

# HERMENEUTICAL RAPE... another look ( Presented by, Dr. Barry Downing )

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## HERMENEUTICAL RAPE

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## INTRODUCTION

Although I am a Protestant, and have no desire to be a Roman Catholic, there are certain aspects of Catholicism that I envy. Catholics have a Pope, who can speak infallibly according to church doctrine, a doctrine that Protestants reject as a denial of the humanity of the Pope in particular, and the humanity of the church in general. I think this rejection is theologically sound. It is a good part of our Reformation tradition not to believe any church leaders are infallible. Unfortunately, some Protestant leaders didn't get the memo.

In order to claim an authority equal to the Pope, many Protestants hold to a doctrine of biblical infallibility. This is to ensure the authority of church doctrine. I understand the purpose of this doctrine, but I have serious doubts about its usefulness, because even if the Bible is infallible, how do we know our interpretation of the Bible—our hermeneutics—are infallible? We don't, of course.

Nevertheless

, what the doctrine of biblical infallibility seems to do is to ordain many Protestant fundamentalists as mini-Popes (hereafter Popetts). They suppose if they quote an infallible verse from the Bible, that makes them by association infallible, and able to make infallible papal decrees.

I have been cursed (depending on the divine authority of the Popetts, of course) as a "hermeneutical rapist" by Michael Heiser, as "downright blasphemous" by Guy Malone, and as a "wolf in sheep's clothing" by Gary Bates, all on the Strong Delusion Web Site. I kind of look with envy at the Catholic Church, with only one Pope authorized to make infallible condemnations.

But

far be it from me to say these Popetts have no right to make their decrees of condemnation. Guy Malone delivered a lecture in New Mexico on September 13, 2009, entitled "Evidence for a Spiritual View of the "Alien" Phenomenon: Why do many Christians think the alien phenomena is demonic?" <http://www.alienstranger.com/arealiensdemons.htm>

At

the beginning of the lecture, he identifies himself as a "Fundie," and confesses his faith in Jesus Christ (I also claim Christ as my Savior), and senses that having made this confession, he suspects that his UFO oriented audience may have some anxiety. Malone comforts the audience by saying, "I'm not going to tell you you're going to hell if you disagree with what I present today, okay?" In other words, ordinarily Malone would claim his authority as divine judge to decide who is going to hell, but on this occasion the Popette offers a kind of papal indulgence. For today only, Malone will give up his authority to send those to hell who disagree with him. Since in this lecture he pronounced me "downright blasphemous" (Jesus was crucified for blasphemy; Mt. 26:65), you can see that his papal indulgence applied only to his audience, not to me. Obviously, it is bad to be blasphemous, and worse to be downright blasphemous, so who could object to Malone's judgment?

Malone

and his friends believe they have the authority to make these condemnations (in spite of Matthew 7:1), it is obviously part of their understanding of what fundamentalists are supposed to do. But I do look with envy at a one Pope church.

It is difficult to

respond to papal decrees, of course. A papal decree may be reasoned, but it does not have to be. Heiser offers an example of an unreasoned decree. He says, "I think what Barry Downing and those like him do to the text is truly a hermeneutical rape of the text. It's a textbook (and almost farcical) example of reading what you want to see in the text into the text, the text be damned if it gets in the way. Just awful." (Strong Delusion, "The Christian View of Aliens, Part 3: Angels, Demons, Gods, Aliens: Are These Terms

Reconcilable?&rdquo; June 2, 2009)

## THE HERMENEUTICS OF UNREASONED DECREES

One way to respond to this kind of charge is to take the texts that Heiser mentions, and show why I think my hermeneutics is not as radical or serious a violation of the text as he charges. But when he does not mention a single biblical text, or any of my work in his condemnation, what am I to say?

He does not even define hermeneutical rape. It was not a term used when I was in seminary. One meaning of his charge might be that I have used the text violently, as he says, that I have &ldquo;read into the text&rdquo; what is not there. (The technical term for reading something into the text that is not there is eisegesis, as opposed to exegesis.) Now this seems to be a strange thing for him to say in light of other things he has said.

Heiser has published at a blog called &ldquo;The Naked Bible.&rdquo; ( I guess in Heiser&rsquo;s world, hermeneutical rape is some kind of sexual sub division that goes with Bible nakedness.) He has written an article entitled, &ldquo;End Times Questions for Left-Behinders: How Everyone Cheats on Eschatology.&rdquo; He discusses how everyone tries to make absolutely certain claims about eschatology, when the hermeneutics of biblical eschatology is very uncertain. He says, &ldquo;The Bible didn&rsquo;t come with a handbook with the &lsquo;right&rsquo; answers to these [eschatological] questions.&rdquo;

The view that hermeneutics has an objective part (Scripture), and a subjective part (Interpretation) has always been true. One definition of hermeneutics is &ldquo;whose meaning is the meaning of the meaning?&rdquo; (Oxford Concise Dictionary of World Religions, ed. John Bowker, p. 240)

So, when Heiser is doing the interpreting, he admits there are no right answers. But he has full authority to pronounce that I have given the wrong answer, and he does not even tell me what the question is. This used to be called hypocrisy, but in the current UFO debate, it is called the voice of seminary trained wisdom.

Inconsistency in his definition of the flexibility of hermeneutics is only part of the issue. We usually think of rape as a violent male sexual act, and I believe Heiser intends to use the term in this way. But hermeneutics is really more like a female sexual act than male.

The Word of God (logos) is always understood in the biblical tradition to be like seed sown in a field. Seed is a male property, and understood to be a God property. This is why the God of the Bible is thought of in male terms. This understanding is developed in the Parable of the Sower in Matthew chapter 13. People go to seminary to study the Word of God, the semen of God. The church as the bride of Christ is seeking to be faithful to—;in sexual terms—;only go to bed with the God of Jesus Christ, not some other god. “You shall have no other gods [husbands] before me.” (Ex. 20:3) Thus men and women are both female in relation to God. (Modern feminist theology has messed up this understanding a lot.) The hermeneutical task for me is to receive the Word of God into myself, and have it impregnate my soul with faith so that a new life springs up inside me, a child of God that more or less lives inside and co-habits with the first-born me, as Jacob, the second born twin son of Rebekah and Isaac, struggled with his first-born brother Esau in the womb, (Genesis 25:19-34). This struggle between the laws of the spirit, and the laws of the flesh, is the battle ground of the Christian life. (See also Rom. 9:6-13; Heb. 12:16) That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the spirit is spirit as Jesus said (Jn. 3:6), and as Paul later confirmed (Rom. 7:4-25). (What I have just done in this paragraph is an example of my biblical hermeneutics.)

If I have sinned in the above paragraph, what kind of sin is it likely to be? It is likely that instead of interpreting the Scripture to glorify Christ (the Jacob figure in me), I interpret Scripture to glorify the Flesh (or Satan, Esau) in me. Because the lusts of the flesh are always there, as Paul says in Romans 7, they tempt me even to use the Law of God, the Semen of God, to promote my own lusts for success, sex, food, money, fame, power, all the forms of the gods of this world. [The devil used this form of temptation with Jesus, quoting scripture to him. (Mt. 4:1-11)]

Thus the most likely form of sin for me is not hermeneutical rape, but rather hermeneutical adultery. As the bride of Christ I am tempted to take the seed of God into me during the day, but at night to let the seed of the flesh be sown in my soul by an Evil One, an Enemy of God. (Mt. 13:25) The Law forbid interbreeding of cattle, and of sowing two different kinds of seed in a field (Lev. 19:19), a law which reflected the commandment against adultery (Ex. 20:14). Idolatry represented a sexual analogy to spiritual unfaithfulness, a mixing of good and bad spiritual seed, and so our whole modern idea of religious pluralism, suggesting all religious values are to be tolerated in some kind of egalitarian stew is not biblical. (Ex. 20:4; 2 Cor. 6:14)

In my book *The Bible and Flying Saucers*, I have dealt extensively with the Word of God, the Bible. Christian conservatives know this, and that is why they condemn me so violently. But my sin, if it is sin, is spiritual adultery, hermeneutical adultery, not hermeneutical rape. My sin is that I have mixed the Seed of God with the Seed of UFOs, and if UFOs are demonic, as my critics charge, then I have claimed that the "UFO Faith" in me is of Christ, when in fact it is seed sown of the devil.

This would be a serious sin, I recognize that, in fact I worry about that. But my faith is that I am right, and furthermore, my faith is, that Christ knows I want to be right. I trust Christ is merciful, and will forgive me in the day of judgment if I am wrong. Christ forgave a woman caught in adultery, he died to forgive his church, I have had the courage to present my UFO faith in spite of almost universal rejection by the church because I trust the mercy of Christ toward me. But I may be wrong about my UFO faith, and I do not want to be guilty of leading the church, the bride of Christ, astray. But if I am right, the church needs to repent of its blindness, and the quicker the better.

So here is my defense to the church that condemns me of hermeneutical rape, blasphemy, or ignores me as someone who is crazy (or has a demon, see John 7:20).

HOW  
I GOT HERE

You do not become a hermeneutical rapist overnight. I didn't just wake up one day and decide to write *The Bible and Flying Saucers*. Two important elements in my early life plowed the field—I started reading the Bible every day when I was in 8th grade. By the time I was in my junior year in high school, I had been through the Bible once, and started again. I came from a Christian home, both parents were Christians, my mother with a Baptist background, my father Presbyterian. My great grandfather on my mother's side was a Baptist pastor.

The other element was that I was interested in science, as were my best

friends. We talked about Einstein's Theory of Relativity, the world of physics seemed to me to be a place where the mysteries of the universe could be found. For that reason, I planned to major in physics in college. But toward the end of my senior year in high school, many things happened that made me feel called to Christian ministry. I was a Presbyterian at the time, and began talking with my pastor about my future. At the same time, my father brought me some books from the local library dealing with flying saucers, books by Maj. Donald Keyhoe. I believed what Keyhoe wrote, but made no connection to my Christian faith.

My view was, in the universe as large as ours, there were probably other advanced life forms.

I earned a scholarship in physics to Hartwick College, in Oneonta, New York. Some have asked me why I majored in physics if I was entering the ministry. The easy answer was I needed the money, and would lose my scholarship if I changed majors.

I entered Princeton Theological Seminary in 1960, and took the basics: Greek, Hebrew, Old and New Testament studies, theology, church history, preaching, pastoral care. My senior year I took an elective in church doctrine, dealing with the Creeds of the church. We had a small class, not more than eight students I think. The professor was one of the most respected not only in the seminary, but in my National Church.

One day his lecture went something like this. "The Bible was written in a pre-scientific culture. In biblical cosmology, there was a three decker universe: heaven above, earth in the middle, hell below. When the Copernican revolution came, that cosmology was destroyed. If heaven is no longer 'up,' then what? No one today believes in the Ascension [of Christ] do they? And if he has not ascended, where is his body? We may only suppose that his bones lie buried somewhere in the Middle East."

No one in the class spoke an objection to this. But I think these words had more affect on my faith future than any other words spoken in any class. I could not get them out of my mind. At first glance, this seemed to be theological heresy—it is. But at the same time, my scientific side could not deny the point the professor was making. Modern science has in many ways made the Bible unbelievable for many people.

There have been two ways for the modern church to cope with this believability problem. The first is the liberal way, the way of my Professor: if something is scientifically impossible, don't believe it, even if it is in the Bible. But treat it as mythology,

then you can talk about it in symbolic terms, and some people will not even know the rules have changed.

And the conservative way. Declare that the Bible is infallible, everything in it is literally true. If science and the Bible conflict, forget science. This pretty well explains the split between conservative and liberal Protestantism. My Presbyterian Church (USA) is known by conservatives to be fairly liberal, and thus we find when Guy Malone is describing who I am, he says I am a "Presbyterian (cough, cough) minister." I should perhaps not risk doing the hermeneutics of Malone's "cough, cough," lest I commit further hermeneutical rape. But my sense is the "cough" is not a sign of praise of my church. Why settle for condemning me when you can condemn my whole denomination? Whatever the sins of my church may be, it has given me the freedom to explore my UFO theology.

I had a crisis of faith. I wondered what I could say at funerals. Should I go on talking about the resurrection of Jesus, and our promised resurrection, as if our church leaders still believed this? Or fake it? Or should I say, "We used to believe in life after death, but that is gone now. Still, we can be thankful for the life of our dearly departed. Too bad. End of story."

Thomas

G. Long is professor of preaching at Candler School of Theology in Atlanta. He recently published an article in the liberal Protestant magazine *The Christian Century*. In the article he laments how shallow modern funerals are, because we have lost belief in life after death. "If Christian funerals today are impoverished, we must look primarily to the church's own history and not look with scorn at the funeral director. The fact is that many educated Christians in the late 19th century, the forebears of today's white suburban Protestants, lost their eschatological nerve and their vibrant faith in the afterlife, and we are the theological and liturgical heirs." ("The Good Funeral," October 6, 2009, p. 22)

The crisis Long describes was a burning one for me in 1963, as I was graduating from Princeton Seminary. From my point of view, Christianity will die unless its eschatology is believable. (My church at the national level had 4 million members in 1983, and has about 2 million now.) My fears became more public in the "Honest to God and Death of God" theology that broke into public consciousness beginning with the publication of Bishop John A. T. Robinson's *Honest to God* in 1963. (Bishop John Shelby Spong, author of books such as *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*, 1998, has helped push the Robinson tradition of unbelief to a higher level.) These issues would be the focus of the first chapter of my book, *The Bible and Flying Saucers*, when it was published in 1968. Notice this: if you are part of a church in which the hermeneutical rules are "everything in the Bible is true, no matter what science says," then the death of God theology is not

an issue. But being a church that is a joke in the eyes of science becomes the issue (see Gary Bates, *Alien Intrusion: UFOs and the Evolution Connection* ). Intelligent Design advocates such as Phillip Johnson, William Dembski, and Michael Behe, do not want to ignore science, like Gary Bates, but do not want to give up on the Bible either.

In light of my faith crisis, I decided that I needed to do graduate study in the relation between science and religion, and for a number of reasons elected to go to the University of Edinburgh, Scotland to do this. Two theological professors were known for their work in the area of science and religion, Prof. John McIntyre, and Prof. T.F. Torrance, whose son Iain Torrance, is now President of Princeton Seminary. I went to Edinburgh with the intention of exploring the issues of "eschatology, time and space," I would attempt to understand how modern cosmology destroyed biblical eschatology.

Before graduating from Princeton, I happened to run into the professor who had started my faith crisis, right on the steps of Hodge Hall, my dormitory. He asked what I was doing after graduation, and I told him. (I did not tell him his class led to my faith crisis.) His response to my plan was to say that there were no seminaries in the United States dealing with the issues of science and religion. Science and religion were now totally separate disciplines.

I went to Edinburgh anyway, and eventually produced the dissertation, *Eschatological Implications of the Understanding of Time and Space in the Thought of Isaac Newton*. The dissertation was well received by Professors McIntyre and Torrance, as well as my outside reader from Cambridge University, and I graduated with my Ph.D. in 1966.

During the fall of 1965 I began exploring connections between UFOs and the Bible. This was not part of my Ph.D. work, but certainly did relate to issues of time and space. I wondered if there might be some connection between biblical angels and UFOs. I reread Exodus, and concluded that the pillar of cloud and fire (Ex. 13:21,22) seemed very much to fit the description of modern UFOs, and also it moved ahead of the Jewish people like a UFO might. This idea hit me with great emotional power, I thought I should explore writing a book about this. But I made a prayer deal with God: I would finish my Ph.D. dissertation first, then go home and work on a UFO book. After returning to the United States, I wrote *The Bible and Flying Saucers* in the basement of my in-law's home while seeking a church call during the summer and fall of 1966. I put the manuscript in the mail to a publisher about February 1, 1967, the book was rejected several times before being accepted by J. B. Lippincott. I began work as an assistant pastor at Northminster Presbyterian Church in Endwell, New York, on February 6, 1967, and was ordained March 5, 1967. Before taking the Endwell position, I explained my UFO research to the senior pastor, Rev. George Rynick, and he was very supportive of my project, and helped the church understand my work. I eventually became senior pastor of



Northminster. I was known in the community as the "UFO nut"; for a while, but by and large, except for conservative Protestant pastors, it was felt that even if what I was working on turned out not to be true, it was an area I had a right to explore, and an area that needed exploring. I find that attitude still prevails in my church, though I am now retired. And as readers of the Strong Delusion web site know, many conservative Christians still do not like me. (Heiser, Malone, Bates)

In 1972 Walter Andrus Jr. invited me to become a consultant in theology to MUFON. Members of MUFON believed UFOs were real, and that our government was involved in a cover-up. Many people who believed UFOs were real read my book, and found both my biblical analysis, and my scientific point of view, plausible. But this plausibility did not extend to Conservative Christians. I published many articles in the MUFON UFO Journal , as well as speaking at many symposiums, and was well received by this scientific community. MUFON was willing to give me a voice which the church would not.

HERMENEUTICS:  
RAPE, ADULTERY AND BLINDNESS

Moving to the present, on Sunday, October 3rd, 2009, the History Channel presented the James Fox program, "I Know What I Saw." This program is now available at the Strong Delusion Web Site. Astronaut Gordon Cooper testified that a UFO landed at an Air Force Base where he was stationed, it was filmed, he saw the film, it was sent by courier to Washington. He knows our government has been lying to us about UFOs from the beginning. The head of the French government sponsored UFO study testified, with scientific hedging, that his group concluded that some UFOs are extraterrestrials, and hesitantly recommended the United States try telling the truth. For me, there is no question that UFOs are real, although a reality that is beyond our science to understand. The James Fox program made it clear that the United States government has been, and still is, covering up this reality from its citizens.

Here is my question. Why is it that in all the writings I have seen of Michael Heiser, or Guy Malone, or Gary Bates, they never condemn the United States government for its UFO lies? They condemn me for my unproven hermeneutical sins, but do not condemn our government for withholding evidence that is extremely important for understanding what God is doing (or not doing, if you buy the demonic argument), in our time. My suspicion is that my critics do not have faith in their own stated convictions. I suspect they know that if the United States released all its known information, their theories about UFOs

would be blown away by the truth. That is what I suspect.

It may be that my theories would be blown away by that truth also, but I want to know. I want my government to stop lying about UFOs. The government is violating my Constitutional right to explore the truth of my Christian faith by its continued UFO lies. I cannot "freely" exercise my religion when government UFO information is locked away in the name of national security, and the History Channel film "I Know What I Saw" documents our government cover-up policy in a very convincing way, except to the doubting Thomas who will not believe until a UFO lands in his back yard.

I have no doubts that UFOs exist, and that they are some kind of intelligent reality from another world. But do these UFOs carry the angels of God, is this the reality that gave us the biblical religion? That is another issue, it is a hermeneutical issue. Do modern UFOs and the Bible go together, or is this "mixing seed," is this hermeneutical adultery? This is not just my question, it is a question to every person who claims to hold to the biblical tradition. We should be seeking a collective answer, and in a sense I understand that is what my critics, Heiser, Malone and Bates are trying to do, but they do not believe I belong in the collection. I believe Christians should be shouting for our government to release the UFO truth as they understand it. This is one thing we could do collectively. Why don't I hear this demand from the church?

Those in the church who are trained in biblical theology ought to be seeking the truth about UFOs, but when I have talked to those who are in positions of seminary authority, or try to publish in main stream religious publications, I am treated as if I were a spiritual leper.

What is the task of those doing biblical interpretation (hermeneutics)? Jesus gave a very short definition of the hermeneutical task of the trained professional: "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." (Mt. 13:52) No one "scribe" I have studied is sure exactly what Jesus means by this. Welcome to hermeneutics. But the image suggests that the religious life must be a blend of understanding what God has done in the past, and what God is doing now. Study of Scripture deals with the history of God. But we have to open our eyes to see what God is doing in the present.

With this in mind, let us consider Jesus at work in the field of hermeneutics. During the time of Jesus, the Pharisee Party believed in the resurrection and eternal life, but the Sadducee Party did not. Some Sadducees tested Jesus with a hypothetical situation in which a woman married a man, he died, she married one of his brothers, he died, this pattern continued for all seven brothers, and then the question: in the resurrection, whose wife will she be? Jesus

answered that when we die, we become like the angels, we do not marry. &ldquo;But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now he is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him.&rdquo; (Lk. 20:37,38)

Jesus

took something old, the story of the burning bush, well known to all scribes, and put new light on it. If Michael Heiser had been there, he might have been justified in charging Jesus with eisegesis. If you did not accept the authority of Jesus, then you could say, &ldquo;Come on Jesus, you are just reading your resurrection beliefs into the text. The text tells us God is alive, it says nothing directly about whether Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are alive, or not.&rdquo;

But

Heiser&rsquo;s charge must be faced. It could be that I am &ldquo;reading UFOs into the Bible,&rdquo; when such reading is not justified. My claim is that as Jesus &ldquo;saw&rdquo; resurrection information in the Burning Bush text, information that he brought to light, so I am saying that modern UFOs are throwing light on biblical UFOs, and new light on biblical angels, including the possibility that the biblical angels use technology. So this is the debate: am I reading false interpretation into the text as Heiser says, or have I discovered new information, in light of UFOs, about the text?

If

eisegesis (or hermeneutical rape, if you prefer), is one sinful way of dealing with Scripture, there is also a sinful way of dealing with &ldquo;something new in the household,&rdquo; signs of God&rsquo;s presence in our times. That sin is to be deliberately blind to God&rsquo;s signs. A comical example of this is the story of Jesus healing a man born blind as related in John chapter 9. Jesus spit into clay, anointed the blind man&rsquo;s eyes, and sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam. His healing caused a huge uproar among religious leaders about how this could have happened. The religious leaders were so unwilling to believe the evidence in front of their own eyes that they put the healed man through a grilling that exceeded what Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke frequently goes through before the United States Senate.

If

UFOs are carrying the angels of God right in front of the eyes of millions (14% of Americans or about 40 million have seen a UFO according to a 2007 Associated Press survey), and we in the church continue to be blind to this reality, what will be our excuse in the Day of Judgment? There are indeed false UFO stories, there are hoaxes, there are those who claim to &ldquo;channel&rdquo; truth from some higher power. I know the UFO field is full of weeds. But we need the hermeneutical courage to do the hard work of the scribe, and sort through the UFO story, keep the good fish, and throw out the bad, as Jesus explained. (Mt. 13:47-52)

## WE NEED A SIGN FROM GOD

It seems to me we need a sign from God., but if God gave us a sign, would we have the spiritual wisdom to interpret the sign properly, or would the church be embarrassed by its blindness? The church in the world now seems to have little interest in seeking a sign from God. That might be a good thing, since Jesus says an evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign. (Mt. 16:1-4) But my sense is our modern generation, including the modern church, is so evil and adulterous that we do not even recognize the fabulous sign from God which we have been given as a wonderful gift of grace to renew the faith of our faithless generation. I suspect that if the signs that have been to our generation had been given to Sodom, the city would have repented. (Mt. 11:20-24)

How faithless is our generation? Books by atheists like Sam Harris (The End of Faith), Christopher Hitchens (God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything), and Richard Dawkins (The God Delusion), have sold wonderfully to a generation in love with the scientific idol that we have created with our own hands. That idol threatens to destroy us all in one big nuclear blast, of course.

Here is Richard Dawkins: "The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser &hellip;." (The God Delusion, p. 31) Dawkins is best known for his promotion of the theory of evolution, and has done battle with Christian creationists and intelligent design advocates. He is to England what Carl Sagan was to the United States.

Notice that Dawkins is not just an atheist, he describes himself as an evangelist for atheism, and he thinks that it is bad for us to allow anyone to even go on believing in the God of the Bible. Can we suppose for a moment that none of the thinking of Dawkins, even if he is not named, does not spill into the class rooms of our public schools, and our universities? Are we surprised that a kind of nihilism has broken out among our students, who sometimes express their despair by shooting a few classmates (instead of expressing nihilism in the approved way, by shopping addictively?)

Modern theology has no answer to Dawkins, other than to say, "I don't care what you say, I still believe." And of course to tell Dawkins

he should believe the Bible is infallible would be to joke with him, and he would joke back: prove it! So I believe our generation needs God's help. We need a sign, a sign that may not make Dawkins believe, but will make him less certain. For I believe in God by faith, but it is a faith not just in the Bible, but a faith that God is alive and well, and knows the mess the church, and our atheistic culture, is now in. God needs to do something to restore the plausibility (not the provability) of Christian eschatology. I believe UFOs in the midst of our space age culture have done that redemptive work, making our eschatology plausible again, but the church is blind to God's sign, God's gift to us.

## MY EXODUS HERMENEUTICS

If I am to be charged with hermeneutical rape, it likely has to do with my interpretation of Exodus that my critics have in mind. Notice where we are now not only in liberal biblical studies, but also in all our secular university "religious studies" programs, in understanding Exodus. Walter Brueggemann is one of liberal Protestantism's most respected Old Testament scholars. He is Professor Emeritus at Columbia Theological Seminary in Georgia, author of many books, including An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination (2003). I have attended some of his lectures, and respect him very much.

But what is his basic assumption about the "historicity" of the book of Exodus? Basically, he agrees with archaeologist William Dever, that Exodus never happened. He quotes Dever who says, "The whole 'Exodus-Conquest' cycle of stories must now be set aside as largely mythical, but in the proper sense of the term 'myth';; perhaps 'historical fiction,' but tales told primarily to validate religious beliefs." (Quoted in Brueggemann, p. 54; in Dever's book What Did the Biblical Writers Know, and When Did They Know It? P. 121)

For many modern scholars, including seminary professors, Moses is now a literary figure in a religious play, somewhat like Hamlet in a Shakespeare play. Thus modern scholars come at the Bible with a literary interest, and religious interest in the sense that the book of Exodus illustrates how a unique ethnic group developed their sense of their god, and their destiny. (Mythology in the good sense, whatever that is.)

The modern church has no chance of making its way through the wilderness on Brueggemann's manna from the sky, no matter that he is one of the best manna bakers we have. This is stone, not bread. (Mt. 7:9) Obviously right at the center of this mythology is the central power of God, the angel of God who led the Exodus in the "pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night" (Ex. 13:21,22) This strange Exodus UFO is said to hover in the sky during the 40 years of the Exodus. I have suggested that the pillar of cloud and fire is not only shaped like many modern UFOs are reported to look, but if UFOs carry the angels of God, then we may be looking at the reality that created the biblical religion. That means, what we now call UFOs were the power of the Exodus, and it is my faith that they are a power working under the direction of the God of the Universe.

Of course, it is for this belief that I am charged with hermeneutical rape, downright blasphemy, or being a wolf in sheep's clothing. (For my response to the wolf charge, see my article at Strong Delusion: "Barry Downing's Response to Gary Bates.")

I am not going to repeat here what I have treated at length elsewhere. (See Chapter 3 in my book, *The Bible and Flying Saucers*, which deals almost exclusively with Exodus; also see "Did a UFO Part the Red Sea?" UFO Magazine, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1990. Also see my Strong Delusion article: "UFOs: What Does Christ Require of Us?" ; "Exodus as a Paradigm of UFO Strategy," MUFON UFO Journal, October 1994; "Radiation Symptoms in Exodus," Flying Saucer Review, May-June 1972; "Some Questions Concerning Dr. Menzel's Biblical Exegesis," 1973 MUFON Conference Proceedings, Kansas City, Missouri.)

I suggest that the pillar of cloud, the Exodus UFO met Moses at the burning bush, orchestrated the plagues in Egypt, including Passover, led the Jews up to the Red Sea, parted the Red Sea, fed the Jews manna on their wilderness journey, gave them the law at Sinai, and left them in the promised land to work out their, and our, salvation.

Let me quote just one and a half verses regarding the parting of the Red Sea to explain the hermeneutical issue: "And in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down upon the host of the Egyptians, discomfiting the host of the Egyptians, [breaking] their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily." (Ex 14:24, 25a)

At this point in the text, the Jews have crossed on dry ground to the

other side. But the Egyptians are in hot pursuit, in their chariots, in the open sea channel. What happens next? Most of us, with our Sunday School memory, would say Moses raised his hands, and the walls of water collapsed on the Egyptians. This did happen, but later.

The Egyptians were tooling along in their chariots just fine, perhaps it looked to the Jews, safe on the other side, that they were not safe after all. The miracle that seemed to save them may have been a hoax. The Jews watched with anxiety when suddenly things changed. Notice that the Exodus UFO is hovering directly over the open channel. (Imagine a long fluorescent light tube, hovering parallel to the sea, and just above it.) The Lord, in the pillar of cloud and fire, &ldquo;looked down.&rdquo; What does this mean? The Egyptians were knocked flat, the horses struggled under a heavy burden, the chariot wheels broke&mdash;from the Lord&rsquo;s &lsquo;look down.&rdquo; Some invisible force that came from above, from the Exodus UFO, broke the chariot wheels and paralyzed the horses. Hmmm. This is a strange note of &ldquo;mythology&rdquo; to have been saved all these years. The &ldquo;story&rdquo; does not need this part. Just let the walls of water collapse, and let the Egyptians drown. Why bother with chariot wheels breaking? By the way, the reason &ldquo;breaking&rdquo; is in brackets is because in the RSV translation, the editors used the word &ldquo;clogging&rdquo; in reference to the chariot wheels, but noted that the actual Hebrew says the wheels were broken by the force from the pillar of cloud. The editors could not make sense of breaking wheels, and invented mud to clog the wheels, which would not be found on dry ground, of course. (Ex. 14:22; 29)

I have wondered if the propulsion system of a modern UFO might have the power to part the Red Sea, or any body of water. I have noticed that some modern UFOs are huge, up to a mile long. They are sometimes called &ldquo;cloud cigars,&rdquo; in other words, cloud-like cylindrical columns. Modern UFOs sometimes burn the ground where they land. Could this power dry the sea bed? And most of all, could modern UFOs in fact be a sign that the angels of God are still with us?

This is what I have wondered. Is this eisegesis, am I just &ldquo;reading UFOs&rdquo; into the Exodus text, with no justification? Is this hermeneutical rape, or more accurately, hermeneutical adultery, or are my critics blind to the presence of the angels of God in our skies, as religious leaders were blind to the healing of the blind man in John chapter 9? Are our modern scribes ignoring what is &ldquo;new&rdquo; in our treasure chest?

CONDEMNED  
BY GUY MALONE

In his New Mexico talk on fundamentalism and UFOs, Guy Malone condemned my book, and then went on to make fun of the idea that a UFO might have parted the Red Sea, or dropped manna from the sky during the Exodus journey. Did he reference my book, and the scripture to go with it, as his source?

No, he presented this information from a book by Bonnie Meyer, *Alien Contact: The Messages They Bring*. Who is Bonnie Meyer? She has her own web site, "EARS", which stands for Evidence of Alien Contact Revealed In Scripture. Where does Ms Meyer get her information? From an alien named Lea, according to the web page. Malone found this information on pages 180-181 in the Meyer book, which I have not read. I am sure it made good theater to make this presentation in New Mexico. But if I had been in New Mexico, I would have asked Malone: why are you using Meyer as a resource, instead of the Bible, or even my book, which deals with the biblical evidence? Granted, I did not get my ideas from a space alien named Lea, but I did get them from the Bible, which should have been pointed out in the Malone talk if he is in any way sincere in being fair to what the Bible actually says.

The Meyers book, *Alien Contact*, was published in 2006. Malone knows *The Bible and Flying Saucers* was published in 1968, he mentions it is the year Malone was born. Did he wonder if by any chance Meyer's alien contact Lea had read my book? Throughout his lecture Malone quotes scripture that we need to worry about "being deceived"; I think Malone's whole presentation is deceptive, and perhaps that's the key to understanding the "Fundie" approach he is defending. My impression is the "Fundies" do not even dare let people see the Scripture I am interpreting. In any case, Malone, Heiser, and Bates do not. Conservatives condemn me, and hope people do not read my book. This has been the practice from the beginning. When Albert Hedrich reviewed my book in *Christianity Today*, (June 21, 1968), he condemned my book, and suggested that those who share his point of view "can only hope that this book has a very limited circulation." The tactic has not changed. Condemn Downing, and do not let anyone see what is in the book. It is dangerous. He quotes the Bible a lot!

The Malone lecture is bizarre in a lot of ways. He is making the point that Fundies believe UFOs are demonic, and he is right in the sense that there are more books than I can count making this argument from a conservative Christian point of view. One would think that if one were going to make this argument properly, one would refer to passages in the Bible concerning demon possession, in particular, and demonology in general, and then compare these texts with modern UFO abduction events.

As far as I could



find, Malone did not quote a single biblical text in regard to demons. I thought the Bible mattered to Fundamentalists. What kind of faithfulness to scripture does not even mention one text concerning demons?

A  
quick examination of biblical demonology gives us this outline. There is almost no mention of demons in the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 32:17, and Psalm 106:37, being the exceptions. These seem to refer to idolatrous religious practices.

In  
the New Testament, there are two basic types of references to demons: the first type of reference suggests there are demons which cause people either mental or physical illnesses, such as paralysis, convulsions, epilepsy, or perhaps schizophrenia as a form of mental illness. This latter case finds Jesus driving out demons from a man into a herd of pigs, who run down a hill and drown in the sea. (Mt. 8:28-34) In none of these cases do I see any sign that the demons ever had bodies of their own, ever had a physical form, ever had "UFOs" to fly around in. I know of no biblical case where anyone was abducted by a demon, and Jesus had to somehow rescue them from the abduction, nor did Jesus ever talk about demons abducting anyone. Do people go through painful things during modern abductions that I would not want to go through? Absolutely. But I went through a root canal once, which I did not want to do. I do not think my dentist was a demon, but did wonder about it at the time.

In  
summary: I do not see any biblical textual evidence that links UFO abductions and demons. That may be the reason that although Malone gave as his title "Why Christian Fundies Think Aliens Are Really Demons," he did not even refer to demons in the Bible.

The  
other main reference to demons in the New Testament is to Jesus, or John the Baptist, either that they had a demon, or that Jesus drove out demons by the prince of demons. (Mt. 11:18; Jn. 7:20; Mt. 9:34 etc) I do not believe these scriptures help Malone's case. In modern thinking, we would say many of the religious leaders thought both John the Baptist and Jesus were a little crazy. (One step away from being a UFO nut.)

When  
Malone goes on to build his case for UFO demonology, he changes to the term "fallen angels" as if they were the same as demons. But then he starts using biblical references to good angels, although not from Exodus of course. He refers to Daniel's Vision in chapter 10, but also to Peter being released from prison by an angel (Acts 10:9) He makes little distinction between angels in a vision (Daniel), and those in real time (Acts). And then Malone offers this summary: "The lecture had a great detail (sic) to say about the obvious overlap between the abilities that angels have as described in the Bible—and there's no reason to think that those same abilities wouldn't be true of fallen angels as well."

There

is no reason to think fallen angels would not have the abilities of God's angels? On what biblical basis did he make this statement? Although I do not recommend Gary Bates for many things, I do think he has raised proper skepticism about linking UFOs to the fallen angels, or the Nephilim, of Genesis 6. (See Bates, Alien Intrusion , &ldquo;Who Were The &lsquo;Sons of God&rsquo; In Genesis 6?&rdquo;, pp. 350-369)

At

the end of his lecture, Malone mentions that his wife did a lot of his biblical research about angels. My hope is she will look far enough to find the angel in the pillar of cloud and fire. In the end, Malone even mentions Satan, so that at the end of his lecture I did not know whether he was linking UFOs to demons, fallen angels, Satan, or what. Satan is actually the best choice of those three, provided that we understand that Satan only works with God's permission. (See the book of Job.) That would mean that if UFOs are Satanic, they are testing us as part of God's purpose, as Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit of God to be tested as part of God's purpose. (Mt. 4:1-11) Likewise the Exodus wilderness journey was led by the angel of God in the pillar of cloud, as part of God's testing. Moses tells Israel that God &ldquo;fed you in the wilderness with manna which your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end.&rdquo; (Deut. 8:16)

Modern

UFOs are testing the nuclear powers of the world, and testing the faith of the Church in Christ. Do we understand the signs we have been given? I believe that right now, we are flunking God's test. Instead of condemning those who disagree with them, I think it would be better if Fundamentalists paid closer attention to what the Bible says.

ABDUCTION  
PASSOVER

Malone might suppose

that my above treatment of his work is unfair, he is not trained in biblical studies, and one might say I am splitting hairs in the objections I have raised. But I believe if Fundamentalists paid more attention to what the Bible says, they would not be condemning me.

A

lay person might say, &ldquo;Come on Downing, if UFOs are doing bad

things, they are our enemy, call them demons, fallen angels, Satan, anything you like. If they are evil, we should pray the U.S. Air Force can shoot them down.&rdquo; Notice how this plays nicely into our modern popular secular UFO myth, as in the film &ldquo;Independence Day,&rdquo; when we cheer Will Smith as he shoots down the alien bad guys. The Christian demonic theory provides nice religious cover for our U.S. military powers. But I suspect these same Christians would have been cheering for Pharaoh&rsquo;s chariots at the Red Sea, and cursing the pillar of cloud and fire as demonic.

We are in bondage to a world wide military industrial complex, as Dwight Eisenhower warned. Many countries have nuclear weapons, we fear others like Iran may soon join the nuclear club. UFOs started making their presence felt right after the United States dropped two nuclear bombs on Japan. Notice who is the only nation in the history of the world to use nuclear weapons. We are the modern Pharaoh, and our weapons, as well as the weapons of other countries, hold the world hostage to terror as the Egyptian Pharaoh held the Jews hostage. All of us are working hard, and being taxed, to support the war machine. This is not a shocking reality. When Israel established Saul as its first king, the prophet Samuel warned people of the ways of the king, taking young men to support his own military complex, and taking young women to run his industry. (1 Samuel 8:4-22) That world governments can be oppressive is no new thing. But the way in which science and technology united with military goals is a thing which reached a new level: we can now destroy the whole human race.

#### Might

we suppose that the angels of God might think it would be a good time to draw a line in the sand, and send a message to the nuclear powers of the world, that their war games were now out of bounds? What have UFOs done? Here are reports I have heard or read. They have flown frequently, and slowly over our nuclear bases. They have used beams of energy to disable the firing mechanisms of embedded nuclear weapons. They have even reprogrammed the computers in our underground nuclear missiles. Think of this memo to a General at the Pentagon: &ldquo;Sir, remember that missile in silo number 4 that was programmed to hit Moscow? It is now programmed to hit Washington, thanks to UFO interference. Await your reply. &ldquo; The reply was to build underground protection for &ldquo;chosen people&rdquo; in the Washington area. UFOs have disabled the electronic firing systems in our fighter jets when the jets challenge a UFO. And UFOs may even have shot down some of the military jets that have challenged them, both in Cuba and the United States. (See Lawrence Fawcett, and Barry Greenwood, Clear Intent: The Government Coverup of the UFO Experience , and Donald E. Keyhoe, Flying Saucers: Top Secret , as resources for the information in this paragraph.)

If UFOs have acted to make sport of our modern Pharaohs (Ex. 10:2), we should thank God. And maybe the message from the aliens was to start nuclear disarmament. Maybe our human leaders only &ldquo;saw the light&rdquo; with a little help from our UFO friends.

With that in mind, I

come to modern UFO abduction reports with wonder. I wonder if UFO abductions are part of the process by which the aliens are humbling the powers of this world, which was a very godly thing to do to the Egyptian Pharaoh.

The argument of Guy Malone, and his partner Joe Jordan in the MUFON Florida CE 4 abduction study group, is that UFO beings are demonic because they do bad things to people during abductions. But if Christian people cry out, or pray, "Jesus save me," or words to that effect, the abduction is stopped. Malone would argue that as demons in the Bible obeyed Jesus, so modern demons obey Jesus during attempted UFO abductions. (Mark 1:34) Jordan and Malone argue that this is "scientific research," because of the repeatability of the scenario: An abduction is imminent, the potential victim says, "Save me Jesus," and stops the abduction. This has happened in dozens of cases. I am thankful to Malone and Jordan for this research, and if I am ever in danger of an abduction, I plan to shout "Save me Jesus."

But it seems to me that if we are in an Exodus situation, where the political and military powers of the world are in danger of destroying us all, and if modern UFOs have stepped in to challenge our military powers, then we should look to modern UFOs to be like the angels of the Exodus.

The final blow against Pharaoh was the killing of the first-born of Egypt at midnight, but the first-born in the Jewish homes were spared (passed over) because of blood on the doorposts of their homes. (Ex. 12) If modern UFOs are carrying out abductions in order to demonstrate their power of dominance over our modern Pharaohs, then "Save me Jesus" may be the equivalent of the blood of a lamb on the doorposts of Christians. "Save me Jesus" may be the blood that leads to a modern Abduction Passover.

This would mean the angels of God are at war with our modern military powers, and we Christians should be cheering the angels, not calling the angels demons.

Some have suggested to me that some MUFON leaders have not taken the Florida MUFON CE 4 research seriously enough. It is not being treated with proper respect. I would suggest that putting the "demonic" interpretation on the data does not help the cause that Malone and Jordan want supported.

Furthermore, from a scientific point of view, there are issues. Imagine the following. A man walks into a bank wearing a baseball cap, colored glasses, and a trench coat, and walks up to a teller carrying a brown

paper sack in one hand, and a paper note in the other. As he walks up to the teller window, the female teller starts saying, "Save me Jesus, save me Jesus," and the man turns and walks away, leaving the bank.

The teller rushes to the bank manager and says, "This strange guy was going to rob the bank, but I prayed to Jesus, and he went away." The bank manager, before calling the police, goes outside to see if the alleged robber is still in sight. He was standing outside the building. The manager says to the man, "Could I see the note in your hand?" The man hands over the note which reads, "I am mute, and cannot talk. In the brown paper bag are 20 five dollar bills. Could you give me four 20's and two 10's?" The bank manager asks for the bag. Inside are 20 five dollar bills.

The bank manager says, "Why did you leave the bank?" The alleged robber takes out a note pad and writes, "As I approached the teller, she started saying 'Save me Jesus, save me Jesus,' and I did not want to deal with a religious fanatic."

Here is the scientific issue: if I say an alien was going to abduct me, that implies knowledge of alien motives and plans. From a scientific point of view there is no way to go outside the bank and interview the alien, and see if an abduction was really part of the alien plan. The CE 4 study needs to be included in the process of abduction analysis, but it does not "prove" what Malone and Jordan want to prove.

From my Christian point of view, I like what Malone and Jordan have found. But UFO researchers who want nothing to do with Jesus will find scientific reasons not to accept the evidence. The fact that the evidence is not conclusive means we are left to "walk by faith." I trust Christians know what this means.

To summarize, I believe that the research of Jordan and Malone is important, and I respect what they have done. But I think their lack of understanding of the relation, in the Bible, between demons, fallen angels, the Satanic, and the protecting, judging, powerful angels of God, such as we see in Exodus, has caused them to give a very false and dangerous interpretation of the evidence. They have come down on the side of Pharaoh, rather than on the side of the angels of God.

A  
BLASPHEMOUS HALF SENTENCE

The

usual approach of conservatives to my work (liberals just ignore me) is to look in my UFO work for one hanging sentence, quote it, condemn me, and then move on. The Pharisees used the same technique to try to get rid of Jesus. (Mt. 22:15-32) In his speech Malone mentions that I have suggested UFOs carry the angels of God, like other cult leaders, and then he quotes part of a sentence from my book. "Jesus came to our world by a perfect cover story: By means of the Virgin Birth Jesus was able to come from another world... The rest of the sentence which Malone left out reads, "...but could appear to have come naturally, to be a 'natural born citizen' of this world." (The Bible and Flying Saucers, Lippincott and Marlowe editions, p. 146; Avon Books, p. 126; Berkley Books, p. 147; Sphere Books, p. 109.) I used the analogy of our modern spy stories, in which a spy from one country is an "under cover" agent in another world to explain why the incarnation of Jesus caught religious leaders off guard. Malone sees this as the reason to reject all of my book. This statement is not only offensive to Malone, "but downright blasphemous." He goes on to explain, "The idea that Jesus is an alien, or even part alien, denies the Godhead that is THE fundamental staple of all true Christian doctrine, that Jesus is fully God, and fully man." I would not deny that the issues Malone raises are important for Christian belief.

But

I would say that the issue of how Jesus can be fully God, and therefore from the heavenly world, and fully human, has been a topic of debate for a long time. Malone does not mention that the people around Jesus could not figure this out. Jesus tells the Jews that he "came down from heaven," (John 6:49-51) and they are not too impressed. They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" How does he now say, "I have come down from heaven?" (Jn.6:42)

I

used the "under cover alien image" as a space age analogy to explain exactly the mystery that Malone presents: Jesus as both human and divine. One problem is that fundamentalists are so literalistic that they don't get analogies. Jesus spoke frequently in parables, which are analogies.

Jesus

says "the kingdom of heaven is like... a sower who goes out to sow, or a man who has two sons, the younger son asks for his inheritance, or a man on the Jericho road is attacked by thieves, and a Samaritan rescues him. Parables, analogies, are critical to any hermeneutical process. Fundamentalists with their literal mind sets have trouble understanding analogies as a hermeneutical tool.

I

have found it painful dealing with Christian conservatives. They believe in the God of Jesus Christ, they want to be faithful, but for whatever reason, I feel strange about the way my UFO material has been treated by conservatives. When my book was reviewed by Albert Hedrich in the June 21, 1968 issue of Christianity Today, I sent a letter of complaint to editor Carl Henry, dated July 3, 1968. In my letter I complained that the reviewer never even mentioned the word "angel" in his review, and that my whole book depended on a realistic view of angels in the Bible. To help with this oversight, I enclosed an article entitled "Angels and UFOs," which I asked them to consider for publication. I pointed out that there was no serious modern consideration of angels, even in conservative Protestant theology, and the Hedrich review illustrated that neglect.

I received a letter dated July 18, 1968, from Janet Rohler, Editorial Assistant, saying that my manuscript had been received, but "the committee is divided about its use" in the magazine. Henry was retiring as editor, and Harold Lindsell was coming in as new editor. Eventually the manuscript was rejected. Billy Graham was one of the founders of Christianity Today, and I have long wondered if he read my book, and was part of the discussion of the "divided committee";

Needless to say, I wondered even more when Billy Graham published his book, *Angels: God's Secret Agents* in 1975. I would say to Guy Malone, "Maybe you are right, maybe my "secret agents" or "under cover agents" analogy means I am being blasphemous, and am going to hell." That would indeed be bad news. But the good news is, if I go to hell, I should have Billy Graham with me.

## HERMENEUTICAL BARRENNESS

From my point of view, the problem with Christian attempts to interpret the UFO signs for our generation is not so much hermeneutical rape, as Michael Heiser has suggested. Rather what I see is hermeneutical blindness, of both the left and the right, and therefore spiritual barrenness is the result.

If you do not see both the Word of God, and the signs of God in our time, you will not get pregnant with faith. I believe the modern church is only going through the motions of faith, in the best case,

with eyes on Scripture, but with no hope that God sees our modern scientific/military/atheistic oppression.

I believe the angels of Christ are flying in our skies, and the bride of Christ does not even recognize them. Now, indeed, Christ has been away on a long trip. (Mt. 21:33-44) We knew he might sneak back like a thief in the night (Mt. 24:43), but this is not fair. UFOs have not exactly come, they are just kind of hovering outside the door. Instead of Christians being caught up to heaven with true believers, feeling badly for those Michael Heiser calls the "left behinders," we have these strange stories of UFO abductions instead of salvation and a nice trip to heaven.

The fact that liberal Christians are paying no attention to UFOs is not surprising. They stopped believing in angels, in heaven, in the parting of the Red Sea and the Resurrection of Jesus years ago. Liberal Christians are very busy about their Mother's business, liberating the oppressed and being politically correct. Liberals have no interest in seeing traditional Christian eschatology restored, it would challenge their theologically driven politics of envy and earthly entitlement. The "redemption of Christian eschatology" is exactly what I believe UFOs are about. Christian faith cannot live without biblical eschatology, liberal Christianity is proof of that. If we start believing again that we should store up "treasures in heaven" (Mt. 6:20), many things will change, including our culture of despair, and our culture of greed. Conservative Christians should be shouting, "Look up, your salvation draws near." (Ex. 14:13; 2 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 19:1,2)

Michael Heiser is right about this: hermeneutics is the issue. But the issue is not hermeneutical rape, it is hermeneutical barrenness. God has given his church an opportunity to witness to the power of God, and thereby become pregnant as the bride of Christ, using Scripture as the means to identify the signs that God has graciously given to our evil and adulterous generation. Liberal Christians do not even look up—they have no hope. Conservative Christians look up and shout "demons." Lord have mercy on us all. Especially me, if I am wrong.

#### Mike Heisers Response

It's a response on the part of Dr.

Barry Downing to some thoughts I had on his work some time ago. For those who don't know who Barry Downing is, he's the author of a book called *Flying Saucers and the Bible* that promotes the ancient alien hypothesis using the Bible. He has an earned doctorate (I believe in theology). I'm not a big fan of his work, as you'll figure out from what follows.

I'm actually not even sure when it was, but I'm guessing it's six or seven years ago that I called Barry Downing's approach to Bible interpretation a rape of the biblical text. I can't even recall if it was in print or on radio. That said, my thanks to those who pointed the link out to me. While readers can go right to the link and read it in full, I'll be reproducing it here in installments and blogging through it by way of response. It's long enough that this will take a few installments. My responses are the indented portions (MSH).



Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

Part 4

Part 5

Mike Heiser

Barry Downing responds to Mike Heiser and others.

"UFOs, the Bible, and Targeted Intervention."

