself "just kind of going with them. Slow. Slow going up. It's weird. I don't know how they can do that."

With one being on each side of her they floated Jerry "out the window, like the wall. It's like it's not there." She got "that paralyzed feeling again" as she was pulled up to a large craft.¹⁰⁸

As John Whitmore observed, these bedroom experiences are comparable to those of religious ecstasies and saints who report encountering otherworld beings at night. It is not unusual for these beings to take the mystic on a journey to heaven or hell (as we shall observe in Chapter Four).¹⁰⁹

Abduction whilst driving is frequently reported to begin with a CEI or CEII sighting. The targeted individual will either stop the car to observe the UFO and then walk towards the craft which has landed, as in the case of Barney Hill; or the car may be caught in a beam of light causing the engine to stall or the driver brake. The individual is then either taken out of the car by alien beings or is floated out of the car in the same way as the previous bedroom experiences:

...Two nurses in central Tennessee were stopped late at night at a village traffic light. A large domed craft landed on the road ahead of them and D.S., in the driver's seat, was startled when her vehicle began to move without her "pushing gas or anything...or accelerating the car." They traveled [sic] about five hundred feet before the car halted "all of a sudden, and the motor just kind of stopped."

A witness in an Alaskan case noticed that her car was driving itself. She could neither guide it, nor accelerate, and they proceeded for many miles at twenty-five miles per hour, a period during which the car apparently used no gasoline.¹¹⁰

Barbara, whilst under hypnotic regression, tells psychologist Edith Fiore about her abduction by car:

BARBARA: I'm driving along about fifty-five miles per hour. Something in my mind says UFO, and I look around at the sky through my windows, but I don't see anything except a very large bright moon. But the feeling is very strong. There's a flash of light. [Pauses] A UFO stops over my car and brings my car to a halt. [Getting upset] I am taken out of the car.

DR. FIORE: How is that done?

BARBARA: By a light. The light seems to pull me from...pulls me out of my car.¹¹¹

There are occasional reports of individuals being abducted while out walking alone at night, or even when they have been on their own during the day. In the majority of these cases the abduction starts with the individual observing a bright light, and then being paralysed by entities who appear and either float the subject to the UFO, or force the individual into accompanying them onboard their craft.

Entering the Spacecraft

Infrequently an abductee may remember entering the spacecraft through its underside or through a portal along its edge, yet it is more common for the individual to be unable to recall entering the craft - even when the recall is facilitated through regression hypnosis:

DR. FIORE: I want you to look back at the chair or the couch you were sitting in. As you were going up, what did you see there?

SANDI: I didn't look back. It felt like I was just leaving maybe a skin on the chair, just like a snake does...just a skin.

DR. FIORE: Did it feel like the physical body was going up?

SANDI: Yes.

DR. FIORE: Now what?

SANDI: I went up and up and up. I didn't think it would ever end. I just felt lighter and lighter....

DR. FIORE: How do you get from going up to being in the oval room.

SANDI: I don't know. It's just like I was there.

DR. FIORE: Okay. Now you're going to let yourself remember if you saw a craft of any sort.

SANDI: I don't know.¹¹²

Another of Fiore's clients was also unable to remember entering the spacecraft:

TOM: ...I'm being carried up to the ship...the ship is hovering up above. And it's a dizzying sensation of motion. The trees become a blur below me. I feel like I'm suspended there in midair, being carried along.

DR. FIORE: What do you see?

TOM: I'm looking down at the moment, but the ship is up above. It's a disc with a hemispherical bulge above it. The explanation that comes to me now is that I was in what might be called a tractor beam, a beam that was pulling me up to the ship....I was brought inside the ship. I'm not quite sure how.¹¹³

Thomas E. Bullard identified the abductee's frequent inability to remember how they have entered the craft and labelled it *doorway amnesia*.¹¹⁴ Despite the frequent inability to describe how they cross this crucial threshold, the experience of entering into what is believed to be a spacecraft, can be viewed as a stage in the initiation process.

It can be argued that the transition from the abduction site to the inside of the UFO is part of the marginal stage of the ritual. The abductee is taken from familiar surroundings to a place unknown to them, and where they have little or no control. Just as the shaman enters into what he recognises as the spirit world, or the mystic and near-death experiencer find themselves in an otherworld, such as heaven or hell, the abductee enters into an otherworld ruled in a specific way by non-human beings. In this new location or realm the individual is subjected to their true initiation process. *Doorway amnesia* also emphasises the *gnosis* of the whole abduction experience. The abduction is itself a covert act: the abductee is being taken from their earthly realm, usually at night, from an isolated location or from their beds.¹¹⁵

In the majority of claims, once onboard, the abductee reports being taken to a large room where various procedures take place. Here, there is also emphasis on mysterious light phenomenon for this room is frequently described as being brightly lit, yet the origin of the lighting can not be detected:

BH: How was the light in the room?

MM: Light seemed to come from behind me and up above.

BH: Do you remember seeing a light source?

MM: No. The room was well lit. There was a light on me from behind and it *was like* a lamp...it *felt* like a lamp. The light *was like* a lightbulb behind me and up above. [My italics]...

BH: Though you never did actually see it, you just felt a source there.

MM: Yes, there was a source of light there.¹¹⁶

The room's walls and ceilings are curved and white in colour.¹¹⁷ Equipment lines the sides of the room, some of which has been likened to computer consoles, the room, in general, has a variety of alcoves and balconies on various levels. Furniture is sparse, although there is usually a central couch or examining table. The ambiance is generally described as cold, sterile and clinical, resembling that of a hospital operating room:

TED: I'm in this room in some kind of a craft. And the room is round and there's lights and dials along the wall. On one side there's all kinds of dials and lights and lights in little screens. These dials are built into the wall of the room, but there's a table that comes out like they would use to write information....[The room is] very clean, very smooth, and it's domed. There's almost no furniture in it except for the panels of lights and this table that contours around the room. I believe the door is behind me, and all the people are standing in a semicircle around me.¹¹⁸

Catherine, a 22 year old music student, describes to John Mack the room she alleges she was taken to:

[In the room there were] lots of panels and instruments and scientific things, but they don't look like things we have here. There's kind of like a platform thing in the middle of the room[....]There's a thing on the ceiling above the people there in the middle of the room. It looks like it's long on hinges like desk lamps like we have here that you clamp on and you can move them around. And there's another being in here. He's waiting, and I think he's like the doctor or the medical examiner kind of guy. And there's all kinds of instruments and buttons and panels everywhere along the walls. There's almost kind of counters along the walls except for the entryway...The table in the middle is like solid, not like a table with space underneath it, but attached to the floor and it's like one big solid kind of block.¹¹⁹

The entities who were encountered at the beginning of the abduction are usually present in the room, and may be accompanied by a different 'type' of alien who will be described below.

The Medical Examination

At this stage of their experience the abductee recalls an invasive medical examination. The individual is escorted to a table or couch and is undressed and told to lie down. There may be other humans undergoing similar procedures in the same room. Sometimes the abductee reports being tied down to the table with metallic or material restraints. Two to four small beings surround the table and begin their examination. The entire procedure may only take ten to twenty minutes as the aliens work fast and efficiently, totally absorbed in their work.

During the procedure the abductee's body is thoroughly examined, although certain areas are of more interest than the rest. Skin and hair samples are generally taken, and the genital area of the subject is probed. Female abductees claim to have eggs removed, or fertilized with either alien or male human genetic material, or their vaginal or uterine wall may be 'scraped', and material extracted with an instrument. Karen Morgan, 32 years of age in 1977, is reported by David Jacobs to be furious when relating, under hypnosis, gynecological procedures performed on her:

And now...I'm wondering what he's doing, and I say in my mind, "You son of a bitch, I'd better be all right," and he says, he's down at the other end of the table, he says, "But you are all right," or that he's just making sure. And then he comes back up...I think he takes an instrument, and I think he's taking...it always reminds me of a Pap smear, but I think that's what he does next...I remember it feels like a long, rounded instrument....I don't think this is for removing an egg, I think this is for inserting one.... That's why he gave me that exam. That's why they were worried. He's implanting an embryo in me, I'm positive of it. There's absolutely no doubt in my mind.¹²⁰

Female abductees have also claimed that any alien-human or human-human pregnancies they may be carrying are later removed. Mack describes Catherine's disturbing medical procedure:

The tall being inserted "a big metal thing" in her vagina, which was intensely upsetting. Then he took a longer and thinner "version" of this "and put it up inside me!" She felt that he was trying to reach something inside her body in order to cut it off. Sobbing forcefully she said, "Oh, God, Oh, God. He's taking it. I can feel him cutting.[...] He's cutting inside me. I can feel it...He's got it. He takes out this hunk...He takes out the thing he put in and there's something attached to the end of it. It looks like a fetus...I can see it." I asked how many months she estimated it was and she replied, "I'd say about three months but I don't know enough to know for sure. It's about the size of a fist."¹²¹

Lynn Miller (aged 31 in 1986), describes to Jacobs the extraction of an implanted embryo. A "speculum-type instrument" is inserted, followed by a long, black instrument with a "suction cup" at the end of it:

It feels like he's tearing something inside at first...They're not too gentle. I keep on telling them it hurts....

He seems to pull something out, and he puts it right in something else.

What does he put it in?

Sort of a container with water or something in it.[...]

Does he show it to you anyway?

Yes.

What are you looking at, then?

I'm looking at a fetus.

Is this a live little fetus?

Yes, it's in the bag.

Why does he want you to see this?

He says, "This is your child and we're going to raise it."

Does it look like a normal fetus?

Yes. I told him it was part of me and they didn't have any right.

He says, "It's our right."¹²²

Many male abductees claim to have had semen samples taken from them, in much the same way as has been described by Barney Hill. In 1988, 28 year old Ken Rogers was regressed by Jacobs and describes the process by which his semen was taken:

I think they're hooking up a machine. They hook up a machine on a tube, with a suction cup end. So now they put it on my penis. I don't remember this or feel it, but I can see it happening now. That's where sexual feeling comes.

This is happening while he's [the alien] staring at you?

Yeah, then he'll break away, and I think he touches me somehow. That's when I ejaculate. At least that's the way I see it. And I think while one little guy hooks up the machine the other one pumps my stomach for some reason. That seems to be the procedure.

When he looks into my eyes, I get this bonding feeling. When the machine's all hooked up and ready, he strokes me or something. It feels pleasurable. And I ejaculate into the machine. That's the way I see it all the time.¹²³

John Mack records the regression of Scott, a 24 year old actor and filmmaker, who claimed to be abducted in April, 1990:

He saw more light in the room now, and for the first time in this session he spoke of the "wires" that were applied to his testicles. It was these wires, Scott observed, in combination with the suction device over his penis that stimulated his erection and were "making it happen" and "taking things out" - i.e., his "sperm."¹²⁴

It is interesting to note here that, if the abduction experience is to be regarded as some kind of rite of passage, this medical examination which so many abductees claim they endure, is of striking similarity to the shamanic initiation process. This will be discussed at greater length in another chapter, but now it is important to note that the main features of the shamanic initiation involve suffering, death, and resurrection. The shaman, after crossing the threshold between our world and the alien spirit 'world' is commonly subjected to a brutal dismemberment of his body by the spirits he encounters. This physical suffering, seen as the 'crisis' part of the ritual, is the moment when the neophyte shaman dies to his old life, followed by the reintegration of his body parts when he is made 'anew', or 'reborn' into his new role.¹²⁵ Having endured these tortures, becoming spiritually empowered in the process, the shaman is now in a position to face life no longer fearing death. Having received intimate knowledge of 'the divine' he is also able to share this initiatory gnosis with those who are ill or dying.

In the same way, abductees are taken to an otherworld where they are treated to often painful procedures similar to disembodiment, frequently experiencing the removal of parts of their bodies, whether it be blood, tissue samples, or genetic material. The shamanic ritual surgery is apparently replaced by a modern medical examination, and the spirit torturers become the sinister alien 'doctors'. As will be discussed below, abductees, too, are returned to their homes, and commonly experience a burgeoning of spiritual and psychic growth, and a general transformation in the way they lead their lives and relate to those around them. Despite the overt 'harvesting' of genetic material, the overall intention of the aliens remains hidden. Abductees are never told the purpose of these processes, despite several theories being incorporated into the ETH. As with many reports of divine revelation throughout the ages the process of alien revelation is strictly on a 'need to know' basis.

The Mental Examination and Alien Messages

Throughout their abduction ordeal, individuals claim that the aliens communicate telepathically.

The abductee either "hears" the communication or receives an impression in her mind. She knows she is being addressed and what the Beings want from her. The alien's communication to her is almost always reassuring. For instance, she may ask, "Why are you doing this?" and the answer might be, "We are not going to hurt you" or "You will be all right".

The Beings deflect the subject's questions with palliatives and do not give substantive answers. Usually the abductee receives only an "impression" of what the Beings are communicating and has difficulty repeating specific words and sentences, although some people "hear" sentences in their minds and can recall not only the sense of the communication but the words as well.¹²⁶

Although it is not true of all communications, as we shall see in the next chapter, when these messages are analysed, it is common for the individual to only incompletely recall the alien revelations. This can be highly frustrating for the individual as it would appear pointless to deliver a message if it can only be partially recalled later.

There is a continuity with these communications and the tales of cultural heroes who are given enigmatic and esoteric riddles by divine beings which must be unravelled to gain enlightenment. These fragmented revelations may be viewed as vital components in a 'quest' which is bestowed by superior beings upon mortals in order to bring them to a higher state of spiritual and mental awareness. Such spiritual questing can be compared to the transformational rite of passage which may also feature episodes of amnesia.

Among the Arunda [Arunta, of Central Australia], for example, a candidate witch-doctor quits the village and lies down at the entrance of the cave of initiation. At dawn, an Iruntarinia demon manifests. 'Seeing the man sleeping, he throws an invisible lance which enters his neck, pierces his tongue leaving a large hole, and re-emerges by the mouth....The spirits then carry him into the depths of the cave....

The Iruntarinia remove from his body all the internal organs and replace them with new ones.' The man returns to his senses, but for several days is in a state of stupor. The spirits have at the same time implanted magic stones in his body which protect him from all malevolent influence.¹²⁷

Amnesia is also a common theme in many religious philosophies. Medically, 'amnesia' is commonly related to an individual who has completely forgotten who and where he is. Yet it can also be applied to the loss of old or new memories, and can be permanent or partial, lasting for years, months or weeks. Spiritually, amnesia follows the same pattern. Patrick Harpur observes, "The idea that in knowing the Otherworld we have somehow tasted forbidden knowledge is an echo of the doctrine, found in Greek and Gnostic philosophy, in Buddhist and Hindu scriptures, that we have forgotten our essential natures."¹²⁸ Yet this forgetfulness is also not necessarily permanent. It is assumed in many religious traditions that we can move out of this condition, and 'remember' our past, who we really are; although this may take many years of striving.

The next most commonly reported procedure is the mental examination which is usually conducted by a taller being, who is apparently the leader. Abductees report that he has an authoritarian manner and frequently gives orders to the smaller aliens. If the abductee attempts to communicate with this leader he usually responds reassuringly but will never directly answer a question, always replying instead in a typically enigmatic answer. For instance, if asked "What are you doing?", a common reply would be "You know what we are doing". Sara, a 28 year old graduate student, being questioned under regression about her alien friend 'Mengus', tells Mack, "He's family, really, kind of benevolent." Sara recalls herself aged five inside the alien craft:

"...right up in front of" Mengus, "Standing right next to him". She communicated with him "dreamy, like in my head...half telepathically" and "half verbally" in English. "He just kind of nods his head." She asked Mengus "what are you guys doing here on Earth?" and he replied, "Oh, we're just looking around."¹²⁹

During the mental examination this leader figure moves closer to the individual and stares deeply into their eyes. Abductees report feeling as if some sort of information is being extracted from their minds, yet what the aliens do with this information is never made known. Mack's abductee Catherine, recalls that:

[A] being stared into her eyes, Catherine felt she had no choice but to look back. I asked what the experience was like. "I think he knows everything about me. He knows exactly what I'm thinking. He's answering the questions before I even think of them," as when he told her this process was necessary "before I even asked." Looking into the being's eyes is "scary" for Catherine, "but then parts of me are kind of beaten down. I feel just calm and peaceful."¹³⁰

A feature of this mental examination is that the leader can produce a range of emotions in the abductee. They may consider this alien to be a 'good' being with whom they can bond and cooperate. Joe, a 34 year old psychotherapist, describes to Mack the type of relationship he has with a leader figure he calls 'Tanoun':

With his "very round face...right next to mine," Tanoun put his hand on Joe's shoulder – "he's very comforting" - and "we kind of walked, kind of floated" into the bottom of the ship, which seemed "much bigger inside than outside." Tanoun took Joe down a hallway to a large room with a table that he has often been placed upon. With one hand on his head and one on his hip the being reassured Joe, who felt "this guy really loves me, and in a way I don't feel anywhere else [sic], and that's kind of scary" because it made him feel so "different from everybody."¹³¹

23 year old Patti struggles to explain to Jacobs what the bonding process was like for her:

Do you have those same feelings of liking him?

Yeah, kind of liking him. Not being really threatened by him. Kind of sympathizing with his purposes, whatever they would be.

Patti, do any of these emotions seem sort of bordering on romantic feelings or anything approaching that?

Well, I don't think he means it to be that way, but I may interpret it to be that way. Like he's just so curious, and he's looking at me with such questioning eyes, and maybe I interpret it that way. But he gives me a feeling, just kind of a head rush. A real head rush, just all different emotions.

He's trying to tap into me, maybe he's just evoking things from me, it's because he's curious as to what they are....A real powerful feeling, but it's really, you can't really describe it adequately. Romantic is just too shallow....I think you become one with this thing. You're happy. It's just like a symbiotic relationship.

It's like you exist together with him, there, while your eyes are locked and you just kind of feed on each other, charge each other. It's really a very hard thing to describe.¹³²

Other secondary mental procedures include being shown images which are projected onto a screen-like apparatus. These are often disturbing: death, atomic explosions, 'end of the world' scenarios, wars and environmental disasters, all feature. The individual generally responds with great emotional upset and these reactions are analysed by the taller alien figure, who stands close to the individual's side gazing directly at them. Jason Howard, one of Jacobs' abductees, recalls being taken into a room and viewing a screen which portrays an atomic explosion on Earth. Jacobs asks him whether the explosion was now or in the past:

No, it's ahead of time.

In the future?

Yes.

Does he give you a date?

No. He doesn't give me years.[...]It's just a measurable amount of time that I would have lived.

Then how do you know that it's a month away from when you would be forty?

Because that's the span of time that we understand.

Okay. Is this going to be a cataclysmic event?

Yes.

How do you feel when he tells you this?

I guess relieved that it will be that long....

Now during the entire discussion, does he ever look away from your face?

I don't think so, no.¹³³

Some abductees have interpreted this mental procedure as the aliens' way of communicating their concerns about the fate of Earth, and the responsibility of humankind to ensure that our destructive powers cease.¹³⁴ As will be discussed in Chapter Three these images are generally apocalyptic in content and are similar to the messages received by the contactees. It is as though the aliens continue the traditional functions of the gods; that of overseeing and guiding the fate of humankind, in order to prevent future apocalyptic catastrophe. Some abductees (discussed below) claim they are given assignments in this future holocaust, such as feeding the survivors. They are told some people will perish, whilst others will be taken to live in a new place to continue humanity's evolution. Other abductees claim to receive information about ongoing battles over the fate of the Earth between 'good' or more evolved aliens, and other 'bad', less evolved, races: an intrinsic theme in many theologies. It is, however, more commonly claimed that the aliens wish to avoid coercion; they would prefer humanity to evolve and bring the change about themselves.¹³⁵ These aliens are represented as our guardians, guiding humanity with esoteric morsels of information towards individual and collective perfection.

Returning Home

After the aliens have finished, the abductees are abruptly returned home. Just as on entering the alien craft, the exit from the UFO is largely unrecalled. A floating sensation is sometimes reported or, on occasion, the individual simply remembers closing their eyes onboard the craft and, on opening them, finds they are home.¹³⁶ Sometimes the aliens may accompany the abductee back to their houses and even into their bedroom to watch them get into bed, or they will personally return the individual to their car.

LINDA: All of us are walking down a corridor.[...]Then they put us into a smaller craft that holds about fifty people. And they close the door, and we whiz off. We land somewhere, way out in the desert. We get out of that [craft] and go into smaller ones that only hold a few people. They strap us in something, and a protective arm comes across. We whiz over the top of trees. The very first thing I see is a lake, over to the right....It's 3:00 before they get me home. Somebody is walking with me. A tall being gives me a hug, and I climb back in bed.¹³⁷

Occasionally the aliens do make mistakes. Individuals may find that they have been returned quite some distance away from their home or car. Carl Higdon (40), a mechanic from Riverton, Wyoming, was elk hunting in Medicine Bow National Park in October, 1974, when he was abducted. He was taken to the aliens' home planet, but on arrival the aliens decided that Higdon "is not suitable" for their purposes. They returned him to the forest, where he was unceremoniously dropped out of the craft onto rocky ground.

These "diabolical" events are recalled by him only the following day; right now, he finds himself simply walking at random, gun in hand, on a cow trail in an area unknown to him. By chance he comes across a vehicle stuck in the mud, equipped with a CB radio. One hunter, aching all over, gives a call for help and waits. In fact, due to his loss of memory, he has failed to recognise his own pick-up which is bogged down in a place unreachable by 2-wheel-drive vehicles, and which he had left 8 km away!¹³⁸

Smaller mistakes include waking to find that the individual's pyjamas or nightgown are on inside out, or that some clothing or jewellery are missing. The individual may also wake up in an odd position in bed, or find that they have been snugly tucked in.¹³⁹

On their return individuals recall to varying degrees what has occurred. Sometimes they believe they have dreamt the episode; in other cases they may wake and discover, what they believe to be unexplained scars, lesions, rashes or bruises. Nosebleeds are also commonly reported. Generally, abductees feel exhausted and believe that they have experienced some stressful activity, although they cannot quite remember what that might be. It is common, in the majority of abduction cases, for the individual to have no conscious recollection of his ordeal.¹⁴⁰ (Amnesia after initiation rituals has already been observed and parallels this lack of recall.)

The abductee may feel compelled to investigate their vague feelings that something extraordinary has happened to them if they later realize that a substantial period of time is missing from their lives. A journey which should have taken two hours may, apparently, have taken four or more hours, as in the Hill case. Recognition of this may encourage the individual to explore the anomaly, along with the inexplicable feelings of unease, disorientation, and the strange dreams which they can experience.¹⁴¹

Physical Evidence and Alien Implants

As previously mentioned, abductees sometimes claim that they have been alerted to their experience after discovering marks on their bodies which they cannot explain. Physiological symptoms which have been reported and, in some cases, verified by independent medical and UFO examiners, include: burning eyes, skin discolouration, fresh scarring and soreness - such symptoms were experienced by Villas-Boas. Virginia Horton contacted psychologist Aphrodite Clamar, an associate of Budd Hopkins, after experiencing a period of missing time and recalling an incident from when she was nearly seven, in the summer of 1950. She was living on her grandfather's farm in southern Manitoba and had been playing in the barn.

All of a sudden, I was in the yard and I didn't remember going from the barn into the yard towards the house. I had an itch on my leg, and I reached down to scratch it. I pulled up my blue jeans and when I scratched my leg I realized it was wet. I was covered with blood, from a cut on the back of my calf. It was a large and clean cut...no dirt or anything. It must have been at least a half-inch deep and an inch long. It was bleeding, but there was no pain....The funny thing was, even at that age I realized there was something very weird about the cut, and later I ripped the bandage off, [which had been applied by her mother] thinking 'I want to remember this.' It left a very nice, straight scar...the only scar I have on my body.¹⁴²

Proponents of the ETH have suggested that the cuts and scars found on the abductees are possibly the result of alien experimentation and genetic sampling, during the 'medical examination' stage. Under regression hypnosis individuals describe such procedures being undertaken. Virginia recalls:

I think my leg was cut with a scalpel. It was just really sharp and clean...as if somebody made a nice, clean quick incision...and I don't think that it hurt, but I think I expected it to hurt.[...]They took a little cut. They didn't mean to hurt me.¹⁴³

In *The Omega Project* Kenneth Ring cites what happened to a 36 year old close encounter experiencer in a "brightly lit, cold, hospital-like room" onboard a spacecraft:

[Beings] started to put needles (?) [sic] right under my breast below my ribs. I told them they were hurting me and that is the last thing I remember until I woke up and started telling my husband.

When I went to the bathroom to get dressed I noticed marks under my breast. Under close examination I noticed that they were three small blisters in the shape of a triangle....

Later that night when taking my bath I noticed that the blisters had dried up somewhat and turned black. (Now they are still visible like burn scars.) When I was bathing, I started to shave my legs and I noticed that the back of my leg was sore and when I looked the very same mark was on my upper calf. Now I really started to worry. [pp.75-76]

It is also suggested that the symptoms which appear to resemble radiation burns, (such as skin discolouration) may be caused by radioactivity whilst onboard the UFO.¹⁴⁴ Sceptics, however, have observed that the sort of symptoms reported can also be the result of psychosomatic disorders. These arguments aside, as John Mack has observed:

Even though the abductees are certain that the cuts, scars, scoop marks, and small fresh ulcers that appear on their bodies after their experiences are related to the physical procedures performed on the ships, these lesions are usually too trivial by themselves to be medically significant. Similarly, abductees will often experience that they have been pregnant and have had the pregnancy removed during an abduction, but there is not yet a case where a physician has documented that a fetus has disappeared in relation to an abduction.¹⁴⁵

The marking or branding of humans after divine revelations is not unknown. As already mentioned when talking about light phenomena Moses' face shone after his encounters with Yahweh [Exo.34:29]. It appears that his glowing skin was a permanent branding as we are later told that after his descent from Mount Sinai Moses veiled his face:

...but whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the people of Israel what he was commanded, the people of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone; and Moses would put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him. [Exodus 34:33-35]

Carol Zaleski tells us of a certain Antonio Mannini, who took part in an initiation ritual at the pilgrimage site of Saint Patrick's Purgatory, on an island in Donegal's Lough Derg:

Shut up in a cave by the monks who controlled the rite, he passed through a doorway into the Otherworld and returned to tell the tale. 'The bearer of this [letter],' he wrote to a friend, 'will tell you how I came out marked, for I showed him so that he might tell you about it; and perhaps I shall carry the mark forever.'¹⁴⁶

The most well-known type of divine branding is probably stigmata: marks which resemble the wounds of the crucified Christ and which are believed to have appeared on the bodies of some individuals. It is generally believed that Saint Francis of Assisi was the first to experience such wounding whilst praying alone on Mount Albarnia:

On or about Holy Cross day 1224, the miracle of the stigmata occurred. While he was engaged in prayer on the mountainside, Francis saw a seraph with six fiery wings coming down from the highest point in the heavens. Then he saw the image of a man crucified in the midst of the wings, with his hands and feet stretched out and nailed to the cross. Francis was filled with wonder. While still in a state of bewilderment, the marks of the nails began to appear on his hands and feet, just as he had seen them a little while before in the crucified man above him. His right side was as though it had been pierced with a lance. The wound frequently bled, so that his clothing was often covered with blood. Francis, thus marked with the sign of the Passion of Jesus Christ, tried to conceal what had happened - 'this favour of Heaven'... - and ever after covered his hands with his habit and wore shoes and stockings on his feet.¹⁴⁷

Since then, some Christians have experienced the wounds of Christ: the most well-known modern stigmatics being the Italian priest, Padre Pio, Christina Gallagher, George Hamilton, and Heather Woods. Recently, with the case of Giorgio Bongiovanni, stigmata have become linked to extraterrestrial encounters.

[Bongiovanni] claims to have received his stigmata during a pilgrimage to Fatima in 1989, since when his wounds - in hands, feet, side and forehead - have bled daily....What makes Bongiovanni's story even more remarkable is that he claims to have frequent visions of Jesus and his Mother who arrived in, or descend from UFOs. He sees many UFOs and for him there is no incompatibility with his religious visions as he believes the ETs are "beings of light". They are, he says, angels, composed of "spiritual energy" who speak to him telepathically. He told George Wingfield that he has also met the traditional Grey aliens; they were not demonic, but from a civilisation about 100 years ahead of us technologically.¹⁴⁸

Not only can correlations be made with marks received by abductees to other types of divine branding, but the procedure of 'alien implanting' is also comparable to other types of divine revelations. Abductees and UFO investigators alike claim that during their abduction an individual may receive an 'alien implant'. These implants are believed to be some sort of monitoring, tracking, or communication device, and are reported to be inserted into the brain or sinus cavities, either through the ear or nasal passages. "Sometimes an abductee describes a small object shaped like a ball bearing on the end of an instrument that is inserted; when the instrument is withdrawn, the ball is gone."¹⁴⁹ Several abductees have reported that:

...a ball-shaped object either dropped out of their nose or was expelled when they blew their nose. All of these expulsions happened before they knew they had been abducted; in each case they felt that they had inexplicably inhaled something, and discarded the object or lost it.¹⁵⁰

Eva (33) was interviewed by John Mack:

Eva believes that the aliens “have a tracking mechanism,” and relates an experience when she was about nine and still in England to a possible implant. She was doing somersaults on horizontal bars, missed one, fell, and bumped her head “really hard.” She says that she felt that “something moved” in her head, “something they could keep track of me...” I asked her if she could feel it move, how she knew. “I just know,” she said. “They had their signal” from this accident, and they came back and “corrected it.” Again I asked how she knew. “I know,” she said.¹⁵¹

Later, under hypnosis, Eva recalls seeing “a silver instrument with a round tip that was inserted in her forehead. A white or yellow fluid dripped onto her nose”.¹⁵² Another of Mack’s clients, Peter, a 34 year old acupuncturist, recalls an implant being inserted, not in the usual nose or sinus cavity, but into his anus:

[...]“they’re groping at my legs” and put a tube in his rectum to take a stool sample. “These guys don’t know how to touch people...like, get some bedside manner.” The tube was passed deeper into his rectum and Peter felt that they left “an implant” or “an information chip” inside of him.

“Why do you have to do this to me?!!” Peter shouted, “I’m tracked now [almost crying], I can never get away. That’s how I feel. I’m stuck for life. I feel like a tagged animal. I feel like they put something big up my anus, and spread it and then stuck something else up through it and then they left it. It’s way up inside of me.”¹⁵³

These implants evoke the ‘magic stones’ implanted into the body of the neophyte witch-doctor of Aranda, by the *Iruntarinia* demon (p.54). Among the Ibans of western Borneo, shamanic initiation strongly parallels that of the Aranda medicine-men:

They [the spirits] cut his head open, take out his brains, wash and restore them, to give him a clear mind to penetrate into the mysteries of evil spirits and the intricacies of disease; *they insert gold dust into his eyes* to give him keenness and strength of sight powerful enough to see the soul wherever it may have wandered; *they plant barbed hooks on the tips of his fingers* to enable him to seize the soul and hold it fast; and lastly they pierce his heart with an arrow to make him tender-hearted and full of sympathy with the sick and suffering.¹⁵⁴ [My italics]

Shamanic and alien implants both appear to be elusive to detection. It is common to find that, despite the obvious physical properties alien implants must have, thus the ease with which they should be detected, there have been few claims of retrieval.¹⁵⁵ Not only are claims concerning the physical marks made by aliens inconclusive but so, too, are the claimed existence of alien implants. We find that the methods and purpose of the aliens remain opaque to mere mortals. It is not only these alleged alien procedures which remain unfathomable: abductees are unable to produce *any* concrete proof of alien capture. There are no convincing photographs of alien beings or views of inside the spacecraft and, just as Villas-Boas and Betty Hill both tried, and failed, to acquire some alien artifact, similar attempts have proved futile.

As demonstrated, there are close parallels between the experiences of both contactee and abductee and those expressions of religious experience chosen for comparison. Locations, timings, events and, in some cases, transient evidence are common to both the religious and the 'technological' alien experience. With both occurrences only the individual concerned perceives the events – there is only their belief that something has happened. In such cases where there is no tangible evidence to prove the validity of such an event, it is in subsequent, observable, effects that one may find some foundation for the individual's beliefs.

However, before considering the effects of alien contact and abduction on the individual, it will be pertinent to first look at the knowledge the aliens are alleged to have shared with their human subjects and any relationship to revelations within mainstream religious traditions.

¹ Margaret Sachs, *The UFO Encyclopedia* p.2
John Spencer, *Perspectives* pp.35-36
Denis Stacy, 'The Contactee Era' pp.121-122

² Sachs, *Ibid.*
Spencer, *Ibid.*
Stacy, *Ibid.*

³ George Adamski & Desmond Leslie, *Flying Saucers Have Landed* p.194

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.195

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.199-202

⁶ Later, when Russian photographs of the Moon's far side revealed nothing but barren surfaces Adamski retorted that they had retouched the photographs in order to deceive the United States.

⁷ Sachs, *op. cit.*, p.2
Stacy, *op. cit.*, pp.123-124

⁸ Sachs, *Ibid.*, p.3

⁹ Frank Longford, *Saints* p.51

¹⁰ Meg Maxwell & Verena Tschudin (Eds.), *Seeing the Invisible* pp.116-117

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.86

¹² Georges Bertrin, *Lourdes* p.4

¹³ Kevin McClure, *The Evidence for Visions of the Virgin Mary* p.73

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.107

¹⁵ Paul Tillich, *Religion as a Dimension of Man's Spiritual Life* quoted in James Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred* p.65

¹⁶ Adamski & Leslie op. cit., p.201

¹⁷ Orfeo Angelucci, *The Secrets of the Flying Saucers* quoted in C. G. Jung, *Flying Saucers: Modern Myth* p.155

¹⁸ Crystals are not uncommon in religious experiences, and this is especially true of shamanic encounters with the Otherworld. Quartz crystal is viewed by North and South American, Australian and SouthEast Asian shamans in particular as being of singular importance and features regularly in shamanic ritual as a strong power tool. This is not just a modern belief; the importance of crystals appears to span thousands of years. For example, in California “quartz crystals have been found in archaeological sites and prehistoric buildings dating back as far as 8,000 years.” [Michael Harner, *The Way of the Shaman* p.109.] Part of the importance attached to crystals is that shamans are able to perceive the crystal in an altered state of consciousness in the same way as they do in an ordinary state of consciousness. In other words its material and spiritual natures are the same.

Shamans also believe the quartz crystal to be solidified light relating to enlightenment and clarity of insight. “For example, a phenomenon not unlike the ‘third eye’ concept occurred among the Australian Wiradjeri. Shamans in training had a piece of quartz ‘sung’ into their foreheads so that they would ‘be able to see right into things.” [Harner, *Ibid.*, pp.109-110 quoting from A. P. Elkin *Aboriginal Men of High Degree.*]

Also in Australia, quartz crystals were often pushed or scratched into the skin of shamanic initiands, or rubbed over their bodies, to obtain power. [Harner, *Ibid.*, p.110.]

Crystals also feature in another famous close encounter experiencer’s reports of her voyage to an alien otherworld. Betty Andreasson reports that during her visit she observed “a bright light source....It reflected off beautiful crystalline structures like giant prisms. Betty gazed in awe at the changing colors [sic]. The stark beauty of it all was frightening.

And I’m coming before a bright light – crystals, bright, bright light, and clear crystals that have rainbows all in it. It is all crystal all around – all forms of crystal. I don’t know what it is. I’m afraid! I want to go back! And the bright light up ahead. [*Sigh*] I want to go back. [*Sigh*] They are taking me through these crystals. That bright light is up ahead....We are stopping and...I’m just there, before the light.”

Raymond Fowler, *The Andreasson Affair* p.77

Directly after she stopped before the bright light Betty experienced a strongly symbolic experience: she witnessed a huge bird, possibly a Phoenix, being consumed by fire and turning into a worm – the Phoenix is an ancient Christian symbol of resurrection.

¹⁹ Jung, op. cit., pp.155-156

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.156

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.157

²² *Ibid.*, p.159
Stacy, op. cit., p.126

²³ Sachs, op. cit., p.16

²⁴ Jung, op. cit., p.157

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.158

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- ²⁶ Ibid., p.160
- ²⁷ Ibid., p.155
- ²⁸ Ibid., p.160
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Howard Menger, *From Outer Space To You* pp.21-23
- ³¹ Ibid., p.23
- ³² Ibid., pp.132-134
- ³³ Ibid., p.32
- ³⁴ Ibid., p.43
- ³⁵ Ibid., pp.137-138
- ³⁶ Ibid., pp.29-30
- ³⁷ Ibid., p.156
- ³⁸ Ibid., p.160
- ³⁹ Ibid., p.166
- ⁴⁰ Roy Wallis, 'The Aetherius Society' pp.17-18
- ⁴¹ Leaflet: *The Aetherius Society: A Brief Introduction*
- ⁴² Ibid.
Wallis, op. cit., pp.19-20
William Shaw, *Spying in Guru Land* p.96
- ⁴³ Leaflet: *The Aetherius Society: A Cosmic Concept*
- ⁴⁴ Hilary Evans, *Gods, Spirits, Cosmic Guardians* p.140
- ⁴⁵ Wallis, op. cit., p.29
Shaw, op. cit., pp.98-99
- ⁴⁶ Menger, op. cit., pp.114-118,120,133
- ⁴⁷ Evans, op. cit., p.133
- ⁴⁸ J. Gordon Melton, 'World Understanding' p.736
- ⁴⁹ The sects that grew up around most of the major contactees of the 1950s are far too numerous to mention in detail here. However the most notable include Mark-Age Inc., Universarium Foundation, Church of Jesus the Saucerian, Universe Society Church (UNISOC), Association of Sunanda and Sanat, Unarius - Science of Life, Kumura, and the Cosmic Circle of Fellows. Many of these groups kept in casual contact with each other as well as preaching a similar message.

⁵⁰ George Van Tassell, contactee, founder and director of the Ministry of Universal Wisdom, spent the last 25 years of his life building the 'Integraton', a four-story dome-shaped machine which he claimed would rejuvenate the old and prevent the ageing of the young. He received the design for the machine from the aliens he was in contact with, and claimed that it would work once these space brothers came to calibrate it. After Van Tassell's death in 1978 the Integraton was purchased by the Christology Church, San Diego. [Sachs, op. cit., p.352]

Gabriel Green was also a contactee claiming over 100 UFO sightings. He is said to have been asked by an alien from a planet named Alpha Centauri to run for the U.S. presidency in 1960 - he tried but was unsuccessful in his bid. In 1956 he founded the Los Angeles Interplanetary Study Groups which evolved in 1959 into the Amalgamated Flying Saucer Clubs of America (AFSCA). AFSCA believes that UFOs originate from planets within our solar system and that space people from these planets have repeatedly contacted all heads of major governments, in order to improve the world's condition. Their attempts at assistance have, however, been rejected by the power-crazy governments. [Ibid., pp.13,129]

⁵¹ John Spencer, op. cit., p.47

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Olavo Fontes and Joao Martins, 'Report on the Villas-Boas Incident' p.43

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.44

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.51

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.49

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.62

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.50

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.53

⁶¹ Ibid., p.54

⁶² Ibid., pp.67-68

⁶³ John Whitmore, 'Religious Dimensions of the UFO Abduction Experience' p.69

⁶⁴ Longford, op. cit., p.65

⁶⁵ J. M. Cohen and J. F. Phipps, *The Common Experience* p.154

⁶⁶ Maxwell & Tschudin, op. cit., p.75

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp.93-94

⁶⁸ John G. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey* p.55

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.19

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.20

⁷¹ Ibid.

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- ⁷² Ibid., p.30
- ⁷³ Ibid., p.32
- ⁷⁴ Jenny Randles, *Abduction* p.22
- ⁷⁵ Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* passim.
- ⁷⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism* Chapter IV passim.
- ⁷⁷ Stanislav & Christina Grof, 'Spiritual Emergency: The Understanding and Treatment of Transpersonal Crises' p.11
- ⁷⁸ Fuller, op. cit., p.33
- ⁷⁹ Ibid.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., p.49
- ⁸¹ Ibid., pp.63-64
- ⁸² Ibid., pp.73-78
- ⁸³ Ibid., p.305
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., p.157
- ⁸⁵ Ibid., p.196
- ⁸⁶ Ibid., p.212
- ⁸⁷ As can be deduced Betty is unquestionably the main experiencer in this case, as Barney keeps his eyes shut through the majority of events whilst onboard the spacecraft. Following his regression hypnosis sessions Barney's anxiety was relieved but not eliminated and, in February 1969, he died of a cerebral haemorrhage aged just 46. This was not long after the Hills' case became public and so it was Betty who received most of the publicity surrounding the events. She has achieved a sort of celebrity status (especially amongst UFO enthusiasts) and has given many interviews worldwide. In 1975 the Hills' abduction was dramatized in a nationwide TV special called *The UFO Incident*.

⁸⁸ A close encounter with a UFO may still seem an unlikely event but, as is cited by Jacques Vallee in his book *Dimensions*, and also in the 1979 epilogue to the revised edition of *The Interrupted Journey*, there is official corroboration that some unidentified object was tracked by military radar at Pease Air Force Base in the early hours of 20 September, 1961. Report No. 100-1-61 in the files of the 100th Bomb Wing, Strategic Air Command, Pease Air Force Base, New Hampshire was prepared by Major Paul W. Henderson. It states that some type of object had been detected by the military around the time of the Hills' sighting:

During a casual conversation on 22 Sept 61 between Major Gardiner B. Reynolds, 100th B s DC01 and Captain Robert O. Daughaday, Commander 1917-2 AACs DIT, Pease AFB, N.H., it was revealed that a strange incident occurred at 0214 local on 20 Sept. No importance was attached to the incident at the time.

[Jacques Vallee, *Dimensions* p.103]

This report, combined with Barney's hysterical reaction whilst re-experiencing the incident under hypnosis, indicates that *something* very frightening probably occurred to the Hills.

⁸⁹ In 1964, during the regression hypnosis sessions, the warts became inflamed which may indicate that there might be some connection between the skin disorder and the memories of the alleged abduction. Yet, it is also possible that the warts may have been incorporated into the recovered memories in a similar way in which every day experiences are incorporated into dreams.

⁹⁰ Fuller, op. cit., p.227

⁹¹ Ibid., p.266

⁹² Ibid., pp.115,141

⁹³ Ibid., p.179

⁹⁴ Ibid., p.190

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.264

⁹⁶ John Spencer, (Ed.) *The UFO Encyclopedia* p.185

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Budd Hopkins, 'Investigating the Abductees' p.134

⁹⁹ Keith Thompson, *Angels and Aliens* p.62

¹⁰⁰ Randles, op. cit., p.21

¹⁰¹ Coral and Jim Lorenzen, *Encounters with UFO Occupants*, 1976, and *Abducted!*, 1977; Ray Fowler, *The Andreasson Affair* (about the abduction experiences of a Massachusetts housewife, Betty Andreasson), 1979; Ralph and Judy Blum, *Beyond Earth: Man's Contact with UFOs*, 1974; D. Scott Rogo and Ann Druffel, *The Tujunga Canyon Contacts* (the bedroom visitations to two women in their early twenties living in the remote canyon in California), 1975.

¹⁰² Budd Hopkins, *Missing Time* p.247

¹⁰³ Jacques Vallee, 'Five Arguments Against the Extraterrestrial Origin of Unidentified Flying Objects' p.112

¹⁰⁴ In fact, investigators began to actively encourage members of the general public to volunteer their experiences through advertisements and, in general, by devising methods of communication which would enable individuals ready access to information and support concerning their abduction experiences. Hopkins, appearing on a number of television and radio programmes to promote his book (thus raising public awareness of the abduction phenomenon), requested anyone who felt that they had undergone a similar experience to those described in his book, to write to him with details. He received literally hundreds of replies.

¹⁰⁵ Randles, op. cit., p.24

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.84-85

¹⁰⁷ David Jacobs, *Secret Life: Firsthand Accounts of UFO Abductions* pp.52-53

¹⁰⁸ John Mack, *Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens* pp.125-126

¹⁰⁹ Whitmore, op. cit., p.70

¹¹⁰ Hopkins, *Missing Time* p.76

¹¹¹ Edith Fiore, *Abductions: Encounters with Extraterrestrials* p.54

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp.30-31

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.72-73

¹¹⁴ Thompson, *op. cit.*, p.236
Also Manfred Cassirer, *Dimensions of Enchantment* p.200

¹¹⁵ It is relatively rare for there to be a report of an individual, or group of people, who witness the abduction of another individual. If the abductee is with other people during an abduction attempt, for instance, in bed with their spouse, or driving with others in a car, the aliens are reported to 'switch off' the potential observers, leaving them unconscious or immobile while the abduction is taking place. Jerry told John Mack about a memory she had of one of her abductions at the age of eight, whilst in her family car:

Jerry had fallen asleep and awoke to discover that the car was stopped in the road. She became frightened as she saw "a face in the window, it's right there, right close," and a grayish, metallic-looking craft hovering nearby just above the ground with "lights coming out of the bottom of it." Her mother, who had been driving the car, one of her brothers, and her sister seemed to be asleep. [Mack. *op. cit.*, p.41]

After the abductee is returned potential witnesses will be 'switched on' once again and, having no conscious recall of the incident, resume their normal activities. If the abductee is taken from their bed, their partner will typically sleep through the incident:

I just kind of felt like I floated up through the window and back into my room, and in bed with Roy [her husband]. And I woke up and I felt like I had to go to the bathroom....And I shook Roy and I did wake him up, and I said..."I just had a nightmare," or, "I just had a really weird dream." He just mumbled something and turned over and went back to sleep. [Patti Layne regressed by David Jacobs in Jacobs, *op. cit.*, p.211]

There are, however, some cases of abductions which involve multiple witnesses, as in the case of Betty and Barney Hill, who both claimed to have been abducted at the same time. Refer to Sachs, *op. cit.*, p.241 and Jim Schnabel, *Dark White* p.26 for the alleged claims of joint abduction by Charles Hickson and Calvin Parker and Bill Barry, *Ultimate Encounter* for the alien abduction account of Travis Walton allegedly witnessed by a gang of forestry workers.

¹¹⁶ Budd Hopkin's interview (without hypnotic recall) with 'Mac McMahan' (pseudonym) in Hopkins, *Missing Time* p.119

¹¹⁷ Mack, *op. cit.*, p.36

¹¹⁸ Fiore, *op. cit.*, pp.135-136

¹¹⁹ Mack, *op. cit.*, pp.152-153

¹²⁰ Jacobs, *op. cit.*, p.109

¹²¹ Mack, *op. cit.*, p.163

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- ¹²² Jacobs, op. cit., pp.115-117
- ¹²³ Ibid., p.123
- ¹²⁴ Mack, op. cit., p.99
- ¹²⁵ Eliade, op. cit., Chapter IV, passim.
Roger N. Walsh, *The Spirit of Shamanism* Chapter VI, passim.
- ¹²⁶ Jacobs, op. cit., pp.87-88
- ¹²⁷ Bertrand Méheust, quoting Geza Roheim, *Les portes du reve* (p.247), in 'UFO Abductions as Religious Folklore' p.355
- ¹²⁸ Patrick Harpur, *Daimonic Reality* p.185
- ¹²⁹ Mack, op. cit., p.207
- ¹³⁰ Ibid., p.162
- ¹³¹ Ibid., p.181
- ¹³² Jacobs, op. cit., p.103
- ¹³³ Ibid., pp.142-143
- ¹³⁴ Mack, op. cit., p.40
Fiore, op. cit., p.323
- ¹³⁵ Mack, Ibid.
- ¹³⁶ Jacobs, op. cit., p.208
- ¹³⁷ Fiore, op. cit., p.106
- ¹³⁸ Méheust, op. cit., p.353
- ¹³⁹ Mack, op. cit., pp.40-41
Jacobs, op. cit., pp.218-219
- ¹⁴⁰ Mack, Ibid.
Jacobs, Ibid.

Due to the various levels of conscious recall of the alien abduction experience Budd Hopkins decided it expedient to classify the array of abductions that were being reported. A Type I case involves at least a partial memory of being abducted, even if the abductee later resorts to regression hypnosis to clarify the event. A Type II case involves a conscious memory of a UFO - perhaps remembering witnessing alien occupants, and experiencing missing time - yet the actual abduction is not recalled. A Type III case involves a conscious memory of a UFO and/or its occupants, but without any sense of missing time - this is typical of bedroom visitations. A Type IV case involves only those incidents where missing time is experienced. Finally, a Type V case involves only a vague sense of buried trauma which is possibly associated with certain geographical locations, or physical evidence on the individual's body e.g. fresh scar tissue, bruises, rashes or burns. [Schnabel, op. cit., pp.56-57]

¹⁴¹ Hopkins, *Missing Time* pp.21-22

¹⁴² Ibid., pp.129-130

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- ¹⁴³ Ibid., p.138.
- ¹⁴⁴ Randles, op. cit., p.17
- ¹⁴⁵ Mack, op. cit., p.41
- ¹⁴⁶ Carol Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys* p.79
- ¹⁴⁷ Longford, op. cit., pp.51-52
- ¹⁴⁸ Bob Rickard, 'Jesus and the Ufos' p.36
- ¹⁴⁹ Jacobs, op. cit., p.95
- ¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p.96
- ¹⁵¹ Mack, op. cit., p.244
- ¹⁵² Ibid., p.249
- ¹⁵³ Ibid., p.300
- ¹⁵⁴ H. L. Roth, *The Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo* Vol. 1, p.281 quoted in Nevill Drury, *The Elements of Shamanism* p.19
- ¹⁵⁵ An alien abduction investigator who recently claims to have obtained a number of implants, is Derrol Sims. He claims that these implants vary from complex metallic objects to bizarre objects such as teeth. One such 'implant' has been analysed by stereo microscopy, in a Houston laboratory.

[It] showed a hollow, flesh-toned object 1-1.5mm with an egg-shaped porous structure, open at one end. Qualitative elemental analysis carried out using an electron microprobe determined that the material was non-conductive and contained the following elements (in no particular order or percentage): Carbon, oxygen, silicon, titanium, barium, beryllium, sulphur, aluminium. It is unusual for titanium and silicon to be present in a carbon rich compound which contains oxygen. It is also not consistent with the textural properties of the specimen.

Also, the presence of beryllium is unusual in that it is normally found in electrically conductive compounds. This substance is most likely a high molecular weight organic compound and Polymers (plastics) are the most likely compounds to fit the profile.

[Extract from a paper written by Derrol Sims and Mary Jo Florey entitled *Evidence for and Implications of Medically Unexplained Implants in Abductees*, quoted in considerably shortened version in *UFO Times: The Journal of the British UFO Research Association* Issue 44, Dec/Jan/Feb, 1997 p.9]

When asked if he thought implants featured as some type of tracking device, Sims suggested that this explanation was too simple and that it may only be a selection of abductees who have implants: "I'm just speculating here but I think they are more to do with modifying the behaviour of abductees, possibly by controlling the levels of certain neurotransmitters in the brain, such as secertotonin." [Interview with Tim Coleman for the article 'The Alien Hunter' in *UFO Magazine* July/August, 1996 p.19] However, there is no absolute proof that the discussed implant is of extraterrestrial origin.

CHAPTER THREE

ALIEN REVELATIONS

*Yet are the humble free to hear the Voice
which tells them what they are,
and what to do.*

- Foundation for Inner Peace: *A Course in Miracles*

*And a voice spoke to him on the hilltop,
a voice neither male nor female, loud or soft,
a voice said unto him, "Not my will, but thine be done.
For what is thy will is mine for thee.
Go thy way as other men, and be thou happy on the earth."*

- Richard Bach: *Illusions*

As shown in the previous chapter, contactees and abductees frequently report that aliens reveal to them what could be considered vitally important information of a spiritual and material nature. It can be argued that, especially where contactee cases are concerned, such ominous messages are *the* reason for the alien mission to Earth. In this chapter an analysis of the types of alien revelation received is undertaken to identify the mode and content of the alien communications. These revelations will then be analysed in the context of the decades in which they were delivered, to determine whether their content reflects human preoccupations of the time. Finally, alien revelations will be compared to the messages allegedly received from the Virgin Mary.

Despite the largest number of alien messages received by contactees, some abductees have also reported that their alien captors impart important knowledge to them, as we shall observe in later examples. The primary difference between the two close encounter experiences would appear to be that, if a message is given to a contactee, the individual is likely to feel specifically selected to receive the communication and, will actively try to disseminate the information. Such actions might expose the contactee to public harassment and ridicule. As already discussed, some of the most famous contactees of the 1950s faced, in general, a sceptical public whilst preaching their alien gospel. In some cases contactees also have to contend with feelings of betrayal and overwhelming disappointment (known as 'cognitive dissonance') when prophecies and deadlines for change specified by their particular 'space brothers' fail to be fulfilled: Orfeo Angelucci's aliens prophesied incorrectly that a major catastrophe would befall the planet in 1986. Mrs Marian Keech, who between 1949-1950 received messages from space beings known as 'The Guardians', was told that she and other extraterrestrial believers would be saved from a massive flood by being rescued by spacecraft. Many believers resigned from their jobs, and left their homes and families, but the spacecraft never arrived to save them, neither did the flood.¹ As we shall observe in Chapter Five, which centres on the emotional and lifestyle transformation of close encounter witnesses after their alien contact, abductees tend to keep their messages to themselves or within close family circles, having little or no inclination to adopt the role of prophet.

The aliens communicate with individuals via vocal or telepathic means, generally whilst the alien is visually present with the subject. We may recall the 1950s contactees, such as Adamski, Angelucci, and Menger, met with their respective extraterrestrial friends in mundane locations like diners and public transport terminals. Alien contactee claims are very similar to reports of divine communication which also usually occurs with direct contact between the witness and the divine messenger, as in the case of the many angelic encounters depicted in the Old and New Testaments (e.g. Gen.16:7f, 19:1ff; 2Sam.24:16f; Zech.1:7-17; Lk.1:1ff; Jn.20:11f). In both divine and alien contact cases it is usual for the otherworldly messenger to travel to the witness, appearing at some remote location on Earth. In contrast, messages are generally imparted to an abductee during his contact with the tall leader figure onboard the spacecraft.

Contactees especially frequently claim to receive more than one revelation from their particular alien race. Analysis of the many examples of alien revelation reveals the fact that, despite being allegedly delivered by a number of different extraterrestrial races, the messages tend to be uniform in content. In fact, as Hilary Evans has remarked, there have been many revelations published during the past four decades which “run to a pattern which has been repeated often enough to become a stereotype.”² The recurrent themes found within many, if not all, alien revelations consist of: information about the aliens; their warnings about humanity and/or the Earth being destroyed by nature, humankind’s own ignorant actions, or an ‘evil’ alien race; why the aliens are concerned about humanity’s future; and how humanity is to be saved, as revealed by the extraterrestrials. These themes will now be analysed.

The Identity and Origin of the Aliens

In reports of messages the aliens present themselves as benevolent beings with a genuine concern for humanity and planet Earth. This is also true of those aliens who disclose information to abductees. Although this is a rare feature in abduction scenarios, reports indicate that it is usually the less sinister ‘leader-figure’ aliens who reveal the messages. With their advanced technological, moral and spiritual knowledge the aliens are recognised by the close encounter witnesses as being more ‘evolved’ than or ‘superior’ to humans. They could thus be compared to angels who are viewed in the Bible as celestial or heavenly beings superior to humans, but who are still God’s servants (e.g. Matt.20:36; 22:30; 2Chron.18:18; Job 2:1; Heb.1:4). Humanity cannot be considered ‘evolved’ as it has yet to learn to live harmoniously together and is, instead, set upon destroying itself along with its planetary resources. As contactee Kelvin Rowe explains:

I, as many others of this planet Earth, have met, associated with, benefited by and enjoyed the presence of these highly superior beings from other worlds whose development is inconceivable to people of Earth. We have found them to be shining examples of what we of Earth should be, what we can be, and shall become despite man’s solely materialistic minds and egotistical, dominating, destructive nature.³

Despite their apparently superior state the majority of aliens - primarily those encountered during contactee experiences - appear to love humanity unconditionally as their potential equals and 'space brothers'. For example, when Adamski's space brother demonstrated the way in which humanity was heading towards self-destruction "his expression was one of understanding, and great compassion; as one would have toward a much loved child who had erred through ignorance and lack of understanding."⁴ We are told that the aliens have evolved to a higher state of consciousness, which enables them to live in harmony with each other and all other beings on their planet. The Aetherius Society tells us that, "The other Planets in our Solar System are inhabited by highly cultured races millions of years ahead of us, Spiritually and scientifically. There is no war, disease, old age, earthquakes, violent storms, floods, drought and such on the other Planets in this System. The people are peace-loving, compassionate, and devote their lives in service to others."⁵ Some alien communications speak of their being engaged in peaceful relations with other enlightened alien races on planets throughout the solar system. (However, in the majority of encounters the aliens seem oblivious to, or do not deem it necessary to mention, the existence of other alien races.) The 1960s abductee Betty Andreasson related under hypnosis to David Webb, a MUFON (the Mutual UFO Network) investigator, that there are many alien races who work in harmony together:

DAVID WEBB Betty, are there many of these clans or races visiting the earth right now from many planets?

BETTY Yes.

DAVID WEBB How many?

BETTY Seventy.

DAVID WEBB Seventy different planets or races?

BETTY Races.

DAVID WEBB Do these races work together?

BETTY Yes, except for the offensive one [i.e. there is one hostile alien race].⁶

'Tibus', an alien who communicates through Diane Tessman and whom she first met during an abduction episode in her childhood, told her that "aliens and dimensional beings view atomic energy in a completely negative way and they flock to any planet which is foolishly experimenting or using atomic weapons and energy....There is a huge number of extraterrestrial races currently in contact with Earth."⁷ Orfeo Angelucci was also informed that "the inhabitants of other planets were trying to instill into the earth dwellers a better understanding of their present predicament and to help them particularly in the art of healing."⁸ A frequent theme in the alien messages is that humankind was created by some kind of alien genetic manipulation. We are told that certain extraterrestrials:

...claim to be responsible for the genetic development of man from his primal ancestor. That is, they are the creators of humanity; they made us and have guided our evolutionary development and have even intervened in history. The aliens are returning in such great numbers now in preparation for the aforementioned catastrophe.⁹

This genetic intervention theory can be traced back to early 1950s reports of close encounter experiences. During this decade Ralph M. Holland, an engineer living in Cayahoga Falls, Ohio, described his encounter with extraterrestrial humanoids called the Etherians. These space travellers told Holland they existed on an etheric plane of reality, and claimed that they were responsible for the creation of the human race in the following manner:

When these groups first came to the physical plane of your planet, they found that their physical bodies were not entirely suited to the environment. In an effort to improve the situation, they began, by selective breeding and cross-breeding, to develop a better adapted physical body. The final choice was the ancestor race of the present Adamic races, which was a cross between the Elder Races themselves and a certain manlike animal native to your planet.¹⁰

The Etherians are not the only alien race claiming to be humanity's progenitors. Other contactees and abductees report that *their* respective alien contacts claim humanity's creation. Diane, one of Edith Fiore's abductees, described her encounter with one such race:

DIANE: They call themselves the Planters. They go to different parts of this world and different parts of other worlds to check up on their...it's like we're distant cousins. It's like we were planted here thousands of years ago to start the colony. And there were different planets which planted different things here. It's not like an experiment, although I'm starting to feel like one. He says, "No, no, no." I feel not as evolved as they are. And I feel a little uncomfortable that I'm not on their level, like my dog might feel around me or something. I'm feeling that I hope they'll be kind, because they're so far advanced. I want to be like they are, but I'm not on that level. I'm just still growing. They can do so many things. They can...they can materialize themselves. They can levitate things. They can travel in this ship by making this ship change form and then beaming it on this laser beam of light to another destination [...] They can do anything. They're so incredible!¹¹

Abductee John Hodges (pseudonym) told Ann Druffel that he was in constant contact with aliens from Zeta Reticuli. These "Zeta Reticuleans are our cultural ancestors. Millennia ago they participated in converting earth's apemen to homo [sic] sapiens, through gene manipulation."¹² Aliens are not the only ones to have disseminated this 'ancient alien astronaut and human creator' theory. This hypothesis has also been promoted by non-close encounter experiencers including Erich von Däniken, author of a best-selling series of books including *Chariots of the Gods?* (1970), and *Return to the Stars* (1971).¹³ Supporters of the alien colonization of Earth usually propound one of two theories:

That the human race was seeded on Earth by extraterrestrials or was created by the crossbreeding of extraterrestrials and earthly animals. It has been conjectured that the Biblical story of the Garden of Eden is, in fact, an account of seeding by extraterrestrials. Supporters of this hypothesis believe that the extraterrestrial beings continue to visit Earth in flying saucers to monitor and manipulate our development.¹⁴

(There is even an investigative organization, the Earth Colonization Research Association – ECRA - based in New Zealand who devotes itself to the study of this theory.¹⁵) It may be argued that these genetic intervention and Earth colonization theories share common elements with those found in human cultural traditions, particularly those of a religious nature. For example in the Old Testament we are told that 'giants' were born as a result of intercourse between "the sons of god" and the daughters of men (Gen.6:1-4).

Apocryphal letter Baruch 3:26 describes the “great stature” of these mixed race offspring who were “expert in war”. According to Enoch, Book 1, the sons of God were angelic “watchers” who were originally sent from heaven to instruct humanity. Having given into lustful temptation they fell from God’s grace (6:1-4). The aliens, therefore, appear to “...perform many of the traditional functions of God. They create humanity, guide it through history, and eventually offer a form of salvation, all through a nearly omnipotent technology that replaces the miraculous will of God for modern mankind.”¹⁶

Alien Warnings of the Annihilation of Earth and Humankind

When the range of alien revelations are analysed it is apparent that for the vast majority of the material “when you have heard one message from Outer Space, you have heard them all.”¹⁷ Regardless from where they originate, it is claimed that the principle concern for the majority, if not all, of our alien visitors is to save Earth and its population from an imminent disaster of apocalyptic proportions. The type of disaster the aliens are reportedly concerned about is usually said to be caused by humankind itself. The dangers of pollution and nuclear testing are frequently, and repeatedly, mentioned in the many different alien moral injunctions. The extraterrestrials tell us that humanity’s prejudice, violent instincts, and greed for wealth and power, has led to the invention of horrendous weapons of destruction, the pursuit of brutal and futile wars and feuds, and a complete disregard for the continual destruction of the Earth’s natural resources. We are warned that if humanity does not quickly change it will not only destroy itself, but also the delicate balance of the planet’s ecology. This will lead to many natural disasters such as major flooding, earthquakes, droughts and hurricanes, which will contribute to the total annihilation of Earth. As alien communications vary so little in content, it is only necessary to present a few examples of such warnings, representative of the rest:

We are not the first extraterrestrials to come from a distant galaxy to visit you. Beings like us are among you in all parts of your planet....

Alas! Without realising it, you have the error of taking the path which leads inexorably to destruction without the chance of retreat, and the present age is the final phase of that path.

You have not polluted your planet with impunity; radio-active dust impregnates its atmosphere after each insane atomic test explosion. And the least war, be it nuclear, chemical or bacteriological, would lead to the biological end of your generation.

Life will continue for millions of years on Earth, but the way things are going, it is highly unlikely that man will be among the surviving species.¹⁸

Like water swirling down a drain, time runs faster and faster these days as the daily dimension unravels. There are many natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, drought, extreme heat, polluted air, and more. This is because of these “Change Times” which spell the end to reality as you know it. Humanity has almost singlehandedly caused these radical times to occur, from the ozone holes in the atmosphere to the barren land where once great rainforests stood....

Humanity cannot even get along with itself, thus there are racial, religious, and cultural wars where one group of human beings seeks to eliminate the other group of human beings. Also, there is racial and religious tension, discrimination, and violence all over the planet. The answer is simple: Those who cannot rise above this level will not be able to survive in the new, risen frequency of mind/soul.¹⁹

Orthon, Adamski's alien contactee, was concerned with the effect of nuclear radiation on this planet and others in the solar system:

He made me understand that their coming was friendly. Also, as he gestured, that they were concerned with radiations going out from Earth.

This I got clearly since there was a considerable amount of radiation of heat waves rising from the desert, as is often the case. Such as the waves that are often seen rising from pavements, and highways on hot days.

He pointed to them and then gestured through space.

I asked if this concern was due to the explosions of our bombs with their resultant vast radio-active clouds?

He understood this readily and nodded his head in the affirmative.

My next question was whether this was dangerous, and I pictured in my mind a scene of destruction.

To this, too, he nodded his head in the affirmative....

I wanted to know if this was affecting outer space?

Again a nod of affirmation....

But I persisted and wanted to know if it was dangerous to us on Earth as well as affecting things in space?

He made me understand - by gesturing with his hands to indicate cloud formations from explosions - that after too many such explosions. Yes! His affirmative nod of the head was very positive and he even spoke the word 'Yes' in this instance...Then, further to explain himself, he touched me, then a little weed growing close by, and next pointed to the Earth itself, and with a wide sweep of his hands and other gestures that too many 'Booms!' would destroy all of this.²⁰

Howard Menger was also warned about the world's destruction by his female alien visitor:

A look of sadness came over the beautiful face, and tears came to my eyes as for the first time I pitied my new wonderful friend.

She spoke of a great change to take place in this country as well as the world. Wasteful wars, torture and destruction would be brought on by the misunderstandings of people.²¹

One of John Mack's abductees, Scott, remembered under hypnosis an apocalyptic vision he experienced whilst onboard a spaceship. He spoke of major world changes and stated that the aliens would not be able to openly visit Earth until:

There are "less and less" of us as we die off from disease, especially more communicable forms of AIDS that will reach plague proportions. This material was frightening and very sad for Scott, and he also felt that he was not "allowed" to speak of it. Although he was positive in his conviction about this, he said, "I just hope I was wrong." [...]

With considerable resistance Scott admitted that the intention of the aliens was to “live here” (on Earth) but without us, unless “humans change,” in which case “we might be able to live together.” Then he contrasted the ways of humans with the aliens. Human beings “are alone” and “they don’t share.” In the alien realm “nobody’s in their own world” and “everybody knows everything. There are no secrets.”²²

Joe, another abductee Mack worked with, told him that “‘human beings are in trouble...A storm is brewing,’ an ‘electro-magnetic’ catastrophe resulting from the ‘negative’ technology human beings have created.”²³ Other alien revelations are more strictly apocalyptic in form. As described in Chapter Two, abductees and contactees report being shown, on screens or in their minds, scenes of Earth being destroyed either by nuclear holocaust or an ecological collapse, such as relentless flooding, earthquakes or firestorms. Peter, an abductee, was shown such images as he was ushered down the hallway of a spacecraft:

He saw nuclear explosions, sections of Europe and the United States destroyed, “a lot of people burned, a lot of people upset...the human race changing” its “form” and “texture”.... Plagues, pestilence, and “all this stuff” would destroy the “infrastructure of the civilization of man as it is today.” The entire society would crumble.²⁴

Such apocalyptic images are greatly disturbing to the percipients, who tend to view the scenes as predictive of the future for man and the planet Earth. Although the majority of alien revelations mention destruction by some natural or man-made disaster, another annihilation theme introduces two opposing forces. In this scenario it is claimed that the aliens transmitting the messages are Earth’s allies warning of other alien races who are “(a) hostile or (b) contemplating an all-out attack on the unhappy planet Earth, or (c) actually engaged in an attack which is being resisted by our ‘space allies’.”²⁵ Close encounter reports describe certain alien species - for example, ‘Chameleons’, ‘Nagarians’ and ‘Ikels’ - as hostile beings who are conspiring against the other peaceful races in the galaxy.²⁶ These ‘evil’ alien races are considered less evolved than the benevolent alien allies who are in contact with individuals on Earth. Abductee, Peter, told Mack that, “There was ‘a battle going on’ over who was going to ‘get control of the earth’ between ‘beings from all over the universe,’ not only ‘the beings I’m associated with’.

This ‘has been going on’ for perhaps two thousand years, he said, but was now ‘all coming to a head.’”²⁷

The Path to Alien Salvation

On analysing reports of extraterrestrial communication it would appear that the aliens do not simply issue dire warnings of death and destruction to various individuals around the world. They also speak of travelling great distances in order to reveal humanity’s future for a number of reasons. Being far more spiritually and morally developed than man their actions are primarily motivated by feelings of love and compassion towards us. They do not wish us to die and they aim to not only warn us of imminent death, but to aid us in averting such catastrophe by showing us the means of *salvation*. Quazgaa, one of the aliens Betty Andreasson encounters during her abduction, explained to her how much his race loves humanity:

They have come to help the human race. And, unless man will accept, he will not be saved, he will not live...All things have been planned. Love is the greatest of all. They do not want to hurt anybody - but because of great love, they said: because of great love, they cannot let man continue in the footsteps that he is going....²⁸

Despite the aliens' unconditional love there are other considerations which motivate their redemptive actions. It is not only our planet which is affected by our harmful activities, ecological disasters and/or malevolent alien invasions, it is claimed that the aliens' planets, as well as others in the solar system, are at risk too. It is thus in their own interests to educate Earth's population to evolve and rebalance the destructive forces we have unleashed, or to successfully battle against malevolent alien invasion. Finally, for those aliens who claim *Homo sapiens* are their creation, they are concerned that their progeny should learn from the mistakes made, and continue to evolve to become like their alien progenitors.

Notwithstanding their seemingly genuine desire to help humanity develop to a higher evolutionary existence, the extraterrestrial messages indicate that the aliens do not agree as to which level they are willing to directly intervene. Some talk of a policy of noninterference, a rule which many *Star Trek* fans will be familiar with, as the crew of the Enterprise are prohibited from interfering in the normal development of any society. Gene Roddenberry, the creator of *Star Trek*, named this rule 'the Prime Directive of Noninterference'. As Tibus explained to Diane Tessman, aliens:

...cannot and will not interfere "from above" and stop us as a human race from learning the sacred lesson of taking care of our home planet!...They *cannot* help us by directly "beaming down" to save us and set everything right again through their high technology and by *forcing* higher awareness. This would be gross interference and "the child" would not learn his lesson. Human history must be allowed to unfold as humans cause it to unfold. Besides, can consciousness be higher when it is forced?²⁹

Contactee, Arthur Shuttlewood, is told by the alien Karne, from the planet Aenstria, that there would be a Third World War on Earth and that:

You cannot prevent it and we must not, for that would be contravention of Universal Law which decrees one cannot interfere with freewill and liberty of others in any galaxy.

Nor may we actively seek to influence the affairs and vibrations of any other cantel [planet]....We are not permitted to subjugate the wills of other brethren to our own, no matter how far they have strayed from the paths of Love, Light and Truth.³⁰

With such policies of noninterference in place, it is claimed that the aliens can only reveal the manner in which humanity may be saved, and hope that the close encounter experiencer will persuade enough of Earth's population that the danger is real, this disaster may be averted. On the other hand, it is reported that some aliens are prepared to destroy humanity if we threaten other planets or we do not spiritually mature.³¹ Other reports speak of aliens who take a more moderately active role in Earth's plight. These aliens apparently work with enlightened individuals - apart from the reporting human contactee - who are willing to aid in our planetary transformation and to stem the tide of humanity's destruction. Howard Menger was told by his alien mentors that he would:

...meet certain individuals of this planet who will come to you at our direction and help you. You will form groups and teach people. Some of those whom you will teach will themselves become teachers and assist you in your mission. One person we will send to you will assist you in forming a body of twelve men to work in conjunction with us, by using the combined thought power of the men in bringing about universal laws and wisdom in the various groups in which they will teach....

You know, Howard, a lot of our people are among you, mingling with you, observing and helping where they can. They are in all walks of life - working in factories, offices, banks. Some of them hold responsible positions in communities, in government. Some of them may be cleaning women, or even garbage collectors. But when you meet them you will know them!³²

Analysis of alien communications also reveals that there are a number of ways in which the human race may be saved by extraterrestrial intervention. These can be reduced to two types. The first involves further genetic intervention by aliens. It is with this theory that the abductee experience of the harvesting of human eggs and sperm plays an essential and comprehensible role. The messages tell us that if man does not take steps to change it will either be totally annihilated, or those individuals who do survive will be sterile. In both cases alien harvesting of human genetic material and hybrid experimentation is viewed as a vital attempt to keep alive *Homo sapiens*. Such actions will either enable Earth to be re-colonised once the planet is fit to support life, to colonise another planet, or to strengthen, through hybridization, the alien race which is undertaking such experiments. As the abductee, Joe, explained to John Mack:

Reproductive acts like this are "necessary" so that "humans aren't lost in their race and their seed and their knowledge,"...The purpose of this hybridization program [sic], Joe said, was evolutionary, to perpetuate the human seed and "crossbreed" with other species on the ships and elsewhere in the cosmos. Joe spoke sadly of the inevitable further deterioration of the earth. Many humans will die, but the species will not be eradicated.³³

Peter explains how the aliens who abducted him were planning to repopulate the Earth after "the slate is...wiped clean" and a "new millennium of the earth" begins which will support "a whole other world".³⁴ Small hybrid tribes will be returned to re-colonize the planet and who, due to their more advanced mental state, will be able to live harmoniously with each other and all other alien races. Peter's role in this new age is to:

... "make the babies" with the alien/human female with whom he has been connected, to bring the whole process "into consciousness," and to work with the female in "taking care of the kids." He would become a leader of "a new, original tribe," a "new race of humans."

[...] The hybrid tribe, he said, would come down like "sections of people" to be placed in various areas of the earth, basically an advanced "transplanted population" with knowledge "from another world," prepared to start "new life...A whole system" would be transplanted.³⁵

The second method of salvation is through spiritual enlightenment. We are told that the aliens wish to teach us to develop emotionally, spiritually, morally and physically, so that a new reality is created. In other words, humanity can move up the evolutionary ladder so that their development matches that of their alien allies. This type of salvation is usually spoken of in terms of an earthly salvation, that of a new age founded on Earth. The implication is that if enough individuals are able to undergo such a spiritual transformation, annihilation of both humanity and the planet will be averted; but it seems that those who do not wish to change their old ways will not be able to survive this transformation. They will lack the level of evolution which will be needed to survive on the new level of existence or, in alien terminology, they will be unable to 'vibrate at the higher frequency rate':

The bright new dimension of which we speak is still Earth, but it is an *alternate Earth* in which the frequency of being, thinking, and feeling, has risen. The mind waves of this new frequency will be of a higher level. The old "frequency of mind" which encourages greed, cruelty, and insensitivity, will be extinct, unheard of.³⁶

Diane Tessman has been told by Tibus that in order to achieve such transformation an individual must be in closer touch with their own spirituality:

Know your own God spark within. Know Mother Nature as your friend and companion. Do these things and your spiritual/psychic power will increase tenfold. Your frequency of being, feeling, and thinking will be raised. With these advancements made, you will survive the Earth Changes!³⁷

Abductee, Diane, described to Edith Fiore a method given to her by aliens to enable her to achieve enlightenment:

There is a part of my brain, somewhere in the middle of my brain, that enables me to tune in to a different frequency. Be careful how I use it. Never think a negative thought toward another, for that thought is energy, and the higher the vibration of the one using it, the faster the energy can be created in the physical form [...]

The more we pray in the light...this accelerates our vibration. That is the key to our evolution...is that contact with God, who created the universe. And those who have gone before us who walk in this light of love and service. So communication is the key to our evolution, through quietness, just being quiet and feeling that part of the brain inside the middle, asking it to turn on, like a radio, and then waiting to receive our information.

All things are known through that receiver. Those who don't do it become pulled down to the force of a lower vibration, and they'll become angry and hurtful. You must awaken that part of the brain.³⁸

Contactee George van Tassel claims being contacted by an alien named 'Ashtar' who attempts to warn the human race about the destructive power of nuclear weaponry, and of placing too much emphasis on the material world rather than the spiritual plane. Ashtar stresses "an imminent shift of frequency level for the entire planet, which will cleanse the old vibrations and usher in a new, more spiritual millennium."³⁹ William Ferguson, describing his experiences on a flying saucer and his conversations with the Oligarchs of the planet Venus states:

They [the Oligarchs] told me to tell the people of the planet Earth, that all unidentified flying objects are here to help the planet Earth. They are here to help the planet at the time when it is approaching its next evolutionary step. The next evolutionary step is a Four Dimensional consciousness, and after that, a complete change so that the Three Dimensional body will be able to change its frequency and go into Four Dimensions, at will.⁴⁰

Karne repeatedly stressed to Arthur Shuttlewood that Earth time was short:

Only the transmutation of human weaknesses and a change for the better in the thinking, conduct and moral code of Man could save our planet from darkness and doom in a spiritual sense whereby all souls are retarded instead of being elevated to higher planes and dimensions.⁴¹

When humanity has learnt to make such an evolutionary advancement then, it is promised, we will be given the opportunity to openly commune with the benevolent alien races who have assisted in our progression, and to enter into 'cosmic citizenship' with the rest of the galaxy's community. This union will enable all races to work together to bring harmony and peace to other parts of the galaxy which have yet to evolve, and to exchange wisdom and cosmic companionship. Howard Menger was told that "Interplanetary brotherhood for earth's people is dependent upon the degree of decline of hostility and the degree of increase toward tolerance, love, and good will toward our fellow men."⁴² Karne told Arthur Shuttlewood that after the old world order had died "the new one taking its place would fit us to become members of the interplanetary brethren and sisterhood."⁴³

Regardless of which revelatory scenario is received, there is apparently a genuine wish on the aliens' part to act as our 'celestial saviours'. They send us messages which are sagacious and, if we were to follow their advice this planet would doubtless be a safer and more peaceful one.⁴⁴ However, it seems strange that such enlightened aliens continue to give such valuable information to people who invariably can do very little with it in terms of influencing public awareness. A survey of these alien revelations also suggests that the aliens might not be as omnipotent as so often reported, as the messages can contain elements of misleading or completely false information. Why such superior entities should intersperse their salvific gospels with information which is not only misleading and incoherent but, in certain cases, totally false, valueless or absurd, is incomprehensible. A small selection of examples will suffice to show the type of misinformation aliens appear to have taken elaborate measures to communicate.

In *Dimensions: A Casebook of Alien Contact* Jacques Vallee discusses his interview with a woman named 'Helen'. She contacted him in order to enlist his help in building a new type of engine which she said, would solve the world's energy crisis, and which she had seen onboard a spacecraft during her abduction.⁴⁵ Helen claimed she was abducted in the summer of 1968 when she was travelling with three musician friends from Lompoc, California to Los Angeles. Around 3.00 a.m., whilst driving in a flat open area of land, all four individuals witnessed a white light moving erratically in the sky. The object swooped over the car and extended four white funnel-shaped lights over each person's body and all four of them were teleported up into what she believed to be a UFO.

Vallee suggested that Helen should undergo a mild form of hypnotic regression:

During the session, she remembered going on board the “saucer” and observing its propulsion mechanism. She met a man dressed in white, who showed her the amazing motor she is now determined to build....Ever since the sighting, Helen has felt the urge to build the machine whose principle was revealed to her by one of the saucer pilots. It has become a central point for her, the goal of her entire life. Yet the motor she wants to build could never run, physically, at least in the way she explains it. (p.8)

In the same way Howard Menger was supposedly shown by his alien allies how to build a ‘free energy motor’. Although he built and placed it on display to the general public, there are no records of it ever working.⁴⁶

Several contactees claim to have visited busy metropolises and underground cities on Mars. However, explorations by American and Russian probes have failed to find any indications of intelligent life, despite NASA having discovered evidence of ancient microbiological life in a Martian meteorite. On 4 June, 1997 NASA’s Pathfinder expedition successfully landed a roving vehicle named *Sojourner* on Mars, which relayed detailed and instructive pictures of the Martian landscape. The findings of former probes have been vindicated, no intelligent life exists on Mars. The planet is a very barren, rocky structure and there are no indications that sites, either above or below ground, have ever existed. The same is true of conditions on the Moon, despite contactees such as Adamski and Menger, insisting that they visited colonies there. If such claims were true, however, and a contactee:

...had succeeded in stepping out of a spaceship on Jupiter, Saturn or the like, then the effects would have been devastating; a man of average height stepping onto the surface of Jupiter would immediately resemble one of those unfortunate flattened hedgehogs so often seen on motorways.⁴⁷

Finally, as already mentioned in this chapter, some aliens have prophesied, incorrectly, that major disasters were to befall Earth on a certain day, month or year. Not only did predictions given to Angelucci and Mrs Keech fail to come true but Arthur Shuttlewood was told by his alien contact Karne that “Christ, the Alpha and Omega of our Solar System, will arrive not later than 1975 and possibly before the end of 1972.”⁴⁸ It must be assumed that this prophecy too was unfulfilled.

Common Concerns Reflected in Alien Communications

Although the alien revelatory material is full of incongruities and incorrect information, the messages may reflect the period’s own fears and preoccupations, as well as its *zeitgeist*. This has already been briefly touched upon in Chapter Two. In this section a more indepth survey will be undertaken.⁴⁹ Such a review will prove useful when we compare the alien revelations with those delivered by the Virgin Mary.

The 1940s and 1950s

At the time when flying saucers first came to public notice the West was recovering from one of the most devastating wars in the history of man. The *zeitgeist* of this decade is summarized by Anthony R. Martin in his article 'The Plurality of Worlds' for the journal *Futures*:

The early 1940s on Earth were a depressing time for the human race. Only 20 years after 'the war to end all wars' the world was engaged in a conflict that surpassed in the scale of destruction, both of lives and of cities, any previous war. For a few years at the beginning of the decade it appeared to many that the civilization that had slowly been built up over thousands of years was about to fall apart before them and disappear forever. (p.619)

Although America was not as severely hit by the effects of World War II and recovered more quickly than its Western allies, at the beginning of the decade it, too, was preoccupied. The third paragraph of the report of the National Resources Committee received by President Herbert Hoover in October, 1932, on 'Recent Social Trends', not only reflects the reasons why the National Resources Committee was created, but also emphasises the conditions of the first few decades of the twentieth century, which had changed little as America entered the 1940s and 1950s:

The first third of the twentieth century has been filled with epoch-making events and crowded with problems of great variety and complexity. The World War, the inflation and deflation of agriculture and business, our emergence as a creditor nation, the spectacular increase in efficiency and productivity and the tragic spread of unemployment and business distress, the experiment of prohibition, birth control, race riots, stoppage of immigration, women's suffrage, the struggles of the Progressive and the Farmer Labor [sic] Parties, governmental corruption, crime and racketeering, the sprawl of great cities, the decadence of rural government, the birth of the League of Nations, the expansion of education, the rise and weakening of organized labor [sic], the growth of spectacular fortunes, the advance of medical science, the emphasis on sports and recreation, the renewed interest in child welfare - these are a few of the many happenings which have marked one of the most eventful periods in our history.⁵⁰

The events of World War II did little to stem the great advancements being made in the scientific and industrial research centres established throughout the West. Work carried out between 1940-1941 increasingly under strict government and military control and secrecy led to a controlled nuclear-chain reaction in Chicago, 1942; nuclear energy became available to mankind.⁵¹ Astronomical discoveries were also taking place; the boundaries of space widening as man's knowledge of the cosmos accumulated. By the mid-1940s science and technology had progressed to such a degree it was predicted man would eventually be able to leave Earth and venture into space. Italian theoretical physicist, Enrico Fermi hypothesised that:

There should be a large number of sites for intelligence to develop in the Galaxy...Some of these, Fermi reasoned, would have been ancient cultures when mankind was only in its cradle. Given the growth and diversification of living systems, and the innate expansion and colonization imperative that intelligent civilizations appeared to possess, then some of these cultures should have started to populate the Galaxy as long ago as the Earth is old.

These ancient civilizations should by now be lords of all they surveyed. And yet they apparently were not on Earth or in the Solar System, nor was there any evidence that they ever had been. Fermi asked...:

*If there are so many people out there, then where are they?*⁵²

Close encounter experiencers would soon claim that not only were there peoples other than humanity in the solar system, but that they were actually visiting Earth and communicating with selected individuals. Conditions in the 1940s were ideal for there to be a surge in reports about extraterrestrial travellers concerned about the fate of humankind. The years between the wars had been:

A time of renewed myth-making; it was a time when the tale of the future first introduced those premonitions of ecological disaster and world catastrophe that have nowadays become a common-place of international journalism. Fearful wars, inhuman tyrannies, the collapse of society, the end of humanity - these were imaginative codes by which the mind could find intelligible patterns in a time of troubles.⁵³

Alien promises of redemption from a disaster on an apocalyptic scale was very much the sort of thing certain individuals at that time, no doubt fuelled by media reports of advances in astronomy, astrophysics and astronautics, would have wished to hear. Thus it is no wonder that such messages could be accepted on faith by anyone who wished to be saved by some external cosmic force.⁵⁴

As can be observed from the above very brief survey of significant events which took place during the 1940s, western population was confronted by a number of situations which raised grave questions as to how the future would be shaped, and increased the level of anxiety throughout the industrial nations. Not only was the world still stunned by World War II and the brutally efficient actions of the new weapons mankind had invented but, almost straight after Nazi power was effectively suppressed, the world found itself facing Stalin's armies. Despite the fact that America emerged from World War II with an unchallenged military supremacy and a monopoly on the new and terrifying atomic bomb, it soon found itself at the centre of an escalating confrontation with the Soviet Union, with the main focus of rising tension being post-war Germany.

The Potsdam Agreement had stipulated that Germany, though divided into four zones of occupation, was to be administered as an economic unit. But the Russians ignored this arrangement, withholding foodstuffs raised in their own, predominantly agricultural, zone from the industrialized parts of Germany and obliging the Western Allies to make good the deficiency.

The Americans retaliated late in 1946 by halting the dismantling of a German industrial plant intended as reparations to the Soviet Union, expanding German industrial production to promote self sufficiency, and merging their zone of occupation with those of Great Britain and France. Thus by the end of the year...the two main occupying powers were busily imposing their rival economic systems upon the areas they controlled.⁵⁵

Another source of Soviet-American tension was that of atomic disarmament. An American plan, submitted on June 14, 1946, to the United Nations Commission on Atomic Energy, proposed to end the American atomic monopoly by sharing nuclear data with the rest of the United Nations. This information could be disclosed to a newly created international atomic development authority, concerned with the control and inspection of nuclear arms. This proposal was weakened by America's refusal to commit itself to destroy its own nuclear weapons. The Russians interpreted this as a sign of America's intention to maintain its nuclear supremacy, and refused to accept international inspection.⁵⁶ No agreement was reached and both America and Russia became fearful about the intentions of their rival. The Cold War had begun.

With American leaders becoming increasingly concerned that the economic breakdown of old European capitalist systems would open the way for Communist revolutions, a radical new departure, known as the 'containment' policy was initiated. This policy committed the Truman Administration to resisting any further extension of Communist power and influence. This was quickly followed by the Truman Doctrine, a sweeping declaration of support to all nations threatened by totalitarian aggression or subversion.

The Cold War reached a perilous climax in June 1948, when the three Western occupying powers announced plans for the formation of a federal West German republic which would be sovereign in domestic affairs and would be included in the European Recovery Program [sic]. In an attempt to force the West to abandon the scheme the Soviet Union blockaded Western land routes into Berlin, which was under four-power control but was isolated deep inside the Soviet zone. Truman feared that withdrawal from Berlin would jeopardize the success of his entire European policy, but was unwilling to risk war by sending armed convoys to smash a way through. Instead, with the support of Great Britain and France, he ordered a gigantic airlift to supply the beleaguered city. This proved effective and in the spring of 1949 the Russians lifted the blockade.⁵⁷

America then watched the onward march of communism worldwide when, in 1947, Communists came to power in Hungary and then, "in 1948, Communists seized Czechoslovakia. In 1949 the German Democratic Republic was born, and communism spread to China under Chairman Mao Tse-Tung, resulting in the US withdrawing aid to that country. In February 1950, the USSR and China signed a pact in Moscow."⁵⁸ These political events were closely followed by citizens the world over and it is not surprising that, with the knowledge that a Soviet-American war could result in both sides being wiped out at the press of a button, the salient themes of the alien messages reported by this era's contactees were prophesies of nuclear holocaust. With the realisation that humanity was caught in a nuclear stalemate redemption from outer space could be regarded as an attractive alternative to terrestrial annihilation.

Alien warnings of nuclear destruction continued to feature regularly in the 1950s communications as, not only did the Cold War continue to loom, but America tested the first hydrogen bombs in 1952. This was shortly followed by Georgy Malenkov's declaration on August 8, 1953, that the Soviet Union had successfully tested a nuclear fusion bomb.⁵⁹ This meant that the Soviet Union would be able to strike a nuclear blow directly at the American continent. It was apparent that the Soviet Union was emerging as a new political, economic, and military force in international relations. By 1957 the Soviets succeeded in usurping America's international scientific domination by successfully launching a man-made satellite, *Sputnik I*, on October 4 of that year. An almost contemporary statement written for the Council of Foreign Relations, the principal planning association for the United States' foreign policy elite, indicates the international effects such an accomplishment created:

The launching of two artificial earth satellites by the Soviet Union on October 4 and November 3 represented a major turning point in international affairs as well as an important advance in man's gradual conquest of his physical environment. So startling a display of scientific and engineering prowess on the part of a power generally rated far below the West in technical accomplishment provided the USSR and international Communism with a worldwide psychological victory of the first order.⁶⁰

At the end of the 1950s the Cold War had begun to freeze over and no relief from the stalemate was in sight.

The 1960s and 1970s

Although this era is remembered for its liberated 'hippy' youth culture promoting 'Free Love' and experimentation with hallucinatory drugs:

The 1960s and 1970s were among the most traumatic decades in American history. The country was shaken by a sequence of political assassinations and by a protracted, shabby, and shaming political scandal. A new and aggressive militancy among blacks and other discontented groups produced violent confrontations on the streets and on college campuses. A costly, frustrating, and ultimately unsuccessful war plunged the nation into turmoil, while shattering 'the illusion of American omnipotence'.

These experiences left Americans divided and unsure of themselves. Some carried their rebelliousness to the point of questioning the very moral and constitutional foundations of American society. Meanwhile America's economic supremacy was being eroded: there was mounting worry about inflation, unemployment, and the threat of an energy shortage. National pride did indeed receive a boost in 1969 from the remarkable technological achievement of landing a man on the moon and from the bicentennial celebrations of 1976. But the late 1970s brought a further darkening of the economic skies as well as more humiliating reminders of the limits of American power.⁶¹

Freedom from military conflict was still far from being realised. John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as the 35th president of the United States on January 20, 1961. His first year in office saw "an abortive invasion of Cuba, aimed at overthrowing the Castro regime by forces that had been secretly trained and supplied by the United States, a personal meeting of the President with Soviet premier Khrushchev in Vienna, and a continuation of Cold War tensions."⁶²

Also, during this year, the Soviet Union began to adopt a more aggressive posture. In June 1961 Khrushchev threatened to sign a peace treaty with East Germany which would control access to routes to West Berlin. Kennedy reacted to this threat by calling up army reserves and strengthening civil defense. Tensions increased on 13 August when the East German government built the Berlin Wall to stop the flow of refugees to the West. Soviet authorities also began a series of nuclear tests in the atmosphere in September of that year, breaking a test moratorium they had unilaterally initiated in 1958. In response the United States resumed its own atmospheric testing programme the following spring. Such actions were subsequently reflected in the alien communications of the time.⁶³ In October 1962 the Cuban situation reached a critical point, American intelligence agencies learning that the Soviet Union had begun to deploy nuclear missiles in Cuba capable of attacking the United States.

Accordingly, on October 22, 1962, Kennedy ordered a blockade of Cuba to prevent further missiles from arriving and threatened a massive military invasion.

For six days, while the rest of the world community watched anxiously, the two superpowers were poised on the brink of nuclear war; then, after a series of messages, proposals, and counter proposals, Khrushchev announced that the Soviet Union would withdraw the offending missiles, in view of a Kennedy pledge during the week not to invade Cuba in the future.⁶⁴

On August 5, 1963, diplomats representing the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom gathered to sign a nuclear test-ban treaty in Moscow. This treaty stopped all testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere, in outer space, and under water, thus permitting only underground tests, which did not contaminate the atmosphere. Within a few months more than 100 other nations signed the treaty.⁶⁵ Just three months after this historic treaty, on November 22, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas Texas and Lyndon Johnson sworn into office.

America had not witnessed the end of conflict. It soon became involved in the most traumatic episode in its post World War II history, which would cost the lives of more than fifty thousand Americans, and hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese and other South East Asians. America had, for several years aided South Vietnamese defence against the Viet Cong. During 1964 military aid was increased to counter continued Viet Cong successes. Beginning in 1965 Johnson shipped more and more troops to Vietnam, totalling more than 500,00 by 1968. With North Vietnam unwillingly to negotiate until the bombing stopped, and South Vietnamese leaders expressing determination to continue fighting, American troops continued their, largely unsuccessful, assaults on the Viet Cong.

In the United States, opposition to the Vietnam War rose sharply in the winter of 1967-1968 as casualties mounted and victory on either side seemed impossible. In a nationwide address on March 31, 1968, Johnson... announced cessation of U.S. bombing of North Vietnam, except in an area north of the demilitarized zone, and again called upon Hanoi to negotiate. A discussion between the United States and North Vietnam began at Paris in May 1968. On November 1, all bombing of North Vietnam ceased.⁶⁶

The 1960s also witnessed the most intensive development of space technology, with America regaining the ground lost with the 1957 launch of *Sputnik* by the Russians. This launch was considered to be “a serious blow to Americans, who regarded it as a loss of national prestige, and one interviewee at the time suggested that it was the result of the American military ‘falling down on their jobs’.”⁶⁷ Compared with the Russians the United States had made little progress in bringing their dream of conquering space into reality. Prior to the launch of the American *Saturn V*, when President Eisenhower signed the National Aeronautics and Space Act on July 29th, 1958, the Americans had only managed to put two small satellites into Earth orbit.⁶⁸ At the launch of *Sputnik* the Americans could only look on, their pride dented further, on April 12, 1961, as Yuri Gagarin flew into space, thus becoming the first man to leave the Earth’s atmosphere. However, such Soviet achievements spurred the American space programme into action and on 5th May, 1961, Alan Shepherd became the first American in space. Shepherd instantly became a national hero and his voyage inspired the American nation to speculate upon the many possibilities of space travel. In fact it was not long until the public saw the American space dream realised, only eight years later:

...1,000 million viewers throughout the world looked in on the morning of July 16th, 1969 when Apollo 11 lifted off for the moon at 09.32 hours Florida time precisely. Three days, four hours, and fifteen seconds later, after a journey of one quarter of a million miles, the Lunar Excursion module *Eagle* landed on the Sea of Tranquillity...For any visitors from the Universe the astronauts left a message on the Moon:

HERE MEN FROM THE PLANET EARTH
FIRST SET FOOT ON THE MOON
JULY 1969 A.D.
WE CAME IN PEACE FOR ALL MANKIND⁶⁹

For the first time people could see the smallness of our planet and the vastness of space.

The 1960s witnessed the first recorded abduction case, that of Betty and Barney Hill. Just four months after Shepherd took his momentous flight into space the Hills claimed that they were escorted onboard an alien spacecraft, and subjected to a medical examination. Throughout the rest of the decade, and well into the 1970s reports of alien abductions began to spread. The *modus operandi* of the aliens may have changed but the messages some abductees received from their alien captors were familiar: warnings of the dire consequences of atomic tests and weaponry abounded, as did the spiritual or genetic method of salvation.

The 1980s and 1990s

As observed in Chapter Two, since the worldwide reporting of Betty and Barney Hill’s abduction experience, similar reports continue to be collated by investigators around the world. The messages are still familiar, if not stereotypical in form and content, which is not surprising as the last two decades have seen little change in humanity’s ethical evolution. Despite the momentous collapse of communism in the U.S.S.R., the Berlin Wall’s disintegration, and nuclear disarmament, the threat of nuclear confrontation has not dissipated. The new terrestrial threat to the West is arguably the Middle East:

In a period of less than ten years, the region experienced the collapse of the Shah's regime and its replacement by a radical, anti-Western, theocratic regime; a wave of Islamic fundamentalism, including an attempted coup in Bahrain and two major attacks at the holy places in Mecca; the taking of US diplomatic personnel as hostages in Tehran and an abortive attempt by the United States to rescue them by military force; the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war and attacks on tanker traffic in the Gulf; missile attacks and terrorist bombings against Kuwait; and the introduction of substantial NATO naval forces into the Gulf.⁷⁰

The Middle East is not the only area to experience conflict and war. A cyclical pattern of racial, tribal, and religious conflicts continues to erupt throughout the world.

With the advance of science and technology the world is faced with worries of which people in the 1940s and 1950s were happily oblivious: that of environmental pollution and the destruction of ecosystems through human action. Thus the climate was set for the aliens to introduce their concerns about the Earth's damaged ecological conditions. Whereas the destruction of the human race was, in the 1950s, thought primarily to come about through nuclear holocaust alternatives, today's messages - as we have already seen in some of the examples in this chapter - include a wealth of ecological disasters verging on biblical proportions. Tibus has given Diane Tessman several prophecies concerning the Earth's environmental decline:

Global warming will snowball, with both the North Pole and the South Pole melting. Only 25% of the ice now at the polar caps will remain; the rest of the water from the ice will flood the oceans, seas, rivers, lakes, and streams of Earth. After mass flooding, islands will disappear, coastlines will be washed away, and sections of entire continents will sink under the rising waters....

The greenhouse effect will also intensify to a horrific degree....Poison air is added to poison air. Dense humidity is added to dense humidity....And there are few rain forests to give us fresh oxygen, and intake the carbon dioxide....

Millions of homes will tumble into earthquake chasms, succumb to tidal waves, volcanic lava, or rock slides, or become permanently submerged under many feet of water. The weather will be severe due to the climate change, so that summers will be hotter and the winter will be harsher.⁷¹

In March 1986 author and close encounter experiencer, Whitley Strieber, called a press conference of environmental reporters in Washington D.C.:

...to discuss a book I wrote with James Kunetka, *Nature's End*, and to warn about the serious implications of the hole that had been detected in the ozone layer over the Antarctic. My apparent visitor information suggested this hole would lead to further holes over the Arctic and therefore a thinning of the ozone layer over the Northern Hemisphere, with measurable crop damage from excessive ultraviolet light beginning to occur in the 1990-1993 period. At the time I gave this warning, the only stories about the hole were saying that its significance was not understood.

I had also been told that the atmospheric problems will cause a reduction in immune system vitality in all animals, and the consequent resurgence of disease. As yet I have seen no scientific corroboration of this. The damage to the immune system seemed related to excessive ultraviolet light, but the information emerged visually, appearing as complicated images that I may not have understood fully....Additional information suggested that volcanic activity had exacerbated the ozone problem, and that there would be some reduction of the size of the major holes during the eleven years from 1986-1997, but that this would be only a temporary respite.⁷²

The aliens of these latter decades appear to respond to the astronomical knowledge amassed by humanity during the late twentieth century, particularly concerning the frustrated attempts to find intelligent life within our solar system. Very few close encounter experiencers are now reporting contact with aliens from Mars, Venus, or the other planets in our solar system.

All of the new contactees to emerge in the last decade either fail to reveal the planet from which their extraterrestrials come, or place it on the remote edge of the universe, far from the prying eyes of the space programs [sic]. Thus Woodrow Derenberger (Derenberger and Hubbard 1971) entertains visitors from Lanulos, and Oscar Magosci (1980) visits Argona of the Omm-Onn Solar System, a member of the Psycheon Federation Worlds. But most extraterrestrials keep their origins vague, as an exchange initiated by French contactee Claude Vorilhon shows:

“Where do you come from?” he asked.

“From far away...”

“Do you speak French?”

“We speak all of the languages of your world.

“We come from a distant planet about which I will tell you nothing for fear that if the men of the earth weren’t wise enough they could come to trouble our peace.” (Vorilhon 1975)⁷³

Science Fiction Themes Reflected in Alien Communications

Not only do alien messages apparently parallel contemporary social, political and environmental concerns, they also appear to synchronise with science fiction themes. Prior to 1930 science fiction, with only a very few exceptions, was a genre of the written word with, for example, the literature of such notable authors as Jules Verne and H. G. Wells. In the 1940s the first popular science fiction films were produced. These featured simple Good versus Evil themes that could be translated into any of the cinematic genres. The 1950s saw more sophisticated plots being introduced with current concerns such as atomic weaponry being addressed (e.g. *The Thing from Another World*, 1951 and *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, 1951).⁷⁴ From this time on the cinematic aliens became more hostile, with some intervening in human evolution (e.g. *Quatermass and the Pit*, 1967).⁷⁵ By the end of the decade the celluloid aliens were interfering with man’s genetic make-up (e.g. *Village of the Damned*, 1960).

This development can be followed in encounter claims, from the benevolent 1950s visitors to the 1960s more malevolent aliens (as in the Hill case). The late 1960s saw a softening of the cinematic alien image with *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) which continued to the 1977 film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Since then the concept of alien invasion has provided a rich source for film-makers, television producers and science fiction and fantasy writers.⁷⁶ In popular imagination the humanity has found its place in outer space.

Alien Communications as 'Revelation'

As described in Chapter One (pp.22-23), when we speak of revelation we are concerned with the 'unveiling' of knowledge which has previously remained undisclosed. The individual selected as the receiver of such divine gnosis is a passive element in this drama: the word is disclosed *to* him, he does not initiate the procedure. The disclosure is believed to be the will, or purpose of God which is always, essentially, practical in nature. God reveals how to be saved; in fact the Word is salvation itself if humanity would only acknowledge it as such. Revelation is always concerned with man and how we can be saved from annihilation either of our own making or that ordained by God.

Although the bestowal of revelation is, for the receiver, a passive act, it is only by the individual's active decision to accept through faith and act upon the disclosed gnosis that salvation can be attained. Despite the divine nature of revelation individuals are free to reject such disclosures, even though by so doing their ultimate fate is death. If we turn to the type of revelation allegedly received by individuals during close encounter episodes, there are a number of discernible similarities between these and the religious revelations described above. For example, the contactee or abductee is a passive receiver of alien communications, it is the aliens who actively disclose their instructions.

As observed, alien revelations are also intimately concerned with the fate of man and Earth. The messages contain practical measures which not only offer knowledge of how to be saved, but actually *are* the means of salvation. Yet it is humanity's responsibility to actively effect its own salvation - rarely do the aliens intend intervening in humanity's salvation themselves. If humanity fails to take action there is little that can be done to stem the tide of destruction and annihilation. Individuals who reject the salvific teachings will either be annihilated, or fail to evolve to a higher spiritual plane, whilst individuals who have faith in the aliens' abilities to save humanity will either evolve to the same spiritual level or be saved when a New Age is founded upon Earth. This New Age is generally predicted to occur in the immediate future. As we have observed, in some instances certain alien revelations are the foundations for religious movements. Finally, alien revelations are either believed to issue directly from the aliens themselves, who in such cases become substitutes for God as saviours of humanity, or that God directs the aliens as modern supernatural intermediaries to deliver his revelations. The latter idea is characteristic of those religions built around alien communications.

Throughout the ages there have been so many reports of encounters with non-human entities who have delivered various communications, that I could not adequately summarise a fraction of them. Thus, I will again confine myself to western examples, specifically discussing the similarities and differences exhibited in alien messages and communications from the Virgin Mary. There is a vast body of reported encounters with the Virgin Mary and I believe a review of this material will better illustrate similarities and differences with the aliens' messages, than that of a superficial overview of a wider range of entity encounters.

The Marian Revelations

If we wish to compare alien communications with those of the Virgin Mary we have to ignore many interesting aspects of the Marian visions and confine ourselves to those features most obviously relevant to our inquiry. In this case an analysis of the content of the messages given by the Mother of Christ must be undertaken. A brief survey of Marian literature reveals that the message is generally relayed in direct speech, although there have also been instances of 'written' words.⁷⁷ What is actually communicated is rather bland, in some cases insignificant to man in general, despite it being delivered by such a central figure of the Christian, especially Catholic, world. As with alien revelations Marian communications can be reduced to two linked concerns: prophecies and warnings. The prophecies issued by the Virgin Mary are intriguing and, in some cases, have been fulfilled. In La Salette, France, on the morning of 19 September 1846, two witnesses, Melanie Mathieu, aged fourteen, and Maximin (known as Memin) Giraud, aged eleven, were herding cattle on a rocky hillside when they encountered a weeping woman. This woman spoke to them and, despite both children only referring to her as 'The Lady', she was later identified as the Virgin Mary, no doubt due to the content of her communications. Part of her message contained a number of regional prophecies:

There will come a great famine. Before the famine comes, the children under seven years of age will be seized with trembling, and will die in the hands of those that hold them; and others will do penance by the famine.

The walnuts will become bad, the grapes will rot. If they are converted, the stones and the rocks will change into loads of wheat, and the potatoes will be self-sown on the lands.⁷⁸

Although this was the only vision the two children experienced and the overall content of the Marian communication was of little importance for humanity as a whole, the prophecies given were exceptionally specific:

It does appear that the majority of them were fulfilled within a short space of time. By the end of 1846 potatoes could not be bought in the area. *Phylloxera* struck the grape crop. A form of cholera affecting only young children, and causing two hours of shaking and sickness before almost certain death, reached epidemic proportions. The walnut crop failed. Even the most cynical of commentators concur with these points.⁷⁹

During six visions witnessed by three children at Fatima (discussed below) in reply to one of the children's question "Will you take all three of us to Heaven soon?" the Virgin Mary replied:

Yes, I shall soon come to take Jacinta and Francisco. But you [Lucia] must remain longer here below. Jesus wishes to use you in making me known and loved. I wish to spread devotion to my Immaculate Heart throughout the world.⁸⁰

Francisco later died in the influenza epidemic that followed the First World War on 4 April 1919, aged ten. Jacinta, aged nine, died from pleurisy brought on by influenza.⁸¹

The case for later prophecies which have not yet been fulfilled is not so clear cut: during the visions in Garabandal, Spain, the Virgin Mary told Conchita Gonzalez that “a divine warning which will be visible all over the world” will come to pass at a date known only to Conchita:

This will be followed (at eight-thirty in the evening of a Thursday which is also the feast-day of a saint who is a martyr of the Eucharist) by a miracle at Garabandal itself, of which a permanent reminder will be left there amongst the pines. If the sign and the miracle are not heeded, then dreadful tribulation - presumably the end of the world as we know it - will follow.⁸²

Both Maximin Giraud and Melanie Mathieu were given secrets by the Virgin Mary. These were later delivered to Pope Pius IX, at his personal request, and were publicly released between 1879 and 1915. These ‘secrets’ contain accounts of future turmoil in Europe and prophecies concerning the rise of the Antichrist. However, they remain so cryptic that an objective or concise evaluation of them is virtually impossible.⁸³

Just as our alien brothers warn of doom and disaster, the warnings from the Virgin Mary are very similar. In fact, they contrast with accepted ideas about the ‘End Time’ scenario as depicted in the Book of Revelation. Whereas Christian Scripture expects the imminent re-appearance of Christ to herald the New Age after a battle with the Antichrist, and the judgement of each human individual, Marian communications indicate that such an apocalyptic ending can be avoided if humanity changes its ways. This is unusual considering they are issued by the Mother of Christ, as is the fact that, over the last century, the warnings which have been received from the Virgin have become increasingly threatening in character. Some examples follow:

We must make many sacrifices, perform much penance and visit the Blessed Sacrament regularly. But first, we must lead good lives. If we do not, a chastisement will befall us. The cup is already filling up and if we do not change, a very great chastisement will come upon us.

If the world continues to offend God, I will not be able to stay the arm of my son. There will be punishments. There will be wars.⁸⁴

The war (of 1914) will soon end. But if men do not stop offending the Lord, it will not be long before another and worse one, begins: that will be in the next Pontificate [this was during the reign of Pius XI who died in 1939]. When you see the night illuminated by an unknown light, know that it is the great sign which God is giving you, indicating that the world, on account of its innumerable crimes, will soon be punished by war, famine, and persecutions against the Church and the Holy Father.

In order to stop it, I shall come to ask for the consecration of the world to my Immaculate Heart, as well as Communion of reparation on the first Saturdays of the month. If my requests are granted Russia will be converted and there will be Peace. *Otherwise* an impious propaganda will spread its errors through the world raising up wars and persecutions against the Church. Many will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer; several nations will be wiped out....⁸⁵

Some of the messages and commands given by the Virgin Mary are apparently valueless, absurd or ambiguous as some of those given by aliens and, on review, it is difficult to believe that the Mother of Christ would descend from Heaven to say such things. The Virgin appears to be fond of imparting secrets to children. She gave three secrets to Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes, as well as to the children of Fatima, one was given to Mariette Beco of Banneux in Belgium and to the children of Beauraing, Belgium.⁸⁶ More often than not, these secrets are followed by a command such as "I forbid you to repeat this to anyone".⁸⁷ This is rather strange bearing in mind that, in the majority of cases, the Virgin wishes that humanity is informed of her requests of penitence and redemption. There is a correlation with those abductees who are unable to, or not allowed to, remember their experiences or the conversations with the aliens. Other types of nonsensical actions include commanding the individual to do something for which there is no logical or obvious reason. Bernadette Soubirous, whilst praying at the grotto, was requested to "Go and drink at the spring and wash yourself in it." There was no spring, yet after scratching at the ground around her and eating handfuls of it, she eventually found mud and then a little bit of water. The next day where Bernadette had dug there appeared the spring which is now the focal point of the Lourdes shrine. This seems to be one of the genuine, physical miracles of Lourdes. Straight after the Marian vision commanded Bernadette to drink and wash, she then pointed to a plant which grew nearby and told Bernadette to "Go and eat that plant there."⁸⁸ Bernadette complied with these wishes, eating a few leaves, but was given no reason for doing so.

Public Concerns Reflected in Marian Communications

It can be argued that alien messages reflect the public concerns of the time and there is evidence to suggest that Marian communications also address the worries and fears of the period in which she appears. Her appearances have often been in times of great turmoil whether it be political or ecclesiastical upheaval, insurrections and war, or natural disaster. A few examples will support this contention. In 1830, Catherine Labouré, a young postulant at the motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity in Paris, saw a vision of the Virgin in the chapel. She gave Catherine a number of prophecies anticipating threats against France's contemporary political and social systems. Some of these would be fulfilled shortly, others not until 1870. The Throne of France was, so the Virgin prophesied, about to fall and the Church would then, and again in 1870, be attacked. It was a time of political turmoil. The king, Charles X, was trying to re-impose the concept of absolute power. There were also strong anticlerical feelings in the country. The various strong currents in the political and social climate culminated in a short-lived uprising in Paris in 1830.⁸⁹ Although quelled for a while insurrection broke out in 1871 following the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. Again anticlerical sentiments ran high.⁹⁰ The Virgin had told Catherine that during this outbreak of violence the Archbishop of Paris would be killed. He was brutally murdered at the hands of the insurrectionists.

In 1871, when France was still at war with Prussia, there was an unusual silent visitation at Pontmain. Reports tell of how, during the Marian manifestation, one of the villagers rushed to the crowd of onlookers, announcing that Prussian troops were marching towards the village. The residents of Pontmain fully realized that they were in danger of imminent Prussian invasion as troops had already advanced on the nearby city of Laval. Yet at this stage of their advance, German military officials decided not to continue their movement any further into France and, on 17 July, France surrendered. Pontmain miraculously escaped unscathed.⁹¹ The La Salette visions, (again in France), may also be viewed in relation to their social historical context:

Some writers on La Salette have also theorized that the BVM's [Blessed Virgin Mary's] apparition may have served as a veiled warning about future convulsions on the French political scene. Two years after this visitation, France underwent a series of civil insurrections spurred on by activists influenced by the writings of Marx. Don Sharkey, an authority on Marian apparitions, points out in his classic *The Woman Shall Conquer* (1954) that the apparition's messages may have been a direct warning against the rise of communism, thus linking the La Salette miracle to the Paris visitations in 1830.⁹²

Finally, the Fatima visitations in 1917 occurred during a troubled period for Portugal, and for Europe in general.

Portugal was split by political factionalism. Its last king was deposed in 1910 by a revolution which had set up a republican form of government. A more formal government,...had been organized in 1915. With the fall of the monarchy there came a decline in religion - for while the Portuguese people remained dutifully Roman Catholic, the government was openly hostile to the Church and had severed relations with Rome in 1913. Church property was confiscated, and the clergy were treated almost as second-class citizens. In the meantime, the First World War was blazing on the Continent. The seeds of Bolshevik revolution were already germinating in Russia, where in 1918 a thoroughly antireligious government would come to power.⁹³

It was a time of enormous social upheaval and it appears fortuitous that the Marian visitations occurred when they did: at a time when the role of the Church in Portugal was being re-evaluated, the population's faith was strengthened by the Marian revelations and miraculous light phenomenon. Maybe, as D. Scott Rogo has argued, the Marian visitations can be seen as "cosmic reactions to threats against the religious and social status quo of the time".⁹⁴ Whatever the cause, there is an affinity between Marian and alien messages since they tend to reflect contemporary concerns.

The Debate Concerning the Fatima Experience

This affinity can be clearly demonstrated in the events at Fatima. In Portugal, 1917, three children, Lucia Santos (10), Francisco (9) and Jacinta (7) Marto reported that they had met a radiant lady whom they understood to be the Virgin Mary. This contact was unusual in that several encounters were supported by an unprecedented amount of eyewitness testimony. The children met with the Marian vision on the 13th of the month for six successive months in a natural amphitheatre called the Cova da Iria near the town of Fatima.

During this time revelations were disclosed to the three children in the presence of onlookers. Although the actual Marian visions were only witnessed by the children, during the revelations a number of strange phenomena occurred which were observed by onlookers. On several occasions during the earlier visions mysterious balls of light were witnessed. On June 13th:

During the entire period of the apparition the light of the sun was dimmed in an exceptional manner, without any apparent cause. At the same time, the topmost branches of the tree were bent in the form of a parasol, and remained thus as if an invisible weight had come to rest upon them.

Those nearest the tree heard quite distinctly Lucy's [Lucia] words, and also perceived in the form of an indistinct whispering, or the loud humming of a bee, the sound of the Lady's answer, alternating regularly with the girl's voice.

At the end of the apparition, there was heard near the tree a loud report which the witnesses compared to the explosion of a rocket, and Lucy cried:

"There! She is going away."

At the same time the onlookers saw rise from the tree a beautiful white cloud which they could follow with their eyes for quite a while as it moved in the direction of the East. Further, at the Lady's departure, the upper branches of the tree, without losing the curved shape of a parasol, leaned towards the East, as if in going away the Lady's dress had trailed over them.⁹⁵

On July 13 the same type of phenomenon was repeated.⁹⁶ At the fifth and penultimate vision on 13th September, 30,000 onlookers were present when the sun dimmed and the atmosphere took on a golden glow. Then "in the cloudless sky a luminous globe...suddenly appeared before the eyes of the astonished crowd. Moving from East to West, it glided slowly and majestically across the heavens while a light white cloud enveloped the oak tree and the children."⁹⁷ This globe was described by witnesses as being oval in form with "the widest part underneath - a sort of celestial airplane."⁹⁸ It eventually rested on the oak tree where the Virgin consistently appeared, and onlookers were showered with white rose petals that vanished upon touching the ground.

As the people stare at this strange sight they soon notice that the falling, glistening globules, contrary to the laws of perspective, grow smaller and smaller as they near them. And when they reach out their hands and hats to catch them they find that they have somehow melted away.⁹⁹

This manifestation has been connected with the UFO phenomenon of 'angel hair' by investigators including Wendelle Stevens and Jacques Vallee.¹⁰⁰ Angel hair has been reported to fall from the sky, sometime in great quantities, during an UFO encounter. It is a white, gossamer-like substance which dissolves upon contact with the ground.¹⁰¹ During the final vision of 13 October about half of the 70,000 spectators, who were gathered in the pouring rain, witnessed an aerial phenomenon which has come to be known as 'The Dance of the Sun'. Shortly after noon the thick grey clouds suddenly parted and a strange, sweet fragrance filled the air:

The clouds parted to reveal the sun, or something which was where the sun was deemed to be. It was pale, like a silver disc, able to be looked at directly. It began to revolve like a Catherine wheel, spinning madly and throwing out great shafts of different-coloured light - red, blue, yellow, green - staining the faces of the crowd with all the colours of the spectrum. Then it fell out of the sky towards earth. There was scarcely a soul in the arena who did not think it was the end of the world. However, the sun returned to its place in the sky and suddenly everyone noticed that, whereas a moment before they had been soaking wet, they were now completely dry. The sun had resumed its normal appearance.¹⁰²

Here follows three brief first-hand accounts of the Dance of the Sun. The first was written by Domingos Pinto Coelho and appeared in the newspaper *Ordem*:

The sun, at one moment surrounded with scarlet flame, at another aureoled in yellow and deep purple, seemed to be in an exceedingly fast and whirling movement, at times appearing to be loosened from the sky and to be approaching the earth, strongly radiating heat.¹⁰³

The next report is extracted from a letter written by Father Manuel Pereira da Silva to a friend on the night of the event:

The sun appeared with its circumference well-defined. It came down as if to the height of the clouds and began to whirl giddily upon itself like a captive ball of fire. With some interruptions this lasted about eight minutes. The atmosphere darkened and the features of each person became yellow. Everyone knelt even in the mud...¹⁰⁴

The last account is again from a letter, written by Dona Maria do Carmo da Cruz Menezes:

Suddenly the rain stopped and the sun broke through, casting its ray upon the earth. It seemed to be falling on that vast crowd of people and it spun like a firewheel, taking on all the colours of the rainbow. We ourselves took on those colours with our clothes and even the earth itself. One heard cries and saw many people in tears. Deeply impressed, I said to myself, 'My God, how great is your power!'¹⁰⁵

These aerial light displays are also common to close encounter cases, especially just before contact is made - remember the experiences of Villas-Boas and the Hills (see Chapter Two). As Jacques Vallee asserts in *Dimensions*:

The final "miracle" had come at the culmination of a precise series of apparitions combined with contacts and messages that place it very clearly, in my opinion, in the perspective of UFO phenomena. Not only was a flying disk or globe consistently involved, but its motion, its falling-leaf trajectory, its light effects, the thunder-claps, the buzzing sounds, the strange fragrance, the fall of "angel hair" that dissolves upon reaching the ground, the heat wave associated with the close approach of the disk - *all of these are frequent parameters of UFO sightings everywhere.* [p.178]

The Marian revelations to the children at Fatima were couched explicitly in the terminology of the Catholic Church, and consisted of warnings that, unless people turn back to God, there will be terrible divine punishment, and various nations will be annihilated. These warnings and prophecies display a continuity with communications from alien messengers.

Marian and Alien Messages

There is evidence to argue that, in some respects, the Marian revelations parallel certain types of close encounter experiences, not only in their content but also the way such messages are delivered, how the supernatural messengers act, and even the frequency of their appearance. French ufologist Gilbert Cornu:

...has recorded the numbers of meteorological anomalies that were interpreted as 'divine' manifestations between 1900 and 1980. He found that the numbers increased dramatically from 1947 onwards, the very year that 'flying saucers' became the delight of the media all over the world. Similarly, both he and Italian researchers found that the numbers of reported instances of Marian apparitions rose sharply in 1947, and again during the 1954 wave of UFO sightings in France. The reasons for these correlations is not clear; but they are clearly significant, even if they only indicate that the prevalence of one kind of anomalous event may lead to an upsurge in the occurrence of another.¹⁰⁶

As Hilary Evans observes, the implications of Cornu's findings are profound. As either:

- * the things we see as UFOs are really something associated with the Virgin Mary; or
- * the entity we see as the Virgin Mary is really something to do with UFOs; or
- * there is some common factor that makes some people see, or think they see, the Virgin Mary, while others see, or think they see, UFOs.

If we knew for sure what either of these phenomena was, we should be in a better position to choose between these options. As it is, we must accept the link without understanding it, and use it to help us discover what the phenomena are. But this much is certain: no explanation of either one will be complete unless it accounts for this seemingly bizarre correspondence. In other words, whatever UFO-sightings [and encounters] are, they are something which is related to visions of the Virgin, and vice versa.¹⁰⁷

As shown, with both types of close encounter experiences, the aliens can materialise and dematerialise quickly and with little warning, either inside a building or out in the open. Their arrival is often heralded or accompanied by some type of light phenomenon. These features are also present in many reports of the Virgin's arrival and departure:

A golden cloud arose from the opening in the rock which the briar was beating with its branches, and a woman appeared above the bush in the cleft which formed a kind of natural niche.

“When the rosary was at an end,” adds Bernadette, “the Lady retired within the rock, and the golden cloud disappeared with her.”

Thus the heavenly brightness had preceded her when she was about to appear, and followed her when she disappeared, as the light of the sun precedes that celestial body when it rises, and follows it when it sets.¹⁰⁸

The Blessed Virgin spoke to me about my conduct towards my director, and confided some things which I may not reveal...I don't know how much time passed. When she left it was like a light going out; she disappeared like a shadow, as she had come.¹⁰⁹

It was about midday on 13 May 1917 that the first vision took place....It seems that the children had eaten and had just said the rosary together, quite possibly actually kneeling to do so. Suddenly, it is said, there was a flash, or flashes, of lightning and a brilliantly white lady appeared, either in the branches of a holm-oak tree, or possibly standing on a fern!¹¹⁰

He declared that the Blessed Virgin wore a white dress; that possibly she had a blue sash, but that he could hardly see anything but a blue glow; she had no rosary, he said, but kept her hands joined and still....The boy went into greater detail: her dress was draped, her feet rested on a cloud of smoke, etc. Her face, he said, was ‘luminous’.

‘What do you mean “luminous”?’

‘It looked as if she had an electric bulb inside.’¹¹¹

Unlike abductees, Marian experiencers are rarely physically touched by their messenger, nor are they abducted and, although they may be requested to build churches, basilicas or shrines to the Virgin Mary and/or her Son, there appears to be no penalty if the individual declines to do so. The Marian contactees have even been venerated to the extent of canonization in some cases.¹¹² Although a bright light of some kind may accompany the Virgin, she is not witnessed in a technological setting. She does not impart information concerning Heaven, life after death, or herself, nor does she divulge the date of the End Time - unlike certain (incorrect) alien communications.

I would also conclude that, whilst the Marian visions do not correlate with abduction reports in general,¹¹³ the visions, however, share affinities with some aspects of contactee experiences. Both types of entity encountered are human in appearance and benevolent; many contactees believe that they have been chosen, given a mission and must disseminate the revelations to the public; these contactees also may experience multiple encounters typically beginning in childhood; the messages received, as already observed, exhibit common features if Catholic and alien references are removed.

As this survey has revealed, revelations reported to emanate from extraterrestrials often contain certain standard themes. These range from apocalyptic visions of Earth's annihilation, to salvation via genetic manipulation or spiritual transformation. Such messages also contain what can only be viewed as trivia and erroneous, ambiguous or sheer nonsensical, information. Yet such ‘misinformation’ does not indicate that the alien revelations should simply be disregarded as products of human delusions and hoaxes. As Richard L. Thompson observes, “It would be a mistake to dismiss a body of material just because it contains false elements.

Indeed, we can turn things around and suggest that if a body of human testimony seemed to contain nothing false, then that would be contrary to human nature, and it would be highly suspicious.”¹⁴ If we disregard alien revelations for such reasons we would also have to do the same for other types of revelation. Thus far in this thesis we have compared close encounter and various expressions of spiritual experiences throughout religious history. In the following chapter we will examine the commonalities of these experiences in greater detail.

¹ See L. Festinger, H. W. Riechen & S. Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails*

² Hilary Evans, *The Evidence for UFOs* p.42

³ Quoted in Hilary Evans, *Gods, Spirits, Cosmic Guardians* p.173

⁴ Desmond Leslie & George Adamski, *Flying Saucers Have Landed* p.198

⁵ Leaflet entitled *The Aetherius Society: A Brief Introduction*

⁶ Raymond E. Fowler, *The Andreasson Affair* p.137

⁷ Diane Tessman, *Earth Changes Bible* p.36

⁸ Carl Jung, *Flying Saucers* p.159

⁹ John Whitmore, ‘Religious Dimensions of the UFO Abductee Experience’ p.74

¹⁰ Richard L. Thompson, *Alien Identities* p.199

¹¹ Edith Fiore, *Abductions* p.283

¹² Ann Druffel, ‘Encounter on Dapple Gray Lane’ p.179

¹³ Many other researchers have also written on the subject in great detail, including Brinsley Le Poer Trench, *Men Among Mankind* (1962), *Forgotten Heritage* (1964); W. Raymond Drake, *Gods and Spacemen Through History* (1975); Paul Misraki, *Les Extraterrestres* (1962); and David Barclay, *Aliens: The Final Answer?* (1995).

¹⁴ Margaret Sachs, *The UFO Encyclopedia* p.88

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Whitmore, *op. cit.*, p.74

¹⁷ Evans, *Gods, Spirits, Cosmic Guardians* p.174

¹⁸ Quoted in Evans, *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Tessman, *op. cit.*, pp.13,15

²⁰ Leslie & Adamski, *op. cit.*, pp.198-199

²¹ Howard Menger, *From Outer Space* p.23

²² John Mack, *Abduction* pp.104-105

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- ²³ Ibid., p.186
- ²⁴ Ibid., pp.323-324
- ²⁵ Stephen Jenkins, *The Undiscovered Country* p.29
- ²⁶ There has now evolved a whole host of literature available to the general public, giving detailed categorization of all the various alien entities people have claimed to encounter in both types of close encounter experience. In fact, a whole new *mythos* has developed around the varied alien races described, and the individual reader must draw their own conclusions concerning the plausibility of the existence of specific alien groups, based on the evidence, and documentation available to them. An example of one such alien encyclopedia can be readily accessed on the world wide web page 'Spirit WWW: An Appreciation of Spiritual Consciousness on World Wide Web'. I have reproduced a large portion of what is to be found on this web page in Appendix I as it more than adequately represents alien genealogy literature, and demonstrates just how structured the alien race myth has become.
- ²⁷ Mack, op. cit., p.323
- ²⁸ Fowler, op. cit., p.111
- ²⁹ Tessman, op. cit., pp.21,39
- ³⁰ Arthur Shuttlewood, *Warnings from Flying Friends* p.202
- ³¹ Whitmore, op. cit., p.73
- ³² Menger, op. cit., pp.48,86
- ³³ Mack, op. cit., p.186
- ³⁴ Ibid., pp.323-324
- ³⁵ Ibid., p.324
- ³⁶ Tessman, op. cit., p.13
- ³⁷ Ibid., pp.19-20
- ³⁸ Fiore, op. cit., pp.284,286
- ³⁹ Jon Klimo, *Psychics, Prophets, and Mystics* p.54
- ⁴⁰ William Ferguson, *Five Hours with the Oligarchs of Venus* quoted in John A. Saliba, 'Religious Dimensions of UFO Phenomena' p.48
- ⁴¹ Shuttlewood, op. cit., p.204
- ⁴² Menger, op. cit., p.164
- ⁴³ Shuttlewood, op. cit., p.203
- ⁴⁴ John Rimmer, *The Evidence for Alien Abductions* p.131
- ⁴⁵ As well as being an avid UFO investigator, Vallee's varied and eminent career includes working as a research scientist for the French Committee for Space Studies in Paris, a research engineer for the French branch of the Thompson-Houston Company, a mathematical analyst for the Northwestern University Technological Institute and running his own computer company in North California.
- ⁴⁶ Menger, op. cit., pp.172-174

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- ⁴⁷ John Spencer, *Perspectives* p.38
- ⁴⁸ Shuttlewood, op. cit., p.202
- ⁴⁹ This social review will pay particular attention to events in American history as the close encounter experience in the early decades of its development was exclusively American.
- ⁵⁰ Stuart A. Ruce etc. 'Report to the President's Research Committee on Social Trends...in the United States' 1933, p.3 quoted in I. F. Clarke, *The Pattern of Expectation 1644 - 2001* p.250
- ⁵¹ Anthony R. Martin, 'The Plurality of Worlds' p.619
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, p.620
- ⁵³ Clarke, op. cit., p.236
- ⁵⁴ Hilary Evans, 'The Case for Scepticism' p.379
- ⁵⁵ Maldwyn A. Jones, *The Limits of Liberty* p.518
- ⁵⁶ 'International Relations, 1944-1957' in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (15th Edition, Vol. 9) p.754
- ⁵⁷ Jones, op. cit., p.520
- ⁵⁸ John and Anne Spencer, *Fifty Years of UFOs* p.16
- ⁵⁹ 'International Relations' op. cit., p.761
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.764
- ⁶¹ Jones, op. cit., p.543
- ⁶² 'United States, History of the' in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (15th Ed. Vol. 18) p.996
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*,
Jones, op. cit., p.546
'International Relations' op. cit., p.766
- ⁶⁴ 'International Relations', *Ibid.*, p.767
- ⁶⁵ 'United States, History of the', op. cit., p.996
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.997-998
- ⁶⁷ John Spencer, op. cit., p.60
- ⁶⁸ Clarke, op. cit., p.290
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁰ Gary Sick, 'The United States and the Persian Gulf' p.136
- ⁷¹ Tessman, op. cit., pp.7,10
- ⁷² Whitley Strieber, *Communion* p.264

- ⁷³ J. Gordon Melton, 'The Contactees' p.9
Books referred to: Woodrow W. Derenberger & Harold W. Hubbard, *Visitors from Lanulos* New York: Vantage Press, 1971
Oscar Magocsi, *My Space Odyssey in UFOs* Toronto: Quest Group Publications, 1980
Claude Vorilhon, "Real" *Space Aliens Took Me to Their Planet* Waduz, Lichtenstein: Face, 1975
- ⁷⁴ Nigel Watson, 'The Day Flying Saucers Invaded the Cinema' p.333
- ⁷⁵ For other references see:
Armando Simón 'The Zeitgeist of the UFO Phenomenon'
J. Baxter, *Science Fiction in the Cinema*
D. Gifford, *Science Fiction Film*
P. Strick, *Science Fiction Movies*
John Clute & Peter Nicholls (Eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*
Brian Ash (Ed.), *The Visual Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*
- ⁷⁶ Notable films and television series include: *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*; *The Alien* trilogy; *Independence Day*; *The Twilight Zone*; *Star Trek* and its off-shoot series, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and *Star Trek: Voyager*; *The X-Files*; and *Dr Who*.
- ⁷⁷ The Marian vision, which appeared hovering over a house in the village of Pontmain, France on 17 January 1871, and which was witnessed principally by four children, Eugene and Joseph Barbadette, Francoise Richer and Jeanne-Marie Lebosse, did not speak. Instead, "a large white surface, about a yard and a half broad, and about twelve yards long, appeared below the lady's feet and the blue oval. It seemed to the children as if an invisible hand was slowly forming beautiful letters in gold upon this tablet, or paper." [L'Abbé Richard, *The Apparition at Pontmain* quoted in Kevin McClure, *The Evidence for Visions of the Virgin Mary* p.55] Eventually the children were able to read three sentences: 'MAIS PRIEZ MES ENFANTS' (But pray, my children), 'DIEU VOUS EXAUCERA EN PIEU DE TEMPS' (God will soon answer your prayers), 'MON FILS SE LAISSE TOUCHER' (My son allows himself to be moved) [McClure, *Ibid.*, pp.55-56].
- ⁷⁸ Rev. William Ullathorne, *The Holy Mountain of La Salette* quoted in McClure, *Ibid.*, pp.32-33
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.35
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.75
- ⁸¹ See also the later section 'Public Concerns Reflected in Marian Communications' which discusses the fulfilment of Marian prophecies given to Catherine Labouré in Paris, 1830.
- ⁸² McClure, *op. cit.*, p.114
- ⁸³ D. Scott Rogo, *Miracles* p.210
- ⁸⁴ McClure, *op. cit.*, p.131. This warning was disclosed to nearly blind Blandine Piegay in the kitchen of her home in La Talaudiere, France on 31 October 1981.
- ⁸⁵ Warning given to the children of the Fatima revelations on 13 July, 1917, quoted in Rev. Monte De Oca, *More About Fatima* p.54
- ⁸⁶ Jacques Vallee, *Dimensions* pp.96,104
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.44
- ⁸⁸ Accounts differ as to whether Bernadette was told to eat grass - see for example Georges Bertrin, *Lourdes: A History of its Apparitions and Cures* p.17 - or whether it was a plant - see McClure, *Ibid.*, p.45. Whether grass or plant this action is a strange one considering no reason was given to Bernadette for doing so.

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- ⁸⁹ Scott Rogo, *op. cit.*, p.207
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.208
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.217
- ⁹² *Ibid.*, p.210
- ⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp.221-222
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.211
- ⁹⁵ De Oca, *op. cit.*, p.8
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.13
- ⁹⁷ Mgr. William C. McGrath, 'The Lady of the Rosary' in John J. Delaney (Ed.), *A Woman Clothed with the Sun* pp.175f quoted in Patrick Harpur, *Daimonic Reality* pp.106-107
- ⁹⁸ McClure, *op. cit.*, p.77
- ⁹⁹ Vallee, *op. cit.*, p.177
- ¹⁰⁰ See Wendelle Stevens & August Roberts, *UFO Photographs Around the World*, chapter entitled 'The Fatima UFO Sightings' pp.14-22.
Jacques Vallee, *op. cit.*, pp.173-182
- ¹⁰¹ Despite the apparent ease with which they dissolve it is claimed that samples of the strands ranging from a few inches to more than 100 feet have been collected and analysed. They reveal that angel hair is composed of boron, silicon, calcium and magnesium, which is similar in composition to borosilicate glass. However, a more complete analysis is rendered impossible with the few samples they have. Refer to Sachs, *op. cit.*, p.15.
- ¹⁰² Harpur, *op. cit.*, p.107
- ¹⁰³ Quoted in McClure, *op. cit.*, p.83
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.84
- ¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.144.
See Cornu, 'Pour une politique de la porte ouverte'
- ¹⁰⁷ Evans, *Visions, Apparitions, Alien Visitors* pp.120-121
- ¹⁰⁸ Bertrin, *op. cit.*, pp.4,5. This is the description of Bernadette's first encounter with the Virgin Mary and the disappearance of the Virgin after this first sighting.
- ¹⁰⁹ An extract from Catherine Labouré's own account of her Marian vision quoted in Evans, *Visions, Apparitions, Alien Visitors* p.103
- ¹¹⁰ McClure, *op. cit.*, pp.73-74. This is McClure's description of the first Marian vision at Fatima.
- ¹¹¹ Jean Hellé, *Miracles* quoted in McClure, *op. cit.*, p.92. The boy being interviewed is Albert Voison who witnessed, along with his sisters Fernande and Gilberte, and Andrée and Gilberte Degeimbre, several appearances of the Virgin Mary in Beauraing, Belgium during 1932.

¹¹² For example Bernadette Soubirous was beatified on June 14, 1925 and later canonized on December 8, 1933.

¹¹³ I say 'in general' here as there are specific elements of a Marian visitation which conforms with abduction experiences. For example, in many visions there is a reticence on the part of the Virgin Mary to openly and clearly identify herself:

In *Les Apparitions de la Vierge*, Emile Tizané examined fifty-seven well-substantiated Marian visions and found that in thirty of them the vision did not name herself and, in the remaining twenty-seven, she indicated by one means or another that she was the BVM [Blessed Virgin Mary]....The BVMs almost never call themselves 'Mary'. They usually remain enigmatic at first, anonymous. 'I come from Heaven,' said the Lady at Fatima; later, she called herself the 'Lady of the Rosary'. At Beauraing, the Lady merely nodded when asked if she were the Virgin; later she owned to being the 'Immaculate Virgin'. At Banneux, she said 'I am the Virgin of the Poor.' At Lourdes, she only revealed her identity during the last vision at Bernadette's request: 'I am the Immaculate Conception'. [Patrick Harpur, op. cit., p.105]

This can be related to the alien abductors' wish to avoid answering individuals' questions concerning who they are and why they are abducting people.

¹¹⁴ Richard L. Thompson, op. cit., p.208

CHAPTER FOUR

OTHERWORLD JOURNEYS

Pursuing their shamanic practices, they have come to realize that what most people describe as 'reality' only barely touches the grandeur, power, and mystery of the universe. The new shamans often cry tears of ecstasy when undergoing and recounting their experiences. They talk with mutual understanding to persons who have had near-death experiences, and see hope where others may see hopelessness.

- Michael Harner: *The Way of the Shaman*

The two worlds, the divine and the human...are actually one. The realm of the gods is a forgotten dimension of the world we know.

- Joseph Campbell: *Myths, Dreams and Religion*

As we have observed the close encounter phenomenon exhibits a continuity of form and content which suggests parallels with categories of experience described and interpreted in traditional religious contexts. In this chapter I shall demonstrate how both the contactee and abductee experiences share a basic archetypal¹ theme: that of the 'Otherworld Journey'. This chapter will consider each type of experience in terms of its *underlying structure*, that of the journey to an 'otherworld', as marked by the classic stages of separation, ordeal and return. Although we have already illustrated and commented upon each selected spiritual experience in Chapter One we will now enlarge upon this review, analysing each one with reference to their kinship with the close encounter phenomenon.

Rites of Passage

We have already discussed the abduction experience as a 'rites of passage' in Chapter Two. However, as I believe that the core experience common to all the otherworld journey experiences discussed in this chapter is that of 'rites of passage' and, in particular, the rites of passage associated with initiation, rites of passage must be considered in more detail here. As we have noted, rites of passage are found in most cultures and are concerned with life-changing circumstances of an individual or group. Whilst in small-scale societies past and present rites of passage tend to be strongly adhered to, and may involve unforgettable and sometimes frightening experiences, in contemporary western society rites of passage play a lesser role in an individual's life. Few turning points are marked by a powerful ritual and what rites remain are frequently impotent in their impact.

Many such rituals such as baptism, marriage and death are now undergone in a religious setting merely because it is *traditional* to do so, rather than the individuals concerned making a conscious choice to marry at a church *because of* its religious significance. Therefore, much of the deeper meaning of such rituals are lost to the individuals involved. As these rites have less meaning for the individuals concerned they have little power to assist them in recognising the new role that they have undertaken, and the responsibilities and change in lifestyle involved. Despite this reduction in importance in our society, rites of passage still exist and serve, as anthropologist I. M. Lewis observes, to oil “the wheels of life as the individual moves through the human life-cycle from the cradle to the grave.”²

It should be recognised that, although rites of passage have been categorized into three stages, that of separation, margin or liminality and reintegration (or aggregation/incorporation), each of these stages is complex and flexible, making it difficult to separate the phases of a ritual; they can overlap and even re-appear towards the end of the ritual. As previously discussed, the separation stage is frequently marked by the initiand being removed from his normal, everyday world to a place which sociologist Émile Durkheim referred to as “the realm of the Sacred”. Rites of passage are varied according to which lifestage is being entered into. An example of a rite of passage which provides an excellent illustration of the effects and significance of the above transitional stages is the archetypal initiation ritual (or ‘coming out’ rite), which has played a central part in numerous cultures throughout history. This example is, I believe, particularly relevant in this thesis, as this rite, more than any other, highlights comparable structural and thematic motifs with those of the otherworld journey experiences discussed in this chapter. All following examples of rites of passage will thus be taken from the initiation rituals of societies around the world.

In Australian tribes the first act for the male initiand at puberty is a separation from the world of women and children. The boy is removed to a special hut or out into the bush, and usually must observe a number of taboos, primarily concerning diet, during this period of seclusion. As Alfred Howitt in his study *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia* observes of the Kurnai:

The intention of all that is done at this ceremony is to make a momentous change in the boy’s life; the past is to be cut off from him by a gulf which he can never re-pass. His connection with his mother and her child is broken off, and he becomes henceforth attached to the men. All the sports and games of his boyhood are to be abandoned with the severance of the old domestic ties between himself and his mother and sisters. He is now to be a man, instructed in and sensible of the duties which devolve upon him as a member of the Murring community. (p.532)

The themes of ‘death’, ‘rebirth’ and ‘resurrection’ are the hallmarks of a rite of passage, it is at the point of separation, of removal to the sacred realm, that the initiand dies to his old mundane life. He moves into the next stage, the marginal or liminal stage where, although his old identity has been killed, the initiand has yet to acquire a new self or status. It is during this stage of the rite that he is considered neither dead nor alive.

In this 'invisible' state the initiate is instructed in the sacred myths, customs and laws of his community. Through this imparted knowledge he gains insight into who he is and what he must become. From a religious perspective it is at this point that he encounters the Sacred. For example an Australian initiate:

...learning the myths of origins, that is, learning how things came into existence,...discovers that he is the creation of supernatural beings, the result of a specific primordial event, the consequence of a series of mythological occurrences, in short, of a sacred history. Such revelations, received through the ordeals of a ritual 'death', characterize much of the age-grading initiations. The 'resurrection' or 'rebirth' proclaims the coming into being of a new person: an adult aware of his religious condition and his responsibilities in the world.³

Thus the individual experiences a profound transformation - one that not only changes his social status but also his spirituality. Again death and rebirth are the symbolic images of this transformation: the individual gains the spiritual part of his identity, shaped by the spiritual elite of his community in accordance with the divine revelation received from ages past.

To end the rite of passage there is a religious ceremony which, especially in puberty initiation rites, involves ritual branding of the body. This is aimed at differentiating the sacredly transformed individual from those who have yet to complete the sacred ordeal. It symbolizes the permanent incorporation of the individual into a new group of his community and outwardly acknowledges the internal transformation which has occurred. The individual on his return, to symbolize that he no longer remembers his previous existence, may enact a period of amnesia. He then learns his community's social norms.

'Death' and 'rebirth' themes are at the heart of initiation rites of passage. As we have observed in puberty rites the childish self dies and the new adult self replaces it. Later we will observe how the shaman's initiatory dismemberment and resurrection is an essential element in his ability to move between ordinary and otherworldly realms, and converse with spirit beings, to aid his community. The close encounter experience has been likened to an initiation rite of passage, with the elements of 'death' and 'rebirth' being strongly evident in the testimonies of the witnesses. Hilary Evans views close encounter experiences as archetypal initiation processes. In his own words:

Compared with other types of encounter experience, we get an intriguingly plausible model of the abduction encounter experience as an archetypal initiation process:

- * It is nearly always a *solitary experience*. In the rare cases where it is shared, as in the Hill...[case], the partner is someone very close - wife, lover, close friend - which makes it likely that something like a *folie à deux* is involved.
- * Characteristically it occurs in an *isolated location* - in a desert or mountain, such as those where Adamski,...Menger,...and so many others met their contacts.
- * The witness is guided by wise *superior beings* who perform the priestlike task of initiation.

- * An emphasis on *light* - shafts and beams of light, tunnels of light, rooms with no obvious source of light - seems so pervasive as to have some symbolic significance, almost as though the witnesses were literally 'seeing the light' as well as remembering the emerging-into-light = emerging-into-life which birth represents.
- * The preoccupation with *genitals* in the 'medical examination' of abduction experiences is perhaps only to be expected - for after all, our reproductive system is likely to interest otherworldly visitors. But where everything else about the inspection is so *unrealistic*, we may be excused for looking for a deeper significance. If so, then it conforms neatly with the idea of a rite of passage which marks puberty and the ability to procreate. Nor should we forget in how many religious encounters there is reference to the 'mystical marriage' in which the witness dedicates herself to earthly virginity in order to save herself as the 'bride of Christ'.
- * A curious detail of traditional initiation ritual is the crossing of the *enchanted forest* in which, amongst other details, no birds sing. A curious detail which is nevertheless specifically remarked by many encounter witnesses is the absence of birdsong and other animal noises.⁴

In his classic work, *The Hero of a Thousand Faces*, in which the universal myth of the hero's journey is considered, Joseph Campbell (who basis this work upon Van Gennep's model of 'rites of passage') states that "a hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder".⁵ This is an excellent description of the first phase of the hero's journey or initiation rite, that of separation or, as Campbell names it, the Call of Adventure:

...destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center [sic] of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown. This fateful region of both treasure and danger may be variously represented: as a distant land, a forest, a kingdom underground, beneath the waves, or above the sky, a secret island, lofty mountaintop, or profound dream state; but it is always a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds, and impossible delights. The hero can go forth of his own volition to accomplish the adventure, as did Theseus when he arrived in his father's city, Athens, and heard the horrible story of the Minotaur, or he may be sent abroad by some benign or malignant agent, as was Odysseus, driven about the Mediterranean by the winds of the angered god Poseidon.

The adventure may begin as a mere blunder, as did that of the princess in the fairy tale "The Frog Prince"; or still again, one may be only casually strolling, when some passing phenomenon catches the wandering eye and lures one from the frequented paths of man. Examples might be multiplied, ad infinitum, from every corner of the world.⁶

In this extract we can recognise many parallels with the testimonies of close encounter claimants. Both contactee and abductee are transferred out of "his society to a zone unknown." In this new 'zone' both types of close encounter experiencer meet strange alien beings and are certainly witness to "superhuman deeds". Depending upon the type of encounter, "unimaginable torments" or "impossible delights" are also experienced.

Many contactees view their alien encounter in a positive light. Here “the hero can go forth of his own volition to accomplish the adventure”, maybe experiencing “impossible delights” along the way especially if, like Adamski and Menger, a voyage to other planets in the “benign agent’s” spaceship occurs. Abduction testimonies claim a more sinister tone; witnesses taken against their will by “malign agents” and forced to endure “unimaginable torments”. Whichever encounter is experienced “the hero (or contactee or abductee - for present purposes the terms are interchangeable) is separated or detached from the collective, the mainstream, in a powerful and life-changing way.”⁷

The ‘liminal stage’ of the close encounter is the point at which the experiencer has been separated from his familiar surroundings, and taken to a realm where he interacts with beings generally viewed as superior to humanity. Although the contactee does not usually report being ‘taken away’ from his world, it can be argued that during his conversation with the alien contacts he transcends time and space. In other words, he feels “lifted out of” three-dimensional space into a realm that is unfamiliar to him, where he witnesses acts usually believed to be impossible in his ‘ordinary’ everyday world. Orfeo Angelucci, for example, witnessed a crystal cup materialise on the fender of his car, whilst George Adamski communicated with Orthon through a combination of telepathy and sign-language. Also time seems to stand still in this ‘otherworldly realm’. As Cedric Allingham exclaims, after having allegedly conversed with a humanoid from Mars:

I looked at my watch. It was four-twenty-five. The whole of that marvellous interview had taken place in half an hour or so; it seemed only a few moments since I had first seen the Saucer gliding in across the blue-grey sea, but in this short period I had learned things which scientists had been trying to learn ever since the days of Aristotle.⁸

During this contact with otherworld beings the individual undergoes an ‘ordeal’ common to initiation rites the world over, although this is more commonly reported in abduction testimonies than in contactee episodes. To a lesser extent, as observed in Chapter Two, the contactees may be subjected to indepth questioning by their alien contacts, and, on occasion, issued with various tasks to fulfil. However, it is mainly in abduction experiences that the individual is subjected to a traumatic physical examination. It is at this stage of the abduction experience that - if we *are* to view such an encounter as a rite of passage - the dramatic, painful and fearsome aspect of the rite may be observed. The medical ‘ordeal’ claimed by abductees need not be described again as it has been analysed in Chapter Two, and the observation made that it strongly resembles the shamanic ‘dismemberment ordeal’. It is sufficient to acknowledge that these medical procedures can be viewed as acts of violence.⁹

The overwhelming terror induced in the individual on recalling being forcibly separated from familiar surroundings and subjected to ordeals at the hands of an alien agency is graphically described by Whitley Strieber in *Communion*: “‘Whitley’ ceased to exist. What was left was a body in a state of fear so great that it swept about me like a thick, suffocating curtain, turning paralysis into a condition that seemed close to death. I do not think that my ordinary humanity survived the transition...”(p.26). (It can be argued that Strieber ‘died’ and was ‘reborn’ into a new state of awareness.)

It is during the liminal period of the close encounter experience that some abductees and, more often, contactees are guided by the aliens to view the world in a new way. Their alien contacts give them revelations and missions which, in some cases, conflict with the way society views the world (these have been discussed in detail in previous chapters). However, it should be recognised that some of the reported alien messages bear a strong resemblance to those myths disclosed to the initiate during an initiation ceremony. For example, as an Australian initiate is told that he has been created by supernatural beings so we find close encounter experiencers reporting that the aliens they encounter also claim to be humanity's progenitors.

Finally, the stage of reintegration occurs: the abductee is returned to the site of his abduction, the contactee is left waving goodbye to his benevolent alien allies. Both are expected to return to their ordinary 'old' everyday activities. Yet, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, in almost every instance, a close encounter experience marks a new beginning in the witness' life, making it virtually impossible to return to the old ways of living. The close encounter experiencer has, as we shall see later, been 're-born', he is forever in possession of a new sacred identity which reshapes the way he views the world. As John Saliba comments on this period of re-adjustment to the world:

What is clear is that the contactee goes through a change in self-awareness that has religious connotations. For through the experience of encounter with these superior beings, one feels that one has come in contact with something divine or transcendent and that, consequently, one has undergone a developmental change in one's spiritual condition. In other words, the contactee experiences a religious growth and acquires a status or prestige that surpasses that of other humans, who have not been fortunate enough to have been approached by aliens in their flying saucers. The contactee becomes a person set apart, which may explain, to some degree, why he or she enjoys popularity and/or succeeds, on occasion, in attracting a following. Moreover, contactees can acquire a sense of duty, destiny, and mission, which further sets them apart and, in typical prophetic expression, usually evokes ridicule and/or persecution.¹⁰

Reintegration is especially difficult if the experiencer cannot initially remember the majority or all of the experience and is, instead, left with a strong sense that 'something' dramatic and awe-inspiring has happened to them. This period of amnesia is similar to the initiate on returning home refusing to acknowledge his parents or understand his own language. In both cases the individual must find ways to 're-learn' that which is momentarily lost. This period of adjustment for close encounter experiencers in the modern West is, I believe, more difficult to complete than for those initiates of small-scale societies. In the latter, the community understands the individual's experience as many, if not all, have had exactly the same experience. The community actively participates in the staging of the ceremony and is there to welcome the initiate back into the community after his ordeal. The reaction in our society is very different: very few people experience such an ordeal, and the road to reintegration is hindered by this fact. Not only has the individual to deal with a disturbing experience, trying to understand it in relation to his societal worldview, he also, generally, has to do this in isolation. He is not part of a community which is familiar with his experience and hence is unable to assist and acknowledge the transformation of the individual.

This letter was initially published in Budd Hopkins' book *Intruders* and Keith Thompson reproduces it in order to emphasise the "existential crisis" faced by abductees on returning from their otherworld journey:

For most of us it began with the memories. Though some of us recalled parts or all of our experiences, it was more common for us to have to seek out where they were - buried in a form of amnesia. Often we did this through hypnosis, which was, for many of us, a new experience. And what mixed feelings we had as we faced those memories! Almost without exception we felt terrified as we relived these traumatic events, a sense of being overwhelmed by their impact. But there was also disbelief. This can't be real. I must be dreaming. This isn't happening.

Thus began the vacillation and self-doubt, the alternating periods of skepticism and belief as we tried to incorporate our memories into our sense of who we are and what we know. We often felt crazy; we continued our search for the 'real' explanation. We tried to figure out what was wrong with us that these images were surfacing. Why is my mind doing this to me?¹¹

This woman is also aware that her experience is at variance with what the majority of her society believes possible:

And then there was the problem of talking about our experiences with others. Many of our friends were skeptics, of course, and though it still hurt us not to be believed, what could we expect? We were still skeptics ourselves at times, or probably had been in the past. The responses we got from others mirrored our own. The people we talked to believed us and doubted us, they were confused and looked for other explanations, as we had. Many were rigid in their denial of even the slightest possibility of abductions, and whatever words they used, the underlying message was clear. I know better than you what is real and what isn't. We felt caught in a vicious circle that seemed to be imposed on us as abductees by a skeptical society:

Why do you believe you were abducted?

You believe it because you're crazy.

How do we know you're crazy?

Because you believe you were abducted.¹²

Whether we can truly view the close encounter experience as an initiatory rite of passage is debatable but what *is* important is that recognition is given to what these episodes have *in common*. In each case, the experience presents the open-minded individual with an opportunity to discover a new identity, purpose and place in his community. This will be examined further in Chapter Five. The timeless structure behind the various incidents described by contemporary close encounter claimants is difficult to ignore, and it can be argued, as Bertrand Méheust does, that the close encounter experience is in fact a 'replay' of an archetypal initiation rite exhibiting the same sequence of events found in initiation experiences. Méheust argues that in modern close encounter experiences this sequence has in fact been 'resemantised'.¹³ As he observes:

The ball of light which sometimes descends on the chosen one, becomes a glowing spaceship. The amnesia is attributed to a deliberate action on the part of the abductors, anxious to efface all traces of their mysterious activity.

The crystals implanted beneath the skin have been replaced by electronic gadgets intended for mental monitoring.

Ritual surgery becomes a medical examination; the initiatory cavern, a laboratory or operating theatre; even the tortures which formerly prepared the transfiguration of the subject are now inflicted by sadistic or superhuman experimenters. The stigmata and other physical marks are interpreted as the result of surgery or radiation. The celestial journey of the shamans becomes the interplanetary excursion on board a spaceship.¹⁴

However, the close encounter experience is not the only phenomenon in which we find “archetypal images of initiation involving otherworld journeys amid extraordinary - *and apparently autonomous* - beings.”¹⁵

Shamanic Initiation

As described in Chapter One, a shaman is an expert otherworld traveller and, as Mircea Eliade observes, “a master of ecstasy”.¹⁶ A shaman is recognised as being able to intercede between otherworldly spirits and gods and his community. He travels to the otherworld in search of guidance and wisdom when challenges and crises arise, for insight into where the best places to hunt are or how best to prepare for the harshness of winter. The belief is that whilst in an ecstatic trance – which is needed to enter other realms and which a shaman can enter into *at will* whenever called to do so – the shaman can fight disease, direct communal sacrifices and even, as psychopomp, escort the souls of the dead to their otherworld resting place. Certain commonalities between the close encounter experience and shamanic journeying have already been briefly analysed in Chapter Two. Here these commonalities will be re-introduced and examined in greater detail with other aspects of shamanism in order to emphasise the fact that this contemporary phenomenon, and in particular the abduction experience, bears a distinctive resemblance to the ecstatic journey of the shaman.

Shamans are chosen by heritage or by spontaneous call or election. As observed above, in the latter situation the individual may experience a period of sudden illness, during which he believes his shamanic role is revealed, or through a series of visions or dreams. Analogies can be drawn between the ways a shaman is selected for his vocation and the way individuals believe, or are told by their alien contacts, they have been selected for such an experience. Just as some shamans experience spontaneous callings, the majority of percipients are spontaneously thrust into the realm of the close encounter experience. In both cases there is no attempt to ‘seek out’ such an experience: there is neither warning, nor time to prepare for the encounter. For both types of experiencer the selection process is initiated by otherworld inhabitants, be they aliens, gods, spirits or ancestors. Even those instances where shamans are selected by the community or spirits by virtue of some hereditary characteristic are also paralleled in the close encounter experience. For example, Lydia Stalnaker, abducted near Jacksonville in August 1974, was told by her alien abductors that “she had been ‘chosen for her task [i.e. medical examination] because of her chemistry.’”¹⁷ Whatever the selection criteria, the individual:

...is not recognized as such until after he has received two kinds of teaching: (1) ecstatic (dreams trances etc.) and (2) traditional (shamanic techniques, names and functions of the spirits, mythology and genealogy of the clan, secret language etc.)

This twofold course of instruction, given by the spirits and the old master shamans, is equivalent to an initiation. Sometimes initiation is public and constitutes an autonomous ritual in itself. But absence of this kind of ritual in no sense implies absence of an initiation; the latter can perfectly well occur in dream or in the neophyte's ecstatic experiences.¹⁸

An important factor to note in classical shamanism is that shamanic practice is full of danger and is a vocation not lightly undertaken. The shamanic initiate undertakes long years of arduous training to be able to visit other realms and to earn the name 'walker-between-the-worlds'. It is recognised in shamanic communities that the shaman must suffer intensely before he can serve his people:

Those [shamans] who have nearly died, through an accident or severe illness, or who have suffered a psychological or spiritual trauma of such proportions that they are catapulted into the territory of death will come to know the inner workings of crisis. The shaman learns to integrate the experiences of sickness, suffering, dying, and death, as well as to share the special knowledge of these powerful events with those who face disease or death for the first time. Shamanhood implies something more than prescribed sacred action. It is an intimate, mystical encounter with the fields of life and death and the forces that fuse these realms.¹⁹

Thus, shamanic initiation includes an extreme ordeal during which the initiate is believed to 'die' and be 'reborn' to a new role. These ecstatic initiatory rites generally include one or more of the following symbolic elements: torture and dismemberment of the body; reintegration of the body, complete with replacement of organs and blood; a sojourn in the underworld/upperworld/otherworld, and instruction by spirits and/or the souls of dead shamans; various revelations both religious and shamanic (i.e. learning the secrets of the profession); and the return home in new 'resurrected' form. It may be observed that such elements are also present in the puberty rites of passage examined above except that, on the shaman's return, he is considered a consecrated individual, capable of communicating intimately, and at will, with benevolent and malevolent spirits, gods, and/or souls of the dead. As observed in Chapter Two the 'crisis' part of the shamanic initiation, the ritual dismemberment ordeal, may be compared with that of the abductee's medical examination. A review of both types of ordeal will emphasise this kinship.

A Yakut shaman, Sofron Zateyev, states that as a rule the future shaman "dies" and lies in the yurt for three days without eating or drinking. Formerly the candidate went through the ceremony three times, during which he was cut to pieces. Another shaman, Pyotr Ivanov, gives further details. The candidate's limbs are removed and disjointed with an iron hook; the bones are cleaned, the flesh scraped, the body fluids thrown away, and the eyes torn from their sockets. After this operation all the bones are gathered up and fastened together with iron. According to a third shaman, Timofei Romanov, the ceremony of dismemberment lasts from three to seven days; during all that time the candidate remains like a dead man, scarcely breathing, in a solitary place.²⁰

Mircea Eliade cites an initiatory dismemberment of a shaman of the Avam Samoyed taken from ethnologist A. A. Popov's work *Tavgytzy: Materialy po etnografii avamskikh I vedeyevskikh tavgytzev*. The element of time distortion present in the account can be compared with the 'missing time' episodes experienced by close encounter witnesses:

Sick with smallpox, the future shaman remained unconscious for three days and so nearly dead that on the third day he was almost buried. His initiation took place during this time....

[During his ordeal] the candidate came to a desert and saw a distant mountain. After three days' travel he reached it, entered an opening, and came upon a naked man working a bellows. On the fire was a caldron "as big as half the earth." The naked man saw him and caught him with a huge pair of tongs. The novice had time to think, "I am dead!" The man cut off his head, chopped his body into bits, and put everything in the caldron. There he boiled his body for three years. There were also three anvils, and the naked man forged the candidate's head on the third, which was the one on which the best shamans were forged. Then he threw the head into one of three pots that stood there, the one in which the water was the coldest.

He now revealed to the candidate that, when he was called to cure someone, if the water in the ritual pot was very hot, it would be useless to shamanize, for the man was already lost; if the water was warm, he was sick but would recover; cold water denoted a healthy man.

The blacksmith then fished the candidate's bones out of a river, in which they were floating, put them together, and covered them with flesh again. He counted them and told him that he had three too many; he was therefore to procure three shaman's costumes. He forged his head and taught him how to read the letters that are inside it. He changed his eyes; and this is why, when he shamanizes, he does not see with his bodily eyes but with these mystical eyes. He pierced his ears, making him able to understand the language of plants. Then the candidate found himself on the summit of a mountain, and finally he woke in the yurt, among his family. Now he can sing and shamanize indefinitely, without ever growing tired.²¹

Ilpailurkna, a renowned shaman of the Unmatjera tribe, told anthropologists B. Spencer and F. J. Gillen that:

...when he was made into a medicine man, a very old doctor came one day and threw some of his *atongara* stones at him with a spear-thrower. Some hit him on the chest, others went right through his head, from ear to ear, killing him. The old man then cut out all of his insides, intestines, liver, heart, lungs - everything in fact, and left him lying all night long on the ground. In the morning the old man came and looked at him and placed some more *atongara* stones inside his body and in his arms and legs, and covered over his face with leaves. Then he sang over him until his body was all swollen up. When this was so he provided him with a complete set of new inside parts, placed a lot more *atongara* stones in him, and patted him on the head, which caused him to jump up alive. The old medicine man then made him drink water and eat meat containing *atongara* stones. When he awoke he had no idea as to where he was, and said, "*Tju, tju, tju*" - "I think I am lost."

But when he looked around he saw the old medicine man standing beside him, and the old man said, "No, you are not lost; I killed you a long time ago." Ilpailurkna had completely forgotten who he was and all about his past life. After a time the old man led him back to his camp and showed it to him, and told him that the woman there was his lubra, for he had forgotten all about her. His coming back this way and his strange behaviour at once showed the other natives that he had been made into a medicine man.²²

In 1975, Sandra Larson observed a number of glowing globes descending towards her as she drove to Bismarck, North Dakota. She found on her arrival that she could not account for an hour of her journey. Hypnotised by Leo Sprinkle, a professor of psychology and an active ufologist, she described a classic alien abduction during which she alleges she was operated on by her alien captors:

Sprinkle: Do you have a feeling of what kind of experiment it is?

Larson: I feel like I breathe different...It's like somebody took a knife and made the inside of my nose sore.

Sprinkle: Made the inside of your nose sore?

Larson: Scraped it.

Sprinkle: Did you see anybody touching your nose?

Larson: Uh huh.

Sprinkle: Could you see hands?

Larson: No.

Sprinkle: Could you see an instrument of some kind?

Larson: Yeah.

Sprinkle: Can you describe it?

Larson: I would say like a little knife or like a cotton swab.

Sprinkle: Not very big, but something that was placed inside your nose? [...] What other things happened during the examination? [...]

Larson: It's like they opened my head and examined my brain.

Sprinkle: Did you see how that was done?

Larson: They started to put something numb on me...

Clark [Investigator and author of article]: Did you see some instrument they were using to open your head?

Larson: It's like they could just draw it right out.

Clark: They could draw your brain right out?

Larson: Like there's just plugs that they can unplug and pull it right out.

Sprinkle: Did it feel as if it were thoughts that were being pulled out or feelings being pulled out? Knowledge or -

Larson: It's like they wanted to connect something back different, when they put it back.

Sprinkle: Did you feel that you were put back differently?

Larson: Yeah.²³

John Mack describes abductee Jerry's medical ordeal:

The leader asked Jerry "if the medication has been okay up till now," which Jerry did not understand. She then relived an extremely agonizing procedure, involving the insertion of "something sharp" like a "needle" into the side of her head, which evidently had taken some time and against which there was "no medication." She cried out desperately and sweated profusely with her body writhing in pain as she tried to hold off the memories. "I think it would kill me," she said. I assured her that this recall would not kill her and encouraged her to scream as she described the instrument being driven from "a high angle" down into the side of her neck.

“Stop hurting me,” she screamed loudly and complained now of spasms and other uncontrollable movements in her legs (which I could see). Panting, Jerry then screamed out in terror, “I can’t stop it! Ahhhh! Ahhhh! I hate doing this! Stop it! Stop this!”²⁴

In 1976, while driving to Liberty, Kentucky, Mona Stafford, Louise Smith and Elaine Thomas witnessed an enormous object with multiple lights. When they arrived at their destination they, too, found that they could not account for one and a half hours. After separate hypnosis sessions their alleged stories of what occurred during this missing time partially confirmed one another.

The women said they were subjected to a terribly painful examination. First, their arms were pinned down to tables, and warm, soft liquid was poured over their bodies, which formed a mold of their figures. While the liquid was on, they felt as if they would suffocate, and the aliens pulled it off with great force, as one might pull off a bandage. Then they twisted the women’s arms and legs, as if they were experimenting with the stress human bones and muscles could endure before they snapped.

Smith specifically remembers that her neck hurt throughout the examination, and all three women found they had red welts on their necks for several days after the abduction. Stafford further recalled that during her examination the aliens removed her eyeballs, looked them over, then returned them to her sockets.²⁵ [Here, the parallel with Yakut shaman Pyotr Ivanov’s dismemberment ordeal is striking.]

We discussed in Chapter Two the similarity between the implants allegedly inserted into abductees during their medical examination and the various objects inserted into the shaman during his initiation, either by spirits or his shamanic tutor. In the above examples it may be observed that *atnongara* stones are implanted into Ilpailurkna as it is believed that “the possession of these stones...gives his virtue to the medicine man.”²⁶ We could regard the Avam Samoyed shaman as receiving a type of implant in the form of the letters forged inside his newly made head. A Warramunga medicine man also told Spencer and Gillen that during his initiation two spirits came to him and killed him. “While he was lying dead they cut him open and took all his insides out, providing him, however, with a new set, and, finally, they put a little snake inside his body, which endowed him with the powers of a medicine man.”²⁷

A similar experience occurs during the second shamanic initiations of the Warramunga. The initiands must walk or stand continuously until they fall unconscious. Then “their sides are cut open, and, as usual, their internal organs are removed, and they are provided with a new set.”²⁸ As in the first initiation a snake is then placed in their head, which will enable them to cure the sick.²⁹ During Jerry’s medical ordeal, described above, she also “recalled that she was told that some sort of tiny object was left inside of her...’to monitor me’ with no explanation other than, ‘We just have to do what we have to do.’ ‘I think it is still there,’ she said. ‘I don’t remember them taking it out.’”³⁰ Another abductee, Joe, recalls that during his medical examination a needle penetrated his neck. “...They’re putting something in’ that will make it ‘easier to follow me.’ He said, ‘They’re putting a picture in my mind’ of a ‘small, silver, pill-shaped thing that they’re leaving there’ which has ‘four tiny, tiny little wires coming off it.’”³¹

As observed in the puberty rites of passage, the liminal stage is the time when the initiands are taught sacred, tribal knowledge. So, too, after their dismemberment ordeal, shaman initiands receive the knowledge they need to become true shamans from spirits, ancestors, and shamanic teachers. Not only does the Avam Samoyed shaman learn the words inscribed inside his new head but the blacksmith spirit also instructs him in the art of healing. Initiands learn from the spirits and teachers how to become a shaman and they may receive information which they must pass on to their community. The Inuit shamans must learn how to descend to the abode of Takánakapsâluk, the Mother of the Sea Beasts and controller of the Inuit's fate. After negotiating many hazards in this other realm to reach the goddess, the shaman must approach without fear, take her by the shoulder and comb her hair. Now the shaman can intercede for his community and ask questions of the goddess, who will answer him in spirit language. Usually Takánakapsâluk will demand some recompense for food or cures, and it is the shaman's duty to report her demands back to his community.³² As we have already thoroughly analysed the way in which some close encounter experiencers receive a period of instruction and examination at the hands of their alien contacts, and the type of messages received, we need not re-examine them in detail here. However, it should be observed that some contactees and abductees do receive instruction on a number of subjects and, on occasion, are entrusted with messages for society. Thus both close encounter and shamanic initiation experiences do share similar features here.

Another feature common in both experiences is the similarity of the being encountered in this otherworld. Although physical descriptions may differ, essentially both close encounter experiencer and shaman are in contact with 'benevolent' or 'malevolent' beings. As a rule the shaman works with two types of spirit guide; those which are mainly under the shaman's control and who serve as his familiars; and those thought of more as 'guardian' or 'helper' spirits, upon whom the shaman can call for aid. They may help him in his soul journeying and in community affairs by, for example, detecting the origins of illness, guiding him on his journeys to recover lost souls and on his spiritual quests. These entities are, usually, benevolent but they are capable of acts of aggression towards him if angered. They maintain independence in the other realm and do not have to answer the shaman's call. At the same time there are malevolent spirits, gods, or demons who are believed to cause illness and disease, steal souls and bring misfortune onto the shamanic community. It is these types of entity with which the shaman is enlisted to do battle during his ecstatic flight to their realm.³³

The same range of attributes characterizes the close encounter phenomenon. Contactees mainly commune with 'helper' alien entities who wish to instruct and guide the individual as well as, the general population. Communication with such entities is usually of a spiritually uplifting and peaceful nature. Abductees report being in contact with generally two types of being: the short, malevolent "greys" who treat them at best with indifference, and the taller leader figure who is, on the whole, more friendly. The overall experience of alien abduction seems to involve little pleasure with many experiencers being terrified and traumatised during their encounters. As one abductee, recalling her experience told David Jacobs: "I'm absolutely terrified...I feel like this is psychological torture, but I'm not afraid for my life. And I'm furious. There are no words to describe how mad I am because I feel like they're just torturing me."³⁴

The final stage of the journey for both shaman and close encounter experiencer is the return or reintegration phase. Usually both experiencers are returned to the same physical location, both may feel confused and disoriented, and suffer from memory impairment. There may also be “the sense, however dimly apprehended that something extraordinary has happened that will leave a lasting imprint on one’s life.”³⁵ On his return we are told that Ilpailurkna “had completely forgotten who he was and all about his past life” in the same way some puberty initiates in some societies forget their relatives and their language, and must relearn that which they once knew. Amnesia and missing time is also experienced by abductees and, to some extent, contactees, when they return to their ordinary everyday realm. Many experiencers have only a partial memory of what has been communicated by the aliens, which leads to a sense of frustration. Sometimes, full recall is later achieved either spontaneously or through the aid of hypnosis.

Finally, returning from his initiation a fully-fledged shaman is viewed as a person of enormous power and influence, as he has proved he has the skills to commune with the gods and spirits. Because of this he often finds he is unable to completely reintegrate with his community again, as his people now regard him as the recipient of special knowledge, who is no longer exactly like them. They become separated “by the intensity of their own religious experience.”³⁶ In the following chapter we will see close encounter experiencers also find it difficult to achieve full reintegration back into their old way of life.

Consideration shows that the close encounter phenomenon contains many features equivalent to the shaman’s journey to the other realm, including a dismemberment ordeal, implants, instruction and receipt of revelation from otherworld entities with analogous characteristics. Close encounters can be regarded as types of experience which small-scale societies would recognize as rites of initiation. It is also tempting to argue, along with Carol Zaleski and Kenneth Ring, that the close encounter experience “may represent a particularly contemporary form of shamanic journey - one that fits and is phrased in terms of a highly technological society that has already turned its imaginative attention to star flight.”³⁷ Later we shall also note the traditional shamanic themes present in another contemporary form of otherworld journey: the Near-Death Experience.

Medieval Otherworld Journeys

In the literature of the medieval Christian West, a distinctive feature is the journey to an otherworld, particularly heaven or hell. Other themes include a sudden exit from the visionary’s body; travel through tunnels, over roads or country; encounters with otherworld guides; glimpses of heaven and a reluctant return to reality; as well as witnessing horrendous torments and enduring instructive and transformational experiences. Let us now review examples of the medieval form of the otherworld vision identifying the themes of separation, liminality, and reintegration and their similarity to close encounter claims. To avoid repetition, encounter material will be kept to a minimum, as the above themes have already been illustrated with regard to the ‘Rites of Passage’ and ‘Shamanism’ sections.

In medieval accounts an individual typically embarks upon an otherworld journey by experiencing their soul being severed from their body in order that it may depart for the next world.³⁸ This loosening of the soul may be caused by illness or involuntary injury, the intervention of demons or angels, voluntary visionary ecstasy, or happen in a dream. The usual exit for the soul in such narratives is through the individual's mouth. In the seventh century Vision of Barontus:

Struck down by a fever after divine office, Barontus is found writhing on the floor, gesturing at his throat. A colleague interprets this frenzy as an incursion of malign spirits and rushes to disinfect the room with holy water. Suddenly an unseen force chokes Barontus into unconsciousness. From three in the morning until vespers, the monks chant and pray for their brother's recovery. At vespers they observe the signs of death and begin to pray instead for his heavenly welfare. When the cock crows, however, Barontus revives, sits up, and praises God.³⁹

Barontus speaks to the shocked monks and tells them how two sinister demons had grabbed him by the throat and dragged him towards hell. Other examples of individuals being taken away from their ordinary surroundings and journeying to another realm, albeit Christian in its topography, are as follows:

In the Vision of Saint Salvius, Salvius (d. 584 A.D.) tells us how he was initiated on a tour of the heavenly city:

Four days before, he says, when his fellows saw him die, he was taken by two angels to the highest heaven so that not only the filthy earth but the sun, moon, clouds and stars, seemed to be under his feet. Thence by a shining gate he was led to a dwelling paved with gold and silver, where shone an ineffable light and there was a multitude of people, men, and women.⁴⁰

The vision enjoyed by Charles the Fat about 885 is told in William of Malmesbury's *De rebus gestis Anglorum*. A figure of light, holding a shining ball of thread like a comet, appeared to him and, making him bind an end on his right thumb, he led him "in labyrinthas infernorum poenas." Charles saw "profundissimas ualles et igneas," all full of burning pitch and sulphur and lead. Here are familiar souls in torture. Demons try to tear the thread from his finger, but his guide comes to his protection.⁴¹

An Irish account of the early tenth or ninth century tells of the Vision of Laisrén:

At the end of a thrice-three-day fast, sleep overpowered Laisrén in church, and a voice said to him "Arise." He saw a shining figure bidding him approach. He then observed his own soul hovering over the crown of his head. Two angels took it and rose to a place where the church was now opened toward Heaven. Angels and Demons came to dispute over it, and the soul was granted a vision of Hell....⁴²

A twelfth century visionary, Alberic, is taken on his journey by a dove and, under the guidance of Saint Peter and two angels, visits hell and purgatory:

Alberic, monk of Montecassino, wishes to give the correct version of the story of his vision, which has already become known. For nine nights and nine days he lay as if dead. A bird like a dove approached him and seemed to draw his soul from his mouth. He was transported on high above the earth whereupon Saint Peter and two angels appeared and led him to see the places of torture of the inferno....⁴³

A feature of the medieval otherworld journey is the meeting of an individual by a guide. Until this occurs the visionary seems unable to move into the other realm. Instead, in Victor Turner's phrase, he is 'betwixt and between'.⁴⁴ The separation of the individual from his surroundings is completed as he steps over the threshold of the other realm where he is neither dead nor alive. The invariable presence of a guide in the medieval context is clearly related to the Christian guardian angel, yet the guide is not always as benevolent as we expect, especially as contemporary accounts of angel encounters have much in common with the contactee experience of meeting with kindly, caring entities.

In the Middle Ages the visionary is more likely to meet an ambivalent guide who, as we shall see, can be both dangerous and benign and whose role appears to be that of interpreter, instructor, protector and soul-taker. (Much like the spirits encountered by the shaman.) Communication with such a guide is partly silent: the recorder of Laisrén's vision relates that "the angel answered at once, in the way that the (guardian) angel has always answered thoughts and reflections".⁴⁵ In the same way, as we have seen, many of the conversations with aliens in both types of close encounter experiences progress telepathically.

The guide is consistently portrayed as a luminous figure or wearing shining white robes. In his vision, Drythelm (d. circa 700 A.D.) reports encountering "someone of shining countenance and bright apparel."⁴⁶ In the visions of the mountain of God, witnessed by Elizabeth of Schönau (1126 – 1164 A.D.), there appeared "a Man garbed in tunic of hyacinth color [sic] and girded with white, with face shining as the sun, eyes radiant as stars, hair like the whitest wool, and in His mouth a sharp sword."⁴⁷ In the above excerpts we find that Laisrén (d. 639 A.D.) encounters "a shining figure" and Charles the Fat a "figure of light". These shining entities may be compared with the phenomenon experienced by close encounter witnesses (e.g. Villas-Boas' alien encounter). Not only are there claims of light phenomena engulfing the guides of medieval visions, there are also accounts of light radiating from saints, angels and aliens, and the individuals who encounter such entities. We are reminded, too, of the tall alien encountered by a number of abductees who seems to be, on the whole, more benevolent, than the small greys. The tall entity may instruct the individual and may give him messages to take back which we will later see the medieval guide also doing.

As interpreter and instructor, the guide shows the individual where in the otherworld he is, and tutors him about what he observes (see paragraph on 'instruction' below). As protector and guardian angel, the guide watches over the individual and leads him through each stage of the journey, whether it includes torment or bliss. If, however, the individual finds he is unable to save himself from the ordeals he is faced with, his guide invariably delivers him from the danger by, for example, snatching the visionary out of monstrous jaws, pulling the individual through hellfire, and fending off demonic attacks.

Saint Peter and a number of demons are at odds to take control of Barontus's soul. "The struggle between Saint Peter and the demons over the soul of Barontus takes the form of a debate in which each party recites an itemized list of his good or evil deeds. Winning the contest, Saint Peter says, 'He is not your comrade, but ours.'"⁴⁸ In the vision of Drythelm "demons threaten Drythelm with their tongues, but are put to flight by his guide, who appears just in time in the form of a bright star."⁴⁹ Charles the Fat is accosted by demons who try to tear away the shining ball of thread which is attached to his thumb, but his guide protects him.⁵⁰ The guide's attempts to protect the individual are analogous to the way the alien guides, especially those encountered by contactees, try on a much grander scale to deliver the individual, as well as humanity, from the hands of imminent disaster.

After separating from his body the individual faces a dazzling variety of obstacles and ordeals. Medieval visionary literature differs from accounts of shamanic and close encounter journeys in that its otherworld topography is generally less rigidly structured. The shaman learns through instruction from his shamanic teacher, and his spirit guides the layout of the other worlds he visits, a map which remains unchanged throughout his dealings with the entities which abide there.

Although each abductee's experience is unique, containing personal details no other abduction account will hold, research has shown a common underlying structure to each alien abduction experience (already been discussed in Chapter Two). In contactee experiences the otherworld topography is less clearly defined, however it has been observed that, with all the contactees reviewed in Chapter Two, they initially met their aliens in remote locations. In both experiences however, when the individual is taken to this otherworld location, particularly in the close encounter cases, we predominantly find that this journey requires some form of *ascent*.

In medieval visionary literature it is much harder to draw a consistent map of the otherworld location as, although in all instances the visionary will usually find himself in hell, purgatory and/or heaven, these locations are never clearly defined. Zaleski suggests that one reason for such inconsistencies "is that belief in a definitive infra- or extraterrestrial location for purgatory, as distinct from hell, is a comparatively late development in Christian tradition."⁵¹ Once Christian theologians defined the cosmos as being three-tiered (in descending order: heaven, purgatory, hell) in the late half of the twelfth century, it may be observed that this concept began to appear in subsequent visionary accounts. Before this eschatological definition, accounts show a variety of directions an individual may take after separating from his body. Following the tiered system later favoured by the Church, Salvius reports of being taken to "the highest heaven so that not only the filthy earth but the sun, moon, clouds and stars, seemed to be under his feet."⁵² According to Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, the seventh century visionary Fursa was also taken heavenward by angels where "looking down he saw a dark valley beneath him. This we may infer is Hell."⁵³

In the vision of Alberic the region of hell appears to be *above* earth: Alberic “was transported on high above the earth, whereupon Saint Peter and two angels appeared and led him to see the places of torture of the inferno.”⁵⁴ Drythelm is taken by his guide “*southeast* [my italics] to a realm of clear light, where they encounter a vast wall. Suddenly they are on top of the wall, in a bright flowery meadow. Here Drythelm meets ‘many companies of happy people’ and supposes he is in heaven, but learns that it is only an antechamber for the not quite perfect.”⁵⁵ In the account of the knight Owen’s visit to Saint Patrick’s Purgatory in 1150 we are told that Owen journeys *southeast* to purgatory.⁵⁶ Thurkel finds that in his vision he has the three regions of heaven, hell and purgatory situated all around him, from his vantage spot of the middle of the world, symbolised by the structure of a spacious church.

In the middle of this, from what appeared to be a font, rose a great flame illuminating the whole edifice. Near the wall, on the outside, was the pit of Hell. On the eastern side, between two walls, was a purgatorial fire, and beyond was a large, cold salt lake, over which was a great bridge filled with nails and sharp stakes...[There was also a meadow nearby] in which were fragrant flowers and fruit trees and a fountain that gave source to four rivers of varied liquid and color [sic]. Over this fountain was a tree of great size bearing the choicest fruits and having the odor [sic] of spices. Here in this Earthly Paradise was Adam....The garden has a jewelled gate and a golden temple.⁵⁷

Despite the great variation of otherworld locations in medieval visionary accounts it can be observed that, even when the vision is concerned with hell and the punishments on display in this region as in the majority of shamanic and close encounter journeys the narrative tells of the individual’s initial *ascent* to this realm. Zaleski points out that this initial ascent is probably due to the fact that the action of the soul leaving the body is itself an act of ascension. It is only after initial separation that the visionary is then subjected to “an aerial tour of the planet, a journey to one of the four directions, or a heavenly ascent.”⁵⁸ Each option parallels with those of close encounter experiences. We have already mentioned that several contactees and abductees were treated to an aerial tour of Earth and, sometimes, other planets in the solar system e.g. George Adamski and Howard Menger. In abduction cases invariably the abductee describes a bodily ascent to the alien spacecraft hovering above planet Earth.

Wherever the medieval visionary is taken, it is common for him to undergo one or more ordeals during the course of his journey. As already observed this is a common feature in many initiation rituals and close encounter experiences. In medieval otherworld literature it is in the realms of hell and purgatory that the individual must survive an ordeal, in several cases being saved by his guide in the nick of time. In Saint Patrick’s Purgatory Owen, travelling with his demonic guides, encounters:

...a well from which naked bodies shoot upward like sparks and then fall back into the sulphurous flames. “This is the mouth of hell,” the demons say, and they cast Owen in. He falls endlessly, for this well is none other than the realm of utterly lost souls, the bottomless pit described in Rev.20:1-3....No longer a mere spectator, Owen descends into a state of deadly oblivion, forgetting to call on the name of Jesus. At the last minute, however a divine intervention causes Owen to remember the invocation, and he is lifted to safety on a tongue of flame.⁵⁹

To reach the mouth of hell, [Drythelm and his guide] travel through a land of darkness, in which Drythelm can make his way only by keeping his eyes fixed on the bright silhouette of his guide. Hell is a bottomless pit. From it leap tongues of fire...on which damned souls are cast upward like sparks only to fall back again amidst mingled sounds of laughter and lament. Drythelm sees malign spirits dragging the unhappy souls of a priest, a layman, and a woman into the abyss. The demons threaten Drythelm with their tongs, but are put to flight by his guide, who appears just in time in the form of a bright star.⁶⁰

Saint Francis' *Fioretti* tells of the vision of the third robber which is of particular interest here as it resembles the dismemberment ordeals of close encounter subjects and shamans. One day after matins the robber fell asleep:

No sooner had he laid down his head than he was rapt and led in spirit to the top of a very high mountain ["in montem excelsum ualde"] over a steep place, and on this side and on that were broken and jagged rocks and monstrous crags that jutted forth from the rocks; wherefore this steep place, he suffered from the sensation that his bones had been broken by the rocks.

The angel, however, bids him rise and heals him, and then shows him a "great plain, full of sharp and pointed stones and thorns and briars, and told him he must needs run across all this plain and pass over it with naked feet until he came to the end..." Next he has to enter a furnace, and from this experience he is again healed.

He is then led to a "bridge, which could not be crossed without great peril, for it was very frail and narrow and slippery and without a rail at the sides; and beneath it flowed a terrible river, filled with serpents and dragons and scorpions, that it gave forth a great stench." He crosses to the middle and the angel flies to the other side up to the top of a high mountain leaving him helpless. He trembles for fear of the beasts, stoops, and embraces the bridge with a prayer to God, whereupon he sprouts wings, and with these he attempts to fly up to the angel. But he falls back again, and his wings drop off. Twice this happens. At last on the third attempt he attains to the door of the marvelous palace where the angel awaits him.⁶¹

Note the ambiguous nature of the robber's guide, in this case an angel, who leads him into danger and pain, whilst at other times, rescuing and healing him. As with the ordeals encountered by shamans and abductees, the individual admits being fearful of beings he encounters and the tasks he must endure. It is during the visionary's ordeal that he can be viewed as having died to his old life. Succeeding in the physical tests provided by the otherworld entities he moves on from his old state of being. However, at this stage he is still 'betwixt and between', having yet to enter into his new state of being.

A significant feature of medieval otherworld literature is that, not only does the individual endure a variety of ordeals, but he must also witness the horrendous tortures and torments of those already confined to the hellish regions. In the Vision of Laisrén he enters Hell where "he finds a sea of fire with 'an unspeakable storm and unspeakable waves upon it,' and souls in torment."⁶² "Owen visits four fields of punishment where...sinners are devoured by dragons, set upon by serpents and toads, fixed to the ground with red-hot nails, baked in furnaces, immersed in boiling cauldrons, and hooked to a flaming version of Ixion's wheel."⁶³

Tundale witnessed souls roasting on burning coals, and monsters gathering to “seize sinners as they fell from [a bridge] into the stormy lake below.”⁶⁴ Bede tells the reader of the horrors Drythelm witnessed whilst guided by an entity of shining countenance:

“...and as we walked, we came to a great broad and deep valley, so long that no man could measure it; and this lay on the left hand as we went, and shewed one side exceeding terrible [sic] with flaming fire, the other no less unendurable with vehement hail and chilly snow beating and drifting into every corner. And both places were full of men’s souls...” The souls leap in their torture from one side to the other. Further along he finds “every corner full of darkness. And as we entered into it, within a little space it became so thick that I saw nothing but the darkness, saving only the bright glow and coat of him which did guide me.” Flames of fire here and there appear, with souls like sparks ascending and descending, and the stench of the place was great.⁶⁵

In the eighth century Vision of the Monk of Wenlock the monk:

...sees fiery pits vomiting flames, and souls in the form of black birds suffering in the flames, pleading and howling and crying with human voices....He sees a pitchy river boiling and flaming, over which was placed a piece of timber for a bridge. Over this the holy and glorious souls strove to pass. Some went securely, others slipped and fell into the Tartarean stream. Some were wholly submerged in the flood, others to the knees, some to the middle of the body, and some to the ankles.⁶⁶

At first sight the above scenes witnessed by the visionaries seem to be solely property of medieval otherworld journey literature. Yet, beneath the Christian eschatological symbolism it may be possible to identify continuity between the revealed underlying experience and the mental examination to which abductees describe being subjected. In both cases the individual sees a variety of images, which more often than not are disturbing in the extreme. Apocalyptic scenes of death and suffering, horrendous tortures, wars, atomic explosions and inhospitable environments are commonly recounted. In both instances there is usually a ‘guide’ present who observes the individual’s reaction to these images, and who may even interpret the disturbing images.

This is one difference between these two scenarios - other than the cultural setting: Whereas the visionary witnesses such suffering so that he may return to his life repentant and committed to leading a better life, in the close encounter experience we are told that the aliens are more concerned that humanity *as a whole* takes immediate action to change and live more harmoniously with each other, the planet and other beings in the solar system. In medieval accounts the experience is directed to one individual in order to change his life. In the alien encounter successful transformation depends upon the full and willing cooperation of the whole of Earth’s population.

It is during this liminal stage of 'ordeal and observation' that the sacred law is revealed to the visionary. It is through the revelation of his guide, or a pre-eminent figure such as Jesus or the Virgin Mary, and by witnessing the suffering of others, that the visionary becomes aware of how he must conduct himself henceforth. Following the instructions he has received in this otherworld he will once more access this region after death and be received in the 'realm of the blessed' for eternity rather than the hellish realms he has just experienced. Drythelm's guide tells him just before his return that "you must go back to the body and live among men again; but if you strive to examine your actions more carefully and to keep your ways and words in righteousness and simplicity, you will gain for yourself a dwelling-place after death among these rejoicing multitudes of blessed souls whom you behold."⁶⁷ In one unusual instance Alberic is actually made to swallow the revelation given by his guide:

Just before sending the youth back to his bed, St. Peter produces an enormous document covered with minute inscriptions, folds it into a tiny page, and makes him swallow it. Here, presumably, are his instructions for life, delivered in a form that will not fade with time; as the apostle says, "You will not be allowed to reject it, and your blood will not dissolve it."⁶⁸

After passing through hell and purgatory it is usual for the individual to be secured a fleeting glimpse of heaven and its delights, before returning home, thus initiating the reintegration with their own world. It would seem that a small glimpse of paradisaical bliss is all that is needed to inspire the visionary to change his lifestyle on Earth. No doubt the ordeals experienced, and the sights witnessed, in the dark realms are deeply sobering and thus more than enough to induce a positive transformation in the individual.

The visionary's reintegration into his earthly realm is rather abrupt. After viewing the scenes of heavenly bliss for only a few minutes he is told that he must now return. It is virtually unknown for medieval otherworld tales to portray the individual demanding to be sent back, in many cases, he is reluctant to obey the command to return as the sights of heavenly bliss are far more attractive. On observing the heavenly spheres, sweet perfume engulfs Salvius so that he feels there is no longer a need to eat or drink, and it is at this moment of bliss, that "he is told that he must return to the earth for the sake of the Church."⁶⁹ Owen is allowed to sample the food of paradise and immediately becomes enflamed by senses of delight, but:

...just when Owen is thinking that he wants to stay there forever, his guides tell him it is time to go back. If he lives well, they promise, he will return to this place when he dies. If not, he knows what is in store for him. Owen is afraid that if he returns to earth he will relapse into his old ways. Against his will they lead him through the gate and close it after him: having begun his journey by being locked into the Purgatory, Owen ends it by being locked out of heaven. Nothing remains for Owen but to go back the way he came....⁷⁰

Adamnán (d. 597 A.D.) is also dismayed to find he must leave heaven:

But when he bethought him to rest and tarry in that land, he heard, through the veil, the angel's voice, enjoining him to return again into that body when he had departed, and to rehearse in courts and assemblies, and in the great congregations of laymen and of clerics, the rewards of Heaven and the pains of hell, even as his guardian angel had revealed then unto him.⁷¹

On his return the individual remembers that he has been entrusted with a message given by a guide or another spiritual being he encountered. This is normally one of two types. Either the revelation must remain a total secret or be shared only with one or two, usually named, individuals; or he is told he must recount his extraordinary experience to the world. In the vision of Gunthelm, he is fortunate to acquire two guides, Saint Benedict and Saint Raphael. Saint Raphael "orders him to return to his body, and to tell nobody of his vision except the abbot. This injunction the novice disobeys by at once reporting what he has seen, and he is then disciplined by Saint Benedict, who reappears for the purpose."⁷² Angels explicitly order the monk of Wenlock on his return to:

...go back to his own body without delay. He must not hesitate to reveal the things he had been shown to believers and those asking with a pious intention, but must refuse to discuss them with scoffers. To a certain woman who lived in a far-off place, he was to expound the sins she had committed one by one, and intimate to her that by offering satisfaction she could prepetiate herself to God if she wished. To a certain priest named Begga, he was to disclose all these spiritual visions and afterwards proclaim them to men just as the priest instructed him.⁷³

Saint Bede, on the other hand, tells Drythelm, that the purpose of his journey is to "arouse the living from spiritual death".⁷⁴ As already noted, Adamnán is enjoined to return "to rehearse in courts and assemblies, and in the great congregations of laymen and of clerics" all that he has encountered. Other visionaries might have received no instruction as to whether they should or should not inform others of their experiences, upon doing so they are 'punished' in some way. Salvius, after succumbing to pressure by his fellow monks to describe his otherworld journey, suddenly bemoans:

Woe is me, that I have dared to reveal such a mystery. For behold, the sweet fragrance which I was drinking in from the holy place, and by which I was sustained for these three days without any food or drink, has receded from me. And my tongue is covered with horrible sores, and is so swollen that it seems to fill my whole mouth. Now I know that it was not well pleasing to the Lord my God that these secrets should be publicized.⁷⁵

Other visionaries are selective in disseminating their experience. "Fursa and Drythelm will tell their visions only to sincere penitents, and Alberic, Tundal, and Edmund of Eynsham, who publicize their experiences widely, remain as tight-lipped as St. Paul about the celestial paradise."⁷⁶ Occasionally, an authoritative figure in the life of the individual persuades the hesitant visionary to tell his tale. "In the vision of the Monk of Eynsham, Edmund reminds his prior that it is obedience alone that loosened his tongue 'I have related to you as concisely as I could the things that were revealed to me...since I was coaxed by the love and compelled by the command of your holiness.'"⁷⁷

The individual's reintegration as told in medieval otherworld literature appears to be as traumatic as that experienced by those initiates of certain life-cycle rites, shamanic ceremonies and close encounters. It must be remembered that, in the majority of cases the visionary, just like the close encounter witness, is an 'ordinary person', for example Drythelm was a Northumbrian family man. Due to their experience these people suddenly become 'special' to those around them and some, being given messages from the otherworld, are transformed into 'prophets'. Often the visionary is awed and sometimes terrified by what has happened to him, and occasionally finds that he suffers from short or long term scarring of a mental or physical nature. The reader of these accounts is made absolutely aware that the visionary has been transformed by his ordeal, and will never be able to return to his old way of life. In most cases, not surprisingly for an individual living in medieval Christian Europe, the transformation manifests in religious conversion. After startling mourners by abruptly sitting up on his deathbed, Drythelm tells his wife, "Do not be afraid, for I have truly risen from the death by which I was held fast, and have been permitted to live again among men; nevertheless, from now on I must live not according to my old habits, but in a much different manner."⁷⁸

Distributing his possessions between his wife, sons and the poor, Drythelm retires to a Benedictine monastery to spend the rest of his life devoted to prayer, fasting, bathing in icy rivers and other austere rituals. Bede, Drythelm's chronicler, further testifies to his subject's transformation: "Until the day of [his] death, he persevered in such penance of mind and body that even if his tongue had kept silent, his life would have proclaimed that he had seen many things, either dreadful or desirable, that have been hidden from others."⁷⁹ Upon his return, Owen undertakes a pilgrimage to Jerusalem burdened by a wooden cross which he carries on his shoulder. He later feels impelled to a religious life and becomes interpreter for the Cistercian monk Gilbert of Louth, who founded an abbey in Ireland. Gunthelm and Tundal seek to enter the Cistercian order, and Alberic enters the monastery of Monte Cassino.⁸⁰

The visionary may find on his return that he has been mentally or physically scarred in some way, and this is another area in which comparisons can be made between medieval vision literature, the initiatory, shamanic and close encounter accounts already discussed in this chapter. As we have seen initiates of puberty rites may well receive ceremonial scarring or tattoos to indicate their spiritual conquest of the mundane, the shaman or close encounter experiencer may state that they have been implanted with 'alien' monitoring devices. Such 'supernatural branding' appears upon the visionary too. As recounted above, Salvius's tongue becomes "covered with grievous wounds and is swollen." During Fursa's ordeal in Hell he is "burned a little when a devil snatches up one of the sinners tormented in the flames and hurls the victim at him. The angel [Fursa's guide] explains: 'That thou hast kindled hath burned in thee.' On returning to the flesh Fursa carries the scar of his experiences."⁸¹ Yet Edmund of Eynsham experienced quite the opposite, he finds, on his return, that an open wound on his leg has disappeared. Finally, we discover that "Fursa sweats on cold days, and the monk of Wenlock is blinded for a week and suffers memory loss. Gottschalk returns with three 'witnesses of the vision' - pain in the head, the side, and the feet - but also finds that he is immune to fire. Orm temporarily loses the power of speech, and Alberic is so stupefied that for several days he cannot recognise his own mother."⁸²

The medieval visionary's journey is not, overall, a pleasant one. Unlike the harmonious contactee encounters with congenial aliens, we have instead "harsh judgement scenes, purgatorial torments, and infernal terrors".⁸³ With its ordeal scenes, witnessing of atrocities, and supernatural tagging, the medieval otherworld journey has more in common with the terrors of alien abduction; fear and pain play a conspicuous part in the visionary's journey. This review shows that in these medieval accounts we are able to identify the three stages of archetypal initiation: separation from the ordinary realm of existence; the liminal stage when the individual receives instruction and undergoes ordeals; and the reintegration back into society in a permanently transformed state. There is a consistency in the experience of medieval visionaries, shamanic initiates and alien abductees, despite the centuries that separate these reported phenomena. We will now consider our final type of archetypal initiatory journey: the Near-Death Experience.

Near-Death Experiences

As previously discussed, near-death experiences (NDEs) are not a contemporary phenomenon, but have been reported for centuries throughout the world. What is new is that with advances in medical science more people have recovered from the brink of death to describe NDEs. Having analysed 150 NDE reports Raymond Moody Jr., identified fifteen commonly occurring themes (see Chapter One note 67) which he arranged in the order in which they typically occur to construct a 'theoretically complete' model of a NDE. As it has inspired much subsequent research Moody's theoretical model deserves to be quoted here in full:

A man is dying, and as he reaches the point of greatest physical distress, he hears himself pronounced dead by his doctor. He begins to hear an uncomfortable noise, a loud ringing or buzzing, and at the same time feels himself moving very rapidly through a long dark tunnel. After this, he suddenly finds himself outside of his own physical body, but still in the immediate physical environment, and he sees his own body from a distance, as though he is a spectator. He watches the resuscitation attempt from this unusual vantage point and is in a state of emotional upheaval.

After a while, he collects himself and becomes more accustomed to his odd condition. He notices that he still has a "body," but one of a very different nature and with very different powers from the physical body he has left behind. Soon other things begin to happen. Others come to meet and to help him. He glimpses the spirits of relatives and friends who have already died, and a loving, warm spirit of a kind he has never encountered before - a being of light - appears before him. This being asks him a question, nonverbally, to make him evaluate his life and helps him along by showing him a panoramic, instantaneous playback of the major events of his life. At some point he finds himself approaching some sort of barrier or border, apparently representing the limit between earthly life and the next life. Yet, he finds that he must go back to the earth, that the time for his death has not yet come. At this point he resists, for by now he is taken up with his experiences in the afterlife and does not want to return. He is overwhelmed by intense feelings of joy, love, and peace. Despite his attitude, though, he somehow reunites with his physical body and lives.

Later he tries to tell others, but he has trouble doing so. In the first place, he can find no human words adequate to describe these unearthly episodes. He also finds that others scoff, so he stops telling other people. Still, the experience affects his life profoundly, especially his views about death and its relationship to life.⁸⁴

As Moody's title suggests the above is only a 'theoretical model' of the NDEs he has collated. Despite the striking similarities between these accounts no two experiences are precisely identical:

There is no one element of the composite experience which every single person has reported to me, which crops up in every narrative. Nonetheless, a few of these elements come fairly close to being universal...The order in which a dying person goes through the various stages...may vary from that given in my 'theoretical model'...However, the order in which the stages occur in the model is a very typical order, and wide variations are unusual....⁸⁵

Since Moody's initial study there have been a succession of independent NDE studies in the United States and western Europe which have corroborated a large proportion of Moody's results. Thousands of people who have reported NDEs have been interviewed and their accounts meticulously studied by researchers such as Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, who is well-known for her studies in death and dying. More statistical approaches have been employed by professor of psychology Kenneth Ring, cardiologist Michael Sabom and parapsychologists Karlis Osis and Erlunder Haraldsson.⁸⁶ One remarkable feature of all these studies has been the very consistency of NDE accounts. Apart from a few minor differences Sabom's results agree with Moody's findings. He identified that the fundamental features of NDE are 1) ineffability, 2) timelessness, 3) conviction that the experience is real rather than hallucinatory or dreamlike, 4) feelings of peacefulness and release from pain, 5) and separation of the body.⁸⁷ After separation the individual may either stay at the scene of his 'death' or travel to another world of 'light' where he encounters other entities and evaluates his life.

Kenneth Ring concluded that for 48 per cent of his research sample their experiences conformed to Moody's theoretical pattern. Ring, therefore, agrees that "there is no mistaking the common underlying pattern of the core experience itself [as shown in Moody's informal study]."⁸⁸ As we shall see later when we explore the NDE, Ring's research did highlight certain inconsistencies with Moody's model, yet these discrepancies Ring considers to be minor. Overall he places more emphasis upon the apparently common progression of the NDE. Like Sabom, Ring identifies five stages of a NDE: peace, body separation, entering the darkness, seeing the light, and entering the light. As Ring's stages are less detailed than Moody's fifteen features, we will explore the NDE in more detail using Ring's stages as a guide. We shall also discuss whether this phenomenon can be viewed as an initiatory journey, exhibiting the classic stages of separation, liminality, and reintegration.

At the onset of their experience contemporary near-death subjects describe a feeling of peace, painlessness, ease and/or security, that may eventually culminate in an overwhelming sense of joy and happiness as the individual realises that he is in the process of, or has already, 'died'. No less than sixty per cent of Ring's patients reported such a sensation.⁸⁹ One of Ring's subjects who tried to commit suicide describes this state as: "This *incredible* feeling of peace...all of a sudden there was no pain, just peace. I suppose it is because it is so completely unlike anything else that I have ever experienced in my life...a perfectly beautiful, beautiful feeling."⁹⁰ Doctor Melvin Morse, in his study of the transformational affect of NDEs on the individual, recounts the experience of one of his study subjects when she was 15 years old. She vividly recalls the incident for Morse thirty-two years afterwards: "The feeling that went with it was utter and total peace. I was not an unhappy person as a kid, so it wasn't as though my life wasn't happy and peaceful. But this was a peace I had never really known before nor since."⁹¹

The realization that he has 'died' is concurrent with the individual's realization that he has 'moved out of' his physical body. The subject is separated from his body, and it can be argued that he is also separated from his normal physical environment before being thrust into another realm. Not only may the subject be considered clinically dead but at this point he symbolically dies to his old self. The process of separation is rarely observed in detail by the NDE subject. The moment of realization occurs as the individual finds himself viewing his physical body from above, as if from an external vantage point. With this realization comes an awareness of 'floating' or feeling of 'weightlessness', as he rises to a vantage point somewhere close to the ceiling, if the individual's physical body is in a room, or higher in the air if the body is outdoors. The individual invariably remarks upon the 'timelessness' of this out of body state. He feels as though he has been 'lifted out' of the normal parameters of time and space in the same manner experienced by close encounter witnesses. One of Ring's patients recalled "My sense of time was way off. Time didn't seem to mean anything...It was just, well, I don't know how to explain it, even."⁹²

Although 'out-of-body' separation forms an important stage of the NDE, researchers acknowledge that it is an unusual and important phenomenon in itself. Otherwise known in occult or spiritualist circles as 'astral projection' an out-of-body experience (OBE) has, like NDEs, been reported by individuals throughout history. It is not reliant on the individual being close to death, and may occur when the individual is just falling asleep or upon awakening. However, a few persons have been able to control this action and can project out of their bodies when they wish. According to Kenneth Ring's study 37 per cent of resuscitated patients reported an OBE. One of Ring's subjects was able to see the dirt on the operating theatre's light fittings during the OBE stage of her NDE whilst undergoing surgery:

From where I was looking, I could look down on this enormous fluorescent light...and it was so dirty on top of the light. ['Could you see the top of the light fixture, then?'] I was floating above the light fixture. ['Could you see the top of the light fixture?'] Yes [sounding a little impatient with my question], and it was filthy. And I remember thinking, 'Got to tell the nurses about that.'....I don't know how long I was there [but] I could see what was going on in the cubicle next to mine. We were in a series of cubicles with curtains in between and I could see the woman in the cubicle next to me and she was asleep.⁹³

One of Michael Sabom's subjects, a 42 year old woman with a heart irregularity, described a lumbar disc surgical operation conducted on herself. An unusual feature of this particular OBE is that at the time of her operation the woman was laying *face down* on the operating table:

What I recall...was it seems like I was just floating up near the ceiling...It was sort of a funny feeling because I was up there and this body was below...It was a green room...They had surgical gowns on...I could see them operating on my back....I came right down to the operation and I was amazed how deep my spine was in my back and how many layers with things clamped and all that sort of stuff...Then I saw them reach in, I guess it was on my left-hand side, and get the disk out.⁹⁴

Although the OBE is a central feature of the NDE there is debate between researchers over what form the observing separated 'self' takes. Moody states that in the accounts he analysed each person showed a "very decided agreement about the general properties and characteristics of the new body. So, to adopt a term for it which will sum up its properties fairly well, and which has been used by a couple of my subjects, I shall henceforth call it the 'spiritual body'."⁹⁵ Other words used to describe the spiritual body are, for example, a 'mist', a 'cloud', an 'energy pattern', 'smokelike' and 'wispy'.⁹⁶ The attributes of this spiritual body Moody identifies as invisibility (those people with whom the spiritual body tries to contact are unaware of its existence) and lacking solidity (this entity finds that it can 'pass through' physical objects with ease). As has already been observed, the individual feels that, in this state, he is floating and thus is weightless. In a study conducted by Bruce Greyson and Ian Stevenson 58 per cent of near-death subjects stated that, like the individuals in Moody's sample, they could actually sense themselves in a new type of body, being of the same size and age as their old physical one but much lighter in weight.⁹⁷ Kübler-Ross, however, concluded from her analysis that the spiritual body is an "exact replica of the physical body, lacking only its defects".⁹⁸ According to research conducted by Ring and Sabom NDE subjects found that they did not, or could not, sense any 'form' to their separated self; according to Ring, more than 97 per cent of modern near-death experiencers felt an absence of *any* form of body.⁹⁹ Despite the difference between the Greyson and Stevenson/Moody samples and the Ring/Sabom samples, the studies do show that the majority of individuals can provide a detailed recall of all that is happening *around* them. The difference of perception of 'form' during the NDE in these studies is puzzling but may stem from the phrasing or form of questions asked.

Having separated from his physical body the individual finds himself in the liminal condition of having moved out of one realm of existence but not, as yet, gained a new identity. It is during this stage, Ring observes, that subjects begin to be aware of two levels of existence. The experiencer's attention oscillates between the physical scene around him and 'another reality' which seems to draw the individual ever closer to it. Ring believes that this stage of the NDE is:

...a transitional one between this world and whatever may be said to lie beyond. I call it "entering the darkness." This space is usually characterized as completely black or dark, very peaceful, and, at least in the majority of such accounts, without dimension. Most persons have the sense of floating or drifting through it, though a few respondents reported that they felt they were moving very rapidly through this space.¹⁰⁰

Moody describes this stage as entering 'the dark tunnel' but has heard this 'darkness' being described in a variety of ways, for example, "as a cave, a well, a trough, an enclosure, a tunnel, a funnel, a vacuum, a void, a sewer, a valley, a cylinder. Although people use different terminology, it is clear that they are all trying to express one idea."¹⁰¹ Some examples follow:

Next I was hurtling down this dark tunnel at a high speed, not touching the sides. It made a sort of swishing sound. At the end of the tunnel was this yellow-white light. And then I said, "This must be what it feels like to die. I feel no pain at all."¹⁰²

I found myself in a tunnel, a tunnel of concentric circles. Shortly after that I saw a TV programme called *The Time Tunnel*, where people go back in time through this spiralling tunnel. That's the closest to it I can think of.¹⁰³

...I entered head first into a narrow and very, very dark passageway. I seemed to just fit inside of it. I began to slide down, down, down.¹⁰⁴

I floated for a while and then was drawn down a long dark passageway with a very clear bright white light at the end.¹⁰⁵

...I then entered into a dark round tube or hole. I could call it a tunnel. I seemed to go headfirst through this thing and suddenly I was in a place filled up with love, and a beautiful bright white light.¹⁰⁶

As can be observed from these examples the passage from the third and fourth stage of the core NDE is marked by the appearance of a bright light, a light which virtually all who perceive it, feel drawn towards. Typically at first the light is dim but it rapidly takes on a preternatural white or golden brilliance which, despite its glow, does not dazzle or hurt the individual's sight. It is recognised that this light is of unearthly beauty, and is not in the least bit offensive or objectionable to the individual.

This light was really the absence of darkness. We're not used to that concept because we always get a shadow from a light unless the light is all around us. But this light was so total and complete that you didn't look at the light, you were *in* the light. See what I'm saying?¹⁰⁷

I knew I was dying....I felt I was "falling backward" into darkness and total silence....Suddenly, I was suspended in total light - bright but not glaring. *PEACEFUL and ABSOLUTE JOY*....¹⁰⁸

I remember seeing a light. I was curious and drawn to it. It was like looking into the flash of a camera - white, goldish and very bright.¹⁰⁹

A number of near-death experiencers stated that, on encountering this light, they felt that they were able to leave the liminal state they had been in and enter into a new state of being:

For many respondents, though not all, the golden light brings to an end the “time of darkness” and thus seems to signal an entirely new stage of the experience....The transition from darkness to light is packed with symbolic meaning: phenomenologically, if not ontologically, it is taken to signify the termination of the experience of dying and the beginning of new life....¹¹⁰

Reference must once again be made to the common emphasis on light which seems so pervasive within the initiatory experiences discussed in this chapter. Light appears to be universal cutting across cultural and historical boundaries of these phenomena. In all accounts the light is described as being ‘bright’, ‘brilliant’ ‘dazzling’ and emanates from an unknown source. Near-death experiencers repeatedly state that, whilst being engulfed in the light, they become aware that it is radiating wisdom and compassion. These feelings bathe the individual’s mind promoting total acceptance of, and ease in, this otherworld:

When I was almost to the end [of the tunnel], I slowed down and then I was there. This light was so bright and it surrounded me and filled me with a total love and joy. I don’t know how else to describe it to you. I felt intensely pure, calm and reassured. I just wanted to stay there forever.¹¹¹

I felt myself floating towards this beautiful light...I have a hard time describing the feeling I had at this time...I had no responsibilities, no worries, no problems, I didn’t think of anyone, I was just obsessed with the serenity of the light.

The peacefulness was wonderful. It’s a selfish feeling when I think back because I didn’t think of my wife, Sallie, or the kids or my folks, no-one. Just peace, serenity, quiet, floating carefree - it was beautiful.¹¹²

I remember feeling love and peace and also feeling as though I had escaped from all the tension and frustration in my life. I felt kind of enveloped by light. It was a wonderful feeling.¹¹³

With the feelings of love, peace and acceptance the subject may experience such an expansion of awareness that “one seems to comprehend everything in a single gaze.”¹¹⁴ A woman recalls her encounter with the light:

It was a dynamic light, not like a spotlight. It was an incredible energy - a light you wouldn’t believe. I almost floated in it. It was feeding my consciousness feelings of unconditional love, complete safety, and complete, total perfection....It just *pow*ed into you. My consciousness was going out and getting larger and taking in more; I expanded and more and more came in. It was such rapture, such bliss. And then, and then, a piece of knowledge came in: it was that I was immortal, indestructible. I cannot be hurt, cannot be lost. We don’t have anything to worry about. And that the world is perfect; everything that happens is part of a perfect plan. I don’t understand this part now, but I still know it’s true....¹¹⁵

As we shall observe later it is not uncommon for the near-death survivor to recall the receipt of what they consider to be an important revelation whilst in the light, yet the details of the revelation become lost to them in their mortal realm.

Encounters with the all-embracing, all-loving omniscient light take a variety of forms. Although the majority of near-death experiencers describe a sense of ecstatic 'oneness' with 'existence', their accounts differ as to the manner or form in which they 'see' or 'sense' this ultimate reality. For some all that is sensed is a 'presence' which exudes an atmosphere of wisdom and love. Moody concludes from his survey that the light possesses a "very definite personality" which he henceforth describes as "the being of light."¹¹⁶

Like the luminous men of biblical and visionary literature, the being of light is understood by some to be an angelic guardian or guide, occasionally performing the soul-extracting function of otherworld guides in traditional accounts. More often, however, the spirits of deceased relatives or friends serve as guides, while the luminous presence is an exalted cosmic figure, sometimes identified with God or Christ.¹¹⁷

Just as the shaman, ritual initiand, medieval visionary and close encounter witness each encounter a guide upon their journey, so too does the near-death survivor. As already observed the nature of the guide differs with the type of phenomenon described: the visionary's and ritual initiand's guides are ambivalent; the shaman and some close encounter witnesses encounter two types of guide, one 'good' and one 'bad'.

The near-death experiencer is, however, fortunate in that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, their companion is reported to be filled with compassionate concern for their charge, and they are not subjected to any sort of ordeal. One woman was told by such a spirit that "I have helped you through this stage of your existence, but now I am going to turn you over to others." Another that "as she was leaving her body she detected the presence of two other spiritual beings near, and that they identified themselves as her 'spiritual helpers'."¹¹⁸ One of Ring's subjects, Hannah Markham, was just eighteen when she attempted suicide. She was discovered whilst still unconscious and rushed to hospital. She remembers:

...tumbling down through a tunnel about three feet wide. There was a light toward the end of the tunnel but before I could reach it, two figures appeared outlined in light. They communicated with me through my mind, telepathically. I recognized one of the figures as being my father. He confirmed and agreed with everything conveyed by his companion who seemed to have great authority, like an angel or one of God's helpers.¹¹⁹

I was above - and there was a presence. It's the only way I can explain it - because I didn't see anything. But there was [pause] a presence and it may not have been talking to me but it was like [pause], like I *knew* what was going on between our minds.¹²⁰

Then suddenly I saw mother, who had died about nine years ago. And she was sitting - she always used to sit in her rocker, you know - she was smiling and she just sat there looking at me and she said to me in Hungarian [the language her mother had used while alive], "Well, we've been waiting for you. We've been expecting you. Your father's here and we are going to help you."¹²¹

I knew it was God. I knew...this is the hard part...There is no doubt in my mind that it was God. God was me and I was God. I was part of the light and I was one with it. I was not separate. I am not saying that I am a supreme being. I was God, as you are, as everyone is.¹²²

The light came closer and closer at a high rate of speed. It then took on the shape of a man in a white robe. The man hovered at about 20 feet away. He spoke no words but I knew it was Christ...Christ has a very kind, loving, compassionate face but at the same time you know He is in command.¹²³

There has been considerable debate over modern near-death accounts which explicitly identify the figure of light as a particular religious personage. It has been argued that near-death experiencers are placing their own particular religious *interpretation* upon an underlying universal experience.¹²⁴ Studies by Karlis Osis and Erlandur Haraldsson and Kenneth Ring support Moody's hypothesis that religious beliefs influence the interpretation but not the content of a NDE.¹²⁵ Yet the same researchers have also found that agnostics and atheists tend to identify the 'being of light' in religious terms. Moody observes "In quite a few instances, reports have come from persons who have no religious beliefs or training at all prior to their experiences, and their descriptions do not seem to differ in content from [those of] people who had quite strong religious beliefs."¹²⁶

The cultural expectation that there is no life after death and that pain and judgement are as likely as heavenly bliss are not necessarily reflected in NDEs. Where the devout churchgoer expects judgement and punishment neither is found. The Christian vision of the afterlife is replete with frightful encounters with the forces of good and evil. Yet the overall NDE portrays a much more humane afterlife, one where the emphasis is upon self-awareness, knowledge and unconditional love, with no vestiges of wars between the forces of dark and light, judgement, purgatory or hell.

Regardless of who is identified and why they should be encountered, it would appear that, as in medieval otherworld narratives and shamanic initiations, these 'beings of light' wish to guard the dying person during his time in the other realm. The entity also undertakes to teach and guide the individual, as do the ancestral or shamanic spirit helpers and aliens. Conversations are, by common account, telepathic in nature. A transfer of thoughts takes place so that it is impossible to misunderstand or lie to the 'presence'. During these conversations many individuals are encouraged to undergo a transformational process in either of two ways: a series of probing, non-verbal questions asked by the 'presence' or a panoramic review of the individual's life. (In a number of NDEs it is not uncommon for the experiencer to be subjected to both processes.) Although these processes have their parallels in the 'ordeal' undergone by abductees, shamans, ritual initiands and medieval visionaries alike, in NDEs there is a notable lack of condemnation or pain. The probing examination by the 'presence' transpires in a compassionate and gentle way, without judgement. The types of questions asked - such as "Are you ready to die?", "What have you done with your life to show me?" - seem to be phrased in such a way as to provoke reflection. As Moody remarks, "It is a Socratic question, one asked not to acquire information but to help the person who is being asked to proceed along the path to the truth by himself."¹²⁷

Hannah, Ring's patient who attempted suicide, recalls that during her NDE one of 'God's helpers' conducted her through a self-examination:

He made me understand that I had black marks against me because fear had prevented me from doing things I should have done. (It was also explained what these beings were saying about the black marks against me. They were saying that statement to make a point. They didn't mean I had black marks against me that I would be punished for.) I was urged to change my attitude, and to have a more positive outlook on life on earth, even in tough and hard times. I would have to face what I had tried to escape. Without the option of refusal, I was compelled to return and felt myself sucked back into my body. Now, when I apply the advice given to me by this shining being so full of knowledge and wisdom, I am able to love life on this planet more.¹²⁸

All of a sudden I was traveling [sic] somewhere and then I was with a Being that radiated unmeasurable [sic] love. I felt comfortable and very glad to be with him. I thought about my young life and all the physical problems I'd had and said: "I'm glad to be done with that one." He didn't agree. "You didn't do much," he said patiently.

Immediately I was filled with a sense of having a mission that was left undone. I said: "Oh you're right, maybe I should go back." And like that I was back in my body, full of pain.¹²⁹

In the following example the 'presence' who guides the individual through their self-examination is identified as the subject's grandparents:

I communicated with my grandparents but I didn't talk. I don't even remember thinking. But I was right there with them as they spoke. What did they say? They said I had solved most of my problems and could now go either way. That meant I could either stay with them in the light or go back to my body. It was up to me and it wasn't absolutely necessary to stay with them.¹³⁰

The life review undertaken by the experiencer has been reported in almost identical terms in numerous NDE studies. The review is described as being different to that of ordinary 'remembering'. It is extraordinarily rapid, with images swiftly following on from one another, or appearing instantaneously so that the whole of the person's life is reviewed in what seems like an instant of earthly time. It is also extremely clear and precise with some accounts reporting the images perceived as being vibrant in colour, three-dimensional, or even moving. The only difference in the overall life review sequence is that some people report seeing every instance in their life up to their 'death' whilst others report viewing only highlights of their past. An example of the frequently reported life review follows:

When the light appeared, the first thing he said to me was, 'What do you have to show me that you have done with your life?' or something to this effect. And that's when these flash-backs started. I thought, 'Gee, what is going on?' because all of a sudden I was back in my early childhood. And from then on, it was like I was walking from the time of my very early life, on through each year of my life, right up to the present...the things that flashed back came in the order of my life, and they were so vivid.

The scenes were just like you walked outside and saw them completely three-dimensional, adding colour. And they moved. For instance, when I saw myself breaking the toy [an incident from her kindergarten days in which she had smashed a toy that she had liked], I could see all the movements. It wasn't like I was watching it all from my perspective at the time. It was like the little girl I saw was somebody else, in a movie, one little girl among all the other children out there playing on the playground. Yet, it was me. I saw myself doing these things, as a child, and they were the exact same things I had done, because I remember them.¹³¹

As at the OBE stage of NDE we observe that subjects are aware of a time distortion during their life review. The events of a lifetime are said to be compressed into what may seem like a split second or, at the most, a few minutes. Despite the fleeting nature of this review, as the last example clearly shows individuals are able to inspect every instance displayed whilst taking the time to react with the appropriate emotion. As Russell Noyes and Roy Kletti state:

Time, as a dimension of recalled experiences, was expanded or eliminated altogether. One woman claimed that, "each scene lasted only seconds but, as in a dream, seemed to last hours, days, weeks. I do not know how long. Time had no meaning although the events I pictured were progressive." Another noted that, as an endless stream of past experiences went through her mind, "time stood still." Due to an expansion of space, memories were often viewed from a distance as though on a screen. A drowning victim said he saw his life, "like a panorama far below." In the midst of an explosion one man said, "it was as if I were sitting on a cloud looking down upon the whole scene - past, present, future."¹³²

Note just as close encounter witnesses have stated that they viewed future events on a "screen-like apparatus" (see Chapter Two) so, too, in the above example we find images of the future and memories being projected onto a 'screen'. The near-death experiencer's perception of altered time may be compared with the sense of time distortion experienced in close encounter claims and in some shamanic narratives. The transcendence of time and space seems, therefore, to be a universal feature in travelling to other realms manifesting in two ways: not only is the 'normal' or ordinary perception of time as we know it on Earth apparently 'altered', but also the individual often perceives himself as being 'lifted out of' or 'beyond' time in such a way that his experience takes on a 'timeless' quality.

The forms of self-examination are viewed by some near-death experiencers as part of an educational effort made by the 'being of light'.¹³³ In the majority of cases, (as we shall discover later when discussing how the near-death subject is transformed by his experience), time and time again the 'presence' is reported to stress the importance of gaining knowledge and learning how to love other people unconditionally. After the self-examination, during which the individual is said to "grasp the essential meaning of life", the subject reaches the point at which it is decided whether he should return to his body or stay in the otherworld. This decision is reportedly made either by the 'presence', a dead friend or relative, or by the individual himself. The following are typical examples:

A man's voice, very warm and caring, held me back from going to the people [who were waiting in the light]. The voice seemed to be coming from whoever or whatever was holding me in that wonderful loving warmth. The voice said, "Suzanne, turn around." I turned around and I saw my children standing in midair. Then the voice said: "Go back and be a good mother."¹³⁴

Not with words the presence communicated, "So you've decided to go back." I communicated the same way of putting thought into the presence. I said, "Yes." The presence said, "Why?" I said, "My mother needs me." At that moment I started down a tunnel. When I could see the "light" no more, I woke up.¹³⁵

A gentle voice told me I had to go back. Then I met a dear friend, a neighbor [sic] from a town that we had left. He also told me to go back.¹³⁶

Sometimes the desire to return can be overwhelming. One woman found herself with several deceased family members and friends who persistently urged her to join them. She told them she was not ready to leave her infant son and, eventually, they said she could return.¹³⁷ Despite admitting to the beauty of her near-death experience, another woman admitted to her guide that she was worried her two children would not be able to cope without her. She was returned immediately.¹³⁸ It is in the return that we find parallels between the medieval visionary and contemporary near-death experiences, in both instances many individuals are told to return by the 'guide' or 'presence'.

Like Salvius, Drythelm, Adamnán, Tundal, and Edmund, many near-death subjects report being torn away from the enjoyment of heaven by a command to go back to the body. Even the wording is similar: "Go and do what you can and you will have another chance to return." "You have to go back. There is something very important you have to complete." "Go back, your work on earth has not been completed. Go back now."¹³⁹

The striking difference between these two types of initiatory journey is that in the medieval vision the medieval 'guide' or 'presence' is usually a recognised authority figure such as Christ, the Virgin Mary, a holy monk or archangel. Whether or not the individual has any choice in the decision to return, and even if he freely elects to do so, there is usually a yearning - sometimes of great intensity - on his part to stay in the other realm:

I remember pleading with God, and saying, "Please let me stay."
He never answered, just smiled with that loving and kind smile on His face.

Suddenly I felt like I was being pulled down and thrown back into my body. I was angry. I don't think I have ever before felt such a rage! I screamed and screamed in anger and rage because I wanted to go back to that place with the clouds!¹⁴⁰

The feeling of having to relinquish some precious gift is made all the more painful for a few individuals who report that they were allowed a small glimpse of what they were (for the moment at least) missing out on. Only about one in five near-death experiencers describe reaching the stage where, having entered the light totally, they find themselves in an extraordinarily beautiful realm possibly identifiable as paradise or heaven:

When I arrived at the end [of the tunnel] there was a lovely vista spread out before me. There were all fields with flowers and there was a nice road over on my right and the trees were painted white halfway up and there was a white fence. It was lovely.¹⁴¹

All I could see was marble all around me; it was marble. It looked like marble, but it was very beautiful. And I could hear beautiful music; I can't tell you what kind, because I never heard anything like it before....The whole thing was just very good, very happy, very warm, very peaceful, very comforted, very - I've never known that feeling in my whole life.¹⁴²

...I was in a place filled up with love, and a beautiful bright white light. The place seemed holy. Plants and flowers, I could see beautiful scenes.¹⁴³

On being told that he has to return, or after making that decision himself, the subject describes his return journey as being very abrupt in nature. Many claim that they are drawn rapidly down the tunnel they went through at the start of their NDE, and 'jerked' back into their bodies. Yet, others cannot recall the moment of re-entering their bodies.¹⁴⁴ As observed in Chapter Two close encounter experiencers report that the journey back to Earth is an abrupt one. In the majority of cases they are unable to remember the actual transition to reality. It would seem that Thomas E. Bullard's theory of *doorway amnesia*, i.e. the frequent inability to remember entering the UFO or returning home, also applies to near-death survivors. During the first few moments of their return it is common they may feel intensely annoyed at having been returned from such a peaceful and loving state to one in which they feel the pain of their physical body. The individual may feel intense regret, frustration or even alienation:

If everyone could have this feeling I think it would be like Heaven on earth...I felt as if I had been in another dimension, maybe spiritually many, many light-years away from this planet and felt like an alien back here.

Dr. Ring, when I came back...I felt *horrible pain*....After this experience...life seemed very difficult to adjust to. It seemed as if I was a stranger living on another planet. I felt so different, and have never truly felt the same since this incident happened....No longer is this earth my home. I was *cold*, and felt severe pain, anger, disappointment, and very frustrated.

I...got very depressed in the following months, I was ashamed to be sorry to be "alive" in this world, sorry to have left that lovelier one, guilty that it meant I didn't love my daughter enough to want to live.¹⁴⁵

However, even though some persons felt regret at having to leave, they also felt fortunate to have experienced a near-death episode, and to have been given an opportunity to continue with their life:

I awoke many hours later to discover myself on a respirator in Intensive Care. I was *overjoyed* about my experience and in spite of realizing I was very ill again, I wrote on a slate board to my sister and husband about it.¹⁴⁶

It is on returning from his NDE that the subject may realise just how the experience has profoundly transformed his life. Several accounts describe undergoing another period of liminality during which the near-death experiencer finds it intensely difficult to return to normal life. It is as though he wishes to maintain the peaceful contented feelings found in the otherworld. Caught between two worlds, he has not yet consigned the other realm entirely to the past enabling him to complete his reintegration. One woman describes how she felt a few days after her NDE:

...I felt privileged to see something that they [the nurses] weren't able to understand or see. Then one of them started banging on my chest with all of his might and I opened my eyes. For several days after that I just stared at the ceiling. They said I did that for three days. I think I was waiting to see those stars or for that world to open up again.¹⁴⁷

Joe Geraci describes his inability to adjust to normal life and his reluctance to leave behind the blissful other realm:

It was at least six months before I could even speak to my wife about it. It was such a beautiful, swelling feeling inside, that every time I tried to express it, I'd think I would just explode, you know, I would break down and cry. And she, for the longest time, couldn't figure out what was wrong with me....

The minute I came back [from clinical death], the pain returned immediately, and the fear...everything human came back. And I remember being very angry that they brought me back. And my wife ended up asking me why later: "You seemed angry. How come?" I just couldn't tell her.

That was probably the most frustrating six months of my existence. After experiencing perfection...I didn't want to let it go. And it wasn't easy. After I recovered the second time and went home...everything just seemed to change. It was almost like I was starting my life all over. I was a baby. I hadn't made the mistakes I had made in my life. Things weren't messed up....I can recall, in my attempt to hold on to this feeling, to hold on to this peace, that I began to bump into earthly things that of course aren't going to escape from you - you know they're there.

My first frustrating experience was with the television. I couldn't watch television. There would be a cosmetic commercial...I'd have to turn it off because it was something false, it was unnecessary, it was fake. It just didn't belong, it was insignificant. Any type of violence, even an old Western movie, I'd have to turn off, because to me that was total ignorance; there was just no reason on earth to show people killing people. That was frustrating, especially when the family's sitting down trying to watch television and Dad gets up and turns it off. So I finally just learned to go to my room.¹⁴⁸

The problems of adjustment are as troublesome for the near-death experiencer as for the close encounter witness, as observed earlier in this chapter and as will be observed in Chapter Five. Both travellers have to face their inability to adequately articulate their 'ordeal' to those around them, especially to those who are not able to empathize with the experience. Both have to adapt to viewing the world through the different eyes of their 'reborn' state and, possibly as we shall see in the next chapter, both types of voyager may also have to deal with various paranormal phenomena.

Near-death testimonies repeatedly record that, unlike close encounter experiencers, the individual finds that he has no trouble in recalling their NDE. It is usually so vividly remembered in detail that regression hypnosis is not needed. Even when the incident happened many years prior to the research date investigators have found that their subjects describe their experience as if it had happened the day before. Vince Hermann comments on his near-death episode:

Even after almost thirteen years I can still vividly recall crossing over. The warmth, the security. Initially, I remember being able to see the doctors and nurses working around me. As if I were everywhere in the room. Able to see from all angles, I distinctly remember looking into my eyes - inside my head. I felt confused about why they were so engrossed with an empty shell.¹⁴⁹

As with the other types of initiatory journey discussed in this chapter the near-death experiencer feels that he has received an important revelation during his mental examination with the 'presence'. However, upon his return, in common with some of the medieval visionaries and close encounter subjects, the individual may find that he can no longer remember the details of this important insight. We will explore the nature of these revelations and their possible transformative affect in the next chapter.

As this review of the NDE highlights, the subject is led on a journey which is defined throughout by the archetypal stages of separation, liminality and reintegration. However, despite the underlying similarities with the close encounter experience, the NDE does not include an ordeal. A survey comparing the experiences of near-death and abduction subjects found that:

Not only is the content of the two experiences vastly different, to say nothing of the emotional response to them, but the very *quality* of these two categories of extraordinary encounters also stands in blatant contrast to each other....While it may be true, as I have argued, that they both have the structure of *archetypal initiatory journeys*, the *worlds* that they open to their respective travelers [sic] seem, perhaps quite literally and not just metaphorically to reside in altogether different universes.¹⁵⁰

Initially these findings appear to be correct. The abductee claims to be kidnapped by alien entities who subject him to painful and humiliating physical and mental examinations. He is controlled by these aliens and desires to escape. On returning, the confused individual finds he is left with only vague memories of the experience which must be painstakingly pieced together. It is only then that he may discover he has been repeatedly abducted. Near-death experiencers, on the other hand, describe a far more positive and life-enhancing experience. The entities encountered are loving and helpful. They lead the individual on a gentle and affirmatory self-assessment and reveal insights of profound spiritual import. The subject wishes to remain in this other realm and usually regrets having to return. On his return, although the revelations may not remain intact, the actual NDE is vividly recalled. It is unlikely that an individual experiences a repeated NDE.¹⁵¹

A cursory review suggests that NDEs and alien abductions obviously cannot be regarded as related phenomena. NDEs have more in common with contactee accounts: communication with a kind alien on a compassionate, salvific mission. The lack of ordeal and easy recall of the experience is also an aspect of contactee cases. We cannot assume that the obvious conclusion is correct. In support of this observation Kenneth Ring cites a case which "confounds our neat dichotomy between these two types of experience."¹⁵² In 1977 Beryl Hendricks, a college-educated woman, underwent surgery to remove a benign tumor from her breast. Unfortunately, in the early summer of the next year she discovered another tumor "about the size of a golf ball." On discovering this she made a mental note to call her doctor the next day, and returned to sit with her husband in the living room. She does not remember that she then passed out, although her husband was witness to it. He took her pulse and was unable to find one. Meanwhile Beryl vividly recalls:

The next thing I remember was looking out of a round window and seeing the blackest blackness with tiny white sparkles (I later realised I was experiencing deep space). I felt cold - colder than I have ever experienced. I was unconcerned about my predicament and I turned my gaze from the window (to my left). There was a bright white light directly above me with four - seven thin, tall figures around me (I later realized I was on some kind of operating table). I was given two messages (telepathically):

1. Look and see - it is gone.
2. Follow your husband (we had been experiencing marital difficulty at the time).

All of a sudden, I was tumbling head over heels (figuratively - as I was out of my body) and saw the earth as geometric green and [was] shown land masses, changing, getting closer and closer, not unlike an airplane crashing, [travelling at] unbelievable speed, and finally falling from the couch to the floor; vomiting relentlessly.

Two hours passed, and when I washed the vomit off, the lump was gone - totally...In the ten years since this experience my health has been excellent and I have (with my husband) found a close personal relationship with God.¹⁵³

This episode could be classified as either an NDE or close encounter, having elements of both, and it is not unique. Ring has discovered other individuals who, in describing what they consider to be a NDE talk about UFOs and aliens in the same context.¹⁵⁴ Therefore we must not dismiss the possibility that, at a deeper level of analysis, NDEs and close encounters have a stronger kinship than would first appear.

The Archetypal Theme

It is at this point that we return to my proposal at the start of this chapter: that as soon as each expression of religion experience explored here i.e. Rites of Passage, Shamanism, Medieval Otherworld Journeys, Close Encounters and NDEs, is considered in terms of its underlying *structure* their kindred relationship becomes clear. Each phenomenon contains a journey to an 'other realm'; a voyage whereupon the traveller will be lifted out of his normal state of existence, die to the old self he leaves behind, experience instruction and/or ordeal at the hands of an otherworld being whilst in this liminal world, and finally returns 'reborn', 'transformed,' permanently set apart from the mundane world in which he must continue to live.

There are closer kinships between some journey experiences than others. For example the shaman's initiatory ordeal relates closely to the abduction experience where both individuals fare far more harshly at the hands of the 'alien' entities than either contactee or near-death subjects tend to. It would also seem that in some cases the individual has more control over his predicament than in others. The shaman learns to control his journeying whereas others, such as abductees and near-death survivors, appear to be uncontrollably thrust into their experience without any warning or preparation.

This chapter whilst highlighting the parallels between these different contexts of experience has also shown that there are a number of dissimilarities that cannot be overlooked. (These issues will be examined in greater detail in the following chapter.) However, the shared features between them are unmistakable, spanning centuries and cultures. In case after case relating to each of these phenomena the same universal structure is present despite being concealed in a variety of different accents, symbolism, emotions, and styles. It would be highly consistent with the evidence to argue, along with Carol Zaleski, that close encounter experiences may represent for our society today a particularly contemporary form of initiatory otherworld journey: "Perhaps the otherworld journey motif is 'camouflaged' in the modern lore of space travel which, like the fantastic voyage legends of the past, exemplifies what might be called the lure of the edge."¹⁵⁵ In order to further qualify the theory that the close encounter phenomenon is yet another cultural metaphor of the otherworld journey let us now discover what effect both types of alien encounter has on the experiencer.

¹ The meaning of 'Archetypal' here is that of a prototypical or original theme, which has analogies at a later period.

² I. M. Lewis, *Social Anthropology in Perspective* p.131

³ Mircea Eliade, 'Initiation: An Overview' p.227

⁴ Hilary Evans, *Gods, Spirits, Cosmic Guardians* pp.239-240

⁵ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* p.30

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.58

⁷ Keith Thompson, *Angels and Aliens* p.184

⁸ Cedric Allingham, *Flying Saucers from Mars* p.119

⁹ Patrick Harpur remarks whilst commenting upon the "examination-cum-operation" inflicted upon both Betty and Barney Hill:

...while Barney had a cup-shaped device placed over his genitals - it left a ring of red marks - Betty remembered (under hypnosis) having a needle pushed through her abdomen. This, of course, is a traditional torture employed by demons in Christian iconography -

the same operation can be seen, for example, in the fifteenth-century *Kalendrier des Bergiers*, in which demons are depicted torturing damned souls.

Thus Christian fundamentalists, who are particularly voluble in the USA, are not wholly unjustified in regarding the greys quite simply as demons in the service of Satan. [Patrick Harpur, *Daimonic Reality* p.243]

- ¹⁰ John Saliba, 'Religious Dimensions of the UFO Phenomena' p.51
- ¹¹ Thompson, op. cit., p.187
- ¹² Ibid., p.188
- ¹³ 'Resemantisation' is the process whereby an image or symbol acquires a new meaning without losing its original meaning. See Bertrand Méheust, 'UFO Abductions as Religious Folklore' pp.355-357
- ¹⁴ Ibid., pp.355-356
- ¹⁵ Thompson, op. cit., p.188
- ¹⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism* p.4
- ¹⁷ Judith & Alan Gansberg, *Direct Encounters* pp.31-35
- ¹⁸ Eliade, *Shamanism* p.13
- ¹⁹ Joan Halifax, *Shamanic Voices* p.5
- ²⁰ Eliade, *Shamanism* p.36
- ²¹ Ibid., pp.39,41-42
- ²² B. Spencer & F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* pp.522ff
- ²³ Jerome Clark, 'UFO Abduction in North Dakota' pp.145,150
- ²⁴ John Mack, *Abduction* p.123
- ²⁵ Gansberg, op. cit., pp.26-27
- ²⁶ Spencer & Gillen, op. cit., p.480, n.1
- ²⁷ Ibid., pp.480-481
- ²⁸ Ibid., p.484
- ²⁹ Ibid., p.486
- ³⁰ Mack, op. cit., p.124
- ³¹ Ibid., p.182
- ³² Eliade, *Shamanism* pp.294-296
- ³³ Ibid., pp.79-96
- ³⁴ David Jacobs, *Secret Life* p.94

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- ³⁵ Kenneth Ring, *The Omega Project* p.64
- ³⁶ Eliade, *Shamanism* p.8
- ³⁷ Ring, *op. cit.*, p.218
- ³⁸ The separation of the 'self' or 'soul' of an individual from his body is now commonly referred to as an out-of-body experience (OBE) and will be reviewed in more detail in the 'Near-Death Experience' section.
- ³⁹ Carol Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys* p.45
- ⁴⁰ H. R. Patch, *The Other World according to Descriptions in Medieval Literature* p.97
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.106
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, p.109
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.110-111
- ⁴⁴ Zaleski, *op. cit.*, p.52
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.53
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ Patch, *op. cit.*, p.116
- ⁴⁸ Zaleski, *op. cit.*, p.70
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.32
- ⁵⁰ Patch, *op. cit.*, p.106
- ⁵¹ Zaleski, *op. cit.*, p.57
- ⁵² Patch, *op. cit.*, p.97
- ⁵³ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p.99
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.110-111
- ⁵⁵ Zaleski, *op. cit.*, p.32
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.57
- ⁵⁷ Patch, *op. cit.*, p.120
- ⁵⁸ Zaleski, *op. cit.*, p.58
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.36
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.32
- ⁶¹ Patch, *op. cit.*, pp.124-125
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, p.109
- ⁶³ Zaleski, *op. cit.*, p.36

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- ⁶⁴ Patch, op. cit., pp.112-113
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., p.100
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., p.101
- ⁶⁷ Zaleski, op. cit., p.76
- ⁶⁸ Ibid., p.79
- ⁶⁹ Patch, op. cit., p.97
- ⁷⁰ Zaleski, op. cit., p.37
- ⁷¹ Ibid., p.76
- ⁷² Patch, op. cit., pp.117-118
- ⁷³ Zaleski, op. cit., p.79
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., p.79
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., p.80
- ⁷⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., p.81
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., p.32
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., p.77
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., pp.38,78
- ⁸¹ Patch, op. cit., p.99
- ⁸² Zaleski, op. cit., p.79
- ⁸³ Ibid., p.7
- ⁸⁴ Raymond Moody, *Life after Life* pp.21-22
- ⁸⁵ Raymond Moody, 'The Experience of Dying' pp.90-91
For a more indepth discussion of the NDE see also Moody's most recent book *The Last Laugh* 1999.
- ⁸⁶ Their work includes:
Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* 1973, *Questions and Answers on Death and Dying* 1974
Kenneth Ring, *Life at Death* 1980, *Heading toward Omega* 1980 and *The Omega Project* 1992
Michael B. Sabom, *Recollections of Death: A Medical Investigation* 1985
Karlis Osis and Erlunder Haraldsson, *At the Hour of Death* 1977
- ⁸⁷ Sabom, Ibid., pp.10-11
- ⁸⁸ Kenneth Ring, 'Frequency and Stages of the Prototypic Near-Death Experience' p.145
- ⁸⁹ Ring, *Life at Death* pp.39,40

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- ⁹⁰ Ibid., p.41
- ⁹¹ Melvin Morse, *Transformed by the Light* pp.32-33
- ⁹² Ring, *Life at Death* p.97
- ⁹³ Kenneth Ring, *Heading toward Omega* p.43 quoted in Ian Wilson, *The After Death Experience* p.120
- ⁹⁴ Sabom, op. cit., pp.69-70
- ⁹⁵ Moody, 'The Experience of Dying' p.95
- ⁹⁶ Ibid., p.97
- ⁹⁷ Bruce Greyson & Charles P. Flynn 'The Phenomenology of Near-Death Experiences' quoted in Zaleski, op. cit., p.116
- ⁹⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹⁹ Wilson, op. cit., p.120
- ¹⁰⁰ Ring, '...The Prototypic Near-Death Experience' p.126
- ¹⁰¹ Moody, 'The Experience of Dying' p.93
- ¹⁰² Maurice Rawlings, *Beyond Death's Door* pp.80-81 quoted in Wilson, op. cit., p.138
- ¹⁰³ Moody, *Life after Life* p.33
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ring, *The Omega Project* p.90
- ¹⁰⁶ Morse, op. cit., p.109
- ¹⁰⁷ Sabom, op. cit., p.44
- ¹⁰⁸ Ring, *The Omega Project* pp.95-96
- ¹⁰⁹ Morse, op. cit., p.4
- ¹¹⁰ Ring, '...The Prototypic Near-Death Experience' p.139
- ¹¹¹ Morse, op. cit. p.78
- ¹¹² Ring, *The Omega Project* p.96
- ¹¹³ Morse, op. cit., p.152
- ¹¹⁴ Zaleski, op. cit., p.124
- ¹¹⁵ Ibid., p.125
- ¹¹⁶ Moody, 'The Experience of Dying' p.100
- ¹¹⁷ Zaleski, op. cit., p.126
- ¹¹⁸ Moody, 'The Experience of Dying' p.99

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- ¹¹⁹ Ring, *The Omega Project* p.101
- ¹²⁰ Ring, *Life at Death* p.76
- ¹²¹ Ibid., pp.63-64
- ¹²² Zaleski, op. cit., p.126
- ¹²³ Ring, *The Omega Project* p.102
- ¹²⁴ As Moody states such religious experiences seem:
- ...to be largely a function of the religious background, training or beliefs of the person involved. Thus, most of those who are Christians in training or belief identify the light as Christ and sometimes draw biblical parallels in support of their interpretation. A Jewish man and woman [in Moody's study] identified the light as an 'angel'. It was clear, though, in both cases, that the subjects did not mean to imply that the being had wings, played a harp, or even had a human shape or appearance. There was only the light. What each was trying to get across was that the being acted as an emissary, or a guide. [Moody, 'The Experience of Dying' p.100]
- ¹²⁵ See Osis and Erlandur, op. cit. and Ring, *Life at Death*
- ¹²⁶ Moody, *Life after Life* p.134
- ¹²⁷ Moody, 'The Experience of Dying' p.101
- ¹²⁸ Ring, *The Omega Project* p.104
- ¹²⁹ Morse, op. cit., p.57
- ¹³⁰ Ibid., pp.4-5
- ¹³¹ Moody, *Life after Life* pp.56,66
- ¹³² R. Noyes and R. Kletti, 'Panoramic Memory: A Response to the Threat of Death' p.188 quoted in John Pennachio, 'Near-Death Experience as Mystical Experience' p.67
- ¹³³ Moody, 'The Experience of Dying' p.102
- ¹³⁴ Morse, op. cit., p.73
- ¹³⁵ Ring, *The Omega Project* p.106
- ¹³⁶ Morse, op. cit., p.115
- ¹³⁷ Ring, *The Omega Project* p.107
- ¹³⁸ Morse, op. cit., pp.154-155
- ¹³⁹ Zaleski, op. cit., p.137
- ¹⁴⁰ Morse, op. cit., p.33
- ¹⁴¹ Ibid., p.52
- ¹⁴² Ring, *Life at Death* p.63

¹⁴³ Ibid., p.109

¹⁴⁴ Moody, 'The Experience of Dying' p.104

¹⁴⁵ Ring, *The Omega Project* pp.107-108

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p.108

¹⁴⁷ Morse, op. cit., pp.118-119

¹⁴⁸ Zaleski, op. cit., p.140

¹⁴⁹ Ring, *The Omega Project* p.98

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p.108

¹⁵¹ It does seem extraordinary that most witnesses claim their NDEs are pleasant, when many otherworld percipients recall frightening experiences. In *Beyond Death's Door* Maurice Rawlings has suggested that the reason why recall of NDEs are almost always blissful is that although patients *may* remember some type of ordeal immediately on their return, they tend to forget it with time. According to Rawlings, if witnesses were interviewed directly upon their return the investigator would detect a less inviting tale. Some researchers have interviewed patients directly after their experiences and were unable to find any indication of a 'bad' NDE. As Ring notes, "It may be worthwhile to mention that no person in our sample - including of course, all our suicide attempt cases - recounted an experience which could be regarded as 'a journey to hell'. This is consistent with the findings of other large scale studies (e.g. Moody, 1975; Sabom, 1978). Although some near-death experiences did contain frightening aspects or involved moments of confusion and uncertainty, none were characterized by predominantly unpleasant affect or imagery." [...The prototypic Near-Death Experience' pp.121-122]

¹⁵² Ring, *The Omega Project* p.110

¹⁵³ Ibid., p.109

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p.110

¹⁵⁵ Zaleski, op. cit., p.4

CHAPTER FIVE

TRANSFORMATION

*We must be willing to get rid of the life we've planned,
so as to have the life that is waiting for us.*

- Joseph Campbell: *Man and Transformation*

*I distinguish clairiscent phenomena from hallucinations
insofar as true visions and voices may either be verified,
as in parapsychological experiments,
or give authentic directives in the lives of those experiencing them.*

- Rowena Pattee: *Moving with Change*

*Are you willing to be sponged out, erased, cancelled, made nothing?
Are you willing to be made nothing?
Dipped into oblivion?
If not, you will never really change.*

- D. H. Lawrence: *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*

As observed in Chapter Four, in the examples of conventional religious contexts chosen for analysis - i.e. initiation rites, shamanic initiation, medieval otherworld journeys, and NDEs - we find that each individual is transformed in a profound way by their otherworld experience. As this transformation of dying to the old self entails being born 'anew', it is consistent for individuals to alter their lifestyle to harmonise to their new self. For some this involves renouncing their families and jobs, and dedicating themselves to the austerities of a life of religious devotion, as does Drythelm. Others, as we will observe throughout this chapter, do not retire from the world wishing to change it in some way, possibly by their own example.

It has been demonstrated that the above expressions of otherworld journeys induce marked changes in the experiencer. Given that the close encounter experience parallels the structure and content of that of traditional religious experience we will therefore examine whether the witness's personality and lifestyle are transformed by the contactee or abduction episodes. If it can be shown that transformation occurs, analysis will be made of the types of changes undergone, and whether there is any correlation between these changes and those transformations resulting from the spiritual phenomena already discussed. Comparison of the transformative effects of traditional religious and alleged close encounter episodes may elucidate whether close encounters might be considered as *bona fide* religious experiences.

At this point in the discussion we are confronted by two problems in attempting this analysis. The first is that, although much is written about close encounter experiences and UFO sightings, little research has been dedicated to the individuals who report such encounters. It is only recently that researchers have begun to consider whether the close encounter phenomenon may actually be in some way dependent on the witness, and that examining the witness' background and circumstances at the time of the experience might prove fruitful.

Analysis of close encounter experiencers is still in its infancy, and although there have been some enlightening studies¹, data concerning the effect such experiences have on the individual are still very sparse. It is important to recognise that this is a personal experience. As we are not able to examine and analyse the event itself, we must rely on the reports of the experience. With this in mind it is to be hoped that sound sociological and psychological studies of the witnesses and their backgrounds will be undertaken in the near future.²

When we do have access to details concerning the effect a close encounter has upon an individual's life, we face another problem: the difficulty evaluating exactly which changes, whether in personality, morality, spirituality or lifestyle, are the result of normal maturation processes or are specifically due to the influence of the close encounter. If an individual is interviewed a great many years after he has reported his experience, this problem is compounded, it being more difficult to identify changes due to maturity from those possibly induced by the phenomenon. (This type of problem also affects research into other areas of human transformation including spiritual conversion, which we will also be analysing in this chapter.) The researcher must, therefore, proceed cautiously when studying changes in a subject's lifestyle. The effects of individual transformation can be observed by 'before' and 'after' comparisons, yet "beyond such estimates, judgements about [the individual's] progression or regression are fundamental value judgements". Hence, evaluation of transformation "derives from a particular viewpoint, never from pure scientific objectivity."³

The Impact of Close Encounter Experiences

On analysis of close encounter material it is evident that contact with extraterrestrial beings has a significant impact on the experiencer's life. As discussed in the previous chapter, on their return from the otherworld the individual finds it difficult to re-adjust to his familiar surroundings. The initiate in the small-scale society has understanding and support of a community that accepts and values his experience. The western initiate, when he eventually clearly recalls his experience, is isolated and lacks the assistance to help him through the period of adjustment, as he gradually pieces his memories together.

Both types of witness experience little relief if they later - either spontaneously or through regression hypnosis - recall part or all of the details of their close encounter. On remembering the events they may relive these frightening episodes, forcing the witness to make a 'reality check'; to reappraise their experience in light of what western society, through mutual consent, considers to be 'normal'. The abductee who vividly recalls her period of adjustment (in her letter reproduced in Chapter Four, p.116), exhibits a vast array of emotions as she undergoes her "experiential crisis". She passes through stages of overwhelming "terror", "trauma", "disbelief", "denial", "vacillation" and "self-doubt" before having "to reincorporate [her] memories into [her] sense of who [she was] and what [she knows]."

During this period of adjustment the individual realises he has to face these events alone, or at least until he has made some sense out of his experiences; only then will he be able to express these events to anyone else, a process which may take years to achieve. It is not uncommon for witnesses to feel that they will *never* be able to talk about their experience owing to their inability to express what they do not understand themselves. This reflective period in the witness's life mirrors that experienced by near-death subjects who, having returned to reality, experience a liminal state during which they find themselves still between this world and the 'Other'. As observed in the last chapter it took Joe Geraci six months of adjustment after his NDE before he was able to speak about it to his wife. During "the most frustrating six months of [his] existence" Joe felt "like [he] was starting [his] life all over."

Near-death experiencers may find it difficult to talk openly about their travels. This is primarily due to the sheer 'otherness' of the phenomenon they experienced, making it extremely difficult for the individual to describe exactly what they have witnessed. This is a highly frustrating stage of the individual's reintegration. The inability to find the vocabulary which adequately or accurately reflects the magnitude and essence of the phenomenon often hinders the individual in his attempts to communicate his experiences. The few who attempt to share their NDEs with illustrations they believe the non-experiencer may understand, say that such inexact comparisons, in a sense, devalue what they consider to be a mystical experience which has broadened and deepened their lives. As with Saint Salvius, near-death experiencers may feel that the simple act of retelling dissipates the potency of it. One near-death subject explains, "I didn't talk about it for a year or more. I...felt it was a very personal thing. And I didn't want anybody to ruin it."⁴ Another reason for the subject's reticence is that in every case the individual believes his NDE to be a real and pivotal episode in his life:

It's reality. I know for myself that I didn't experience no fantasy. There was no so-called dream or nothing. These things really happened to me. It happened. I know. I went through it. Even though I was in a blackout stage I know myself I went through it.⁵

I *know* it was real. I *know* that I was up there....And I *know* that I seen [sic] me down there. I could swear on a Bible that I was there. I seen things just like I seen them now. I can't prove it to none of those people there because they didn't see me. There's no way you can prove it, but I was there.⁶

However, it is difficult for the individual to convince a sceptical society of the veracity of what he has witnessed. As with contactees, in particular, faced with disbelief, the near-death experiencer realises that society is unlikely to accept his account at face value. It is because of society's scepticism that many individuals resolve to remain silent or to reveal their experiences only to some very close relative or confidant. As one woman told Kenneth Ring, "I tried to tell people of my experience but they laughed or looked at me sadly. I stopped talking about it and got very depressed in the following months."⁷ Only recently, with growing interest in near-death and close encounter phenomena, have both types of experiencer felt more able to share their otherworld travels.

However, even if the close encounter witness is able to vocalise - however inadequately - his experience to friends and relatives, his isolation, instead of diminishing, may actually increase. Possibly the confidant may believe the witness is experiencing a 'breakdown', or has become mentally unstable, or the confider may face ridicule or plain disbelief. Some people will try to find an alternative, more acceptable, explanation for the experience. These confidences may cause life-long friends to break away from the individual or the individual to retreat into solitude to avoid the negative feedback of those around him. It is not only friendships that falter. Knowledge of a close encounter can place a great strain on marital or other intimate relationships. This is especially so when one member of the couple has witnessed such events and the other, not only has not, but also finds that they cannot accept the validity of their spouse's assertions.

As we shall observe, a close encounter experience, or series of experiences, can be of major significance in the life of the witness, for some it can become *the* whole meaning of their life. However, the close encounter may trigger - in ways examined later - significant personal developments for the witness. Obviously, this can result in the disruption of a previously harmonious relationship, as the partner is generally excluded from this transformation. It has been observed that the imbalance in relationships caused from close encounters results in many witnesses being divorced if previously married, or that they continue being alone. The changes to the witness are such that the partner is unable to adapt. This is more pronounced especially in older partners, when the woman is the experiencer.⁸ The trauma of the witness has several aspects. Firstly, he must cope with the (apparent) reality of his experience in light of society's perception of such episodes being bizarre and possibly psychotic. He must then cope with the reactions of his friends and, finally, confront and deal with his own reactions.⁹

Close encounter witnesses can experience a life-long sense of isolation and estrangement. Just as, after his initiation, a shaman is viewed by the rest of his community as no longer being "exactly like them" so it is with the close encounter subject. His experience has challenged the way he previously viewed reality and he may feel, in consequence, "that certain facts of life prior to the experience are no longer exclusively true. Often he or she is frustrated that others do not see that the rules of the game no longer hold, or that the old rules were always only one of many ways of organizing perception rather than ironclad 'laws of nature.'"¹⁰ The witness frequently feels compelled to live his life according to this new worldview. He may also feel there is a new mission in his life, and elements in his psychological make-up may change.

For all these reasons it is common for close encounter subjects to feel that they are somehow 'set apart from' or 'other than' those around them: that they do not belong in society even if they appear to cope adequately.¹¹ Overall, there is acknowledgement that, although the witness did not seek a close encounter - an event which interrupted their everyday life in a most profound way, compelling development whether the individual wanted it or not - they can never return to their old way of life. Emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually, they are born 'anew', and must actively demonstrate this in their lives.

Despite the lack of research, evidence does exist which suggests that close encounters can change lives. Not only is the witness transformed but, as has been observed, so are those individuals who believe their accounts and form groups or religious movements based upon alleged alien information. A review of the research into life changes indicates that certain aspects of the individual's life are enhanced quite quickly after the close encounter. These are: physiological, psychological and moral change; change in daily lifestyle; a thirst for knowledge; an alleged growth in psychic ability; the gift of health and an alleged ability to heal; and a spiritual change in outlook.

Although each of these areas will be examined separately, in reality each element interacts with the others and is reliant on a variety of transformational processes experienced by the witness. For example, a large proportion of close encounter witnesses tend to believe that everything in the universe is intimately linked together in an eternal, mutual and dynamic cosmic whole. That is, whatever we do, no matter what it is, is all part of this multi-dimensional "cosmic web" and any act, however small, can spark a chain reaction of events throughout the web. We do not, therefore, live our lives in isolation, our actions have a direct effect across the web. As all things are interconnected and are mutually dependent on each other, an individual should aim to live in a harmonious way in order to survive as an individual and as part of the universal whole. If an individual accepts this belief system, it can lead him to a pattern of behaviour that serves to express to others this new way of viewing the cosmos.

This worldview affects the decisions a person makes and how he relates to his fellow humans and the environment, changing the way he lives his life and the type of career he chooses. All actions must cause the least disruption and negative vibration of the web. They are held to be inextricably linked, thus to consider them in 'isolation' is false, but convenient. The transformation of the close encounter witness is based on the spiritual outlook he adopts after his experience - i.e. we are all 'one' with the universe - and thus specific transformational aspects will be examined, as will contactee and abductee events to establish whether they are positive experiences, benefitting the witnesses.

Psychological and Moral Change

On analysing the accounts of changes to the close encounter experiencer's personality, three areas of transformation may be noted: physical change; increasing altruistic actions; increasing concern for the environment. I have been able to discover only one report concerning physical change in close encounter witnesses. This is Kenneth Ring's *Omega Project*, which also analyses the transformative effects of NDEs, in relation to close encounter episodes. Individuals who claim to have had a close encounter or near-death experience were interviewed with individuals who were interested in NDEs but who never had one themselves, and individuals who were interested in UFOs but who had no significant UFO-related experience themselves. The latter two groups acted as control groups for the survey. The individuals in these four groups were invited to indicate how, if at all, they had changed in a variety of psychophysical ways since their experience or, for the control groups, since becoming interested in that type of experience.

The main areas covered relating to transformation of the body were: physical sensations i.e. sensitivity to light, sound etc., and physiological and neurological functioning i.e. body temperature and blood pressure. The results were surprisingly clear. Near-death and UFO experiencers report more psychophysical changes than the control groups. The disparity between the groups is very marked. These changes apparently conform to a pattern or progression. Experiencers claim increased sensitivity to environmental conditions, such as light and sound, as well as to various foods, drugs and alcohol. There also seems to be decreases in functions such as metabolic rate and blood pressure. Experiencers all claim that their energy levels have increased, that they need less sleep, and their emotions and moods are more or less changeable.¹² Ring is convinced that the results indicate that physical changes in close encounter and near-death experiences are not uncommon. He suggests that “if these self-report data are valid, it is clear that at face value they suggest that there may be something about these encounters that may actually *reprogram* [sic] an experiencer’s physiological and nervous system so as to make that individual inwardly and environmentally more sensitive.”¹³ When we turn to the psychological effects produced by close encounters, the data indicates that there are significant changes in the personal values of the individual. This is especially true of the experiencer’s attitude concerning humanity and the planet. Ring’s survey indicates a noticeable shift in personal values from all four of his groups, but especially concerning the UFO and NDE samples:

Essentially, three separate statements will serve to encapsulate the main trends to be discerned in the LCI [Life Changes Inventory] table:

1. In general, *all* groups report becoming more altruistic, having greater social concern, and increasing in spirituality.
2. In general, these changes are somewhat more evident for our experiential respondents and are *significantly* greater for the following value clusters: appreciation for life, self-acceptance, concern for others, materialism (decrease), quest for meaning and spirituality.
3. In general, the ND sample shows a greater shift than the UFO sample on altruistic (increase) and materialistic (decrease) values. Specifically, the changes are statistically significant for concern for others, impressing others (decrease), and materialism (decrease).¹⁴

Morse’s investigations support Ring’s findings that near-death subjects become highly altruistic after their experiences. Morse observes that these witnesses tend to devote a large portion of their time to the community, performing volunteer work, and giving more of their income to charity. Not only do near-death experiencers develop a greater concern for humanity but they also become more ecologically aware and active concerning the fate of the planet.¹⁵ Experiencers adopt a healthier lifestyle, changing their diets and exercising more. Psychosomatic illnesses decrease, with less time being missed from work and a lower use of medication. All show a decrease in symptoms of anxiety and depression, becoming more contemplative and solitary. They may devote more time to community work than the control groups or move into the caring professions.¹⁶

It has been suggested that many near-death experiencers “come immediately to have greater self-acceptance and compassionate understanding for themselves, and eventually for others too,”¹⁷ their visions bestowing new goals and moral principles which they feel a strong determination to abide by. The near-death experience may resemble religious conversion, in that the individual often becomes less introspective and more concerned with the fate of humanity and the planet - two aspects which appear high on the list of priorities of close encounter claimants. Individuals appear to have a greater regard for the interrelatedness of all things:

The first thing I saw when I awoke in the hospital was a flower and I cried. Believe it or not, I had never really seen a flower until I came back from death. One thing I learned when I died was that we are all part of one big, living universe. If we think we can hurt another person or another living thing without hurting ourselves, we are sadly mistaken.¹⁸

And you know when I floated out of my body I saw myself, suddenly I realized that we are all the same. There ain't no black and there ain't no white. I saw that bright light and I knew it was all the colors [sic] there were, everything was in that light - everything good for me, that is.¹⁹

Near-death experiencers exhibit a shift towards more altruistic values. John Mack has observed this shift in his interviews with abductees, with the great majority demonstrating a commitment to living in a more harmonious and caring manner. They seem resolved to improve their relationships with others, transcending negative impulses, and striving to live in balance with both the planet itself and all its inhabitants.²⁰ The emphasis on love (in the spiritual sense of *agape*), compassion, and ‘Oneness’, reflects the fundamental and widespread psychological transformations following close encounter episodes. The essence of this altruistic transformation is succinctly demonstrated by quoting from a letter written by Gina Willoughby, a 37 year old librarian living in Virginia, and whose life was changed by a number of contactee experiences:

I have one answer to the big question: “What is the meaning of life?” The answer has come through loud and clear in many of my experiences:

“LOVE”

Love is very important. It is the main reason for our existence as human beings in our physical bodies. We must understand love - and we must understand love in a wholistic [sic] sense, altruistic love, etc. We can never fully experience love or give love unless we also know compassion. To understand compassion, we must know pain, and loss - not just our own pain and loss, but the ability to feel the pain and loss of others. Love is a complex and powerful force. We must become part of the consciousness of love, for it is an entity in itself. Yet it is part of us, and we are part of it. When we are separated from this force we are not total, we are not whole.²¹

Near-death experiencers also emphasise the importance of loving, a lesson they claim was learnt from their time in the otherworld.²²

It is not unusual for the near-death experiencer to retain a feeling of unconditional love for all humankind. He himself has experienced the unconditional love of the 'presence' whilst bathing in 'its' brilliance. It is partly this feeling of being totally loved and absorbed by the 'presence' which makes the individual yearn to stay in the other realm. This unconditional love experienced so profoundly by the near-death initiate, is the same love they wish to share with others. One of Ring's subjects observes: "I think if I took one thing away from this experience, it was that the most powerful force that we all have is love, and before this I had no idea what love was, only what I had been shown in the world."²³ This heightening of compassion for humanity in general is not confined to near-death and close encounter experiencers. For example, it is a stage in the growth of faith identified by theologian James Fowler. Each stage of Fowler's theory describes an individual's widening of vision and valuing, and a qualitative increase in intimacy with the Self, others, and the world. This may culminate in the sixth stage of faith where the individual embodies the qualities "of inclusiveness of community, of radical commitment to justice and love and of selfless passion for a transformed world".²⁴ A shaman's initiation leads to life-long service to his community. Michael Harner in his study, *Way of the Shaman*, points out traditionally:

...in shamanism there is ultimately no distinction between helping others and helping yourself. By helping others shamanically, one becomes more powerful, self-fulfilled, and joyous. Shamanism goes far beyond a self-concerned transcendence of ordinary reality. It is transcendence for a broader purpose, the helping of humankind. The enlightenment of shamanism is the ability to light up what others perceive as darkness and thereby to *see* and to journey on behalf of...humanity. [p.139]

It is perhaps pertinent that several western schools of psychology view altruistic acts as an indication of mental health. Abraham Maslow writes "self-actualizing people are, without one single exception involved in a cause outside their own skin."²⁵ Research shows that those who repeatedly help others can experience what has been labelled as 'helper's high': "a generalized sense of well-being, satisfaction, and self-esteem that may bathe helpers after their good works."²⁶ Yet modern psychology has discovered nothing new in this observation, as service has long been viewed as a natural expression of successful development: Over a thousand years ago the Third Zen Patriarch exclaimed that "For the unified mind in accord with the Way all self centred striving ceases."²⁷ Religious converts also place great emphasis upon humanitarian and ecological welfare. Nearly all writers of the psychology of religion tend to agree with Edwin Starbuck and William James, that the main manifestations of conversion in the mindset of the Christian convert, are changes in attitude towards God, other people, and nature and the universe in general.²⁸ James observes that the shift in the emotional centre of the individual after conversion, or mystical experience, generates a more charitable and caring nature towards fellow-creatures: "The ordinary motives of antipathy, which usually set such close bounds to tenderness among human beings, are inhibited. The saint loves his enemies, and treats loathsome beggars as his brothers."²⁹ A study of a large group of people in San Francisco, conducted by Professor Robert Wuthnow, concluded that people who experienced some type of religious episode "were also more likely than others to be concerned about the welfare of other people, less likely to be concerned with the accumulation of material wealth"³⁰; an observation which correlates directly with Ring's 'personal value shift'.

This empathy towards one's fellow may manifest itself in various acts of selflessness, as in the brotherly love exhibited by members of the Quakers. In the early days of the movement men and women would offer to take the place of those who had been thrown into prison, that they might gain some respite, as was the case when George Fox was imprisoned in Cornwall. Fox campaigned against injustice and oppression, establishing the enthusiasm for social reform and philanthropic endeavour consistently exhibited in the Quaker community.³¹ As with the close encounter subject, the root of such altruistic action in the convert appears to be an overwhelming sense of unconditional love which inspires the individual at the time of conversion or mystical visitation. William James writes that, since the beginnings of Christianity the one consistent, unchanging adjustment in the convert is that the same spirit of charity and piety infuses all who have received grace, that everything is encompassed by love and humility.³² One example of the convert's awareness of Love during their conversion experience will suffice here:

In the morning I felt my soul hunger, and thirst, after righteousness. In the forenoon, while I was looking on the sacramental elements and thinking that Jesus would soon be 'set forth crucified before me,' my soul was filled with light and love, so that I was almost in an ecstasy; my body was so weak I could scarcely stand. I felt at the same time an exceeding tenderness and most fervent love towards all mankind; so that my soul and all the powers of it seemed, as it were, to melt into softness and sweetness.³³

Converts may experience a greater appreciation for their environment too. As we shall observe later, as with close encounter witnesses, religious converts tend to believe that they and their environment are of the Divine. This belief may engender a sense of responsibility or stewardship towards their surroundings. As David Hay has observed, once a person believes he is a part of the whole, that everything, animate and inanimate, is intimately related, damaging any element of the whole inflicts damage on oneself. Whilst this sense of oneness may be transient, being forgotten or ignored, remembrance of the experience can provide the motivation for a variety of social or environmental group members.³⁴

Increasing concern for the environment and ecological issues also appears to be generated by a close encounter experience. Again, the reason for this will become more apparent when we examine the spiritual transformation of the witnesses. However, as already noted, like the spiritual convert, there tends to be a shift to believing that all living things are interconnected. If this belief is accepted by the witness, it is understandable that there should be a marked increase in concern for the planet, as it becomes part of ourselves. Kenneth Ring's study revealed "very marked positive shifts" toward an increasing concern for ecological and planetary welfare *per se*. In fact, "the value for the UFOE [UFO experience] group on the planetary welfare item is higher than *any* other of the thirty-six averages" that make up the whole of the value clusters³⁵ which form the Life Changes Inventory (LCI).³⁶ He found that 85 percent of UFO experiencers reported increased concern for planetary issues, of which 60 percent claimed a strong increase following their UFO encounter. Near-death experiencers report a similar 80 percent increase with nearly half saying it was a strong increase. Although interest in such phenomena partly explains this increase, Ring believes it is the experience itself which provides the impetus for this increased awareness of the environment, as it is amongst the experiencers that the most significant increase in concern is found.³⁷

Some examples of the ways in which close encounter experiencers view their growth in planetary and environmental concern follow. The difficulty witnesses sometimes have of expressing their newly held beliefs should be noted:

“Margaret,” a neatly dressed, carefully made-up brunette in her late thirties, is married to a physician. She experienced a Missing Time episode with her two small children during which she awoke in a disc and saw a greenhouse filled with trees. During her second abduction she was taken into a large room where she was shown scenes of ecological disasters. What started as “several disturbing events,” Margaret says, has been transformed into a “unique learning experience” that has brought her a growing concern for the environment.³⁸

Catherine, another abductee, claims that the encounters have:

...enabled her to undergo considerable personal growth that has been manifested by a desire, which she is already implementing, to help other abductees come to terms with their experiences and by a deepening sense of concern for the fate of the earth’s environment. Information regarding the pollution of nature and the breakdown of the earth’s interconnected living systems has been given to her during her abductions.³⁹

This information concerns trying to arrest these fateful processes, although further details are not specified. Catherine is not the only abductee who claims that she is being passed extraterrestrial information about the environment. Sara alleges that she has been “receiving information linking other entities to issues of planetary preservation and ecological transitions, especially polar and geomagnetic reversals.”⁴⁰ Sara, like many other abductees, “spoke of the cataclysmic physical changes that may be ahead for the Earth and wondered if somehow ecological and environmental concerns could unite humanity and help us transcend ethnic, cultural, and other boundaries.”⁴¹ Mack discusses how one of his abductees, Jerry, has felt a need to express all the important philosophical and spiritual concerns she has had since her abduction through keeping journals. In one of her entries from December 1991 she writes “as if she were receiving information from another troubled and perplexed source or voice that was speaking to her.”⁴² The entry, regardless of the impersonal way in which has been written, vividly highlights the way Jerry explores how the rainforest has been destroyed, and her struggle to find a purpose to such destruction:

Jerry described the beauty of the Brazilian rain forest, but followed this with the concern that “it was dying a slow death...Why was this most beautiful place being destroyed?” she continued. “You started to investigate further and you discovered that it was not the place that was dying. It was the inhabitants of the place that were killing it. You then were very concerned about this and continued exploring the rest of the earth and its inhabitants. The very same thing happened everywhere you went. You then decided something must be done. But what? How? ...Does humankind have that much hatred for his future that he would destroy it?” she wondered.⁴³

Carlos, another abductee, has also developed an acute ecological consciousness which, it seems, was motivated by the aliens’ concern for our planet. Carlos explains how:

The earth and the systems with which it is connected are in danger of “collapsing.” The aliens “are like little tiny drones of a vaster complexity” which is “in the service of survival.” They are “Earth gardeners,” he says, “trying really hard to instruct us to find a plenitude and not to be caught in the human impulses towards extinction.” They want us to find a “plenitude in the environment, a plenitude of the garden Earth.”⁴⁴

Carlos’ concern for the environment is expressed in his work as an artist, and in his writings. He attempts through these mediums to bring a deeper awareness of the environment to the public.

He also has become politically active in his function as a protector of the earth, and very soon after returning from Iona, helped start a Green Party in Tennessee, working on the platform. He wants to convey in his message “the plenitude of the being of the earth.” Again and again, he connects the evolution of this earth consciousness to his relationship with the creatures [aliens]....He strives to overcome for all those he encounters the sense of separateness from the earth, to reconnect us with it and to create an appreciation of its fragility.⁴⁵

Carlos highlights the way in which, eventually, the close encounter witness comes to share the same planetary and humanitarian concerns as the extraterrestrials they claim to have met. As described above, the revelatory material divulged by the aliens, primarily refers to their love for the human race and the planet, and their concern about both’s destruction. Yet, whether the aliens threaten to annihilate humankind if they continue their destructive ways, or state that they personally can do little to change the course of events for humanity, we find that close encounter witnesses are willing to act upon their new beliefs.

Change in Daily Lifestyle

When we examine the close encounter witnesses’ daily life, it is not surprising to observe that what changes there are, appear to stem from the psychological transformation discussed above. As noted previously there is a tendency for near-death experiencers to gravitate towards ‘caring professions’ such as nursing or special education. Entry into shamanism is also entry into a caring profession; shamans serve their communities in a variety of roles, as healer, counsellor, psychopomp, and teacher. Close encounter witnesses may also feel compelled to change direction in their personal and professional lives, motivated by the change of awareness they experience. Many feel driven to “do something with their lives”, to “make a difference”, thus becoming examples for those around them of how to live a responsible, compassionate and caring life. By bringing improvement and happiness into other lives, the witness experiences satisfaction through their altruistic actions. Mona Stafford feels her abduction experiences have led to a change in her personality and, in consequence, a change in lifestyle. Before the encounters Mona describes herself as a “stern, humorless [sic] woman who could never tell a joke or even have a good time.” Today, however, she is much more relaxed. She is able to be late for appointments and forget household chores without feeling guilty.⁴⁶ Her professional life changed too: after moving several times, she settled in Dunnville, Kentucky, where she cared for two boys whose parents died tragically. She gained much pleasure from her work because she felt needed and useful.⁴⁷

Lydia Stalnaker, now a full-time faith healer, states: "I want to be a better evangelist....I guess I'm doing the work I was chosen for. I don't worry about other people. I have my work now. I feel needed, I feel like I have a purpose in life. If someone doesn't believe, they don't come near me. I can't beat them until they believe in UFOs. You can't force them. All I know is that the aliens made my life a whole lot better."⁴⁸ John and Sue Day and their family were allegedly abducted on 27, October, 1974 whilst driving to their home in Aveley, Essex. As Jenny Randles explains:

In the period 1974 to 1977 many things happened to the family. There was a kind of spiritual transformation. They stopped eating meat and began to care about the environment. When I met them, John was just about to begin work in an artistic profession, such was the dramatic increase in his skills in that direction. They were also having numerous psychic experiences, such as objects moving about the house on their own and apparitions being seen, and they had observed several previous lights in the sky.⁴⁹

John experienced a nervous breakdown as a result of having to adjust to his life as a close encounter witness. He later divorced Susan and moved to an isolated cottage where he began writing poetry.⁵⁰

A few abductees have attempted to use their evolving belief systems to influence others, and have "become teachers of a new way of living." As already observed Carlos devotes his time, and artistic talent, to deepening public awareness of environmental issues. He is also an active member of the Green Party in his home town. Peter says his abduction 'journey' has "enabled him to discover his 'place in the universe.'" He spoke to Mack of the "likeness of God' among people all over the earth, who share a common humanity and 'all struggle to understand the mysteries of the spirit world and our connection with it.'"⁵¹ Peter's new belief in the 'Oneness' of all humanity, has led him into a healing-oriented profession, becoming a full-time acupuncturist.⁵² However, an impressive example that an individual can be successful, whilst putting one's new altruistic beliefs into practice, and encouraging others to do the same, is that of a man identified as Arthur. A highly successful young businessman, strongly committed to the democratization of capitalism, creating a sustainable environment, and protecting the future of the planet, he has created many companies, each funding specific philanthropic projects. Profits from these companies are put back into community programmes and environmental awareness schemes.⁵³

Many religious converts also desire to change their outer life to be congruent with their new worldview. Many individuals positively re-examine and reshape their lives in accordance with their new found humanitarian spirit. This includes changing occupations to those involving social reform, or to the caring professions. There are numerous examples of religious persons, for example, Francis of Assisi, Catherine of Siena, Madame Guyon and Vincent de Paul, tending to the needs of the poor and sick. At times this self-effacing act of charity reaches 'fanatic heights', with individuals such as Margaret Mary Alacoque, Francis Xavier, Saint John of God and others, allegedly having "cleansed the sores and ulcers of their patients with their respective tongues; and the lives of such saints as Elizabeth of Hungary and Madame de Chantal are full of a sort of reveling [sic] in hospital purulence, disagreeable to read of, and which makes us admire and shudder at the same time."⁵⁴

The desire to work for others is also a characteristic of the normal convert. I include here one illustration of this, appearing in an account sent to the Alister Hardy Research Centre, by a lady who wished to report the day her life had changed. At the time of her experience she was a young secretary in the entertainment business, becoming increasingly disillusioned with the triviality of the industry. One evening she decided to take a break:

It was a glorious sunny evening and I walked through the park and sat down by the water intending to read. I never opened my book. It was very beautiful with the sun glinting through the trees and the ducks swimming on the water, and quite suddenly I felt lifted beyond all the turmoil and conflict....The disillusion and cynicism were gone and I felt compassion suffusing my whole being, compassion for all the people of earth. I was possessed by a peace that I have never felt before or since, and - what is to me most interesting and curious of all - this whole state was not emotional. It was as if I was not without emotion but beyond it..The experience passed off gradually, and I suppose it lasted about 20 to 30 minutes. At the time I felt it was an experience of God, because I interpreted it according to my own religious framework. [p.76]

Following this episode, she left her secretarial position and began a career as a social worker dealing with delinquents. There are many spiritual accounts with the same kind of outcome.

On returning from their otherworld journeys many close encounter subjects feel imbued with a 'sense of mission'. They claim that 'higher forces' are controlling these experiences, alerting them to a cosmic plan for earth.⁵⁵ However, not all the witnesses receive a coherent sense of what such a purpose may be, whilst others feel that they have been shown, or have been able to deduce, the most fulfilling and philanthropic path for them, as shown in the above examples. Others may have a strong but rather more existential purpose:

Paul feels strongly that he has been given, or chosen, a role on Earth to contribute, as an example in his own being of openness and love, to the evolution and transformation of human consciousness. [...He has decided to] accept and live out the awesome responsibility that he and others like him have undertaken in the face of a culture that resists at every turn who they are and what they are trying to accomplish.⁵⁶

The majority, though, have only an ill-defined sense of what they should be doing unlike traditional religious converts. This can be accompanied by feelings of frustration at their inability to decide what to do to avert imminent human and planetary disaster. For some, their mission begins by feeling compelled to communicate their experiences and new found worldview. Contactee Gina Willoughby, who has already spoken of the unconditional love she has experienced since her close encounter, explains:

I never thought of myself as one of those people who ended up with a "sense of mission" as a result of their paranormal experiences. I never had an urgency of mission. That is, until now, for suddenly I do feel driven to talk about "these things." I want to just go up to people and say, "Listen, there is a whole other reality out there that is just as real, just as valid as what you think is the only reality.

“Open your minds. Look into this. It’s important to you, too!” I feel foolish and afraid to do this, but the drive is there. Somehow I feel as if time is running out, as if something big is about to happen. Don’t ask me to explain it any better, for I can’t. All I know is that this is important - it’s a feeling I have, that’s all!⁵⁷

Sten Lingren, a Swedish contactee, has also begun to talk about his experiences, and the understanding which has evolved from these events:

When you get in contact you get a responsibility inside you and it causes you to act. First you understand yourself and your connection with them. Then you understand the Earth people and the problem the Earth has. When you can see both the Earth situation and their society then you think the people here are completely mad. And then you feel compassion, I think, for the Earth people and there starts a process inside just to evolve in some way the consciousness which causes you to try to help in some way. What I try to do is to try to [communicate] my own experience to people in Sweden, [tell them] just what I know exists. I know that [CBH: the Cosmic Brotherhood, the ‘space people’ Sten alleges to be in contact with] exists and I know how the Earth is and I know that if I can focus the people to understand [CBH] we can lift mankind up in some way.⁵⁸

For others this sense of mission starts with supporting fellow abductees and helping them to readjust to their ‘new’ life:

I’m not here to shove anything down anybody’s throat, but if somebody feels they’re in the same shoes I am...I feel like I have something I have to do. I feel like there is something I should be doing to help. I feel like if I can just talk to one person and just let him know that you are not going to die, this isn’t going to kill you, you’ll be all right, maybe you’ll even be a better person for it in the long run, just hang in there, you’re not alone. I feel like I should be doing stuff like that.⁵⁹

Unlike traditional religious converts the majority of close encounter witnesses are left waiting for inspiration as to what path to follow. Multiple-event abductee Rohan stated:

I have my suspicions about what [my purpose] is but I’m not certain so I’d rather [not say anything about that]. I do feel there is a purpose. I don’t know if I’m imagining it or not. I have an idea what mine is, it might just be [my] projection, or maybe they have implanted something in my head which I am using. But like I said at the [witness support group] meeting, doing the camera interview, this interview [and so on], it’s the start of the path. Maybe part of the purpose....Like I said, I’ve got no answers and I [sometimes] feel very bitter and frustrated. Why haven’t I got any answers? Why don’t they appear and tell me the answers now? I want to know. And then I calm down and go back to my feeling of kinship. I don’t feel angry about the situation that I am in, I feel comfortable with it. I feel kinship with them, I feel a kind of warmth, a kind of kinship and so I am prepared to let things go at the pace they dictate. Like I said earlier, when it’s time for me to know I’m sure I will know. And that’s OK. I don’t know if I could live with the knowledge today.⁶⁰

Journalist C. D. B. Bryan, on interviewing an abductee named Mary, asked her:

“Do you think there’s some sort of grand design?”

Mary thinks for a moment. “If I’m looking at the grand design, I can’t perceive it. Let me put it this way. Imagine taking a pin and punching a hole into a card and then holding that card up and squinting through the hole at the room you’re in. That’s how well we can perceive the grand design - that’s how well I perceive it, anyway. The grand design is there, but I can’t make it out.”

“Do you have any hint as to what this grand design might be?”

“...To learn not to fear,” she says. “And to learn how to love.”⁶¹

Abductee Eva is still trying to discover her true path in life:

Eva spoke of the difficulty dealing with “all the garbage that’s been accumulating,” by which she meant the tension between her “conservative” daily life, and the abduction-related intuitive expansion of her self-knowledge. In having a son and a daughter Eva felt that she had completed “a circle,” and was now ready to focus upon her “global mission,” particularly her role as “a communicator between humanity and everything else - ETs, UFOs, call it what you will - higher intelligence.”...Perhaps her mission is to be a healer, she speculated, enabling people to break away from the unhealthy effects of institutional systems.⁶²

Thirst for Knowledge

The acquisition of knowledge is one thread which runs through the actual close encounter events into the everyday lives of the witnesses. As identified in the last chapter, the liminal stage of the otherworld journey is the time when spirits, aliens, gods or ancestors bestow knowledge and instruction. However, it is unusual for much of this knowledge to be consciously recalled once the individual returns to his ordinary existence. In many cases the individual is struck with the certainty that the key to the mysteries of the universe was given to them, but is frustrated that only scraps of information are retained. What is left, although difficult to vocalise, is usually the certainty that love and knowledge are two intensely important attributes allowing the individual, and community, to advance to a more spiritual and moral plane of consciousness. Raymond Moody tells how, in his research, a number of near-death experiencers insisted that it is very important for each individual to seek knowledge in whatever they are doing, for “the acquisition of knowledge continues even in the afterlife.”⁶³ Although a near-death experiencer may be unable to remember details of the knowledge he has received during his experience of an otherworld he may be certain of what ‘type’ of secret he was privy to:

This seems to have taken place after I had seen my life pass before me. It seemed that all of a sudden, all knowledge - of all that had started from the very beginning, that would go on without end - that for a second, I knew all the secrets of all ages, all the meaning of the universe, the stars, the moon - of everything.⁶⁴

As the near-death experiencer, mentioned in Chapter Four (p.138), observes “A piece of knowledge came in: it was that I was immortal, indestructible. I cannot be hurt, cannot be lost...Everything that happens is part of a perfect plan. *I don’t understand this part now*, but I still know it’s true...”⁶⁵ [My italics.]

For some near-death experiencers a vague half-phrase or taste of the revelation remains, but this appears to be more frustrating for the individual than having forgotten the revelation in its entirety. "One near-death visionary who was told in 'four words' what life is all about, describes his frustration in trying over the years to reconstruct the message: 'The closest I can come and have any satisfaction with is: In your own image.'"⁶⁶ As the feelings of insight or knowledge revealed to the near-death experiencer is often intuitively and not verbally received it is typical for the subject to report that the insight is simply not expressible in conventional language.

Contact with otherworld beings apparently awakens the individual's intellectual awareness, and individuals feel a need to expand their knowledge. During the second Marian sighting at Fatima, on June 13, 1917, the 'Lady' gave instructions to Lucia to learn to read and write.⁶⁷ Close encounter experiencers also feel compelled to learn new skills, languages, philosophies etc., directly after the encounter(s). Mona Stafford, Lydia Stalnaker and Jessica Rolfe have all been directed by the aliens to 'learn', whether that learning consists of reading about a vast range of subjects or focusing on just one topic.⁶⁸ Jenny Randles reports in 'Living with a Close Encounter' that:

A Spanish witness hit by a lightbeam 'fired' by an 'entity' spent some days in a military hospital suffering from shock. According to bizarre evidence that later surfaced he developed an incredible expansive knowledge of science.

In South America, a poorly educated man began to discuss astrophysics and deep philosophical matters after his encounter, as if knowledge had been planted inside his head. [p.150]

On 11 January, 1967, at a farm in Aveyron, France, a farmer's son watched a disk-shaped object hover above him, in which he perceived two 'cosmonauts' who wore uniforms like aircrew. After this encounter, to everyone's surprise, he enjoined young people to study astronomy and science. He also told a researcher he might have to write a book. Although he was barely literate he said: "THEY [sic] told me not to worry about that. When the time is right, I will know what to put on paper."⁶⁹

Abductee Jerry also experienced a blossoming of creative writing after her abductions. She has written poetry and possesses a large number of notebooks filled with her thoughts on a vast array of existential matters including the nature of time and space, creation, the nature of truth, the spirit and the soul, and the parameters of science. She believed the communications were to go into a book about Universe, Soul, God and Eternity. She was apparently awed by the information she received, and by the onus possession of such material implied. She questioned why she had been chosen for this task, and received the answer that she, herself, had chosen the work. Her writings examine the relationship of the material and spiritual worlds and the limitations of a purely technological understanding. In November 1991 she wrote: "Technical data does not lead to the discovery of other beings. Spiritual data does."⁷⁰

This type of intellectual creativity also appears in examples of Christian conversion. One of the oldest written records is that of Saint Paul after his conversion on the road to Damascus. Directly after his experience Paul displays a highly creative period in his life, shaping as he does a Christian theology which is, even today, still greatly debated by theologians. An even clearer case of intellectual awakening following Christian conversion, can be observed in John Wesley's early converts to Methodism. These were generally people of humble birth possessing little education, and less theological training. After a thorough investigation of the effect of conversion upon these men, Professor A. Caldecott concludes that post-conversion they developed intellectual activity directed towards preaching and conversation. They thoroughly familiarised themselves with the Bible, and became able preachers. Some deliberated fundamental issues though they accepted the solutions found in Wesley's teaching. The exercise of their intellects made them leaders in their communities.⁷¹

It is understandable that encounter experiences, whatever their context, should encourage the individual to expand his horizons. He may search for an explanation of what has happened to him, or to recapture the *gnosis* of his experience, so enabling him to proceed with his life or with the mission he may believe he has been given. It is believed that this *gnosis* will expand the individual and communal consciousness to a higher spiritual and moral state of evolution. Maybe this is what is meant by the near-death experiencers' comments that "acquisition of knowledge continues even in the afterlife," through knowledge that humanity gains the wisdom to progress up the spiritual ladder of evolution. It is, therefore, not unusual for individuals who have experienced an otherworld encounter to become more contemplative, reflective and given to periods of meditation.

Growth in Psychic Ability

A prominent feature reported by contactees and abductees is the increase of paranormal events which occur after their close encounter. Jacques Vallee states in recent years that "the report of paranormal events in connection with close encounters with UFOs seems to have become the rule rather than the exception."⁷² Recent studies indicate that close encounter claimants appear to be prone to more psychic phenomenon - such as telepathy, ESP, precognition and poltergeist activity - than non close encounter subjects. These paranormal activities are less elusive than the close encounter experience itself, and have been witnessed by friends, family and, on occasion, scientists and researchers. One could view the apparent increase in psychic awareness as a progression of the growth in intellectual awareness and capabilities the witness appears to experience as a result of their alien encounter. However, researchers are divided as to whether those people who experience close encounters either possess a long history of psychic ability, or that they develop psychic capabilities *as a direct result* of their close encounter.⁷³ Parapsychologist D. Scott Rogo records that, "For years, UFO researchers have been aware of what is popularly called 'paranormal fallout' - often a person who has interacted with a UFO will experience psychic events for years to come, apparently as an *indirect outcome* of his experience."⁷⁴ [My italics] The results of Ring's study of close encounter and near-death experiences which he collectively calls 'extraordinary encounters' indicate that "persons who as adults report UFOEs or NDEs are not as children especially inclined toward a world of fantasy, but *they are apparently already sensitive to nonordinary realities* - and this is particularly true of our UFOE respondents" (p.129).

We will now examine examples of paranormal events reported by witnesses, using evidence from both sides of the argument. Abductee Debbie Tomey⁷⁵ told John Spencer about the paranormal aspects of her life since her abduction. Her response goes some way in arguing for the close encounter having increased her brain function, allowing her to develop extrasensory ability:

Things are still happening. Different things. It's like in some ways it's moved up [to] a different level. I was interested when you and Budd were talking on that panel last night [we were both speakers at a UFO conference in America] about creative and artistic ability. I've experienced that, you know. Like Budd says he doesn't know whether it comes from within us or may be external.

But it is as if you develop, I guess, because of the traumatic experience, you develop a heightened sense of awareness of what goes on around you which kind of bleeds in and affects other things. I developed a heightened sense of what goes on inside me and in my head and in my heart, you know. And it continues to grow. It's like somebody put a seed there and now it's grown, you know. And I'm not saying they put the seed there, maybe it was already there. There's, like, poltergeist activities going on, I don't know how to describe it, things going on, flashes of light, things going missing. I think [the wider paranormal] is all connected....⁷⁶

Tomey also reports that tiny lights frequently whizz down her hallway and her neighbours see lights, hear loud noises and suffer power cuts too. 'Little men' have been seen walking out of the bedroom walls and every Wednesday Tomey allegedly receives telephone calls from an incomprehensible moaning voice.⁷⁷ Whitley Strieber was also plagued with poltergeist-like events in his Manhattan apartment and his forest-situated cabin during his contact experiences. Radios turned themselves off when he walked past and strange knocking sounds were heard by him and his family. Strieber even experienced precognitive visions concerning disasters such as Chernobyl.⁷⁸ Jacques Vallee, in his book *The Invisible College*, speaks of an engineering executive whom he interviewed in October, 1973. This engineer was contacted by aliens in July, 1961, when he was taken on board a UFO, and certain knowledge was fed directly into his brain from "a large machine reminiscent of a computer". After this close encounter the subject now feels:

...that he has received certain information from the "teaching machine", that he has acquired the ability to "leave his body", that he is now able to transfer his consciousness at will into other objects or into space, and that he can trigger a psychokinetic power similar to that of [Uri] Geller, who claims that he bends or breaks objects by pure thought.⁷⁹

In their book, *Direct Encounters*, the Gansbergs undertake one of the earliest assessments of the effects a close encounter has on the life of the experiencer. Unsurprisingly, being two of the first researchers to conduct this type of survey, they were "perplexed" by "the number of abductees who have become psychic or psychically aware following their encounters. There are cases of abductees becoming precognitive, becoming faith healers, becoming clairvoyant, developing clairaudience powers, and displaying virtually every other form of identified psi phenomena...or extrasensory perception, as it is sometimes called."⁸⁰

The Gansbergs consulted Iris Maack, a psychologist who has studied abductions and who has a strong interest in psi awareness. Maack, too, was amazed at the large number of abductees who, prior to their experience, had not been interested in such powers, but had subsequently developed an awareness. It is as though the abduction had triggered a greater brain potential: "Psi awareness is a reality and psi awareness among abductees is very common."⁸¹ Judith and Alan Gansberg relate the story of Ellecia Gruen whose encounters began at the age of seven when aliens appeared at her bedside and gave her a physical examination with scanners. She held no conscious memory of this encounter until twenty years later when this incident was suddenly recollected. In the spring of 1976, Ellecia witnessed dozens of UFOs flying over her house in Ogden Center, Michigan. Day-time and night-time sightings not only placed her in a constant state of anxiety, but also caused her two alsatian dogs to hide in the house, Ellecia admits that she was afraid to go outside. After experiencing these sightings for a few days, and still in a great state of nervousness, Ellecia claimed that her household appliances began turning themselves on and off, suggesting the presence of a poltergeist. Ellecia also began experiencing automatic handwriting - a psychic condition during which time the percipient feels compelled to write messages, 'channelled' by beings other than himself. It is not unusual for the percipient to claim to be in a trance at the time, with the writing being involuntary.

After these sessions Ellecia discovered that she had written reams of poetry in a handwriting other than her own. Ellecia found that not only would future events suddenly flash in front of her eyes but that she was also able to remove pain from herself and others. This ability, as we shall see in the next section, is quite common amongst close encounter witnesses. Ellecia was able to convince members of her family or her friends that they would not feel pain at the dentist.⁸² Ellecia emphasises the fact that she is learning her psychic powers and that as soon as she learns one type she quickly moves on to learning another thus indicating, as we have observed in the previous section, a heightened thirst for knowledge especially in the cause of altruism.

The Gansbergs mention a number of other abductees who have also claimed a growing psychic awareness, which they claim developed only *after* their close encounters. After her second abduction experience, Lydia Stalnaker, the witness who was told she had been chosen "because of her chemistry"⁸³, realised that "she could tell seconds before that her telephone would ring and who was calling. She developed X-ray vision, the ability to see through solid objects."⁸⁴ James Harder, then professor of engineering at the University of California, Berkeley, and director of research at APRO (Aerial Phenomena Research Organisation), supports Lydia's claims. "He confirms that besides faith healing, Stalnaker has performed paranormal diagnosis, the act of determining psychically that a disease exists without the aid of medical science. (In fact, her psi abilities have become so impressive that Stalnaker was selected to be one of the guest speakers at the International Parapsychology Conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico, May 28, 1979."⁸⁵) Mona Stafford, the abductee who remembers having her eyeballs removed, examined and then returned to their sockets during her medical ordeal⁸⁶, recalls two instances where she had precognition of the imminent death of loved ones. Whilst staying with her parents shortly after the abduction, Mona experienced a recurring dream in which she viewed the ghostlike figure of her mother passing through walls, looking "as if she were dead."

"In the vision, Mom would always be wearing the green bathrobe I had given her for Christmas," she recalls, still overwhelmed by the incident. "So I knew it was her. And for two or three weeks every time I'd see her actually put on the robe it would tear me to pieces. It was as if I knew something, but I couldn't put it into words. It was so upsetting. I just wanted to tell her to take that robe out and burn it."

A few weeks later, Stafford's mother learned she had terminal cancer.

Shortly after her mother's death, Stafford had a similar precognitive experience with her fiancé. "I dreamed that he was going to die in a traffic accident," she remembers. "And a few weeks later he died exactly as I had dreamed it."⁸⁷

There are those close encounter subjects who claim possession of psychic abilities prior to their extraterrestrial episodes. One evening in Winchester, Hampshire, on 14 November, 1976, Joyce Bowles, a forty-two year old British Rail employee, and fifty-eight year old ex-farm manager, Ted Pratt, experienced the first of three encounters. Whilst out driving they were pulled across the road by a strange force after sighting an orange glow in the sky. Immobilised on the grass verge they observed an egg-shaped object beside them out of which climbed a tall silver-suited bearded figure with long blonde hair. The figure approached the car, lent on it and, as Joyce and Ted looked away, simply vanished along with the egg-shaped craft. On 30 December Joyce and Ted were once more driving at night when they again noticed a glow in the sky. A terrible whistling noise engulfed them and the car began to vibrate. At this point they both experienced memory loss. Their next memory was of being with three tall beings in a strange room. Both can vaguely remember being given a great deal of information, which unfortunately - but not uncommonly - seems to have eluded them on their return. Then they remember a bright flash of light and finding themselves returned to their car driving on an unfamiliar route. They reported that they could not account for an hour of their journey.

These details indicate that what was experienced was a 'typical' contactee event, however, as Jenny Randles reports "the most interesting news is that Joyce Bowles *had a track record of psychic experience* and was noted as a healer of animals. She had also suffered a poltergeist attack of noises and moving objects in her home [my italics]."⁸⁸ Randles also tells us that after the second encounter the aliens allegedly returned in March 1977. "This time Ted Pratt was not with her, and she has never revealed what occurred in any detail. A message (of a religious nature) was given, but she can release it only when the time is right. So far it does not appear to have been."⁸⁹ In her study of abductees Jenny Randles concludes that, "abductees tend to be psychic....[T]he extent of these claims about psychic phenomena in the history of a witness simply cannot be evaded....This correlation between abduction witnesses and their previous strange encounters does exist."⁹⁰

In 1981 an attempt to examine the life histories of close encounter witnesses was instigated by the late Ken Phillips, a BUFORA researcher who worked for many years with Austrian psychologist Alex Keul. Phillips and Keul devised a means of collecting sociological and psychological data in interviews and named this survey the *Anamnesis Project*. This project concluded that, by and large, UFO-experience subjects form a reasonable cross-section of the population, are normal healthy individuals, not psychotic in tendency or particularly fantasy prone.

The Anamnesis Project analysed the lifestyles of close encounter witnesses in Britain and Austria, and recorded self reported ESP experiences. In Austria half the small sample had experienced ESP. In Britain 22 of the 26 interviewees claimed ESP episodes, with nearly a third of CEI witnesses reporting such events. The effect was more marked in the close encounter group, with nine out of ten reporting ESP events of which six claimed these predated their experiences. Phenomena reported include precognition, psychokinesis, visions, healing, OBEs, etc.. There were four cases of multiple phenomena. That the majority of these people claimed ESP episodes before the encounters, challenges the theory that "UFOs cause ESP". Whatever the case, the affinity should be noted. "The concentration of 'ESP-proneness' in the 'close encounter' group...remains outstanding."⁹¹ Evidence certainly exists for us to conclude that those reporting close encounter experiences are also prone to report or be associated with paranormal events. At this stage further research is needed to determine whether alien encounters *cause* the brain to induce paranormal activity or if, in fact, it is the paranormal abilities of the witness which somehow acts as a beacon to induce close encounters. However, as ufologist Allan Hendry has argued, "Even if we assume that there is a 'valid' paranormal reign, its nature is not understood at all. To state that UFOs are paranormal events is to use one unknown to explain another unknown phenomenon."⁹² At this time all that *is* certain is that people who have experienced close encounters show greater tendency to experience frequent paranormal events than non-close encounter experiencers. As remarked earlier when reviewing the results of Ring's *Omega Project*, it is not only close encounter experiencers who are particularly sensitive to nonordinary realities; modern near-death percipients are too.

According to a number of studies⁹³ the near-death survivor reports psychic experiences ranging from extrasensory perception (ESP), telepathy, precognitive dreams, OBEs to *déjà vu*. A significant proportion of near-death experiencers state that such paranormal phenomena occur on a regular basis. Morse found that near-death experiencers "have four times as many verifiable psychic experiences as people who have not had NDEs."⁹⁴ For the majority of subjects their psychic experience is of a 'simple' and 'insignificant' kind. "One woman seemed to know when someone was going to spill a glass of water or have a minor accident. She was frustrated and angry at not having any way to prevent these accidents, especially since she had frequent foreknowledge of them."⁹⁵ A large proportion of near-death survivors have premonitions of telephone calls especially concerning close family members. Yet, for some people their new-found paranormal abilities are of a more extraordinary nature. A few subjects are able to predict the death or serious injury of a person with great accuracy:

On a regular basis, I dream what will happen the next day....I didn't used to believe these were real until I dreamed my uncle's death. He was in perfect health but on this night I dreamed that he was going to die suddenly. The next day he died of a heart attack. When my parents told me I just said, "I knew it was going to happen." Since then I've always believed my dreams.⁹⁶

I happened to touch one of my son's friends on the arm when I suddenly had a vivid, visual image of blood spurting from his shoulder and the arm falling off! I pulled away and gasped in horror. I had to blink several times before the vision went away.

That evening I told my husband what I had seen. The next day it came true. The boy lost his arm in an industrial accident.⁹⁷

Understandably such psychic powers are regarded as a mixed blessing. The ability to foretell events may exacerbate rather than diminish the individual's sense of isolation or difference from non-experiencers.⁹⁸ It could be possible to view these paranormal abilities as a form of 'supernatural branding' by the experience, also undergone by shamans, visionaries and close encounter witnesses alike.

As observed, it is not uncommon for those people who have experienced an otherworld journey to return with special 'brandings' marking their voyage through other realms: the medieval visionary Gottschalk for example became immune to fire. After their initiation experience shamans report that they can communicate, sometimes by secret language, with tribal gods and spirits, and have the ability to act as psychopomps for the spirits of the dead. They are able to foresee atmospheric changes, they are clairvoyant and can see far away, and their magico-religious relations with animals enable them to find food in times of scarcity. These abilities can be used to find lost men, animals or objects.⁹⁹ Paranormal episodes can also be traced in the lives of individuals who have experienced spiritual conversion.

The Bible is replete with instances of those whose epiphanies have led to a lifetime of prophetic visions. The greatest of the older prophets were Elijah and Elisha. Other 'lesser' prophets include Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Amos. Prophecy continued in the New Testament with such people as Simeon (Lk.2:25ff) and Anna (Lk.2:36). Jesus was also known as a prophet (Matt.21:11) and even adopted the title for himself (e.g. Lk.24:19; Matt.13:57). Prophecy continued among early Christian followers (e.g. Acts 11:28, 21:10-11) it is just one of the many 'paranormal gifts' bestowed upon these early converts: speaking in tongues and glossolalia interpretation, the working of 'miracles', spiritual discernment, and the ability to recognise genuine and counterfeit 'prophecy' are also reported (e.g. Acts 2:1-4, 10:44-46; 1 Cor.12:10,30, 14:13-16,27,28). Directly after her conversion (c.1680) the French noblewoman and mystic, Madame Jeanne Marie Guyon, undertook a period of feverish missionary activity. During this time she had the ability to see spirits "and a miraculous power over souls". People travelled to her looking for the healing of mind and body. Once in Paris her powers waned and persecution ended her miracles. This resulted in her work *Les Torrents*, and commentaries of the Bible. She said "thoughts rose from the depth".¹⁰⁰

The mystic Saint Teresa of Avila also appears to have experienced automatic writing. She wrote quickly, without hesitation or correction, usually after receiving Holy Communion. The words and images came so quickly she sometimes exclaimed, "Oh, that I could write with many hands, so that none were forgotten!"¹⁰¹ Teresa was inclined to bouts of levitation too. In her description of rapture she wrote: "Often my body would become so light that I lost all weight; at times this went so far that I no longer felt the floor under my feet."¹⁰² The saint describes being aware of a "presence of forces" that "lifted her up."¹⁰³ The famous stigmatic, and recently beatified, Padre Pio, was associated with an abundance of miraculous and paranormal occurrences. He was believed to bilocate; people claimed that, on meeting him for the first time, they had encountered him before, possibly at some time of crisis. A brother monk claimed Padre Pio had healed him in hospital though it was known Pio had not left the monastery.¹⁰⁴

Finally, there is evidence to suggest that Marian experiencers also become psychic as a result of their contact with the Holy Mother. This is the case in the Garabandal visitations. Conchita, Mari Cruz, Loli and Jacinta became psychic and seemed to be able to read minds when they were entranced. Once Jacinta told the crowd that the Virgin said a priest was amongst them but that he was disguised. When he came forward she correctly identified that his cross had been a gift from the Pope.¹⁰⁵ One could conclude from this review that paranormal events frequently feature in different contexts of the otherworld journey.

The Gift of Health and Ability to Heal

The changes the close encounter experiencer undergoes are not only psychological and emotional. Although information about the close encounter subjects' lives is sparse, what resources we do have detail instances of healings allegedly undertaken by aliens, as well as witnesses discovering, after their encounter experience, that they, too, have the ability to heal, mainly by touch. Religious teachings have long propagated the belief that God or superhuman beings have the power to heal. It is an interesting parallel to find that aliens, too, are reported to be capable of the same type of miraculous, if technological, cures.¹⁰⁶ This section explores the claims of close encounter witnesses that they have been healed and can heal, and compares such 'miracles' with those healings that appear to have occurred in a religious context. First, let us examine some healings by the aliens. Despite individuals frequently claiming they endured a medical examination during their abduction, there are abduction reports which state that such 'ordeals' are directed at correcting some chronic condition.

Psychologist Edith Fiore has interviewed a number of abductees who have experienced such an event. She states that of some two hundred interviews with alleged abductees she has discovered that fifty percent mentioned cures of life-threatening illnesses such as cancer, or painful conditions such as migraines.¹⁰⁷ One of Fiore's patients claimed that doctors had told his mother he would have a short life because of a malformed blood vessel in his brain. In his late forties and quite healthy, he remembered "ETs doing a treatment on him which he saw on a screen."¹⁰⁸ Another one of her patients, Linda, told Fiore whilst under hypnosis how she was cured of a persistent yeast infection:

Linda: They're going way up into my uterus too. And they're cleaning it out somehow, swabbing it out. They have this jellylike substance that looks like aquamarine blue, and it's clear, it's transparent. How are they doing this? It looks like they're putting it on something that's a squarish, rectangular sort of shape. And they squish it out of the rectangular shape, up inside me. I told them it feels cold. They say that's to help freeze the bacteria...They said, "Don't worry, it won't hurt." It's for my own good. But they understand I have been trying to get rid of it by myself. They say now's the time I've got to get completely well, so they're going to help me some more. They say something about an infection of the liver....I damaged it as a child. When I fell from someplace. Damage to my liver, which over the years they have been slowly refurbishing, just as if building, like building it up. The salve penetrates the whole body and generates new cells that will fight infection and in turn will give off new life in my body. They tell me I'll understand more as we go along....¹⁰⁹

David Jacobs reports that at least two of the abductees he has interviewed “have reported that their cases of pneumonia were cured during their abductions.”¹¹⁰ Jacobs relates the story of Lynn Miller who is certain that aliens were responsible for curing her diphtheria:

Lynn’s Mennonite background precluded her from getting vaccinations, and when she was six years old she became desperately ill. Even though the physician had told her mother that the disease could be fatal, her religious beliefs did not allow Lynn to be taken to the hospital. She steadily deteriorated over a two-week period, and the doctor came daily to do what he could. Finally the physician told her mother he did not expect Lynn to live through the night.

That night Lynn experienced an abduction, during which the aliens told her that they were going to cure her. They passed a portable, rodlike device around her body and then made her stand in a vertical cylindrical machine that had a small window. The aliens sat in chairs and watched as a blue light slowly came down toward her from the top of the machine. When the light was about eight inches from her it began to go back up. It reached its highest point and shut off. The Beings then told her to get out. They informed her in a matter-of-fact manner that she was now cured and “cleansed.” They then performed other procedures on her and took her back home.

The next morning her mother was astounded to find Lynn playing on the floor. She cheerily told her mother that she felt fine. Her mother ordered her into bed at once and called the doctor. Her temperature was normal. The astonished and puzzled physician told Lynn to stay in bed for another week, but she wanted to get up that day and play more. Her diphtheria seemed to be completely gone.¹¹¹

John Mack states that “in my caseload there is evidence that the alien encounters have been responsible for healing conditions ranging from pneumonia and leukemia to limbs paralyzed due to muscle atrophy from poliomyelitis.”¹¹²

According to Carl Higdon, his medical records seem to defy explanation within the confines of modern medical knowledge and practice. Before this abduction, Higdon suffered from recurring uric acid gout and had scars on his lungs from tuberculosis. After the encounter, his blood was tested and found to be ‘very rich’ by a physician. Higdon has not suffered an attack of gout since the abduction, leading his physician to feel that the problem has cleared up. In addition, chest x-rays taken at the hospital after Higdon’s abduction indicated that he no longer has any scars on his lungs. ‘I have been told it is unheard of for tuberculosis spots to disappear,’ Higdon told us [Judith and Alan Gansberg]. ‘But my lungs are back to normal, there are no scars, no x-ray can find a trace of damage. My doctor doesn’t understand it, he shrugs and says to be thankful.

‘As to my gout, I’m even more thankful to whatever power cleared that up. With uric acid gout you get kidney stones bad and the pain is the worst thing known to man. In November 1970 I had nine of them, passed nine stones in 30 days. And I’d get two or three every two or three months. And now I haven’t had any since the abduction, not since 1974. I would like for some of these ol’ boys who don’t believe me to tell me why that is. How come my scars and gout are gone?’¹¹³

Just as the close encounter episode appears to trigger in some individuals the desire to learn and perhaps develop psi ability, evidence suggests that it can also activate the power to heal. According to Lynda Stalnaker and her neighbour, Jerri Betz, during Stalnaker's first hypnotic regression a holly tree growing outside her house broke in half and rolled *up* hill towards her house, despite it being a calm, windless day. Soon after this unusual incident Stalnaker discovered that she had "the gift of healing" and saw the tree's movement as a sign from God. Stalnaker has always insisted that she was abducted by aliens who act as the "angels of God." After discovering her new gift her local church asked her to undertake a lay ministry of healing and preaching. Having had little contact with the church for a long time Stalnaker was doubtful whether she could undertake such a mission. She states, "I couldn't hold back, though. I would pray and lay hands and disease would go away. I have helped paralyzed people get up and walk. I have witnesses to this and other healings."¹¹⁴

John Spencer interviewed another abductee whose life has been changed by their contact with aliens. Finnish doctor Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde is a diplomat's wife and for many years distinguished herself as Chief Medical Officer in Rovaniemi, holding responsibility for all medical and dental care in her province, Finnish Lapland. She claims to have met and conversed with aliens and been given the opportunity to fly with them in their UFOs. She speaks of the aliens' high intellect and their advanced medical knowledge: "They cure illnesses by using energy, light and colours, and examine by using thin needles."¹¹⁵ Rauni-Leena believes that "those who have been in contact with aliens become gifted with rare physical powers." She herself has been a successful faith-healer since her alien encounter. "A good friend of mine had a tumour the size of three centimetres. I held my hands over the tumour until it became so hot that she could not stand it any longer. When she was examined by her doctor a couple of days later before the operation the tumour was gone."¹¹⁶ Paul, one of John Mack's abductees, has discovered the ability to heal as well as teaching others how to "pull despair and hurt from people." He appears to have "a great ability to carry the pain of people's suffering and to purge them of it, especially with the use of his hands."¹¹⁷

Retired teacher Elsie Oakensen believes she was abducted in Northamptonshire on 22 November 1978, from her car. She has only been regressed once, to discover what happened in the fifteen minutes of missing time she experienced, as she feels she cannot trust the information gleaned from such a session. Elsie is, however, certain that she was abducted and given an important message which she can no longer remember and which she believes will not be brought to conscious memory for many years. She is also certain that, although she feels she underwent some type of examination, it was not medical but 'spiritual' in nature. Despite eleven years passing before her healing abilities manifested themselves, Elsie believes that they are directly related to her abduction experience, although after such a long period of time this can only be speculation. John Spencer relates how Elsie discovered her healing powers:

In late 1989/early 1990, Elsie encountered several healers and mediums who told her that she had the power to heal. They told her she could develop this power, and that she could enter mediumship through healing....

A friend helped Elsie to set up a clinic. They assumed that word of mouth would send people to them for healing; if they helped people, word would spread.

In fact the first 'client' Elsie helped was her own daughter-in-law, who had hurt her back. She was in considerable pain and due to go abroad for a holiday in just a few days....[After about an hour of treatment Elsie] asked, 'How do you feel now?' Elsie's daughter-in-law felt immediately more mobile and freer of pain...

Elsie's success continued within the family. Her granddaughter, who suffered severe hearing defects, had had ten operations on her ears. Her granddaughter had been forced to wear two hearing aids...Elsie gave her contact [touching] healing as well as absent healing in the form of 'directed' prayer....After further absent healing the child was cured; the hearing aids were gone....

Of the connection between the events with the UFO and her 'spiritual development' Elsie can only guess. She feels they are connected, but clearly cannot prove it. She believes that she was given her abilities during the fifteen minutes of missing time.¹¹⁸

As already observed, it is not only close encounter subjects who are miraculously cured by beings from other realms, or are given the gift of healing. In the last chapter we related the story of Beryl Hendricks and how, in a 'mystical' experience which contained elements from both close encounter and near-death phenomena, her breast tumor disappeared. Certain sites famous for the appearance of the Virgin Mary are also renowned for miraculous healings. Lourdes and Fatima, for example, are annually inundated with thousands of invalids who believe that faith in the Virgin's ability to heal, may produce a cure for them. The difference with these healings, as opposed to alien cures, is that they happen to 'indirect contactees', people who do not directly meet with the Virgin. It would appear that the location alone induces the miracles here. A few cases do exist where a cure has resulted from an individual being present at a Marian visitation - even if the indirect contactee was unable to see the apparition:

At my mother's request, I went once more to Cova da Iria in August at the time of the apparitions, writes engineer Mario Godinho. Once more I came back discouraged and disappointed. But that time, something extraordinary happened. My mother, who had had a large tumor in one of her eyes for many years, *was cured*. The doctors who had attended her said they could not explain such a cure.¹¹⁹

Unlike close encounter phenomena, encounters with the Virgin Mary do not appear to bestow the healing gift onto the visionaries, nor does she automatically heal those she contacts. Bernadette caught cholera in her childhood which she survived, but she was never free of bronchial asthma. The Virgin did not cure Bernadette of this condition. However, indirect healings began to be reported at Lourdes as soon as the public was made aware of the Marian visitations. For example, Vallee tells how, the day after a spring appeared in the muddy ground from which Bernadette was told to drink, "a blind man named Louis Bourriette bathed his eyes in the spring and regained his sight. A dying baby was restored to full health."¹²⁰ As Kevin McClure states, "There is some evidence that by the time of the next vision, the twelfth, on Monday 1 March 1858, the water from the spring was already being bottled, and that rumours of its curative powers were spreading in the district."¹²¹ The shrine at Lourdes is now considered by the Christian community worldwide to be a major site of healing.

Two examples of the numerous alleged healings at Lourdes will suffice here: An eight year old with a condition that attacks the optical nerves and is irreversible had his sight restored after being immersed in the shrine. A five year old who had suffered infantile encephalopathy, and was a brain damaged quadriplegic subject to convulsions and unable to speak, showed steady improvement after immersion. He began to speak intelligibly, regaining the use of his limbs and his intelligence reached normal levels.¹²² Of course, wide ranges of diseases have psychosomatic causes and it is well documented that suggestion or faith can produce physical cures by removing the mental causes. Many holy healings can be explained in this way, although, as with the two examples above, there have been cures involving supposedly irreversible illnesses such as tumours and broken bones, though these are rare. Of the estimated two million sick pilgrims who have visited Lourdes between 1858 – 1991 only sixty-five cures have been accepted as miraculous by the Catholic Church.¹²³ There does appear to be a significant disparity in the reports concerning the direct, curative actions of the aliens and the indirect ones of the Virgin Mary, and in the bestowal of the gift of healing.

The shaman on the other hand is, throughout the world, attributed with the powers of healing. Only he is able to pronounce diagnosis, go in search of the patient's fugitive soul, capture and return it to animate the body that it has left. Often, however, the shaman himself experiences a period of illness. Indeed, in some circumstances it is the illness that reveals his vocation. According to Father Housse, candidates for shamanship among the Araucanians of Chile "are always sickly or morbidly sensitive, with weak hearts, disordered digestions, and subject to vertigo. They claim that the divinity's summons to them is irresistible and that a premature death would inevitably punish their resistance and infidelity."¹²⁴

The famous Yakut shaman Tüspüt (that is, "fallen from the sky") had become ill at the age of twenty; he began to sing [i.e. shamanize], and felt better. When [anthropologist Wenceslas] Sieroszewski met him, he was sixty and displayed tireless energy. "If necessary, he can drum, dance, jump all night." In addition, he was a man who had traveled [sic]; he had even worked in the Siberian gold mines. But he needed to shamanize; if he went for a long time without doing so, he did not feel well.¹²⁵

Another anthropologist, Garma Sandschejew, met a Buryat who, when young, described himself as an "anti-shamanist." However, he became ill and found no relief from his illness until he started on the shamanic path. His cure was immediate and the course of his life was defined. This period of illness may become the central experience of the individual's initiation crisis as he encounters forces stronger than himself. Illness is the means by which he is raised to a higher level of consciousness. By becoming intimate with death and disease, and transcending them, he gains the insight and power to heal others. The shaman "is a healer who has healed himself."¹²⁶ A shamanic initiation ceremony may involve him pushing his body beyond its limits of endurance, thereby inducing in it a state in some ways similar to illness. Once the initiate falls unconscious, (as with those who are called through illness), their spiritual death and rebirth takes place, as described in the previous chapter.¹²⁷

The Australian Binbinga tribe believe their medicine men are consecrated by the spirits Mundadji and Munjarinji (father and son). Medicine man Kurkutji described how, entering some caves one day, he came upon the old Mundadji, who caught him by the neck and killed him. Mundadji then exchanged his insides with his own and placed sacred stones in his body. Then Munkaninji restored his life and informed him of his calling and new abilities. He was then returned to his community where he heard them mourning his supposed death.¹²⁸

When we turn to healing events in the lives of near-death experiencers the NDE is itself a 'cure'. There are also instances when, subsequently, the individual finds that they are cured of a progressive disease such as cancer. Melvin Morse interviewed a forty-five year old mother, 'Kathy' who had, more than ten years before, been diagnosed as having cancer of the thyroid gland. Despite having radiation and chemotherapy treatments, her doctor discovered that the cancer had spread to other parts of her body and that she probably only had six months to live. Kathy returned home and prepared to die. Her weak immune system left her vulnerable to infection and she developed viral pneumonia. Once again in hospital her condition worsened until one night her breathing and heart stopped. Doctors rushed to resuscitate her whilst Kathy experienced a near-death event. Almost directly after Kathy returned from her NDE she recovered from the pneumonia and her cardiac arrest to discover, a few weeks later, that her cancer had disappeared.¹²⁹ Other near-death experiencers find themselves cured of the condition which caused their NDE. As a child Loretta contracted a devastating case of scarlet fever, a form of streptococcal infection which was very dangerous at that time. Loretta's doctor prescribed penicillin but she spent at least two weeks with an intense fever without showing signs of recovery. During this time Loretta experienced a NDE. Two days after this her scarlet fever disappeared. Both Loretta's mother and her doctor were surprised at her rapid recovery as they believed she would not survive the fever.¹³⁰ Despite being able to correlate these examples of healings to those experienced by close encounter witnesses, I have not discovered any instance where the near-death experiencer has, like the close encounter witness, been endowed with the gift of healing.

In Christian mysticism and spiritual conversion we discover that there are many instances of 'healing by faith'. In the Bible Hezekiah's prays for restoration of health are answered (2Kings 20:1-1; Isa.38:1-8), as well as King David's (Ps.21:4, 116:3-8). All who have been faithful to Yahweh and ask for his help will receive the same blessings e.g. Exo.23:25; Ps.107:20. Because of their faith Jesus cleanses lepers (e.g. Matt.8:1-4; Lk.17:11-19), cures those paralysed (e.g. Mk.2:1-12), restores vision (e.g. Matt.9:27-31, 20:29-34) and staunches a woman's 12 year haemorrhaging (Lk.8:43-48). In his work, *Religious Conversion*, Sante de Sanctis outlines three essentially typical ways in which the religious convert's new role is manifested in an individual's life. The first of these Sanctis describes as "the sensation of liberation and victory, which the convert displays by a powerful and integral joy of the spirit...The repercussion of this affective state on the physical condition of the convert is seen in the clearest way. *The convert, if he was formerly ill or infirm, now declares himself re-invigorated or even cured...*" [p.170 My italics] Melvin Morse interviewed a woman he called 'Janet' who, although she was not a near-death experiencer, had nevertheless been healed and converted by a mystical experience. Janet had been diagnosed with basil cell carcinoma, a form of skin cancer. The cancerous lesion was on her nose and her doctors insisted that it be removed immediately.

Janet tells of how, two nights before the operation, she was awakened by a bright light. A large ball of light hovered in front of her and asked her, "You aren't afraid are you?" She felt incredibly peaceful, it seemed as though her fears and problems melted away, and she felt filled with unconditional love. She prayed that her cancer would be removed.

[The voice from the light] asked me to think of my own worst enemy and I did. Then he said to send all of my light to my worst enemy. I did and a sudden burst of light went out of me and returned as if it had been reflected back from a mirror. I became aware of every cell in my body. I could see every cell in my body. It was the sound and sight of light coming from my being. I was crying, laughing, shaking, trying to hold still and trying to catch my breath. When I finally recovered, the being of light said, 'now you have prayed for the first time in your life.'¹³¹

After this experience, and before her surgery took place, Janet's doctors found that her cancer had just 'disappeared'. It is, apparently, extremely rare for a basal cell carcinoma simply to disappear.

John Heaton was, in his own words, "born a cripple. No other sufferer from my complaint has lived beyond two years - by which early death they were spared an enormous amount of suffering. A mother's love, and her long devotion and sacrifice, kept me alive."¹³² As the years passed John's complaint worsened, as did the pain he endured. During this period of his life severe suffering led to depression and the renouncement of a God who could allow such pain. John states, "I was an unbeliever, an out-and-out atheist. The climax of this period was an experience of two weeks during which I slept little more than two hours. Life was hell."¹³³ John describes his conversion experience, which led to an improvement in his health, thus:

Sunday morning came. I was cursing my mother, raving against her who had devoted her life to my needs. This was deliberate on my part. I had suffered so long. I was determined to make another suffer - my mother was the handiest for the purpose. Even as I mouthed my bitter words..., my hand went automatically towards the bedside radio receiving set. This was *not* a conscious act of mine. I was in no mood to listen, least of all to a religious broadcast. But it happened, the radio became vocal; a religious service was being sent out to the world; and the minister's first words to reach my ears were: "Why do men suffer?" That address changed my life.

In much less time than it has taken you to read so far, I was transformed. It was exactly as though the Lord Jesus Christ had come into my room (as indeed He had!), and had spoken directly to me, saying, "Peace be unto you: be still." In that moment, though I was still in pain, the pain no longer mattered. I knew the meaning of the poet's line: "Pain is sweet if Thou my God art there"...I want to say quite honestly that my transforming experience has amply compensated me for my long suffering...I ought also to say that from that transforming moment I began to make a remarkable recovery. I am still a partial cripple....But, with the aid of a tricycle, I am remarkably mobile; and my general health is princely in comparison with my former pitiable condition....Since my conversion...I have not only increased in health beyond all belief, but it has become possible for me to attend divine worship, which is a great joy, as well as help, to me.¹³⁴

As well as being healed by their conversion, some spiritual converts discover they have the ability to heal others. Although in the Old Testament the ability to heal others after divine contact is rare (2Kings 5:2-10) in the New Testament the apostles and early converts appear able to heal the sick and possessed e.g. Mk.16:17; Acts 3:1-8, 5:16, 8:6-7, 9:32-34,36-41, 19:11-12; 1Cor.12:9. Sometime in the late 1980s John Cornwell, a journalist who had abandoned his seven years of studying to become a priest, had the opportunity to meet Sister Briège. Just turned forty at the time, Sister Briège commanded an unparalleled reputation as a healer in the Catholic Church. Her healing ability, she told Cornwell, all began with a dramatic healing of her own body. Briège's mother had died when she was twelve. At fifteen she left her family to enter a strictly closed convent in County Armagh. At seventeen she developed rheumatoid arthritis, a painful and crippling condition. She was transferred to Florida but the climate there only increased her suffering. At the same time she was questioning her vocation.

“One morning I felt a hand on my head. I opened my eyes and no one was there, but I felt a power going through my body. I looked down. My fingers were limber, the sores were gone and my feet were no longer deformed. I jumped up screaming, ‘Jesus! You’re right here!’”

The summer after her healing she returned to Ireland for a holiday and cured a woman dying of cancer in the hospital of Newry.¹³⁵

Thus began Sister Briège's ministry of healing. Briège gives one example of her many healings, which also involved the spiritual conversion of the patient:

One day at a prayer meeting a woman stood up and asked me to pray for a friend who was blind and paralysed. I was convinced that this was far too big an order for me, but I went to see her anyway.

I found that she was very bitter, angry, and had given up on God. I put my hand on her paralysed arm and prayed with her, and as I did so I felt the sensation of needles, just as I had in the chapel when I had been given the gift of healing. But I wasn't confident that I could do anything for her.

A few days later she asked to see me. She had received her sight, and the power had come back in her arms. But as we talked later I realized that it was the woman's spiritual attitude that had totally changed. The woman's inner healing, spiritual healing, was more important....¹³⁶

Sister Briège is also credited with the gift of prophecy, bilocation and the ability to 'see' into people's hearts. As one priest told Cornwell, “Such an extraordinary woman...She's the successor to the great Padre Pio!”¹³⁷ Yet, there are many other individuals who, on devoting themselves to God, have found that they have the ability to heal. The evangelist Reverend William Fuller felt called to be a minister at the age of fourteen. Some years later, at a religious camp, he felt prompted to walk to an isolated site where he met a stranger. The 'intermediary' gave him what he “instinctively knew” was a message from God.

In this encounter, I was told that I would be used as a funnel through which God would pour blessings upon his people.... About a month later, I was with a small group of people at a nondenominational meeting when I felt a peculiar joy. I raised my arms to praise God and burst out in a Heavenly language. I could not stop. I went on in delirious praise. This joy was an evidence to me of spiritual touch.

Fifty-seven hours later, when I was on my knees praying alone, an audible voice, clear and concise, spoke to me from outside of myself and said: "I have given you the gift of miracles, the gift of healings, and the discerning spirit. You shall lay hands on people in the name of Jesus, and I shall heal them."...From that time on, I was able to manifest healing powers in my work with people. I saw cancers just dry up and fall off. I saw goiters just disappear in front of my eyes. I saw people that had been suffering years from rheumatoid arthritis suddenly drop their crutches and begin to jump and to praise the Lord. I saw people with horrible warts and growths have their disfigurements vanish.¹³⁸

The mystic Madame Guyon discovered the ability to heal by both touch and voice alone. She healed people psychically and spiritually, and preached complete and passive surrender to God's will. She found verbal suggestions very effective, progressing beyond the laying on of hands; "The Word alone sufficing" to effect a cure.¹³⁹ Despite the apparent continuity between the various experiences - other than in Marian visitations - we have just reviewed, concerning 'miraculous' cures and the gift of healing, there are examples of exactly the opposite taking place: individuals becoming ill or dying because of their contact with otherworld beings. The negative effects of alien contact have already been touched upon. In Chapter Two we observed how there are many reports of paralysis, burning eyes, skin discolouration, scarring and soreness found after an alleged close encounter, especially after an abduction experience: "Abductees may also suffer from a number of long-term symptoms that, though subtle, they relate to their abduction experiences. These include various fears...such as hospitals and needles, as well as symptoms such as headaches, nasal sinus pains, limb pains, gastrointestinal and urological-gynecological symptoms, and disturbances of sexual functioning."¹⁴⁰

Jacques Vallee reports that the abducted engineer he interviewed experienced a rapid deterioration to his eyesight directly after his alien encounter. "Prior to his alleged abduction this man had perfect eyesight in both eyes. It deteriorated rapidly afterward, a fact he attributes to a blinding, blinking light that was situated on top of the [teaching] 'machine'."¹⁴¹ Temporary conjunctivitis and blindness can also result from a mystical otherworld journey - Saul's epiphany on the road to Damascus left him blind for three days [Acts 9:9], whilst the monk of Wenlock remained blind for a week after his visionary journey. After his first vision the prophet Ezekiel was unable to prophesy for five years (Ezek.3:25ff, 24:27). The visionary Gottschalk constantly experienced intense pain to his head, side, and feet, and Salvius' tongue was found to be swollen and covered with terrible wounds. After his initiation at Saint Patrick's Purgatory, Antonio Mannini allegedly carried marks of his ordeal all his life. Other mystics, such as Saint Francis of Assisi and Padre Pio, report experiencing stigmata. As already described in this section, certain shamans like Tüspüt, who do not shamanize on a regular basis find that they begin to feel unwell. Continuing to shamanize is the only way they can avoid a relapse. According to the Chukchee, "while the shaman is in possession of the inspiration, he must practice, and cannot hide his power. Otherwise it will manifest itself in the form of bloody sweat or in a fit of madness similar to epilepsy."¹⁴²

The mission of the wounded healer is thus difficult, his path treacherous. The shaman realises that his intense involvement in healing directly affects his own life. He is frequently sick, full of 'poison' from his work.¹⁴³ It is interesting to note that those experiences which incorporate the most obvious 'ordeal' events i.e. mystical, shamanic and abduction phenomena, are those which report illness or suffering after their otherworld contact. The relationship between spiritual transformation and the ordeal experience is discussed in the final chapter.

The analysis undertaken in this chapter indicates that the close encounter experience has potential to instigate long-lasting and powerful changes in the witnesses' lives. Just as an otherworld journey experienced by near-death subjects, shamans, and mystics, may initiate changes in the individual's personality and lifestyle so, too, studies indicate that the close encounter witness' experience in the otherworld makes it difficult, sometimes impossible, for them to return to their old lifestyle. Being witness to a new dimension can lead to personal growth of an intellectual, ecological, moral, and altruistic nature.

Yet the close encounter phenomenon not only significantly impacts upon the individual's daily lifestyle and behaviour, a new found spirituality may also develop. In the concluding chapter we will continue to explore the transformative nature of the close encounter event, paying particular attention to the spiritual growth of the individual. The ultimate benefit of the close encounter to the individual will also be considered. We will conclude with our final analysis of this thesis.

¹ The most notable studies of close encounter experiencers were conducted by the late Ken Phillips, founder of the witness support group in Britain, and psychologist Alex Keul with their *Anamnesis* project, discussed later, and Kenneth Ring's study comparing modern near-death experiences with abduction and contactee episodes.

² As well as more indepth study needed concerning the close encounter witnesses' backgrounds and the transformative effects of their experiences, comparison of these encounters with other spiritual biographies would also be an asset. Gananath Obeyesekere's anthropological study *Medusa's Hair* is particularly relevant. Obeyesekere focuses on the experience of ecstatic priestesses and priests in Sri Lanka in order to show how personal symbolism and subjective imagery relates to religious expression. Obeyesekere's study is confined to ecstatic subjects belonging to a society whose symbol systems have not been eroded or demythologised through centuries of secularization of mythical and religious thought, as in the West, yet his research results can still be applied to the process of transformation undertaken by the close encounter witness. He argues that ecstatic experiences may arise out of the 'hypnomantic consciousness' (Obeyesekere's term for an altered state of consciousness), and that certain of these ecstatic states i.e. trance and dream vision, are influenced by the culture and by the personal quest of the experiencer. Although the witness' 'myth' has its genesis in the ecstatic (hypnomantic) state, the individual may well remember it and rework it in his conscious mind in order to bring it in line with his needs and the demands of his culture, facilitating both personal and cultural symbolism.

³ Lewis R. Rambo, 'Conversion' p.78

⁴ Carol Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys* p.148

⁵ Michael B. Sabom, *Recollections of Death* pp.155-156

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- ⁶ Ibid., p.16
- ⁷ Zaleski, op. cit., p.90
- ⁸ John Spencer, *Gifts of the Gods* p.130
- ⁹ Judith & Alan Gansberg, *Direct Encounters* p.172
- ¹⁰ Keith Thompson, *Angels and Aliens* p.189
- ¹¹ John Mack, *Abduction* p.44
- ¹² Kenneth Ring, *The Omega Project* pp.153-154,155
- ¹³ Ibid., p.156
- ¹⁴ Ibid., pp.175-176
- ¹⁵ Melvin Morse, *Transformed by the Light* pp.189-190
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Ring, op. cit., p.103
- ¹⁸ Morse, op. cit., p.x
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p.17
- ²⁰ Mack, op.cit., p.398
- ²¹ Ring, op. cit., p.178
- ²² Raymond Moody, 'The Experience of Dying' p.106
- ²³ Ring, op. cit., p.105
- ²⁴ James Fowler, *Stages of Faith* pp.201, 274
For a more indepth discussion refer to Part II of Fowler's book concerning stages five and six, stages which exhibit many similarities with the transformative process experienced by the close encounter witness.
- ²⁵ Abraham Maslow, *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences* quoted in Roger Walsh, *The Spirit of Shamanism* p.210
- ²⁶ Ibid., p.211
- ²⁷ Ibid., p.210
- ²⁸ W. Lawson Jones, *A Psychological Study of Religious Conversion* pp.157-158
- ²⁹ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* p.271
- ³⁰ David Hay, *Religious Experience Today* p.76
- ³¹ Alfred C. Underwood, *Conversion: Christian and Non-Christian* p.31 quoting from *Cambridge Journal I*, p.245
- ³² James, op. cit., p.259

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- ³³ L. Wyatt Lang, *A Study of Conversion* p.155
- ³⁴ Hay, op. cit., p.77
- ³⁵ In the LCI the value clusters were as follows: Appreciation for Life; Self-acceptance; Concern for Others; Concern for Impressing Others; Materialism; Concern with Social/Planetary Issues; Quest for Meaning; Spirituality; Religiousness. [See Ring, op. cit., p.280, Table 9]
- ³⁶ Ibid., p.181
- ³⁷ Ibid
- ³⁸ C. D. B. Bryan, *Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind* p.42
- ³⁹ Mack, op. cit., p.176
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., p.201
- ⁴¹ Ibid., p.213
- ⁴² Ibid., p.140
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., p.367
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p.364
- ⁴⁶ Gansberg, op. cit., p.173
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., p.178
- ⁴⁹ Jenny Randles, *Abduction* p.80
- ⁵⁰ Patrick Harpur, *Daimonic Reality* p.184
Jim Schnabel, *Dark White* p.118
- ⁵¹ Mack, op. cit., p.316
- ⁵² Ibid., p.293
- ⁵³ Ibid., p.371
- ⁵⁴ James, op. cit., p.281
- ⁵⁵ Ring, op. cit., p.187
- ⁵⁶ Mack, op. cit., p.240
- ⁵⁷ Ring, op. cit., p.188
- ⁵⁸ Spencer, op. cit., pp.309-310
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., p.179
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., pp.245-46

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- ⁶¹ Bryan, op. cit., p.150
- ⁶² Mack, op. cit., p.252
- ⁶³ Moody, op. cit., p.106
- ⁶⁴ Zaleski, op. cit., p.132
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., p.125
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., p.133
- ⁶⁷ Antonio Ribera, 'What Happened at Fatima?' p.13
- ⁶⁸ Gansberg, op. cit., p.170
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., p.34
- ⁷⁰ Mack, op. cit., pp.140-141
- ⁷¹ A. Caldecott, *The Religious Sentiment: Illustrated from the Lives of Wesley's Helpers* quoted in Underwood, op. cit., p.243
- ⁷² Jacques Vallee, *The Invisible College* p.17
- ⁷³ If the witness is discovered to be psychically aware *before* their close encounter experience the theory that the event induces psychic awareness is invalid here.
- ⁷⁴ D. Scott Rogo, *Tujunga Canyon* p.218 quoted in Peter Rojcewicz, *The Boundaries of Orthodoxy* p.128
- ⁷⁵ Debbie Tomey is 'Kathie Davis', the pseudonym used by Budd Hopkins in his book *Intruders*.
- ⁷⁶ Spencer, op. cit., pp.176-177
- ⁷⁷ Harpur, op. cit., p.247
- ⁷⁸ Schnabel, op. cit., p.172
- ⁷⁹ Vallee, op. cit., p.9 Uri Geller also claims that he received his paranormal abilities after his encounter with a UFO in a desert in his native Israel.
- ⁸⁰ Gansberg, op.cit., pp.139-140
- ⁸¹ Ibid., p.140
- ⁸² Ibid., pp.141-142
- ⁸³ See Chapter Four, p.113
- ⁸⁴ Gansberg, op. cit., p.145
- ⁸⁵ Ibid.
- ⁸⁶ See Chapter Four, p.117
- ⁸⁷ Gansberg, op. cit., p.147
- ⁸⁸ Randles, op. cit., pp.86-87

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- ⁸⁹ Ibid.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid., pp.87,104
- ⁹¹ Alex Keul & Ken Phillips, 'Assessing the Witness' pp.233-235
- ⁹² Quoted in Rojcewicz, op. cit., p.141
- ⁹³ See especially Ring, op. cit. and Morse, op. cit.
- ⁹⁴ Morse, Ibid., p.89
- ⁹⁵ Ibid.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid., p.91
- ⁹⁷ Ibid., pp.26-27
- ⁹⁸ Zaleski, op. cit., p.141
- ⁹⁹ Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism* p.184
- ¹⁰⁰ James Leuba, *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism* p.84
- ¹⁰¹ Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* p.294
- ¹⁰² Saint Teresa of Avila, *The Life of St. Teresa of Avila* p.226
- ¹⁰³ Ibid., p.218
- ¹⁰⁴ John Cornwall, *Powers of Darkness, Powers of Light* p.276
- ¹⁰⁵ D. Scott Rogo, *Miracles* pp.243-244
- ¹⁰⁶ John Whitmore, 'Religious Dimensions of the UFO Abduction Experience' p.72
- ¹⁰⁷ Richard L. Thompson, *Alien Identities* p.128
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁹ Edith Fiore, *Abductions* p.101f
- ¹¹⁰ David Jacobs, *Secret Life* p.192
- ¹¹¹ Ibid., p.192
- ¹¹² Mack, op. cit., p.398
- ¹¹³ Gansberg, op. cit., p.139
- ¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.145
- ¹¹⁵ Spencer, op. cit., p.146
- ¹¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁷ Mack, op. cit., p.238
- ¹¹⁸ Spencer, op. cit., pp.330-333

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- ¹¹⁹ Jacques Vallee, *Dimensions* p.150
- ¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.157
- ¹²¹ Kevin McClure, *The Evidence for Visions of the Virgin Mary* p.45
- ¹²² Rogo, *op. cit.*, pp.289-290
- ¹²³ Cornwell, *op. cit.*, p.250
- ¹²⁴ Eliade, *op. cit.*, pp.25-26
- ¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.27-28
- ¹²⁶ Joan Halifax, *Shamanic Voices* p.10
- ¹²⁷ B. Spencer & F. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* p.485
- ¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.487-488
- ¹²⁹ Morse, *op. cit.*, p.142
- ¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.149-150
- ¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp.138-139
- ¹³² Leslie D. Weatherhead, *Psychology, Religion and Healing* p.514
- ¹³³ *Ibid.*, p.515
- ¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.515-516
- ¹³⁵ Cornwell, *op. cit.*, pp.118-119
- ¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.234-235
- ¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.113
- ¹³⁸ Brad Steiger, *Revelation* pp.70-71
- ¹³⁹ Leuba, *op. cit.*, p.83
- ¹⁴⁰ Mack, *op. cit.*, p.45
- ¹⁴¹ Vallee, *The Invisible College* p.10
- ¹⁴² Walsh, *op. cit.*, p.206 quoting W. Bogoras in *The Chukchee* (Ed.) F. Boas p.419
- ¹⁴³ Jeanne Achterberg, 'The Wounded Healer' p.118

CHAPTER SIX

ALIEN ECSTASY?: ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

T. S. Eliot: *Little Gidding*

*There never was an explanation which didn't
itself have to be explained.*

Charles Fort: *The Complete Book of Charles Fort*

*In the last analysis magic, religion and science are nothing
but theories of thought; and as science has supplanted its
predecessors, so it may hereafter be itself superseded by
some more perfect hypothesis, perhaps by some totally
different way of looking at the phenomena – of registering
the shadows on the screen – of which we in this generation
can form no idea.*

Sir James Frazer: *The Golden Bough*

In this thesis we have so far shown that a close encounter experience, in structure and content, parallels selected religious visions and otherworld journeys. When we analyse the effect a close encounter has upon the witness there is evidence to suggest that exposure to such a phenomenon generates a new spiritual dimension in the witness' life. Thus, it is unfortunate that the overall transformational power of a close encounter, particularly where spiritual growth is concerned, has been largely neglected in much of the research into this subject. I have focused particularly upon the repercussions of this phenomenon upon the close encounter witness because a) it has received no comprehensive investigation before, and b) I believe this largely uninvestigated area to be particularly significant when trying to identify the nature of the close encounter phenomenon. It is how the witness understands his experience, and what he does in consequence to the event which, when compared with the selected religious traditions, allows us to determine a new interpretation of the close encounter phenomenon. This final chapter will define the evidential grounds for my belief, whilst recapping on the stages of phenomenological methodology employed in this thesis, and the results found in so doing.

When we analyse the overall transformative nature of the close encounter we discover that a significant number of witnesses speak of a newfound spirituality gained either during, or as a direct result of, their close encounter. This experience has powerful and long-lasting effects upon the psyche of the individual, prompting fundamental changes in worldview and lifestyle. Kenneth Ring conducted a 'Religious Beliefs Inventory' (RBI) in his survey, which provided "a measure of the degree to which an individual shifts toward a universalistic spiritual or a more sectarian religious position in the aftermath of an [encounter experience]."¹ He concluded that "*All groups show a very marked movement (and it is highly significant statistically) toward religious universalism. Thus, following extraordinary encounters, respondents, on the average, don't become more religious, they become more spiritual.*"² Ring's findings (and, as we shall see below, the findings of other close encounter researchers) may be compared with James Fowler's theory of growth in faith. Particularly pertinent are stages five and six of Fowler's theory. In stage five ('Conjunctive Faith') the individual "suspects that things are organically related to each other" and "attends to the pattern of interrelatedness in things".³ The experiencer "accepts as axiomatic that truth is more multidimensional and organically interdependent than most theories or accounts of truth can grasp."⁴ The individual in stage six of faith ('Universalizing Faith') undergoes a significant reshaping of his life and worldview. "Living with felt participation in a power that unifies and transforms the world, Universalizers are often experienced as subversive of the structures (including religious structures) by which we sustain our individual and corporate survival, security and significance."⁵

The results of Ken Phillips' and Alex Keul's *Anamnesis* project support the trend towards religious universalism. They found that many witnesses reported mystical or religious experiences, and gave weight to "spiritual quality of life". However, this group of close encounter witnesses follows the general trend away from the conventional church which does not meet their personal needs.⁶ Witnesses' statements in the research undertaken by Judith and Alan Gansberg (see p.197 below) support this. We shall give examples of this move towards a more spiritual way of life, but first we should analyse what spiritual philosophy the close encounter witnesses are following. Descriptions of this philosophy tend to follow a consistent pattern, one that we have met before when analysing alien revelations. It is also a philosophy which is fundamental to the individual viewing the cosmos in an entirely new way. They believe that the soul develops spiritually through a succession of incarnations, each lifetime encouraging the development of universal love and compassion, intellect and psychic powers. The more advanced the soul the more co-operative its actions. Everything in the universe is believed to have come into being through the Creator. Omnipotent and omnipresent the Creator is the One, undivided, eternal, full of love, light and consciousness.⁷ The close encounter experiencer appears to discover a new sense of their place in the cosmos. Earth and its inhabitants are seen as one interlinked and indivisible whole. The natural world is sacred and awesome, and worthy of respect. The close encounter witness is despondent about Earth's environmental crisis. He may describe himself as a "child of the universe".⁸ Knowledge and acceptance of a cosmic design should lead the individual to a life of altruism and unconditional love for all beings: human and non-human. Such behaviour is perceived as an indication of spiritual advancement and enables the individual to open his mind to a broader way of life and becomes, what psychologist Leo Sprinkle describes as, a 'cosmic citizen'.⁹

Close encounter claimants are not the only ones to experience a sense of 'Oneness' and interconnectedness with the rest of the universe. This view is also shared by shamans and some spiritual converts. To the shaman all things are alive: humans, animals, plants, even rocks and objects which the majority of westerners could not conceive of as living, such as tables, chairs and buildings are all part of the One. Such objects exist and are alive because they are needed and have been brought into being by their makers, craftsmen, architects, etc.. All things have 'life-force', an energy which emanates from them - sometimes called an 'aura' - which can be sensed by someone who has trained himself to 'see' such energy fields.¹⁰ This "vision of the universe, from the gods to the underworld [can be regarded] as being connected by an enormous all-reaching system of fibres rather like a three-dimensional spider's web. Everything [is] connected by strands of fibre to the all-encompassing web. Any event anywhere, results in reverberation and repercussions throughout the web..."¹¹ As all things are interconnected and are dependent upon one another the shaman stresses how vital it is that all beings live in a harmonious way. They, themselves, will try to balance their lives with the other life-forces connected by the web. The shaman's life teaches him respect for the universe and brings a sense of unity with all life forms. Attaining harmony enables him to help others because he can draw on the true power that unity with the universe brings.¹² With spiritual conversion we discover that after his conversion the individual enters upon his new reality; one in which he clearly feels true communion with everyone and everything.¹³ The idea that 'we are part of everything and everything is part of us' is described in this account from a young man who was climbing near Ben Nevis:

I was climbing first and was ahead of my companions. The roar of a waterfall nearby was deafening, until I climbed over the rim of the rock face. In absolute quiet, within a beautiful scenic panorama, I found God. The descriptions of Samadhi fits my experience perfectly. I was no longer aware of 'myself'; and yet I retained my personality. This was however merged into an infinite incorporated personality of all life. Peace, love and understanding, became real and tangible.¹⁴

One other example illustrates the convert's realisation that all things are interrelated. R. M. Bucke, a Canadian psychiatrist, relates his religious experience:

Among other things, I did not merely come to believe, but I saw that the universe is not composed of dead matter, but is, on the contrary, a living Presence; I became conscious in myself of eternal life. It was not a conviction that I would have eternal life, but a consciousness that I possessed eternal life then; I saw that all men are immortal; that the cosmic order is such that without any peradventure all things work together for the good of each and all; that the foundation principle of the world, of all the worlds, is what we call love, and that the happiness of each and all is in the long run absolutely certain. The vision lasted a few seconds and was gone but the memory of it and the sense of the reality of what it taught have remained during the quarter of a century which has since elapsed. I knew that what the vision showed was true. I had attained to a point of view from which I saw that it must be true. That view, that conviction, I may say that consciousness, has never, even during periods of the deepest depression, been lost.¹⁵

With their new respect for humanity and the planet, not only do close encounter witnesses and those experiencers in the other categories feel compelled to live a more modest and harmonious life, they also frequently begin to pursue a more explicit spiritual path as they open themselves to the depth and meaning of their experiences. Scott increasingly spoke to John Mack of the spiritual dimensions of his abduction experiences. In a support group meeting “he told of how ‘exposure to them’ had ‘opened up something in me...It’s almost like you’re given an intense jump into a spiritual realm you’re not even ready for - like Yogis go through tons of work...to get to a certain point.’...Scott himself, in addition to his increasing curiosity about the spiritual dimensions of the phenomenon, had begun to meet with an acupuncturist and more recently a shamanic healer.”¹⁶ ‘Pat’, an abductee, vividly describes an intense spiritual experience induced by the tall alien leader who is commonly present during an abduction:

He, too, was wearing a robe; but unlike the hybrids [supposed beings of human/alien parentage], this Tall Being was wearing a hood which framed his sharply pointed chin, his thin, slitlike mouth, and tiny bridge of a nose. The Tall Being’s most striking feature, however, was his eyes: almond-shaped, huge, dominated by totally black, irisless pupils. His dark eyes made his pale complexion seem almost chalky white.

“The depth of those eyes was indescribable!” Pat says. “It was like looking up at the sky at night: totally dark. He slowly turned and looked at me, and his eyes engulfed my whole personality: everything I knew and remembered about life, all my feelings, all the love I had for people on this earth and my love for Earth itself. All those emotions came out, and he knew *who* I was, and *what* I was, and then all of a sudden my body began to shake.

“Every molecule began to shake so very, very fast,” she continues, “that what happened next was like a silent explosion. My whole body just burst into a million different pieces of light!” Pat exclaims. “And I looked down at myself and I could see that I was much larger than I thought I had been. And I was so much *brighter!* It was like my soul had escaped my body. And then,” she says, “he pulled me through his eyes and we were free - free of all the physics of this earth that limit us, free of the body that puts a wall around our souls...”

“It was such a beautiful experience! Just *beautiful!* I just can’t express how spiritual it was. All I can tell you is that the human body is one poor, poor, *poor* piece of machinery compared to the soul! And that’s what we live in: the body. But if people could really see their souls...”¹⁷

During Whitley Strieber’s attempt to understand his close encounter memories he began a journey of discovery which has led him to believe that his experiences are primarily spiritual in character. He has moved away from the Catholic faith of his childhood. He believes that the “visitor experience” (i.e. abduction) is aimed at expanding man’s spiritual awareness, that the alien science is a “technology of the soul” designed to jolt the individual’s spiritual capabilities to mature. This is the purpose of the aliens whom he compares to cosmic predators or demons. Strieber believes this mystical aspect is fundamental to solving the UFO mystery, and encourages others who share the same belief to speak out to counter darker theories.¹⁸

One of Mack's abductees, Peter, felt intense loneliness as he struggled to come to terms with his abduction experiences. Yet this isolation became a central factor which led to Peter embarking on a spiritual path of discovery. He particularly places stress upon the interconnectedness of all living beings and states that in his aloneness he has discovered unity with God and spirit:

The abduction experience...allowed me to feel this aloneness yet to feel totally connected with that one individual source....I began to know on the most cellular level that we are not alone in the universe, that God created many creatures in His likeness. [The aliens] are not so unlike ourselves. They too struggle. They too question existence. They too are inquisitive. They nourish themselves. They procreate and they pass on. They wish to be accepted for who they are....God created a lot more in the universe than we can ever imagine....Like thousands of others like myself who have had the experience, have seen God's creation in other forms, I know in the deepest part of myself that the beings are like us in many ways....I am connected to a creation process that is far greater than anything I have ever been asked to imagine in any of my other previous exposures to any spirituality.¹⁹

Carlos also experienced profound spiritual growth and personal transformation as a direct result of his close encounter events. He agrees with Peter that the feelings of trauma, helplessness, and aloneness of an abduction can contribute to expanding an individual's spiritual consciousness. Carlos's immediate reaction to his insight into the otherworld was one of awe:

"Awe is fear. Awe is mystery. Awe is ecstasy. When I use the word 'awe', this is the substantial piece of being in a larger (world, universe, movement, energy)...where exists all the energy forces that are tension and stress and movement and energy and electrical components and atomic molecular and all of that. That is awe...We have the capability of awe, but we don't deal with it."
...Among the "lessons" he has learned in his abduction experiences is the need for human beings to expand the scope of their empathy, to identify more widely. "If human beings were empathic and learn to identify with that which is not themselves, then they will be less predatory and destructive." For this to occur it may be necessary for us to gain a sense of where we belong in the universal order.²⁰

The type of spiritual awakening experienced by many close encounter subjects does not signify a renewal of traditional religious fervour, in fact, it would appear that the exact opposite is true. As quoted above, Phillips and Keul discovered in their *Anamnesis* survey, that close encounter witnesses are rejecting mainstream religion as it does not meet their personal needs. Many of the witnesses are unchurched people, and the few who have been brought up in a traditional religion rarely return to, or continue with, that religion, preferring to embark upon a spiritual quest of their own.²¹

This is adequately highlighted by the interviews conducted by Judith and Alan Gansberg. Mona Stafford was a regular churchgoer until her experience, now she often misses services. Louise Smith, a previously devout Baptist and Gospel choir member, finds services can be missed without guilt. Carl Higdon, formerly a Baptist, now a Methodist, rarely attends church now, but is adamant that he knows more fully that "God is the supreme being". Lydia Stalnaker, a previous lapsed Church of God member, is the only abductee who has returned to her earlier faith in Gansberg's sample.²²

It is unsurprising that the close encounter experiencer should independently embark upon a spiritual path. A close encounter can be perceived as a profound and possibly awesome encounter with the 'Sacred' or the 'Other'. Close encounter experiencers have, in some almost indescribable way, been "open[ed] up to the source of being in the cosmos, which they often call Home, and from which they feel they have been brutally cut off in the course of becoming embodied as a human being."²³ Although close encounters have happened to many people the experience usually occurs in isolation in the same way as a shaman, mystic or near-death subject experiences their ecstasy. It is understandable that, having experienced the other realms on such intimate terms, the individual feels the need to forge his own religious path. The belief that there are "many ways to the ultimate Truth or Source" allows the subject to begin a highly individualised spiritual quest, without denying the revelations of Unconditional Love, Knowledge, and Universalism to which he has been exposed.

As observed in the previous chapter, the passive and compassionate nature of the contactee experience tends to have more in common with the NDE than with its fellow close encounter event, the abduction. It is comprehensible that such inspiring forms of contact with an otherworld would promote a growth in spiritual consciousness. Both the near-death and contactee experiences largely lack the trauma of an 'ordeal'. Both offer the individual a more gentle, affirmatory self-assessment with advice for future salvation. The same cannot be said of the abduction experience, in which the individual fares far more harshly. Yet, from the examples above, there is evidence to suggest that such a traumatic and humiliating ordeal can promote spiritual development: Peter, despite his feeling of aloneness in the face of his abduction experiences, was able to connect with the 'Godhead'; Carlos believes that his feeling of helplessness at the hands of alien entities, contributed to an expansion of his spiritual awareness; Whitley Strieber, who views the aliens as a form of demon is, however, assured that these "predators" appear in people's lives in order to activate their spiritual capabilities, through the very fact that the ordeal is one which involves pain and trauma. Later, we will explore whether the individual, on the whole, regards their close encounter in positive or negative terms. For now I wish to emphasise that, despite the violent and distressing aspects of alien abduction, it is possible for such an event to be seen as spiritually transformative. We have already touched upon this when we examined the way in which the shaman endures his initiation. It is his suffering, and perhaps his physical and mental healing, which ultimately empowers him. It is exactly through his dismemberment and/or illness that he is able to die to his old Self, to become so completely reduced to 'nothingness' that he is then able to begin to see 'anew'. A new man is born who, it emerges, has the desire, knowledge and skill to serve his people. The same may be true of the abductee.

The spiritual path has often been one of 'ordeal', contrary to those who believe, especially in recent decades, that such metaphysical quests should be free of pain and struggle. Turn to any history of religion and one will discover examples of pain and suffering endured by many seekers of spiritual wisdom. As John Mack observes:

Sometimes our most useful spiritual learning and growth comes at the hands of rough teachers who have little respect for our conceits, psychological defenses, or established points of view. Zen Buddhist teaching is notorious for its shock treatment methods. One might even go further and argue that genuine spiritual growth is inevitably disturbing, as the boundaries of consciousness are breached and we are opened to new domains of existence.²⁴

"Suffering is the ancient law of love," says the Eternal Wisdom to Suso, "There is no quest without pain, there is no lover who is not also a martyr. Hence it is inevitable that he who would love so high a thing as wisdom should sometimes suffer hindrances and griefs."²⁵ Little is, therefore, achieved at a spiritual level if the subject has not learnt through some form of mental and/or physical ordeal, the lessons of the Universe. So it is with alien abduction - the difference being that the individual may not, at least consciously, have had any intention of expanding his spiritual awareness and, therefore, may be ill-prepared for his sudden thrust into Otherness. Yet, for many, if not all, abductees this is the beginning of an awareness of a universe that is more than simply material and that man is not alone in the cosmos. The whole of creation becomes sacred and ensouled. They are no longer separate, isolated, individuals but unique integrated parts of a far greater whole. They may experience an ecstasy as they open to, and connect with, the divine and creative source of the cosmos.²⁶ There are elements in the abduction claims that suggest these may be viewed as consciousness-altering opportunities. As with shamanic and initiation rites, there are strong 'ordeal' elements in the experience. It is when the abductee solely focuses on the ordeal, with its feelings of abuse and victimization, that spiritual transformation is unlikely to occur; that is the vivid 'ordeal' memories are not placed within the context of the whole experience. After his ordeal the shaman meets and converses with his spirit guide and teachers, learning the knowledge and skills he will need in his new calling. A number of abductees also claim that important information about the future was given to them after the ordeal part of their experience.

However, it can be argued that the abductees' belief that the experience was needed to expand their consciousness, and thus ultimately is beneficial for the universe is, in fact, a defensive shift. Such a shift allows the ego to maintain a sense of control – what is freely given cannot be taken by force – and a rational explanation of the situation is achieved. Or it could be that working through, and coming to terms with, the traumatic experience gives the abductee "access to experiences of transpersonal meaning, universal love, and connectedness that make such compassion possible."²⁷ Strieber argues that the *actual close encounter* may be recognised as a tool for individual personal expansion; the initiatory event of a spiritual process which can lead to spiritual advancement involving love and compassion for all beings. This way of viewing the universe may also manifest itself in the individual's development of knowledge, intelligence, psychic powers, and healing abilities, as observed above.

This spiritual transformation can only occur if, the individual first becomes aware that this experience is an opportunity for spiritual advancement, and then finds the courage to surrender totally to the initiatory ordeal. (We will further discuss the surrender of the individual later in this chapter.)

The Close Encounter as Positive Experience v. The “Used Person” Claim

It would appear from the evidence presented in this chapter that close encounter experiences do have a profound effect upon those who undergo them. Yet, there is debate over whether these close encounter episodes are ultimately beneficial experiences. Some investigators suggest that, in fact, rather than being an aid to spiritual transformation these events can be damaging to the individuals. Let us examine evidence from both sides of this argument. The close encounter phenomenon is for many who experience it an unprecedented event. Those individuals who have partial, or full recall of events, are faced with the challenge it creates for their concept of reality. As already acknowledged, it takes time for experiencers to come to terms with what has happened to them, and some never do. For abductees the process is evidently more difficult than for the contactees. Not only are they kidnapped and separated from all that they know, they also report enduring humiliating and painful procedures - procedures that may be repeated on a number of occasions. Both types of close encounter witness are not prepared for their journeys to other realms. For some, such journeys can be highly successful, resulting in mystical revelations that appear to enhance the lives of the experiencer. Many witnesses are able to cope with the events, experiencing only minor repercussions from their alien contact. However, for both groups, such uncontrolled and involuntary leaps to an alternate reality can also be “highly perilous, resulting in one or two undesirable conditions which used to be called ‘loss of soul’ and ‘possession by spirits’. The first, analogous to what we now call neurosis, occurs when we lose touch with other realms; the second, analogous to psychosis, occurs when we are too much in touch with the Otherworld, becoming overwhelmed by it.”²⁸ Pioneer ufologist John A. Keel coined the term ‘used person’ to describe those witnesses who experience emotional collapse, mental disorders, or even die following their close encounter.²⁹

Some individuals are so profoundly shocked by what has happened to them that they feel unable to view their experience in anything other than negative terms. Their trauma may be exhibited in a variety of ways. In 1986, Ronald Westrum reported that he had identified what he refers to as Post-Abduction Syndrome (PAS). This involves a multiplicity of psychological symptoms that are initiated by abduction experiences and has, Westrum believes, its greatest effect on unaware abductees. PAS is very similar to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) but differs in that the memory of events is repressed by outside forces, even though abductees may wish to remember them. Abduction events appear to be repressed even though they may not include violent and traumatic events as in PTSD. PAS sufferers may experience sleep disturbances; their dreams can be vivid and disturbing making them fear sleep. Abductees may become so anxious that when they do fall asleep they wake up many times during the night. They may suffer from fears, sometimes minor ones or, occasionally, ones that seriously effect their lives. They may also suffer from depression.³⁰ Westrum also reports that abductees with PAS may suffer episodes of withdrawal or hysteria and may contemplate, or even resort to, suicide to end their misery.

The Gansbergs interviewed one abductee who suffered prolonged hysteria as a result of his close encounter: "This man was too unnerved immediately after the encounter to be hypnotized and has spent much of the last few years 'on the run' from his former home in order to escape being reminded of the memories. His condition has now stabilized, and he says he is working again."³¹ Jo Stone-Carmen, an Arizona psychologist, reports "that thirteen out of twenty-three abduction experiencers in one study had attempted suicide - a figure 57 per cent higher than that for the general population. Some correlation obviously exists between abduction experiences and attempts on one's life...but its meaning is not fully understood, and further study is needed."³² In certain circumstances individuals claiming to carry out instructions from aliens act in a way that causes their unintentional death. "In one incident, a woman starved herself to death after a 66-day fast instituted by her instructor from Jupiter."³³

In India in 1958 a businessman witnessed a UFO landing in broad daylight, and claimed that four three foot tall aliens emerged: "Two boys playing in nearby rocks were subsequently found to have disappeared. One was later discovered dead, with several organs removed, as if by 'expert surgery.' The other was in a catatonic trance and died five days later in a hospital without speaking."³⁴ Paradoxically, suicide may also be the resort of those who believe that they have benefitted from their experience. As acknowledged in Chapter One, the 39 members of Heaven's Gate appear to have *willingly* taken their own lives on the strength of their UFO beliefs. This is not the only instance of people killing themselves so as to join their alien contacts. An earlier instance, headlined "ALIEN ORDER CAUSES CHILD SUICIDE" in the March 8, 1977 issue of the Mexico City newspaper *Ovaciones*, highlights a much younger example of self-sacrifice:

The story states that a 13 year old boy shot himself in the heart after leaving behind a note saying that his alien friends asked for his company on a long voyage. In the note the boy told his mother that "beings like us are asking me to go with them." He added that his relatives should not worry *as he would be happy with the beings*. "Mom, don't think I'm dead, since I'll be reborn on another planet. I'm not crazy or imagining things, since little creatures in a spaceship have told me I'm desperately needed on the planet Soholcucid...", he wrote. After signing the note, he promptly shot himself with his father's pistol.³⁵ [My italics]

Despite the fact that these individuals did not appear to be coerced, it has been argued that leaders of certain UFO cults have merely exploited their position and influence over their followers. In 1979 Jacques Vallee presciently stated that HIM was "a dangerous organization that uses traditional religious themes and adverse social conditions to establish its doctrine of salvation and manipulate its believers."³⁶ There is no evidence to suggest the members of Heaven's Gate were forced, against their will, to kill themselves, but widespread media coverage of the close encounter phenomenon has led to a number of direct and indirect contactees being targeted and 'used' by a variety of entrepreneurs, charlatans, and exploiters.³⁷ It is undeniable that there are people who are unable to cope with their exposure to the otherworld, and I will discuss why this may be at the end of this section.

Overall, in the literature I have reviewed, I have been impressed by what appears to be an overwhelming sense of appreciation on the part of individuals, that they have been able to experience and learn from the otherworld. Many close encounter witnesses have been able to adjust to the phenomenon and lead their lives free from the types of dysfunction mentioned above. As observed, many more have felt that, in some way, they have been “enlightened”, and even prepared for some future benevolent purpose. This has been supported by Kenneth Ring’s *Omega Project*. He concludes that the overall thrust of his survey indicates people who, either through personal experience or interest, have become involved with UFOs and NDEs and believe they have made a positive, life-affirming difference to them, and to their perception of the world. Even though the onset of the experience may be traumatic, their belief is persuasive evidence of the transformative nature of these episodes.³⁸

Other researchers have identified the same trait. Psychologists Edith Fiore and Richard Boylan have both observed that the witnesses they have counselled describe their close encounter as being uplifting, and believe their consciousness or cosmic perspective expands as a result, despite acknowledging that the events were frightening.³⁹ Folklorist Thomas E. Bullard has also indicated that even an invasive abduction is commonly viewed in a positive light. Replying to a letter from two abductees who strongly felt that their encounter was positive and beneficial to them Bullard states:

In my earlier studies a pattern of unfriendliness, coldness and exploitation came to the fore and persuaded me that these beings were up to no good. Since then I have received several letters from people who regarded their experience in the same positive light as you do. Some people certainly come away with negative feelings. That is understandable, even reasonable when taking the experience of kidnap at face value. Yet the more I learn, the more I realize that the experience has a less obvious positive side. Some abductees feel a deep and abiding affection for their captors, and sense a reciprocity of those feelings.⁴⁰

Judith and Alan Gansberg, after extensive interviewing, concluded that most abductees did not regret their experience despite the negative aspects they might incur through media attention. Most felt appreciation for the changes in their outlook and the recognition that life is more than mere “mundane mechanics”. Life has become more fulfilling; they work hard, devote more time to leisure, especially reading, and give more consideration to the meaning of life. “As they describe it, each encounter was almost akin to a religious experience, a fervent revival of faith.”⁴¹ Jessica Rolfe told the Gansbergs, “I feel different, but not special because of what has happened to me. There is no need to capitalize on it, since the knowledge I have seems gift enough.”⁴² Rolfe does not doubt that her abductions were beneficial, her life is richer and fuller than before her encounters. Travis Walton also concludes that his life has changed for the better as a result of his abduction, despite having to deal with feelings of isolation and awe: “I used to have my head to the ground; now I know there is more to what’s here. The universe is bigger, more immense, more spectacular than I ever imagined. But what a price I have paid for that broadening of my horizons. I’m a better person, but on a day-to-day basis it is more difficult to live.”⁴³

It would appear that, despite the fear and pain endured, and the inability to control the close encounter, especially abduction, the majority of witnesses feel that the overall experience is one of deep importance and value to them. Deciding to surrender to the process, and at the same time conquering the fear induced by the experience, seems to allow the individual to realise that they are participating in a life-enhancing or life-transforming process. By 'giving oneself up to' the experience, one becomes open to the opportunity of learning which is being offered. However, this opportunity is not fully realised until the surrender is made. As abductee Arthur states: "If you don't react with fear [to the aliens] you can communicate with them and the communication is in itself incredibly inspiring. I don't know how to describe it, but I know, at least my family thinks that it has affected my life in the way that I treat society and my commitments to different causes and stuff."⁴⁴ Eva found that surrendering the need to control and resist the intensity and meaning of her abduction has enabled her to "move beyond fear and trauma to a place of greater inner balance and personal power."⁴⁵ Mary has also been able to work through her dread of being repeatedly abducted, describing her ability to overcome such events as empowering:

"You said that you anticipated with great pleasure working with the Gray [sic] Beings."

"Yes, I would say so," Mary replies thoughtfully. "The work I have done with them has had many positive and beneficial effects on my life. So even though the feeling that I have just prior to an experience might be called dread or apprehension, I'm aware that that's the biological response - the animal in me. I'm able to control my fear through my awareness that what I'm feeling is simply similar to that of a rabbit in the woods cowering in fear when a superior intelligence walks by....I do anticipate with pleasure working with them, because..." She pauses for a moment, then says with a sigh, "Because this has been a good thing for me."

She doesn't sound convinced. "Why has it been good?" I ask.

"The more control I have over these experiences - these experiences over which there is no control - the more empowered I am in my everyday experiences to control the gross matter that I have to deal with in consensus reality...."⁴⁶

The Close Encounter Event as Spiritual Initiation Process

It is evident that a close encounter experience may be shocking, painful, and humiliating for the individual concerned. Not everyone has been able to view such an ordeal as a positive, life-enhancing process. As we have observed, some are driven to despair, ill-health or even suicide by the very process that, for others, opens up a new and exciting way of living. I believe the difference between those individuals who are able to view such an event in a positive light, and those who cannot, is the former's ability to surrender to the process. The ability to do so is of major significance as, quite literally, it may mean the difference between life and death for the individual.

From the knowledge I have gained in researching this thesis I believe that, whatever the reality of a close encounter may be, one central effect it can have is that of transforming the individual and expanding his consciousness. It is true that in abductions the witnesses can experience terror, helplessness, and pain at the hands of their alien abductors who are unpredictable and brutal. It would appear that, as in the shamanic initiation, these traumatic elements are essential to bringing about the death of the old self, giving the witness the opportunity to be spiritually and mentally born anew, and ascend to a higher plane of consciousness.

The thrust of the alleged alien messages is that we are all interconnected beings of the universe who must live a life of spiritual selflessness in order to enhance our relationships, not only with one another, but also the planet and the Divine. As we have observed, subjects have experienced a profound change in their outlook. Acknowledging the interconnectedness of the universe leaves them incapable of returning to their old ways. Instead they move through life with a greater respect for themselves and all those around them. The prospect of death, birth and spiritual transformation are all present in a close encounter event but one must be prepared to realise this and then open up to it. It appears that only those who no longer resist the annihilation, that is prerequisite to rebirth, can truly gain in any way from the experience. For it is only then that their former view of reality is shattered, and they are forced to reconstruct a new reality which embraces the dimension which has been opened up to them.

Willingly embracing the marginal, liminal, twilight realms of being, the domain of uncertainty and not-knowing, can make possible new insights, new ways of "constructing reality."

...It is impressive to meet subjects of close encounters who move from an initial view of paradise lost to celebrating the freedom from having to keep a particular one-dimensional sense of paradise intact. They realize that they can choose to enter paradox and live there, as social psychologist Donald Michael puts it, "landing with both feet firmly planted in midair."

...A growing number of witnesses...seem genuinely pleased to be free from having to know what reality is ultimately all about, satisfied to have the opportunity to thrive outside accepted realms of classifications, to ask questions about matters they once took for granted, to focus on what they see as an even larger transition than their personal one: the shift for a new way of being for humanity.⁴⁷

Unfortunately, as we have seen, not every close encounter experiencer feels comfortable surrendering to the fear of the experience. This is understandable given that in our western society no attempt is made to prepare individuals for an encounter with the other realms, as there is unspoken consensus in the West that we should view the world in one, primarily scientific, way. As we have observed throughout this thesis, ordinary people frequently experience profound encounters with the Other and, because they are usually unprepared for such contact, casualties do occur. A close encounter is evidently to those concerned an event of tremendous power, which thrusts the individual into a new realm of consciousness. Prior to this the percipient, along with the rest of his community, has maintained his sense of orientation in the world by a kind of reasoning that makes order and sense out of everything. This is, by its nature and convenience, a consensus view.

Being pushed through into another realm, unsurprisingly, causes disorientation, as it is a process discontinuous with the ordinary stream of events in everyday life. Close encounter percipients become aware of another part of existence; a realm which many are regularly forced to return to, where scientific and physical laws respected in the everyday realm are disregarded. In this otherworld they momentarily grasp the truths of the universe. On their return they find that these truths elude them or are only vaguely remembered, and they have to reassess their expectation and understanding about what life is all about. Due, on the whole, to an unwillingness of the West generally to accept that the way we view reality may only be one of many ways, the close encounter witness may fight against accepting his close encounter.

The individual may attempt to share his encounter experience with others only to be ridiculed, or accused of mental instability, which can leave him doubting the validity of the encounter. Or he may be investigated by those UFO researchers who believe in the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis and who promote the idea that the subject is a passive victim of alien exploitation. Again, such beliefs do not encourage the witness to question further the nature of his experience, or to view it as a transformational process. The inability to adapt to or understand this process, to which the individual may repeatedly be exposed, can only lead to frustration, fear and despair. As Patrick Harpur suggests:

If all questers showed their willingness to listen and learn, to pay deep attention to daimonic phenomena instead of either fighting them off or trying to fit them into a rational framework, then they would learn...to walk the narrow sword-bridge between one kind of madness and another.

The first is the madness that confines the Otherworld to 'a single frame of reference', and so cuts us off, not only from daimonic reality, but also from our own souls, like dogmatic over-rational ideologies. The alternative madness is to lose *all* frames of reference and to be confined in the Otherworld alone, like the poor souls who eke out their days conversing with spirits in the lunatic asylum.⁴⁸

Fortunately, it appears that the majority of close encounter experiencers are able to live with their experiences and accept that, despite the trauma of the event, the process of 'opening up to' or 'returning to' the source of all creation, or cosmic consciousness, has benefitted their lives. For, regardless of what they actually experienced on their journey to an otherworld, their view of the world, belief systems, and way of living have been permanently altered. In this respect these individuals show kinship with those shamans who are able, after their shamanic ordeal, to come to terms with their transcendental experience and live in both worlds healthily and well-adjusted. In both cases the initial experience, an encounter with the Sacred, withdraws the witness from the secure, ordered world of his society, and exposes him to forces previously unknown and, for those close encounter experiencers, probably unheard of, or at least not believed in.

This transcendental world clashes with everything the witness has previously known. Ordinary social life with its boundaries, structure, and order, dissolves after entering the liminal realm. Initiands are vividly and rapidly aware that all that has gone before has no meaning in this sacred state. Their very identity, their place in society, has no worth here; instead of order there is only chaos and anomaly. Yet this liminal space is also a source of pure potential, from which the individual may be fashioned anew. The initiate shaman realises this potential before he is thrust into the sacred realm; it is a lesson which is more difficult to learn for the close encounter witness with his western consensus view.

Yet, in their different way, both shaman and close encounter witness may open up to the event and, having consumed spiritual power, are made anew. By receiving sacred vitality the initiand becomes part of the unchangeable whole; on returning to the profane world he brings this sacredness with him, as an essential part of him. Through his ordeal in the liminal otherworld he gains a sacred identity which triumphs in the mundane world; always existing within the individual, and exhibited in his daily actions. Order and chaos are brought together in this new worldview: through both the shaman and close encounter experiencer the power of the transcendental realm is harnessed and purposefully, especially in the shaman's world, applied to minister to the needs of the community. In other words, from being subject to uncontrollable violent episodes of disorder in the liminal realm, both shaman and close encounter witness (if willing to embrace this realm) emerge balanced individuals; connected to both sacred and profane realms.

Religious experiences have come to be viewed by western society as pathological because of our cultural emphasis on reason or rationality, and our ignorance of the potential, range, and value of certain altered states. Religious experiencers, such as shamans and mystics, may be seen as subscribing to primitive belief systems or as being deluded and their experiences denigrated and dismissed. Yet, by taking such a stance we are in danger of misinterpreting and denying an essential part of our nature – our spirituality. We cannot exclude other cultural perspectives simply because they do not fit with our own chosen view of reality; neither should we do so when it is individuals from our own society who are, apparently, straying into a realm which, to the western way of thinking, does not exist.

We must realise the act of labelling religious experience, such as visions and otherworld journeys, as pathological is to allow only one interpretation. Whilst psychoanalysis has enormously contributed to our understanding of ourselves, it has its own limitations and blind spots and is thus not always a useful stance from which to investigate a phenomenon such as close encounters or shamanic journeying. 'Mental health' is a 'relative' issue, dependent on cultural perception: what is perceived as pathology in one culture may be considered a marker of health in another culture. Whereas in western society shamanic practices may be reduced to dissociation; in shamanic cultures it is assumed that such practices actually produce more balanced and mentally healthy individuals. As we have already recognised in Chapter Five shamans and those who have experienced spiritual crises regularly emerge strengthened, matured, and enabled to help others.

Pathologizing shamanic journeying is then one step away from diagnosing and dismissing all mystical states of consciousness. In fact, the West has been quite efficient in doing just that. By placing priority on technological innovation in the exploration of our outer world we have seriously disconnected from the spiritual inner realm. We have phased out important initiation rites because of our unwillingness to consider that, whether as inner or outer space, another realm (or realms) might exist. Yet for millennia, religious experiences, contact with the transcendental, have often been regarded as the highest goal of human existence. Our one-dimensional western consensus view excludes the possible value of this contact. It is only by applying phenomenological methods of studying sacred episodes that we may view these experiences in terms other than the pathological and, in so doing, bypass Western rationalistic-positive ideology. By applying phenomenological study methods we immediately drop the cultural and individual bias of the West. Instead of worrying about the truth claims of the experiencers, we can concentrate on investigating the experience itself, and how it can transform the individual who experiences it. When all we have are the reports of the experience to investigate the phenomenological approach allows us to determine the essence of the phenomenon without blurring the issue with personal or academic suppositions about the value of the data.

Religious and close encounter experiences are ultimately experiences that evade our observation; they are revelations which, in their very essence, remain concealed. All we can obtain from them phenomenologically is a mere reflection of the experience, yet I have chosen the phenomenological approach to study these experiences because the technique allows us an 'inside' perspective of these phenomena without concerning ourselves with the veracity of the alleged episodes. It has allowed me to focus solely on the written close encounter reports as they presented themselves to the witness' consciousness. By applying *epoché* I have bracketed out my own, as well as society's, judgement of the close encounter event, as well as the religious categories used in comparison. *Epoché* has allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the experiences debated in this thesis, without my having to adopt the beliefs of the witnesses, nor colouring the experiences with my own biases. I have been able to determine the essence of the close encounter phenomenon and identify a model of the phenomenon, which allowed comparison with visions and otherworld journeys from respected religious traditions.

I suggest that the limited way in which the West views reality has led to a general esoteric starvation. As a direct result morphology of personal spiritual experience has evolved, with technologically skilled aliens replacing the angels and spirits of yesteryear. These aliens provide, for so many individuals, a more suitable (and acceptable) symbol of salvation in our technological age. However, because we have all but disregarded the possibility that not only might the sacred realm exist, it might occasionally, and in a variety of disguises, abruptly and sometimes violently admit an individual to connect with, learn from and, ultimately, be transformed by it, this metamorphosis has been overlooked and misunderstood. Close encounter experiencers believe they have accidentally encountered a reality that, through cultural assumptions, their society has denied. It is a perceived reality that these individuals cannot ignore; for in experiencing this transcendental state they become part of it, returning to the ordinary realm as a sacred being.

Gina Willoughby implores, "Listen, there is a whole other reality out there that is just as real, just as valid as what you think is the only reality. Open your minds. Look into this. It's important to you, too!" In as much as this 'Other' realm has traditionally fallen under the supervision of religion, and close encounter witnesses claim entry into, and contact with, beings from this realm I suggest that close encounter episodes are, themselves, spiritual initiation processes.

The purpose of this thesis has been to discover whether the close encounter phenomenon shares any kinship with a range of experiences reported in traditional religions. As with all such episodes it is impossible to examine the veracity of the claims, so one must rely on the accounts of the claimants, that is, on their perception of what has happened to them; this has always been so. If it can be shown that the close encounter phenomenon does indeed parallel more traditional religious experiences we shall have to re-assess our opinions of the claimants, that rather than being somewhat "fanciful" individuals, they may in fact be tapping into an old (and respected) vein of mysticism, albeit one vested with modern imagery.

By applying *epoché* and adopting an empathetic stance, I have been able to establish that the close encounter phenomenon does exhibit a strong underlying structural similarity to otherworld journeys in other traditional contexts, especially those involving a 'rite of passage' associated with initiation. The initiand firstly experiences a separation or removal from his mundane life. Once separated, it is needful for him to accept the possibility of the death of his old self (or identity) before he can move on to benefit from the next stage, liminality. Here he is between his old and his new persona, he may experience an ordeal, during which time magical objects may be inserted into his body to aid him in his future career. During this period of liminality a guide may give him sacred knowledge and instruction about his future duties and responsibilities. He is then reintegrated into his community, he may be subject to amnesia or confusion, but once this passes he finds a whole new dimension is open to him. He cannot ignore that he is a changed being; every aspect of his world, material and non-material, taking on a sacred dimension which irrevocably links everything into one whole.

This is the basic pattern of all the journeys; however, there are differences. The most notable is that of the shaman who has the ability to control and direct his journeying. Each otherworld traveller is overseen by a guide. The purpose of this guide can vary; as we have seen he may cause the near-death subject to review his past life and examine his present responsibilities and future path on this plane; the medieval otherworld traveller is shown the horrors of hell that awaits those who go against the will of God; the shaman's guide may be teacher and tormentor; the Virgin Mary delivers warnings and may make requests. However, even in this diversity of purpose, there exists throughout the common message of the need for love, in the sense of *agape*, which is itself the means to heal the individual, the race, the planet and, ultimately, the whole cosmos. We find these aspects of otherworld journeys, except the element of control, in the close encounter claims. From the first instance of an alien allegedly touching down on Earth to converse with its inhabitants, aliens have been delivering warnings and prophecies and, sometimes, bestowing the gift of healing. In its overall structure and content the close encounter phenomenon does closely parallel traditional religious visions and otherworld journeys.

However, there are dissimilarities, some of which may be an effect of the experiencer's circumstances. We have seen that close encounter witnesses find it difficult to adjust and re-integrate into their society, that their experience may be derided and attributed to an overactive imagination. The shaman and the initiand do not suffer in this way because their communities perceive their experiences as being real and proper, benefiting the whole population. The medieval otherworld traveller was often fêted, being respected as one who had a glimpse of the afterlife, and had received knowledge that could benefit his society. The near-death experiencer suffers less, possibly because those around him find such an experience easier to accept, especially given the context of the experience. Appearances of the Virgin Mary have been accepted as valid by the Catholic Church for centuries, and have promoted the building of shrines throughout the world. All these experiences have a long and respected history behind them, whereas the close encounter experience has only a short record of fifty years, and also suffers from a prevailing western cynicism regarding religious experiences.

Traditional religious experiences also exhibit an homogeneity. For example, the medieval otherworld travellers all experienced similar episodes throughout the medieval period. The shamanic initiation retains its continuity; a present day shaman experiences something very similar to that of his ancestor of four hundred years ago. In contrast the close encounter phenomenon has developed and changed quite radically from gentle one-to-one discussions, to forcible abduction and intrusive mental and physical examination. Unlike his fellow travellers, the abductee generally, at first, remembers little of his experience and, when he does start to recall it (often with the aid of regression hypnosis), he still finds it impossible to reclaim the, to his mind, vital information he was given. Other voyagers apparently do not suffer from this although, as with some medieval otherworld travellers, the information is for themselves, or for only a very restricted number. Given that the knowledge conveyed to abductees is allegedly vital to the survival of the human race, it is bizarre that the aliens apparently cause individuals to forget it, unlike the shamanic guides or the Virgin Mary. The medieval otherworld traveller, the near-death experiencer, the shaman and the initiand, tend to be given messages that relate to themselves and their immediate world, that is, it is generally not of global significance. The knowledge given to the close encounter experiencer shares similarities with that bestowed by the Virgin Mary. Both sources are concerned with the larger picture, and we find warnings of disaster and catastrophe, with advice on how to avoid such things occurring, although, as noted above, the close encounter claimant may have great difficulty recalling this advice.

In the course of this thesis we have examined the structure of these otherworld journeys and visions, and have observed a unifying thread that runs through them all. It has been shown that the content of the various experiences have a homogeneity despite there being dissimilarities, as discussed above. This thesis has also considered the repercussions of the experience on the individual, an element which has received no systematic discussion before. I specifically chose to centre on the witness' transformation after a close encounter as I consider this to be the area that may resolve the issue of how the close encounter experience should be perceived and classified. It is evident that the majority of the close encounter claimants do perceive their experiences as being of a religious and transformational nature.

Not only, as we have seen, does the episode have far-reaching effects in their day-to-day lives, it also radically alters their intellectual approach to life. As with the religious otherworld travellers they feel compelled to lead a more spiritual life. This affects their approach to the material world and all its inhabitants. As well as trying to practice their belief that they must act with love and compassion to all other beings, they may become engaged with environmental issues such as, on a global scale, saving the rainforests, or with smaller projects at a local level. The well-being of their environment becomes an important issue, action to improve it part of the fight to save the planet. Everything around them is acknowledged as part of the Sacred; God is everywhere and in everything, as everything is part of the whole.

Through their perceived experience the close encounter subjects acquire a sense of becoming different people in some way. Instead of feeling isolated and helpless as regards the challenges facing modern man, or being simply ignorant of them, they are empowered, part of something much greater than the individual, and able to take a positive role in the future of humanity. There are a number of instances where, as with the shaman, the close encounter experiencer's potential new role as a sort of planetary healer is inaugurated by the curing of his existing health problems. Possibly this parallels the shaman's status as a healer who has been healed, in that only one who has experienced illness and disability can truly understand and promote well-being. The parallel is emphasized in the instances where the individual claims to have subsequently gained healing or psychic powers.

The close encounter subject gains a new sense of potential and purpose for himself and his race. This purpose can manifest itself in small or large plans, but it is always outward looking. Rather than retiring from the world he feels the need to outwardly demonstrate his transcendental conquest over his mundane life; to go out into society, and work and campaign actively for change. He feels expanded, his interests and concerns having widened beyond the personal to encompass the whole planet and, ultimately, the whole of creation. Whatever the veracity of the close encounter experience the claims conform, in overall form and content, to those made in traditional religions. Although the experience itself is unexaminable, there is evidence that the phenomenon (whatever it is) has a profound transformative affect on the experiencer which, to a great extent, parallels traditional experiences.

Despite the differences there are strong linking features. Although formal religion now plays a very small part, or is non-existent, in many people's lives, there does seem to be an innate desire for a spiritual or mystical dimension to our lives. It is important to acknowledge that the cultural milieu of a spiritual experiencer is an important factor in determining what kind of sacred encounter he will have. As there is a natural desire to describe an unknown object or experience in terms of society's 'consensus-reality', in terms of that which we all accept as real, the subject may feel more comfortable in describing a religious experience which appears to be couched in some type of scientific framework, rather than in terms that do not relate to our modern world. Hence, perhaps for some, alien visitations are a more convincing form of religious encounter than a meeting with an angel or the Virgin Mary.

This has not been a primarily sociological or anthropological study. Whereas I believe that there is scope for the close encounter event to be further examined, I have looked purely at the phenomenon of the event itself. I set out to examine whether there is a religious dimension to this experience as suggested by (but not thoroughly analysed in) previous research. Within traditional religions it is acknowledged that the experiencer either prepares himself for his experience, i.e. through fasting, meditation, etc., or already lives within a community that promotes such experiences through its daily lifestyle e.g. the frugal, hard working, yet contemplative, life of the cloister. However, the contactee/abductee, like the near-death experiencer, in most cases is unprepared; further studies could perhaps examine whether there is some unconscious catalyst or whether, just as the NDE usually has an identifiable trigger such as trauma or acute illness, there are external events which trigger the alleged close encounter. It is possible that some understanding of the alleged phenomenon might be found in an examination of the witness' social and familial backgrounds. My purpose has been to methodically examine, as far as is possible, the perceived experiences through the individual's own accounts, and to assess whether we are perhaps seeing a new context of a respected tradition of religious experience.

It would appear that with a very few exceptions (e.g. George King and George Adamski) the close encounter subject had little or no interest in religious matters prior to their claimed experiences. Yet, for many, the event has had a similar impact on their beliefs and lives as that experienced by, for example, St. Teresa of Avila. Further research could examine whether these individuals in fact had an unacknowledged need, or desire, to bring a more meaningful dimension to their lives, buried in their unconscious. Such a unconscious desire might be then expressed and fulfilled in these alleged encounters, the catalyst for the event possibly being some unnoticed or very trivial occurrence. Those are aspects that, in the light of this systematic, phenomenological study, could come under future scrutiny.

Despite some dissimilarities this survey has shown strong parallels between some traditional religious experiences and the contemporary phenomenon of the close encounter. As already acknowledged it appears that such experiences reflect the cultural milieu of the time in which they occur: the medieval otherworld journey mirrored contemporary concerns about hell, paradise and salvation; the Marian revelations echoed the anxieties of the times in which they were revealed. Whilst some, such as the shamanic initiation and the NDE, are apparently timeless. However, there is a continuity that runs through all these instances. Given that the setting and contents of traditional religious experiences have changed, and have been accepted as changeable, throughout religious history, it is possible that we should view these close encounter claims as having religious validity.

Whilst there has been a decline in the adherence to the mainstream religions in modern society, there has been less of a decrease in the search for spiritual fulfilment; witness the growth in the number of western adherents to eastern religions, and the rise of groups which synthesize beliefs from a number of religious traditions into a new whole. The appearance of divine messengers in technological form can be seen as suiting modern society.

Man and the planet have long ceased to be at the centre of the universe, but Man's need for divine guidance and protection appears not to have decreased. Instead, science pushed the boundaries of our knowledge about the universe further away from Earth and in direct relationship to this the aliens' home has been placed further away, maintaining an elusive quality. God has always been omnipotent and omnipresent, an unknowable being, those qualities, for some people, have been transferred to the aliens.

However, although the scenario described by close encounter witnesses may seem to be straight from science fiction it is hard to deny that they have been affected by their claimed experiences. As with the traditional religious otherworld travellers and visionaries we find that the individual ultimately makes conscious changes to his lifestyle, with the emphasis of his concerns changing, as well as his world/cosmic view. He believes himself to be a better, more fulfilled, less egocentric person. He believes that, in however small a way, he can initiate changes that will benefit the whole of creation; he may even feel he has an evangelical mission.

Given that we find in these positive changes, and in this potential sense of mission, many parallels with the repercussions of traditional religious experience, this thesis shows that we may be justified in interpreting the close encounter experience as a valid contemporary category of traditional religious experience.

¹ Kenneth Ring, *The Omega Project* p.182

² *Ibid.*, p.183

³ James Fowler, *Stages of Faith* p.185

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.186

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.201

⁶ John Spencer, *Gifts of the Gods* p.167

⁷ Richard L. Thompson, *Alien Identities* pp.391-392

⁸ John Mack, *Abduction* pp.49-50

⁹ Bertrand Méheust, 'UFO Abductions as Religious Folklore' p.356

¹⁰ Refer to: Stanley Krippner, 'The Inner Life of the Healer' p.108

Michael Harner, 'What is a Shaman?' pp.10-11

Lewis E. Mehl, 'Modern Shamanism' p.129

¹¹ Brian Bates, *The Way of Wyrð* p.12

¹² Michael Harner, 'The Ancient Wisdom in Shamanic Cultures' p.16

¹³ Sante de Sanctis, *Religious Conversion* p.169

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- ¹⁴ David Hay, *Religious Experience Today* p.77
- ¹⁵ Williams James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* p.385
- ¹⁶ Mack, op. cit., pp.101-102
- ¹⁷ C. D. B. Bryan, *Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind* pp.251-252
- ¹⁸ John Whitmore, 'Religious Dimensions of the UFO Abduction Experience' p.76
- ¹⁹ Mack, op. cit., p.316
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.364-365,368
- ²¹ This is also the case among contemporary mystical experiencers. As David Hay acknowledges: "A relatively small proportion of people reporting religious experiences are regular church attenders [sic]. Not far short of half of those reporting experiences say they *never* go to church except, perhaps, for a wedding or a funeral, yet they often say that their experience is of the highest importance to them; several would claim that it has radically changed the direction of their lives." Hay, op. cit., p.104
- ²² Judith and Alan Gansberg, *Direct Encounters* pp.172-173
- ²³ Mack, op. cit., p.397
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.407
- ²⁵ Quoted in Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* p.222
- ²⁶ Mack, op. cit., pp.407-408
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.47
- ²⁸ Patrick Harpur, *Daimonic Reality* p.257
- ²⁹ Peter Rojcewicz, *The Boundaries of Orthodoxy* p.493
- ³⁰ David Jacobs, *Secret Life* pp.246,247,248
- ³¹ Gansberg, op. cit., p.137
- ³² Bryan, op. cit., p.128
- ³³ John Weldon with Zola Levitt, *UFOs: What on Earth is Happening?* p.160
- ³⁴ Thompson, op. cit., pp.351-352
- ³⁵ Reproduced in Salvador Freixedo, *Visionaries, Mystics and Contactees* pp.82-83
- ³⁶ John Saliba, 'Religious Dimensions of UFO Phenomena' p.38 paraphrasing Jacques Vallee, *Messengers of Deception* p.70f
- ³⁷ Two examples highlighting this exploitation are as follows: Richard L. Thompson collected a number of mail-order business advertisements which various 'so-called contactees' were promoting. They include such items as:

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1. A Nuclear Receptor, based on extraterrestrial technology, that absorbs negative energy and transforms it into harmonious frequencies (\$100).
 2. "Readings designed to attune Light-Workers and Star People to their Individual Mission and Purpose for being in Earth Embodiment" (\$125).
 3. A videotape by a 36,000-year-old Space Commander that explains "the brutal, inter-universal war that has been going on between the Universa [sic] Federation and the Negitarian Confederation for thousands of years." (\$19.95) [Thompson, *op. cit.*, p.171]

Although Thompson has not investigated the above adverts and thus cannot prove that they are hoaxes he states "the overall impression conveyed by this material - and there is a vast flood of it - is that much of it consists of "con games" intended to separate fools from their money." [Ibid., pp.171-172] Another such dubious, although totally legal, promotional activity is the 'Alien Abduction Insurance Policy'. A friend and fellow ASSAP [The Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena] member, Valerie Hope, was presented with a year's insurance against alien abduction and poltergeist activity in acknowledgement of her support of FOCONI (Bulgeria's Foundation for Cosmonoetic Investigations). The policy was developed by FOCONI and Balkan Ltd, an insurance company and was launched in 1995. It states:

The Insurer undertakes to pay compensation if any of the following are established:

1. abduction and consequent forceful transportation by a UFO and the stay of the insured person at a different spatial point;
2. psychological stress due to abduction by a UFO or observation of a UFO from a close distance;
3. psychological and physical depression of the insured person as a result of experiencing the above phenomena;
4. specific health disorders;
5. UFO-provoked amnesia;
6. an artifact implanted into the insured person's body during the abduction;
7. abortion of the embryo in pregnant women carried out by force during an abduction;
8. the insured person's needing to spend money on transportation to his/her place of residence from a distant spatial point where he/she has unwillingly been left at the end of the abduction;
9. any moral, health and/or marital damage caused by the poltergeist phenomenon. [Valerie Hope, 'I'm with the Balkan' p.11]

How one is expected to prove such a claim is not detailed.

³⁸ Ring, *op. cit.*, pp.178-179

³⁹ Bryan, *op. cit.*, pp.129-130

⁴⁰ Thompson, *op. cit.*, p.143

⁴¹ Gansberg, *op. cit.*, p.172

⁴² Ibid., p.178

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Mack. op. cit., p.371

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.261

⁴⁶ Bryan. op. cit., pp.148-149

⁴⁷ Keith Thompson. *Angels and Aliens* pp.189-190,192-193

⁴⁸ Harpur. op. cit., pp.253-254

APPENDIX I

Alien Genealogy

The world wide web page 'Spirit WWW: An Appreciation of Spiritual Consciousness on World Wide Web' contains a whole new mythos concerning specific alien races. Continuity exists with the development and diversity of this web page alien genealogy and the variety and classification of demons, angels and other supernatural entities encountered in cultures worldwide. Analysis of the web page classification system and philosophy reveals a belief in a supreme being, and the integration of Christian, Judaic and cultural mythic themes and figures. One example which highlights this integration is the internet document, entitled *Alien Encyclopedia*, which states that:

We are convinced, regardless of the reliability of specific accounts, that the OVERALL [sic] evidence strongly suggests that two general intellectual 'entity groups' inhabit this general sector of the galaxy, and that these two groups are - generally speaking - in conflict with each other to some extent. Aside from this obvious fact there are numerous accounts which seem to corroborate this thesis, yet which should nevertheless be weighed by the reader in light of their corroborative elements, documentation, the sincerity and reputation of the numerous witnesses, and other evidences both physical and circumstantial. For want of better terms, we will refer to these two root categories as follows:

1) EVADAMIC or EVA'S

- Those entities which may be considered to be soul-matrixed members of the human race OR the 'angelic' benevolent beings who seek to influence them for the good.

2) DRACONIAN or DRACO'S

- Those entities which are apparently 'soulless' and can be associated with the neosaurian-reptilian or 'fallen' angelics that have been known to accompany or motivate them.

Since a cosmic conflict is taking place between these two groups, and especially between the fallen and unfallen angelics which influence the physical world for evil or good respectively, one group may succeed in subduing part of the other's 'physical' dominion or 'territory' at any given time. We must however remember that the ancient battle between these two groups (human conscience vs. reptilian ego) is not an outgrowth of a so-called 'dualistic reality', or rather the idea that good-positive and evil-negative cannot exist without the other, which is entirely fallacious.

The Draconian conspiracy should instead be viewed as a 'Cancer' or 'Virus' which plagues the Universe, an unnatural 'disease' which does not belong in creation, but one which came about nonetheless through the mis-use of the free-agency which the Creator gave to his creation.

There then follows a list of known “humanoid and sauroid entities inhabiting Terran, Subterranean and Exterranean realms”. These include:

- **Insiders** (Evadamic) - Residents of the different top secret government ‘underground installations’ and bases throughout the United States and the world.
- **Telosian** (Evadamic) - Nordic humanoids who have a re-established network of subsurface antediluvian colonies located throughout the western States. They refer to ancient ties with neo-Mayan tribes and therefore may possess a Greco-Mayan ancestry.
- **Chameleon** (Draconian) - Reptilians genetically bred to enable themselves to appear ‘human’, who wish to invade and takeover human society.
- **Ikels** (Draconian) - Small hairy humanoids with cloven hoofs which inhabit deep caverns beneath South America and elsewhere. They are believed to be members of a fallen pre-Adamic race which possessed angelic, animal, and humanoid characteristics. They are now reported to be allied with the reptilians.
- **Anakim** (Evadamic) - These are also referred to as the ‘Els’ short for Elder Race, or simply as the ‘Giants’. Referred to in ancient Hebrew tradition, this race is allegedly tied in with ancient humans who broke off from mainstream humanity because of their vast size, 9-11, sometimes 12, feet tall. Encountered in deep cave systems from Alaska to Mexico, they are believed to have interstellar travelling capabilities.

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