

THE BALDUCCI INTERVIEW AND RELIGIOUS CERTAINTY by Dr. Barry Downing.

Contributed by Administrator
Friday, 04 November 2011
Last Updated Friday, 04 November 2011

THE BALDUCCI INTERVIEW AND RELIGIOUS CERTAINTY

MUFON UFO Journal

September 1998,

Dr. Barry H. Downing

The June 1998 issue of the Journal reported that Monsignor Corrado Balducci of the Vatican has said on Italian television that UFOs are real. The July issue of the Journal suggests that some aspects of the original article were misleading, but Balducci is a Catholic theologian with interest in UFOs; that is clear.

Whitley Strieber, in his book, *Confirmation: The Hard Evidence of Aliens Among Us* (1998), includes an appendix, "An Interview with Monsignor Corrado Balducci of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and Propagation of the Faith, The Vatican." [Strieber has long been interested in the religious dimension of UFOs, in part due to his Roman Catholic background. See my Journal articles, "Holy Communion?" April 1987, and "Strieber and the God Hypothesis," November 1988.]

The Balducci interview was originally conducted by Michael Hesemann, editor of *Magazin 2000*. The translation published by Strieber was made by Matthias Schubnell, Ph.D.

UFOS ARE REAL

What is interesting for most MUFON members is the firmness with which Balducci believes UFOs are real. Balducci says, "UFOs exist, there's no question about that; nobody can deny it any more." The basis for this is simply widespread eyewitness human testimony. We dare not question human testimony too much says Balducci; otherwise we will "question the testimony of Christ's existence." (p. 272)

Unlike my own position, however, Balducci does not expect UFOs to have revolutionary implications for Christianity. When asked how to interpret UFOs theologically, he said "I would prefer to speak of a human interpretation and not of the theology." He goes on to say, "The explanations of the UFO research should be sought in this world or, to put it more succinctly, in science and not in the world of angels or the Virgin Mary or the demons. The phenomena should be explained from within themselves. That is why scientific progress is very important. Each individual event should be thoroughly examined, not as a miracle, but as something supernatural; not as a divine or demonic incident, but as physical reality, as part of nature." (pp. 272-4)

[My italics: I suspect there is a translator's error here. I believe the translation should be "not as something supernatural." Whitley Strieber is quoted in the July issue of the Journal as saying Monsignor Balducci "personally read and agreed with every detail of the translation, and it is completely accurate." (p. 20) Be that as it may, I believe the word "but," rather than "not," totally reverses the point Balducci is making.]

A LAYER OF INSULATION

Balducci of course has the right to suppose that we can separate out UFOs as strictly a scientific problem, and not confuse UFOs with something supernatural. Most scientific UFO researchers would applaud this approach. With the exception of UFO cult leaders like the late Marshall Applewhite, most religious leaders try to put a layer of insulation between UFOs and traditional Christianity—and ultimately this may prove justified. But as an operating assumption, I believe it unwise.

Balducci argues that UFOs should be treated as natural objects, and as such should not impact the supernatural world of Christianity. Protestants have their own form of insulation. Liberal Protestant leaders have been very slow to admit UFOs are real, even though they would be the first to say "you cannot trust the government." Liberal

Protestants have been happy to trust the government on this one. For Liberal Protestants there is no supernatural. Reports of miracles in the Bible (the parting of the Red Sea, the resurrection of Jesus) are myth, and modern UFOs are likewise myth. Liberal Protestants are happy to confine religion and UFOs to the psychic world of Jungian archetypes.

Protestant Fundamentalists, who still have not adjusted to Darwin, are not ready to admit UFOs exist as extraterrestrials, but when they do admit UFOs are real, UFOs are called demons. Thus Protestant Fundamentalists are willing to have UFOs belong to the world of the supernatural (unlike Balducci), but it is only the negative supernatural—the demonic.

Protestant Fundamentalists—unlike Protestant liberals, believe in miracles. They believe the Red Sea parted, and that Jesus was raised from the dead. They believe—just because it is in the Bible, and the Bible can't be wrong. By calling UFOs demonic, Fundamentalists keep a layer of insulation between biblical UFOs and our modern UFOs.

UFOS AND RELIGION WITHOUT INSULATION

My approach to UFOs and the biblical religion, as argued in *The Bible and Flying Saucers* and in many articles published by MUFON, does not presume that we can be sure any insulation separates UFOs and the biblical faith. We cannot assume that the "pillar of cloud and of fire" that led Moses and Israel during the Exodus was supernatural. Nor can we assume it was not. We cannot assume modern UFOs were involved in developing biblical faith, nor can we assume they were not.

Although I believe his arguments could be more carefully made, I think R.L. Dione has asked an important question: *Is God Supernatural?* The 4000 Year Misunderstanding (1976). His basic question deals with wondering how we could distinguish between the supernatural and the supertechnological. Theology has never wondered about this because in biblical times a chariot wheel was advanced technology (Ezekiel described his UFO as a wheel within a wheel).

A SUPERNATURAL WORLD?

If George Washington were to come back to life today, our whole world would look supernatural to him. We have made this technological leap in two hundred years. In a universe that is 15 billions years old, how might the technology of a civilization a million years ahead of us look? Might it not appear supernatural?

The approach that I have taken to UFOs and Christianity is this: we need to wonder a lot more, and not shut ourselves off from possibilities. I applaud Monsignor Balducci for coming to the conclusion that UFOs are real. In light of the fact that Pope John Paul II apologized in 1992 for the way the Roman Catholic Church treated Galileo, I know there is Catholic hope that the church will give science the freedom to do its work without worrying that the faith will be jeopardized by scientific discovery.

But my own view is that faith without risk is not faith. I do not think we can hide our faith in a safe place. In the parable of the sower, Jesus made it clear that when a farmer sows, he takes risks: that the birds will eat some of the seed, that some seed will fall on rocky ground, that weeds will choke out some seed. Whether it be stock market investments or marriage, we are all in favor of risk reduction. But serious faith can never be risk free.

RISKS AND UFOS

Almost all UFO researchers, especially those with professional positions, have taken risks for their faith in UFOs. They have taken these risks because they believe the quest for truth matters. There are indeed risks involved in mixing UFOs, and Christianity. Marchall Applewhite's gravestone could bear that epitaph. But from my point of view, one does not stop sowing seeds because one is afraid of the weeds. I do not think we need any ideological separation between religion and UFOs at this time. Such an ideology only gets in the way of truly open research.

We need to believe that research and patience—including perhaps waiting for the UFO reality to choose to reveal its nature more clearly to us—will lead ultimately to the truth. And we do not need insulation to protect us from the truth, either from the point of view of science or religion.

We Wish To Thank MUFON and MUFON UFO Journal For Permission To Post This Article.