

UFOs and Alien Beings – A Christian Worldview Response

Michael Gleghorn addresses issues related to reports of UFO and alien sightings. He considers the various possible causes before closing with a biblical, Christian perspective pointing out these reports are often presented like false gospels. At the end of the day, even an alien cannot take away from the importance of faith in Christ.



This article is also available in [Spanish](#).

A Tale of Two Hypotheses

It seems that almost everyone is interested in reports of UFOs and alien encounters. But how should these reports be understood? Where do these “unidentified flying objects” come from and what are they? Are intelligent beings visiting us from another planet or some other dimension? Or are UFO reports merely a collection of hoaxes, hallucinations, and misidentified phenomena? Can all UFO reports be adequately explained, or are there some that seem to defy all natural explanations? These are just a few of the questions we want to consider in this article.

First, however, it’s essential to note that most UFOs (unidentified flying objects) become IFOs (identified flying objects). John Spencer, a British UFO researcher, estimates that as many as 95 percent of received UFO reports “are turned into IFOs and explained satisfactorily.”^{1} For example, the report might be found to have been a clever prank or to have some natural explanation. Planets, comets, military aircraft, and rockets (among many others) have all been mistaken for UFOs. But even if 99 percent of UFO reports could be satisfactorily explained, there would still be thousands of cases that stubbornly resist all natural explanations. These

are called *residual* UFO reports.

If residual UFOs are not hoaxes, hallucinations, or some natural or man-made phenomena, then what are they? Most UFO researchers hold either to the extraterrestrial hypothesis or the interdimensional hypothesis. The extraterrestrial hypothesis holds that technologically advanced, interplanetary space travelers are indeed visiting our planet from somewhere else in the cosmos. Stanton Friedman, a representative of this view, states clearly, "The evidence is overwhelming that some UFOs are alien spacecraft."[\[2\]](#)

The interdimensional hypothesis agrees "that some UFOs are real phenomena that may exhibit physical . . . effects."[\[3\]](#) However, unlike the extraterrestrial hypothesis, this view does not believe that UFOs and alien beings come from somewhere else in our physical universe. So where *do* they come from? Some suggest that they come from some other universe of space and time. But others believe that they come from some other dimension entirely, perhaps a spiritual realm.[\[4\]](#)

How might we tell which, if either, of these two hypotheses is correct? Astronomer and Christian apologist Dr. Hugh Ross suggests that we employ the scientific approach known as the "process of elimination." He writes, "Mechanics use it to find out why the car won't start. Doctors use it to find out why the stomach hurts. Detectives use it to find out who stole the cash. This process can also be used to discover what could, or could not, possibly give rise to UFO phenomena."[\[5\]](#)

So what happens if we apply this process to the extraterrestrial hypothesis? Although quite popular here in America, there are some serious scientific objections to this viewpoint.

The Extraterrestrial Hypothesis

In the first place, it is highly improbable that there is

another planet in our cosmos capable of supporting physical life. Dr. Ross has calculated the probability of such a planet existing by natural processes alone as less than 1 in 10^{174} . You actually have “a much higher probability of being killed in the next second by a failure in the second law of thermodynamics (about one chance in 10^{80}).”[\[6\]](#) Thus, apart from the supernatural creation of another suitable place for life, our planet is almost certainly unique in its capacity to support complex biological organisms. (See the Probe article [“Are We Alone in the Universe?”](#)) This alone makes the extraterrestrial hypothesis extremely improbable. But it gets even worse!

Suppose (against all statistical probability) that there *is* a planet with intelligent life elsewhere in the universe. What is the likelihood that such creatures are visiting our planet? And what sort of difficulties would they face in doing so?

Probably the greatest challenge to interstellar space travel is simply the immense size of the universe. One group of scientists, assuming that any alien spacecraft would likely maintain communication with either the home planet or with other members of their traveling party, “scanned all 202 of the roughly solar-type stars within 155 light-years of Earth. Not one intelligible signal was detected anywhere within the vicinity of these stars.”[\[7\]](#) This implies that, at a minimum, E.T. would have to travel 155 light-years just to reach earth. Unfortunately, numerous galactic hazards would prevent traveling here in a straight line. Avoiding these deadly hazards would increase the minimum travel distance to approximately 230 light-years.[\[8\]](#)

Dr. Ross estimates that “any reasonably-sized spacecraft transporting intelligent physical beings can travel at velocities no greater than about 1 percent” of light-speed.[\[9\]](#) Although this is nearly 7 million miles per hour, it would still take about twenty-three thousand years to travel the 230

light-years to earth! Of course, a lot can go wrong in twenty-three thousand years. The aliens might run out of food or fuel. Their spacecraft might be damaged beyond repair by space debris. They might be destroyed by a contagious epidemic. The mind reels at the overwhelming improbability of successfully completing such a multi-generational mission.

In light of these facts, it doesn't appear that the extraterrestrial hypothesis can reasonably survive the process of elimination. Does the interdimensional hypothesis fare any better? A growing number of serious UFO researchers believe it can. Let's take a look.

The Interdimensional Hypothesis

The interdimensional hypothesis holds that residual UFOs "enter the physical dimensions of the universe from 'outside' the four familiar dimensions of length, height, width, and time."[{10}](#) Where do they come from? Some believe that they come from another physical universe of space and time. But this does not seem possible. General relativity forbids "the space-time dimensions of any other hypothetically existing universe" from overlapping with our own.[{11}](#) For this reason, many researchers believe that residual UFOs must come from some other dimension entirely, perhaps even a spiritual realm.

What evidence can be offered for such a bold hypothesis? Many point to the strange behavior of residual UFOs themselves. Hugh Ross contends that residual UFOs "must be nonphysical because they disobey firmly established physical laws."[{12}](#) Among the many examples that he offers in support of this statement, consider the following:[{13}](#)

1. Residual UFOs generate no sonic booms when they break the sound barrier, nor do they show any evidence of meeting with air resistance.
2. They make impossibly sharp turns and sudden stops.
3. They send no detectable electromagnetic signals.

For example, “relative to the number of potential observers, ten times as many sightings occur at 3:00 A.M. (a time when few people are out) as at either 6:00 A.M. or 8:00 P.M. (times when many people are outside in the dark).”^{14} If residual UFOs were simply random events, then we would expect more sightings when there are more potential observers. The fact that these events are nonrandom may suggest some sort of intelligence behind them. This is further supported by the fact that some people are more likely to see a residual UFO than others. Numerous researchers have observed a correlation between an individual’s involvement with the occult and their likelihood of having a residual UFO encounter. This may also suggest some kind of intelligence behind these phenomena.

Finally, residual UFOs not only appear to be nonphysical and intelligent, they sometimes seem malevolent as well. Many of those claiming to have had a residual UFO encounter have suffered emotional, psychological, and/or physical injury. A few people have even died after such encounters. In light of these strange characteristics, many researchers have reached similar conclusions about the possible source of these phenomena.

The Occult Connection

Many serious UFO investigators have noticed a striking similarity between some of the aliens described in UFO reports and the demonic spirits described in the Bible. Although it may not be possible to know whether some aliens are actually demons (and I certainly do not claim to know this myself), the well-documented connection between UFO phenomena and the occult cannot be denied.

In 1969 Lynn Catoe served as the senior bibliographer of a publication on UFOs researched by the Library of Congress for the U.S. Air Force Office of Scientific Research. After a two-year investigation, in which she surveyed thousands of documents, she drew explicit attention to the link between

UFOs and the occult. She wrote, "A large part of the available UFO literature . . . deals with subjects like mental telepathy, automatic writing and invisible entities . . . poltergeist manifestations and 'possession.' Many . . . UFO reports . . . recount alleged incidents that are strikingly similar to demonic possession and psychic phenomena."[\[15\]](#) Veteran UFO researcher John Keel agrees. After surveying the literature on demonology he wrote, "The manifestations and occurrences described in this imposing literature are similar if not entirely identical to the UFO phenomenon itself."[\[16\]](#) The bizarre claim of alien abduction may lend some credibility to these remarks.

Many (though not all) of those who report an abduction experience describe the aliens as deceptive and hostile. Whitley Strieber, whose occult involvement preceded the writing of both *Communion* and *Transformation*, at times explicitly referred to his alien visitors as "demons." For example, in *Transformation* he described his emotional reaction to the aliens with these words: "I felt an absolutely indescribable sense of menace. It was hell on earth to be there, and yet I couldn't move, couldn't cry out, couldn't get away . . . Whatever was there seemed so monstrously ugly, so filthy and dark and sinister. Of course they were demons. They had to be. And they were here and I couldn't get away."[\[17\]](#)

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that abduction is often physically and emotionally painful, Mr. Strieber tends to believe that its purpose is ultimately benevolent. When integrated correctly, the abduction experience can provide a catalyst for spiritual growth and development. Still, he candidly admits that he is really not sure precisely *who* or *what* these beings actually are, and he continues to warn that many of them are indeed hostile and malevolent.[\[18\]](#) In light of this, one can't help wondering about the experiences related in Mr. Strieber's books. If his encounters with aliens were not merely hallucinatory, or due to some mental disorder,

isn't it at least possible that his sinister visitors really were demons? As noted above, many UFO investigators would indeed consider this (or something very much like it) a genuine possibility.

Another Gospel?

In his letter to the Galatians the Apostle Paul delivered a stirring indictment against every gospel but that of Christ. "But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed" (1:8-9). Evidently, the purity of the gospel was deeply important to Paul.

In today's pluralistic society a variety of gospels are being preached. And among the great throng of voices clamoring for our attention are many UFO cults. Since the 1950s a number of these cults have arisen, often around a charismatic leader who claims to be in regular contact with otherworldly beings. Interestingly, unlike the abduction phenomenon, most contactees do not claim to have ever seen the aliens with whom they communicate. Rather, they claim that the aliens communicate with them psychically or telepathically. The contactee is simply a channel, or medium, through whom the aliens communicate their messages to humankind. This method of contact is rather intriguing for those who favor the interdimensional hypothesis. As John Saliba observes, "Many contactees . . . write about UFOs and space beings as if these were psychic phenomena, belonging to a different time/space dimension that lies beyond the scope . . . of modern science." [\[19\]](#)

So what sort of messages do the aliens allegedly communicate to contactees? Often they want to help guide us to the next stage of our spiritual evolution or give us advice that will help us avoid some global catastrophe. Strangely, however,

many of them also want to deny or distort traditional doctrines of biblical Christianity. Oftentimes these denials and distortions concern the doctrine of Christ. For example, the Aetherius Society “views Jesus Christ as an advanced alien being . . . who communicates through a channel and travels to Earth in a flying saucer to protect Earth from evil forces.”[\[20\]](#) As a general rule, “UFO religions . . . reject orthodox Christology (Jesus’ identity as both God and man) and thus reject Jesus Christ as the . . . Creator and . . . Savior of humankind.”[\[21\]](#)

A deficient Christology, combined with an acceptance of biblically forbidden occult practices like mediumistic channeling (see Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:10-12; etc.), make many UFO cults spiritually dangerous. By preaching a false gospel, they have (perhaps unwittingly) placed themselves under a divine curse. By embracing occult practices, they have opened the door to potential demonic attack and deception. Nevertheless, there is hope for those involved with these cults. There is even hope for those tormented by hostile beings claiming to be aliens. The Bible tells us that through His work on the cross, Jesus disarmed the demonic rulers and authorities (Col. 2:15). What’s more, for those who flee to Him for refuge, He makes available the “full armor of God,” that they might “stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). Regardless of *who* or *what* these alien beings might be, no one need live in fear of them. If Jesus has triumphed over the realm of evil demonic spirits, then certainly no alien can stand against Him. Let those who live in fear turn to Jesus, for He offers rest to all who are weary and heavy-laden (Matt. 11:28).

Notes

1. John Spencer, ed., *The UFO Encyclopedia* (New York: Avon Books, 1991), s.v. “identified flying objects (IFOs),” cited in Hugh Ross, Kenneth Samples, and Mark Clark, *Lights in the Sky & Little Green Men* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress,

2002), 25.

2. Jerome Clark, *The UFO Encyclopedia*, 2d ed., vol. 1 (Detroit: Omnigraphics, 1998), s.v. "Friedman, Stanton Terry," cited in Ross, et al., *Lights in the Sky*, 31.

3. Ross, et al., 32.

4. Ibid., 109.

5. Ibid., 34.

6. Ibid., 39.

7. Ibid., 57.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., 59.

10. Ibid., 109.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., 69.

13. Ibid., 69-70.

14. Ibid., 116.

15. Lynn Catoe, *UFOs and Related Subjects: An Annotated Bibliography* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), p. iv (prepared under Air Force Office of Scientific Research Project Order 67-0002 and 68-0003), cited in John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *The Facts on UFO's and Other Supernatural Phenomena* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1992), 17.

16. John A. Keel, *UFOs: Operation Trojan Horse* (New York: Putnam's, 1970), p. 215; cited in Ankerberg and Weldon, *The Facts on UFO's*, 18.

17. Whitley Strieber, *Transformation: The Breakthrough* (New York: Morrow, 1988), p. 181; cited in Ankerberg and Weldon, *The Facts on UFO's*, 23.

18. For example, his recent online journal entry, "How We Can Protect Ourselves," (Aug. 28, 2003) at www.unknowncountry.com/journal/.

19. John A. Saliba, "Religious Dimensions of UFO Phenomena," in *The Gods Have Landed*, ed. James R. Lewis (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 25; cited in Ross, et al., *Lights in the Sky*, 145.

20. Ross, et al., *Lights in the Sky*, 150.

Communicating with the Dead – A Christian Perspective on Its Reality

Can John Edward and James Van Praagh really communicate with the dead? Michael Gleghorn takes a skeptical and biblical look at the phenomenon of after-death communication.

<https://www.ministeriosprobe.org/docs/comunicacion-muertos.htm>

[1](#)  This article is also available in [Spanish](#).

Mediums and the Media

Both John Edward and James Van Praagh are highly sought-after mediums who claim to possess the ability to communicate with the dead. Each has his own Web site and hit television show. They have both authored best-selling books, been interviewed by television personalities and news journalists, and each has about a three-year waiting list for personal readings.

“According to a recent Gallup Poll, 38 percent of Americans believe ghosts or spirits can come back in certain situations. In 1990, it was 25 percent. Today, 28 percent think some people can hear from or ‘mentally’ talk to the dead, compared with 18 percent 11 years ago.”[{1}](#) Some believe that the increased interest in after-death communication is a “spillover from the growing interest in alternative medicine

and Eastern spirituality.”{2} But whatever the cause, the popularity of self-proclaimed mediums like Edward and Van Praagh has soared in recent years.

John Edward was 15 when he first learned of his life’s work.{3} He received a reading from a psychic who told him that he would help bring comfort to the living by reuniting them with those who had crossed over to the other side. Since



then, John has gone from doing private readings in his home to making appearances on popular radio and television shows. He has been a guest on *Entertainment Tonight*, *The Crier Report*, and *The Maury Povich Show*, just to name a few. He’s also been interviewed by *The New York Times*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and others. He’s authored three books, produced a series of audio tapes that explain how to communicate with the other side, and, since June 2000, he’s had his own television show, *Crossing Over with John Edward*.



The story of James Van Praagh is similar. On his Web site we learn that James was 24 when a medium told him that he would be in the same line of work within just two years.{4} Although James was initially skeptical, he soon realized that he indeed had the ability to communicate with the dead. Since that time, James has gone from doing psychic readings for friends, to making television appearances on such

shows as NBC’s *The Other Side*, *Oprah*, and *20/20*. In addition to writing four books, he’s produced two meditation tapes and a video about psychic development. The popular CBS mini-

series, *Living with the Dead*, was based on his life and work. And since September 2002, he's been the star of his own television show, *Beyond with James Van Praagh*.

What are Christians to make of all this? Is there good evidence that Edward and Van Praagh can really communicate with the dead? And what, if anything, does the Bible say about such matters? These are just a few of the questions that we will wrestle with in this article.

The Tricks of the Trade

Both John Edward and James Van Praagh claim the mediumistic ability to communicate with the dead. And thousands of adoring fans believe these claims are true. One reporter tells the story of Sally Morrison, who visited Edward after the death of her husband.[\[5\]](#) During the reading, Edward reportedly asked her, "I'm getting a screwdriver; what does that mean to you?" Ms. Morrison remembered that the day before she had spent an hour looking for a screwdriver in her late husband's tool box. Afterward she told the reporter, "It was such an everyday thing to bring up. But to me, it was incredibly comforting, a sign that Paul had been there." Apparently, Ms. Morrison was persuaded that Edward had really made contact with her late husband. Similar stories could also be told of James Van Praagh's apparent successes.

But if this is so, why haven't Edward and Van Praagh managed to convince the skeptics? Michael Shermer, who I must point out is also skeptical of Christianity, observes that there are three techniques commonly used by mediums to convince people of their alleged paranormal powers: cold reading, warm reading, and hot reading.[\[6\]](#) These techniques might be thought of as the tricks of the trade, so to speak.

In cold reading, mediums make use of methods that help them "read" a person who was unknown to them in advance. Such

methods may include observing body language, asking questions, and inviting the subject to interpret vague statements.^[7] For instance, by carefully observing body language and facial expressions, the medium can often get a good idea of whether or not he's on the right track. Also, by asking questions and inviting the subject to interpret vague statements, the medium can gain valuable information. This information can then be used later in the reading to make what appear to be stunningly precise revelations from the spirit world. Indeed, Shermer contends that by effectively applying these techniques, the medium actually gets the subject to do the reading for him!^[8] Skeptics hold that both Edward and Van Praagh make use of such methods.

Warm reading involves making statements that tend to apply to most anyone. For example, many people carry a piece of jewelry that belonged to their dead loved one. By asking if the subject is carrying such jewelry, the medium has a good chance of making a "hit." This can give the impression that the information was divined from a paranormal source. In reality, of course, it may have been nothing more than a highly probable guess.

The last technique, hot reading, actually involves getting information about a subject *before* the reading begins! But surely Edward and Van Praagh have not availed themselves of such methods. Not according to the skeptics! It appears that both mediums have apparently been caught red-handed using "hot reading" techniques.

Caught in the Act

Skeptics contend that self-proclaimed mediums John Edward and James Van Praagh have both been caught red-handed using "hot reading" techniques. "Hot reading" involves gathering information about a subject *prior* to doing the reading. Although most skeptics agree that such techniques are probably

not used as much now as they were by spiritists in the past, there seem to be strong indications that both Edward and Van Praagh have, on occasion, attempted to obtain information about their subjects in advance.

In an article written for the *Skeptical Inquirer*, Joe Nickell describes one such episode involving John Edward.[\[9\]](#) The incident occurred on a *Dateline* special. During a group reading, Edward indicated that the spirits were telling him to acknowledge someone named Anthony. The cameraman signaled Edward that that was his name. Edward appeared surprised and asked, "Had you not seen Dad before he passed?" John Hockenberry, the *Dateline* reporter, was initially quite impressed with this revelation. The cameraman's name was Anthony and his father was dead. Hockenberry later learned what really happened.

Earlier in the day, Anthony "had been the cameraman on another Edward shoot."[\[10\]](#) The two men had talked and Edward had learned of the death of Anthony's father. When confronted by Hockenberry in a later interview, Edward reluctantly admitted as much. Of course, Edward still maintained that he got this information from the spirits as well. But can anyone blame the skeptic for being suspicious?

Michael Shermer relates a similar incident, this one involving James Van Praagh, which occurred on *20/20*.[\[11\]](#) While relaxing during a break, Van Praagh asked a young woman, "Did your mother pass on?" The woman shook her head, but said that her grandmother had died. Unfortunately for Van Praagh, the cameras had accidentally been left rolling during the break. The entire episode was caught on tape! Unaware of this, Van Praagh later turned to the woman during his reading and said, "I want to tell you, there is a lady sitting behind you. She feels like a grandmother to me." Afterward, when confronted by *20/20*'s Bill Ritter with the video evidence captured during the break, Van Praagh insisted, "I don't cheat. I don't have to prove . . . I don't cheat. I don't cheat. I mean, come on.

. . . ” Shermer concludes, “Interesting. No one said anything about cheating. The gentleman doth protest too much.”[{12}](#)

The fact that both Edward and Van Praagh have been caught using information in their readings that they gained beforehand ought to alert us to the possibility that these men may not really be what they claim. Still, to be fair, we must at least admit the possibility that these men not only had advanced information about their subjects, but that they also received such information later through a spiritistic revelation. But is this really possible? Let’s see what the Bible says about after-death communication.

Saul and the Spirit Medium

In 1 Samuel 28, we read that Israel and the Philistines were preparing to make war with one another. When Saul, the king of Israel, saw the Philistine army, he was filled with fear. Desperate for a word from God, he inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him. Hoping for guidance by another means, Saul told his servants to find him a medium. At this point in Israel’s history this may not have been an easy task, for “Saul had put the mediums and the spiritists out of the land” (1 Sam. 28:3). But why had he done this?

It was actually an act of obedience to the Word of God. In Deuteronomy 18 the Lord had said, “There shall not be found among you a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord” (vv. 10-12). The Lord had also told His people that they were not to seek out mediums (Lev. 19:31), that the person who did so was to be cut off from his people (Lev. 20:6), and that mediums were also to be put to death (Lev. 20:27). In spite of all these prohibitions against turning to mediums, Saul was apparently so desperate for guidance that he ordered his servants to find him one. They did, and he disguised himself and went to her by night.

Although initially hesitant to practice her art, the medium, not recognizing her client as Saul, eventually agreed to call up the prophet Samuel who had died some time before. "When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice," suddenly realizing that her client was Saul! (1 Sam. 28:12)

Samuel's message to Saul was both tragic and prophetic: "The Lord will . . . deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines. And tomorrow you and your sons will be with me" (1 Sam. 28:19). Reflecting on these events, the author of Chronicles wrote, "So Saul died for his unfaithfulness . . . against the Lord, because he did not keep the word of the Lord, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance" (1 Chron. 10:13). Whatever truths we may glean from the story of Saul and the medium, it clearly does not sanction man's attempt to communicate with the dead.[\[13\]](#)

But does it confirm that after-death communication is really possible? Although some have speculated that the spirit of Samuel was actually a demonic spirit, the text repeatedly identifies the spirit as Samuel (vv. 12, 14, 15-16) and nowhere even hints that it might be a demon. Thus, we are forced to conclude that after-death communication is not intrinsically impossible. But here we must be careful. Possibility does not suggest probability. The text seems to imply that God allowed Samuel's special return in order to pronounce judgment against Saul (vv. 16-19). And as we'll see, there are good reasons to believe that this was, in fact, an exceptional event.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) clearly suggests the immense improbability of the dead communicating with the living. Both the rich man and Lazarus died. Lazarus went to "Abraham's bosom," a place of paradise for the righteous dead (Luke 16:22). The rich man went to

Hades, a place of conscious torment for the unrighteous. Though separated by a great chasm, the rich man could still see and speak with those dwelling in paradise. He called out to Abraham, asking that Lazarus be sent to warn his brothers, lest they share his torment in the afterlife. But Abraham refused, saying that if they would not listen to the Word of God, they also would not listen if someone rose from the dead.

But why didn't the rich man just go and warn his brothers himself? After all, if it were a simple matter for the dead to communicate with the living, then why did the rich man ask that Lazarus be sent to warn his brothers? Apparently, the rich man was not *able* to warn his brothers. He could not escape his place of punishment to do so.

But wouldn't it also, then, be impossible for Lazarus to warn them? Not necessarily. Although it seems to be a rare occurrence, it appears that the righteous dead are, on occasion, permitted by God to communicate with those still alive on earth. The Old Testament records the appearance of Samuel to Saul (1 Samuel 28), and the New Testament records the appearance of Elijah and Moses to Jesus and some of his disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17). Nevertheless, the biblical evidence indicates that after-death communication is extremely rare.

Does this mean that mediums like John Edward and James Van Praagh are charlatans? Skeptics certainly think so, and the skeptics may be right. But the Bible allows for another possibility; namely, that the spirits with whom Edward and Van Praagh claim to communicate are not human at all, but demonic. Consider the following.

The Bible indicates that messages from the human dead are extremely rare. It's therefore unlikely that Edward and Van Praagh should receive such messages all the time. In addition, listen to what the spirits are alleged to say. Do any of them, like the rich man, strive to warn their relatives about a

place of conscious torment? Do they urge repentance for sin or the need for personal faith in Christ? On the contrary, such important Christian doctrines are typically either ignored or denied. But if the Bible is truly God's Word, and the spirits deny its teachings, then who are these spirits likely to be?

Of course, maybe Edward and Van Praagh aren't really communicating with spirits at all. But if at times they are, I fear it's probably with demonic spirits – not spirits of the human dead.

Notes

1. Bill Hendrick, "Higher Communication," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 31 October 2001, sect. C; Greg Barrett, "Can the Living Talk to the Dead?" *USA Today*, 20 June 2001, sect. D; cited in Marcia Montenegro, "The Resurging Interest in After-Death Communication," *Christian Research Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 01, 2002, 12.
2. Ruth La Ferla, "A Voice from the Other Side," *New York Times on the Web*, 29 October 2000 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2000/10/29/living/29/DEAD.html>).
3. See the information about John at <http://www.scifi.com/johnedward/aboutjohn/> and his official Web site at http://www.johnedward.net/about_John_Edward.htm.
4. See the information about James on his Web site at <http://www.vanpraagh.com/bio.cfm>.
5. La Ferla.
6. See Michael Shermer, "Deconstructing the Dead: Cross Over One Last Time to Expose Medium John Edward," <http://www.skeptic.com/newsworthy13.html>. I have relied heavily on Shermer's article in the following discussion.
7. See Joe Nickell, "John Edward: Hustling the Bereaved," *Skeptical Inquirer*, November/December 2001, Vol. 25, No. 6, p. 20. I have relied on some of Nickell's observations in what follows.
8. Shermer.
9. Nickell.

10. Ibid.

11. See Michael Shermer, "How Psychics and Mediums Work: A Case Study of James Van Praagh," <http://www.skeptic.com/>. See also Michael Shermer, "Does James Van Praagh Talk To The Dead? Nope! Fraud! – Parts 1" at <http://www.holysmoke.org/praagh1.htm> and "Does James Van Praagh Talk To The Dead? Nope! Fraud! – Part 2" at <http://www.holysmoke.org/praagh2.htm>.

12. Shermer, "How Psychics and Mediums Work: A Case Study of James Van Praagh."

13. Montenegro, p. 16.

© 2003 Probe Ministries