



RAEL: he describes his movement as "an atheistic religion with regular cult practices" IAN SMITH

UFO 'passenger' gets rough ride

By GAVIN WILSON

Rael was having a rough time. He had come to the Robson Square media centre Thursday night to spread the word, to tell how he had been taken to another planet by extraterrestrials who had created the human race in laboratories and how he was appointed to be their ambassador on earth.

Nearly 250 people paid \$5 each to hear him speak. But they weren't in a mood to listen.

Rael, a former sports reporter, describes his movement as "an atheistic religion with regular cult practices."

A member of the audience loudly proclaimed it "a bunch of (nonsense), buddy."

At one time Rael, 41, was just plain Claude Vorilhon. But he says that one night in 1973 he was mysteriously drawn to the crater of an extinct volcano near his home in France. It was then, he says, that an alien spacecraft

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appeared and Rael had his first close encounter. He says he's met the extraterrestrials five times since then.

He says that on one occasion he visited their world where he met Jesus, Moses, Mohammed, Buddha and others who are all living forever thanks to a type of cloning practised by the super-scientific race he calls the Elohim.

Rael says there is no God, only the extraterrestrials who created us in their image as a part of a vast genetic experiment. They're now planning to return, he says, but only once he's collected \$15 million and built an embassy for them in Jerusalem.

"Some people say to me: 'You are crazy.' But what is crazy?" he asked.

Rael, dressed all in white with a large medallion hanging around his neck, claimed he has 20,000 followers around the world, 5,000 of them in Canada. Not many were in attendance Thursday.

Most members of the audience were highly skeptical of Rael's claims, but said they attended out of curiosity and would keep an open mind.

During a lively and sometimes raucous question period, Rael was peppered with questions and denounced as a false prophet.

"I have much closer connections to any extraterrestrials than you do," one man shouted. "You're disseminating evil seeds."

Despite the rough ride, all copies of Rael's book, *Space Aliens Took Me To Their Planet*, sold out during the intermission.