

The Raelian Movement

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Suggested reading

Introduction

The Raelian Church was founded in 1973 in France but the head office of the international movement is in Geneva. A Raelian foundation the object of which is the publishing of books containing the messages of the Elohim and the collection of royalties

is based in Vaduz (Liechtenstein). Statistics on the number of its adherents in the world are variable according to the sources: 28,000 according to Alain Allemand, journalist at the Belgian daily paper *Le Soir*, 35,000 scattered over 85 countries according to the Raelian flyer "Le raëlisme, religion athée de l'an 2000" (Raelism, atheistic religion of the year 2000) published in French, 40,000 according to Yves Nawezi, a Belgian Raelian priest. Raelians are most numerous in France (5,000-6,000), Quebec (4000) and Japan (4000).

According to reports from the group of experts of the Canton of Geneva and the French and Belgian parliamentary commissions on cults, the Raelian movement is allegedly a dangerous cult.

Raelians Seen By Themselves

"The Raelian religion is a religion that recognizes Jesus, Moses, Buddha, Mohammed... and atheism." It appeared after the meeting of a man of the Earth, Raël, with representatives of an extraterrestrial civilization – the Elohim – who are at the origin of all forms of life on Earth. We can find marks of their visit in all mythologies, legends and sacred texts. Today, by the light of our scientific progress, we can understand such a revelation."

"The Raelian religion"

- advocates the lowering of the majority age to 16 years

- defends

- the right to contraception, to abortion, to free intercourse (union libre/ common life??), to homosexuality, to masturbation, to equality between races and sexes, to assisted suicide in cases of incurable illnesses causing intolerable sufferings,
- the right to resort to genetics to improve the human species and to eliminate illnesses,
- the right for children to divorce from their parents in cases of sexual abuse, violence or disrespect from the latter by allowing the young victims to choose their guardian with the help of a judge, while enjoying a subsistence and education allowance at the charge of the parents,

- advocates the independence of regions forming big artificial states."

Source: Flyer "Le raëlisme, religion athée de l'an 2000".

Raelians Seen By Others

"The Raelian religion was founded by Claude Vorilhon, a former car pilot and journalist. According to the creed of the cult, the founder was taken into a flying saucer coming from the crater of a volcano and onto a mysterious planet where he allegedly got his

'revelation'. Back on Earth, Vorilhon, renamed Rael (The Messenger) started his teaching. It is an atheistic religion, which says that man was not created by God but by aliens. One of the proofs is allegedly in the Bible: the word Elohim, usually translated by God, would in fact mean "those who came from the Sky", in other words, aliens. Rituals of the cult consist in trying to get in telepathic contact with the Elohim.

After the return of the creators on Earth, believers will not receive eternal life but they will have the possibility to live on unknown and extraordinary planets, where aliens will make very beautiful and available mates for them. Raelism is probably the most widespread UFO cult in the West." (Source: Report on sects in the Canton of Tessin, Switzerland, 2 October 1998).

According to Alain Lallemand, "There is nothing more urgent for Raelians than to build an "Embassy" to welcome the extra-terrestrials soon, they should manifest themselves during this generation. A new era began with the birth of Vorilhon, we are therefore in the year 47." (Source: Sects in Belgium, Alain Lallemand, Edition EPO).

Profile

1. Hierarchical structure of the movement

- The hierarchical structure includes several levels:

1. The baptized. Baptism is only given to adults: it is forbidden to children. A baptized person is considered a sympathizer, no more than that.
2. The national members. They do not have the power to take decisions in the hierarchical structure.
3. The members of structures. They are members of the active structure of the international Raelian religion. Their mission is to represent their religion in public and help the official structure and their seniors in the achievement of the movement's objectives: spreading the message all over the world, building an embassy in Jerusalem to welcome the Elohim, etc. They avoid marriage but if they get married, they limit the number of children.
4. The regional leaders. They are "assistant-guides".
5. The national leaders (guide-bishops or guide-priests or assistant-guides): they are elected by the general assembly in every country and are appointed after approval by the continental leaders. The guide-priest or national guide can confer baptism. Number: about 150 in the world.
6. The continental leaders (guide-bishops): they are chosen by Raël. Number: 20.

7. The Raelian guide of the guides is the highest function. Currently, it is Claude Vorilhon.

The guide of the guides is elected every 7 years by his twelve guide-bishops. He can make appointments and confer powers at all levels. Claude Vorilhon has been in this office since the creation of the Raelian religion in 1973.

All hierarchical functions are accessible to men and women, to people who are married or not, heterosexual or homosexual. No leader at these various levels receives a salary for his/her work. Raël lives from the "royalties" of his books.

2. Recruitment of new members

- This is achieved through the spreading of the Elohim's message, conferences, sales of books, distributions of flyers. When they propagate their message, they do not try to convert but they look for those who identify themselves in their message.

3. Joining the movement

- The minimal adherence is achieved through baptism. It is a public ceremony consisting in "transmitting the cellular plan"; it is reserved to adults who have understood and approved of the message of the Elohim.

4. Adherence to the movement and to another religion

- Adherence to the Raelian religion excludes adherence to another religion. New members that go through "the transmission of their cellular plan" (Raelian baptism) must apostize their previous religion (if they had one). This act of apostasy is written in three copies: one for the new baptized member, one for the files of the Raelian religion and the last one is sent to the central headquarters in Switzerland. 15 000 Catholics in the world are said to have already signed such an act and to have asked the Roman Catholic Church to be erased from their files.

5. Financial obligations of members

- A baptized person does not have any financial obligations.

National members must give the Raelian church a financial contribution: the recommended amount is 3% of their income after payment of taxes but they remain in control of the choice of the amount. No control of the members' incomes is carried out by a senior.

The members of structures, the regional, national and continental leaders as well as Raël are requested to give a freely chosen contribution to the Raelian church: the recommended amount is 10% (3% + 7%) of their income after payment of taxes, plus 1%

for Raël. These contributions are optional. No control of the members' incomes is carried out by a senior.

Contributions can be made all along the year and at everybody's pace. A yearly written promise of contribution is made once a year, usually in July.

According to an investigation made in Quebec by Susan Palmer, a professor in religious sciences at Dawson College in Montreal, only 15% of the members contribute 10% of their income.

6. Voluntary leave of the movement

- It can be made by a simple letter of resignation. No constraint is obstructing this procedure.

7. Procedure of exclusion of a member, a priest, a bishop or the supreme leader

- The Council of discipline, that exists in each country, and the Council of the Wise Men, that exists on each continent, can pronounce exclusions. They are composed of priests and bishops. They can exclude members, priests, bishops and the guide of the guides for serious mistakes and at any time.

Example: In France, in Carpentras, in the case of a trial for sexual touching of a minor, a Raelian was sentenced, along with a Catholic, to a 5-year suspended prison term. He was excluded from the movement.

8. Social and domestic relations

- Members of the movement fully live in society. The doctrine of the movement does not incite them to break off their relations with their family.

All the possibilities of common life are allowed on the basis of mutual consent: heterosexual between two, three or more partners, homosexual and even transsexual relationships between consenting adults. The choice of the partner is completely free.

Children from Raelian families go to public or denominational schools.

Religiously mixed couples (Raelian-Christian, Raelian-Buddhist) are quite common in this religion.

9. The movement and medicine

- The doctrine of the movement is not opposed to the right of members to consult physicians and to medical treatments. Healthy life and food are recommended.

10. Informing members about the financial management of the movement

- Information on the national financial management is distributed during the general assembly of the non-profit making association, as required by law. Information on the world financial management is given during the intership for guides.

11. Cultural and religious activities

- The Raelian worship includes some religious ceremonies: baptism, prayer, attempts of telepathic contact on Sunday at 11 o'clock, marriage, divorce, funerals (recommendation to give his/her body to science or to be incinerated, but after having removed a piece of their frontal bone to be stored until the arrival of the Elohim). Religious ministers are the Guide of the guides (Raël), the bishops and the priests.

12. Life in community

- The movement is opposed to all forms of permanent communal life. Raelians live within civil society.

13. List of allegations concerning the dangerous nature of the movement

- A. Incitement to sexual touchings, pedophily, incest, rape and prostitution of children
- B. Incitement to mass (or individual) suicide
- C. Creation of a company of human cloning.
- D. Imposition of geniocracy on society
- E. Use of the movement's benefits for secret ends
- F. Organizing of orgies and collective masturbation with children
- G. Failure to respect the laws on morals
- H. Laundering of drug money
- I. Incitement to racism

14. Official position of the Raelian church to these allegations

- With regard to the aforementioned allegations, the Raelian church declares the following:

A. It condemns sexual touchings, pedophilia, incest, rape of children and adults, prostitution of children,

B. It condemns mass (and individual) suicide

C. Some Raelians have created, along with non-Raelians, a company the objective of which is the human cloning in a country where it is allowed by law (USA).

D. Geniocracy is based on the principle of a government composed of geniuses in which candidates at the local and governmental level should take a test of assessment of their potential of intelligence (and not of their intelligence quotient) and get 50% more than the average. As far as voters are concerned, they should be 10% higher than the average to be allowed to vote. Geniocracy will present itself like a new electoral system and will be set up in a democratic way (elections). Today, geniocracy is considered and lived like a utopia and not like a political project to be achieved through elections.

E. The goal of the fundraising is to build an embassy in Jerusalem (preferably) to welcome the Elohim. The objective to be reached is 20 million Swiss Francs (about 14-15 million dollars). In 1998, the movement had 5 million Swiss Francs on an account in Switzerland.

F. It does not organize any sexual activity. During the yearly seminar of awakening that is held on their campground in Albi (in the south of France), for 6 days, the participants fast for 24 hours fast, practice nudity (not compulsory) and awaken their sensuality through appropriated meditation exercises. Children and youngsters of less than 18 years are not admitted during the seminars.

G. It encourages its supporters to be law-abiding but advocates the change of laws pertaining to morals.

H. It is opposed to the consumption of drugs, tobacco, coffee and alcohol.

I. It denounces racism, sexism and sexual discrimination.

15. Lawsuits against the movement or against members of the clergy in Europe on the basis of one of the allegations from point 13.Sentences.

- None, according to the guide-priest of Belgium, Yves Nawezi-Daems. The movement declares that it is ready to denounce to the justice and to exclude any member of the clergy that would carry on illegal activities.

16. Lawsuits against the movement or against members of the clergy in America on the basis of one of the allegations from point13. Sentences.

- None, according to the guide-priest of Belgium, Yves Nawezi-Daems. The movement declares that it is ready to denounce to the justice and to exclude any member of the clergy that would carry on illegal activities.

17. Complaints from members of the movement concerning intolerance, discrimination on the basis of their convictions and hindrances to the exercise of their liberties before the publication of parliamentary report on cults in Europe.

- Very few and without any comparison with what followed the publication of the report. Those were essentially some negative newspaper articles.

18. Complaints from members of the movement concerning intolerance, discrimination on the basis of their convictions and hindrances to the exercise of their liberties after the publication of parliamentary report on cults in Europe.

- These complaints are numerous, according to testimonies collected by the movement in Belgium and in France: mockeries, insults, defamation, slanders, humiliations, anonymous threats, physical aggressions, breach of reputation, loss of jobs or promotions, dismissals, rupture of relations with the family, loss of visitation right or child custody in the settling of divorces, bomb threats in rented rooms, denial of room renting for religious ceremonies, decision of a bank to close their account, fiscal harassment, return of donations for children of Iraq by the recipient humanitarian organization, etc. Raelians attribute the sudden emergence of these problems to the publication of parliamentary reports on cults in which their movement is listed among the dangerous sects as well as to media coverage of the topic from that time on.

19. Lawsuits started by the movement. Results.

- *Lawsuits in Belgium*

In Belgium, a complaint has been lodged against J-M ABGRALL, of French nationality, and J.-A. FISCH, from Luxembourg, on the grounds of defamation and incitement to hate when they were heard by the Belgian parliamentary commission on cults. The case is pending.

- *Lawsuits in France*

A. High Court of Le Mans (13.12.1994)

*Parties involved:*Raelian Movement against 'The Maine Libre' and Bernard Filiaire

Motive: Publication of an interview in which Bernard Filiaire says that cults - including the Raelian Movement - launder dirty money coming from drug trafficking, prostitution, arms dealing or the sale of pornographic videotapes.

Sentence: Gérard Chol, director of 'Le Maine Libre', is declared guilty of public defamation. Payment of 1FF for damages, of 3000 FF for proceedings costs and publication of the penal judgment in "Le Maine Libre."

B. Appeal Court of Reims (26.01.1994)

Parties involved: Raelian Movement against SIRC Company and Myriam Assan

Motive: In the book "Les sectes à l'assaut de la France" (Cults attacking France), Myriam Assan says that Raël was often sentenced for corruption of minors.

Sentence: In emergency proceedings, the sentence for defamation was :10 000 FF for damages, provisionally, the withdrawal of the book, a penalty of 300 FF per infringement, 5,000 FF for proceedings costs, judicial publications in 'Le Monde' and 'Le Figaro'.

C. High Court of Paris (09.02.1994) and Appeal Court of Paris (10.01.1996)

Parties involved: Raël against Martin Cotta, Flammarion.

Motive: In the book "Dans le secret des sectes" (In the secret of cults), both journalists attribute racist statements to Raël (excerpts from the book "Accueillir les extraterrestres"/Welcome the Aliens).

Sentence: Because of the distorted quotation, payment of 10 000 FF for damages and of 13,000 FF for proceedings costs, insertion of stickers mentioning the sentence on copies not yet distributed, suppression of the passage in the next editions and penalty of 100 FF for each non conform copy.

D. High Court of Paris, ruling in emergency proceedings on July 5, 1996

Parties involved: Raël against Dr Abgrall and Edition Payot.

Motive: Release of the book "La mécanique des sectes" (The mechanics of cults), same motive as Martin Cotta.

Sentence: Insertion of stickers mentioning the sentence on copies not yet distributed, suppression of the passage in the next editions and a penalty of 300 FFS for each non conform copy.

20. The movement and human rights

· The Raelian religion declares that it promotes the respect of human rights not only in its own ranks but also outside: defense of other minorities (religious, sexual, cultural), of the right to asylum, to a minimum income, of the statute of women, of the right to vote for all, etc. It calls upon the Belgian and European authorities to set up a "committee of

ethics and censorship of religious writings" which would screen the publications of minority and majority religions through the filter of the Human Rights.

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This profile will be updated as far as new pertinent elements will be brought to the attention of and will be controlled by "Human Rights Without Frontiers."

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Suggested reading

Palmer, Susan, 1996, "The international Raelian movement and the report", pp 305-314, in "to put an end to sects", Milano, Cesnur-Di Giovanni.

Palmer, Susan, 1995, "Women in the Raelian Movement, pp 105-135, in "The Gods have Landed. New Religions from Other Worlds", New York, State University of New York Press, Publisher James Lewis.

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