

# Mars First!

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“The tighter that our humanity closes ranks to conquer nature on Mars, the tighter the elements close theirs to avenge the victory.”

—from Aleksandr Malinovskii Bogdanov’s *Red Star* (1908)

It’s easy to laugh off the Bush-Cheney regime’s plans for “establishing an extended human presence” on the Moon and Mars. “We will build new ships to carry man forward into the universe, to gain a new foothold on the Moon,” said Bush, a man who constantly fails to correctly pronounce the word “nuclear” and whose own scientific wisdom has had him publicly defending creationist fairy tales over Darwinian evolutionary theory. “We choose to explore space because doing so improves our lives and lifts our national spirit.” Coming out of the mouth of such a cowardly, belligerent, and proudly ignorant obscurantist like Bush, talk of interplanetary missions sounds as unbelievably silly as the music on a Christian rock CD.

But the issue of Bush Administration’s tendency towards faith-based foreign policy decisions and other deeply creepy manifestations of conservative Judeo-Christian supernaturalism is reason enough to take this ninnyhaimer’s threat to the lunar and Martian wilderness very seriously. Take note, for instance, of how Bush concluded his NASA talk: “Let us continue the journey. May God bless.” Compare this to Bush’s remarks at the memorial for the space shuttle crew killed when the Columbia blew up while coming in for a landing in February 2003—Bush quoted from the ranting, spittle-flecked Old Testament prophet Isaiah, adding “The same Creator who names the stars also knows the names of the seven souls we mourn today. The crew of the shuttle Columbia did not return safely to Earth; yet we can pray that all are safely home.” Ah yes, once again the fetid illusion of Divine Providence has been conjured up; like the fifteenth-century Portuguese Catholic explorers who built a huge crucifix on an estuary of the Congo River before inaugurating the slave trade, and the crazed, paranoid Puritans who murderously came to North America on the Mayflower, the miserabilist God and His pox-ridden blessings which have consistently ruined environments and ecologies in every corner of the world will be expected on board Bush’s armada to Mars.

Christianity, of course, is at least as befouling to wild regions as soiled disposable diapers in a landfill that was once a forest glade, choking clouds of carbon monoxide smog in the summer wind, and wretched, stagnant pools of Superfund-ready water. The religious pollution of outer space by the US military and defense industry has been going on for decades, beginning on December 24, 1968 when the astronauts aboard Apollo 8 took turns reading from the Bible in worldwide broadcasts as their capsule entered lunar orbit. Even more horrifying, Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin self-administered Holy Communion before making his “one small step” into the Sea of Tranquility in late July 1969. Astronaut-turned-evangelical minister, James Irwin described his 1971 moonwalk as a revelation of “the power of God”; astronaut Charles Duke returned from the Moon to become a Christian missionary, and frequently sermonized about “walking on the Moon and walking with the Son.”

The regularly-scheduled space shuttle missions over the last decade seemed to have led to a renaissance of monotheistic mumbo-jumbo. Astronaut Tammy Jernigan talked about her blind Christian faith during a live broad-

cast from aboard the shuttle in 1995; likewise, Shannon Lucid, the daughter of missionaries, took sermons with her on the shuttle to the Russian space station Mir and reportedly held daily Bible studies with the cosmonauts. Senator and Presbyterian Church elder John Glenn, who went back into space on the shuttle in 1998 at age 77, said during an in-orbit space capsule news conference that he prays every day and warned that “everybody should.”

The space shuttle missions have also inspired some especially grotesque outbursts of military-industrial theology. USAF Colonel Jeffrey Williams had a six-hour space walk while flying with the Atlantis shuttle in May 2000, and he has since repeatedly explained that deploying top secret military spy satellites while being suspended four hundred miles above the Earth’s surface helped him to see how “we are all an infinitesimal speck in light of the Creator Himself.” This realization “amplified my belief in the Creator,” he crowed, and it led him to conclude that “apart from Christ, we are insignificant.” As for the search for extraterrestrial life-forms, Williams says that his “gut feeling based on studying the Scripture is to doubt the existence of life elsewhere, as Earth and mankind are described in God’s revelation.”

## **Columbia’s God Squad**

Most recently and most egregiously, God was the copilot for the crew aboard the doomed space shuttle Columbia. After the spectacular Columbia explosion spewed debris over a wide swath of Texas and the southeastern US, one major mass-media conglomerate put a remarkably bizarre story out over its newswire about how the dead crew members could be linked to “an extraordinary variety of faith traditions” (“extraordinary” in this case meaning five different flavors of Christianity, one Jew, and a conservative Hindu Sikh). Shuttle commander Rick Husband was a fanatical Charismatic evangelical Protestant who had been active in a small church in Texas. In a video that Husband recorded for the congregation before the fatal flight, he had declared that his achievements in space were possible “only in America” and “only by the grace of God.” Husband had failed the NASA physical exam four times before he was accepted into the shuttle program; during that time, he said, he dedicated himself to “learning what it’s like to live life as a Christian, the way God would want us to live.” When he signed autographs for space shuttle groupies, he would also add quotes from his favorite Biblical verses. Husband had left a note with his church’s reverend to be opened in the event of his death aboard the shuttle that instructed the minister to “Tell them about Jesus. He means everything to me.” He was remembered as “a model church member” who sang in the choir and who even went as far as to offer to donate his vintage Camaro to the church building fund.

Also among the dead was a Roman Catholic, an Episcopalian, and a relatively godless Unitarian Universalist. Columbia’s science officer, as it turns out, was a Baptist; after the explosion, his father was certain that his vaporized son was “in a better place than where he would be on Earth.” And then there was Israeli Defense Force Colonel Ilan Ramon, another godly celebrity killed aboard the Columbia. Ramon was the State of Israel’s first astronaut who kept kosher while in orbit and brought Holocaust relics with him into space, including a Torah that had been used at a concentration camp Bar Mitzvah and children’s art from Auschwitz. He prayed aloud when the shuttle’s orbit took him over Jerusalem.

But Islam was involved, too. The fact that one of the towns below the Columbia explosion was Palestine, Texas was not lost on one of London’s most notorious extremist Muslim clerics, Abu Hamza. “It is a punishment from God,” Hamza railed, since Hinduism, Christianity, and Judaism are “a trinity of evil against Islam. It is a strong message for the Israeli. He spoke about the Holocaust and tried to make some religious advancement from outer space and gain some moral high ground, hence you have seen this message over Palestine.”

Such revolting and empty-headed remarks should serve as a warning of things to come if we do not take steps to stop plans for the US’s renewed extraterrestrial imperialist adventurism. Are we going to stand by passively as the madness of monotheistic religious wars, witch hunts, fundamentalist terrorism, genocide and concentration camps are imported onto Luna, Mars, and beyond? Isn’t it enough that these military-industrial-statist gangsters have already played golf and erected a US flag on the Moon’s surface? Isn’t that enough interplanetary poisoning and humiliation for one civilization?

Mars and the star-fields of our galaxy are a wilderness that must always remain uncivilized, free territory. We should begin to adamantly resist any and all attempts by corporate capitalists, technocratic militarists, and dangerously narcissistic statists to further their monstrous plans to despoil and colonize celestial bodies.

## **Praise the Lord & Pass the Ammunition**

There can be no mistaking the putrefied stink of US Christian triumphalism wafting from the alarmingly pernicious project to militarize and colonize outer space. The matrix of the overlapping motivations of God, capital, and bombing superiority are what frames the future objectives of the US space program, and to not take seriously, considering the ramifications of such a pathological perspective, is a grave error. Most international commentators simply giggled and dismissed Bush's January 14<sup>th</sup> speech at NASA as an election-year distraction designed to divert attention away from the latest spastic convulsions of the terminally-ill capitalist market's downward spiral. (Bush actually hailed US astronauts as "spatial entrepreneurs" and openly indulged in lusty flights of fancy about the Moon's "abundant resources" of "raw materials" that will one day "be harvested and processed"). Other critics suggested that vainglorious visions of a massive military-industrial operation to some faraway place without a heavily-armed indigenous resistance movement might help Americans to forget the daily follies and atrocities of the Afghanistan and Iraq quagmires. But a few sharp-eyed antimilitarists were quick to contextualize the proposed Mars mission as a new, interplanetary Manifest Destiny that would include weaponizing outer space with a multi-layered "shield" of Star Wars humbuggery and dangerously poisonous nuclear-powered rocket engines.

Secretary of Defense Donald "Strangelove" Rumsfeld and his Pentagon bully-boys have been nursing on the undead fantasy of Reagan's rayguns (and the flimsy pyramid schemes needed to pay Big Business aerospace death merchants for building them) for more than twenty years, and a manned mission to Mars by the year 2020 coincides nicely with their own pet project, the USAF Space Command's "Vision 2020" agenda. As anti-militarist critics have pointed out, the Space Command's ambitious, self-proclaimed aims of "global vigilance, reach, and power," of dominating "the space dimension of military operations to protect US interests and investments" and of integrating "Space Forces into war-fighting capabilities across a full spectrum of conflict" are congruent with the recent bureaucratic regime change at NASA executed by a presidential advisory "refocusing team" that recommended that the agency be re-organized away from a State-sponsored scientific-experimental orientation towards privatized and even more explicitly military-commercial ends.

In so many respects, the knotting together of God, capital, and weaponry calls to mind countless other examples in human history when, armed with missionaries and artillery cannons, European and US military-commercial expeditions "explored" and ruthlessly colonized other lands. Bush's diktat for a US invasion and occupation of Mars is not some visionary notion or a freak aberration, but rather one more point on a continuum that began when Columbus and his crewmen pillaged, enslaved, Christianized, and infected the Tainos in 1492. Knowing what we know now, what would have green anarchists done when they learned the news of Francisco Pizarro's military mission for gold, God and glory in the Andes? What would have been the anti-civilization anarcho-primitivist solution in 1805 to the problem of the Lewis and Clark expedition? How would have radical, deep environmentalists reacted to what was going on in the Wright brothers' crude aviation workshop? These questions about the abominations of long-lost yesterdays may seem foolish to ponder in the midst of what we are all fighting against today, but we cannot lose sight of what our struggles might very well be tomorrow, regardless of whether or not such schemes seem feasible from a technological, scientific, or budgetary standpoint. Rather than shrugging off the Bush-Cheney regime's audacious plots to militarize, annex, strip mine and contaminate the lunar and Martian wilderness, we should begin considering them to be a sick outrage no less loathsome than their wet dreams for a metropolis of police barracks, oil rigs, banks and churches built in the heart of the 19 million-acre Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

## No Compromise in Defense of Sister Mars

In the name of wilderness, wildness, and possibly wildlife, we must work together to put a stop to the US occupation of the Moon and Mars. We need to prevent any further capitalist-productivist, imperialist, and Judeo-Christian contamination of the solar system's open, untamed spaces. For decades, there have been climate orbiters, polar landers, and Mariner, Viking, and Pathfinder spacecraft sent to Mars. In the last year alone, Martian missions have included Nozomi, the Japanese-built Martian orbiter, the European Space Agency's Mars Express (which carried the ill-fated British explorer called Beagle 2), and two NASA current explorers Spirit and Opportunity. As you read this, plans are well under way for launching an even more advanced expeditionary flotilla of NASA Mars craft, such as a reconnaissance orbiter for 2005, the Phoenix lander in 2007, and a science laboratory rover for 2009. The moons' of Jupiter—Ganymede, Callisto, Io, and Europa—are under attack by the US as well, as was illustrated by the eight-year Galileo mission that ended last September. Laden with fifty pounds of plutonium 238 (an isotope 300 times more radioactive than plutonium 239, the four-and-a-half pounds of fissionable material used by the US government against civilian targets in Nagasaki), the still-functioning Galileo space probe orbited Jupiter's moons before it was deliberately plunged by NASA into the dense Jovian atmosphere where it exploded as spectacularly as a hydrogen bomb detonation on a South Pacific atoll.

It is not too early to develop autonomous, non-hierarchical, anonymous cells of anti-authoritarian individuals willing to take responsibility for stopping the exploitation of off-world natural worlds. We cannot afford to wait to help educate the public about the vile crimes being committed against the wild spaces of outer space. Nor can we expect others to halt those who will profit greatly from ravaging and destroying outer space.

The rape of the Red Planet by the US armed forces, industry, and the apparatuses of the State is the worse kind of ecological corruption and greedy capitalist speculation. But it is not inevitable or unpreventable. The use and abuse of the Martian wilderness by the US is not a natural outcome—it is not like the rise of the Sun or the fall of rain, or the inescapable effects of those things falling under the jurisdiction of the laws of gravity. For those of us stubbornly opposed to imperialism, militarism, and ecocide, we must take our fight against these colonialist butchers to yet another distant land. The further invasions of Mars can be stopped.

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