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E.T.
Theological probings

E.T. hailed as modern Messiah figure

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Millions have seen the movie and perhaps hundreds of thousands more will open video games this Christmas in which the aim is to help the gentle alien, E.T., return home.

E.T., *The Extra-Terrestrial*, created by movie director Steven Spielberg, has become a genuine cultural event — a character in political cartoons, stand-up comedy routines and newspaper stories.

Meaning

And such attention has now invited the probings of theologians and religion commentators to probe the religious meaning of the movie and the E.T. character.

Theologian Robert Short, best known for his book, *The Gospel According to Peanuts*, has written a new volume, *The Gospel from Outer Space*, which looks at the E.T.-Gospel connection.

Messiah

Short, in exploring the parallels between E.T. and Christ, finds that both are Messiah figures, both come from outside our world on temporary "earthly" missions, both appeal to the underdog, are rejected by the authorities, die, rise from the dead and ascend heavenward after leaving their mark on the hearts and minds of those who have come to love them.

Two writers in a recent issue of the *National Catholic Reporter* suggest — only half humorously — that E.T. should be made a saint.

Edward Brett, assistant professor of history at the College of Santa Fe, N.M., and Donna Whitson Brett, a freelance writer, say that E.T., like other saints, teaches the 2,000-year-old Christian tradition in ways few other modern heroes do.