



How Should Conservatives Respond to the UFO Phenomenon?

By Justin Naylor | October 4th, 2024 | Categories: Christianity, Conservatism, Imagination, National Security, Nature of Man, Science

UFOs are supposed to be the stuff of conspiracy theories and fringe documentaries. And yet many high-ranking government officials believe some of the most explosive claims about UFOs to be true. How would this potential reality affect the conservative worldview?

On December 13, 2023 Majority Leader Chuck Schumer took to the Senate floor to deliver remarks which can only be described as incredible. He was speaking about his amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Remarkably, the subject of this amendment was not Ukraine or China, nor Russia or Iran, but rather UAP (Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena, or what used to be called UFOs). Schumer lamented that

The United States government has gathered a great deal of information about UAPs over many decades but has refused to share it with the American people. That is wrong and additionally breeds mistrust. We have also been notified by multiple credible sources that information on UAPs has also been withheld from Congress, which, if true, is a violation of laws requiring full notification to the legislative branch.

These claims—that the executive branch of the government has gathered a “great deal of information” about UAP over “decades” but has refused to share it with the public and has even violated the law by withholding information from congress—are quite simply extraordinary.

But the text of the Schumer amendment itself is even more extraordinary. As proposed, the amendment stipulated that

The Federal Government shall exercise eminent domain over any and all recovered technologies of unknown origin and biological evidence of non-human intelligence that may be controlled by private persons or entities in the interests of the public good.

In other words, Chuck Schumer believes it plausible that the Executive Branch not only has evidence of UAP going back decades that it has hidden from Congress and the public, but that private entities (i.e. certain aerospace companies) have recovered craft and bodies as well.

If this sounds like a headline from “The Onion,” I sympathize. The stigma surrounding this topic has been strong and reinforced for decades. UFOs are supposed to be the stuff of conspiracy theories and fringe documentaries. And yet, we must confront an uncomfortable and inconvenient truth: The Majority Leader of the Senate believes that some of the most explosive claims about UFOs—government cover-up, recovered craft, and non-human bodies—are likely to be true.

And Chuck Schumer is not the only one. He did not take to the Senate Floor alone on December 13. He was joined in colloquy by Republican Senator Mike Rounds, who had co-sponsored the amendment along with a bi-partisan group of other Senate heavy-weights such Marco Rubio (R) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D). On the senate floor, Rounds reinforced Schumer’s sense of the urgent need to get to the bottom of this issue, and he lamented that enemies of the amendment had successfully gutted some of its most powerful provisions, such as the creation of a nine-member which would make recommendations to the president on what information could be released to the public in a plan of “controlled disclosure.”

How did we get here, such that the Leader of the Senate could speak on the floor about non-human intelligence, recovered craft, biological remains, and controlled disclosure? There’s a lot to unpack here. It is a complex and bewildering tale. But of all the many players in this drama, none has been more significant and public-facing than Lue Elizondo, whose memoir *Imminent: Inside the Pentagon’s Hunt for UFOs*, was recently published by William Morrow. Elizondo burst on the national scene in 2017 when the New York Times published an explosive article detailing Elizondo and the secret program he ran at the Pentagon—the Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification



Program (AATIP)—which studied UAP. This exposure was followed by numerous media appearances by Elizondo, from CNN to Fox, culminating in a segment on 60 Minutes in 2021 which became the most viewed segment in the program’s history. Elizondo hit the podcast circuit around the same time, often speaking more bluntly and in less measured language than in his appearances with mainstream media. He argued that if the general public knew all he did, the mood would be “somber.” According to Elizondo, his book *Imminent* was written to provide a permanent record of his experiences and to bring the general public up to date.

Still from DoD “Gimbal” video, taken by a Navy fighter of a UAP off the Florida coast

In the book, Elizondo details being recruited in 2009 into the small secretive program called AAWSAP but also known as AATIP. The money for the black, off-the-books program had been secured by then Senator Majority Leader Harry Reid along with Senators Stevens and Inouye, and it was run by scientist Jim Lacatski out of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). When money for the program ran out, Elizondo and others continued the effort in an unofficial capacity until he resigned in protest and frustration in 2017.

What Elizondo learned while working on this program changed his life. Never having given any thought to UFOs, Elizondo was suddenly confronted with the wildest claims. At any early dinner with his AATIP colleagues and a Brazilian four-star general, he heard hard-to-believe stories of incidents in Brazil in the 1970s in which residents claimed to have seen unknown craft and even been injured by them. It seemed the stuff of tabloids, but Elizondo found the credibility of his AATIP colleagues too solid to dismiss. As he continued his work on this topic, Elizondo heard more claims that some would find outlandish: that there really was a UFO crash at Roswell, that UAP had been observed routinely over decades near sensitive nuclear sites (even interfering with the operational capacity of nuclear launch facilities), and that both non-human craft and bodies had been recovered over the decades and were still under the control of a mysterious and impenetrably secret legacy UFO retrieval and reverse-engineering program.

Such stories intrigued Elizondo, but more compelling were the contemporary cases reported by living military pilots that came with data that couldn’t be easily dismissed. He details the gold standard Nimitz case which took place in 2004 off the coast of California. After days of tracking mysterious objects on radar doing seemingly impossible things (like dropping instantaneously from 80,000 feet to sea level), two fighter jets were redirected to make visual contact with these targets. Not knowing what they were supposed to be looking for, the pilots were shocked to see a white object about 50 feet long moving erratically above roiling water. This object (nicknamed the tic-tac owing to its oval shape) then seemed to notice the pilots and began to mirror their own movements before disappearing and re-appearing on radar within seconds some 60 miles away.

Other reports came across his desk, such as UAP which plagued the USS Roosevelt off the East coast, not on a single day, but repeatedly in 2014 and 2015. After the radar of the Roosevelt’s fighter jets were upgraded, they began picking up unexplained objects making remarkable maneuvers on a daily basis. At first assuming they were glitches in the new system, some pilots eventually made a visual confirmation of small UAP which resembled a cube within a sphere, one of which maneuvered between two F18 hornets flying in formation 100 feet apart. It was a near miss that could have led to a catastrophic accident. Eventually pilots captured footage of a UAP traveling in formation with four others flying against a windspeed of 120 knots. The UAP begins to rotate before the clip (or at least the publicly released version) ends.

Another video (not publicly released) shows a series of three lights traveling in formation, sometimes in a triangular shape, sometimes in a straight line, harassing a US Predator drone for more than 20 minutes while the drone was doing surveillance over a nuclear facility in a hostile country. According to Elizondo, the video shows objects that are clearly craft. He relates that the objects seem to be playing with the Predator drone, as if to say “See what we can do.”

When he shared these and countless other videos with aviation experts working in DOD, the experts were consistently baffled and often disturbed. They worried they might be break-away technologies from foreign adversaries except that the craft performed in ways that defied our current understanding of physics. The experts were often “unnerved” and “mystified” by what they were seeing, as was Elizondo himself.

One might think such encounters with unknown craft would raise red flags within the DOD. And yet, Elizondo experienced over and over again a sort of bewildering indifference best summarized by Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendell, who remarked in 2021 that:

“I don’t consider it an imminent threat to the United States or the human race, these phenomena occurring. I would have to see evidence that it was something worthy of the attention of the United States Air Force as a threat.”

It’s worth noting that Kendell did not deny the reality of UAP, or even a non-human explanation. He only emphasized that they didn’t seem to be a threat. But as Elizondo has observed, it’s hard to imagine a greater potential threat than unknown aircraft operating in controlled airspace (including over nuclear facilities) performing in ways that we cannot defend against.

As Elizondo pushed these concerns within the DOD he kept coming up against indifference and outright resistance. One source of resistance came from fundamentalist Christians who did not deny the phenomena, but thought they were evil and should be ignored. As a high-level official related to Elizondo:

“Lue, you’re opening a can of worms playing with this stuff. It’s demonic. There is no reason we should be looking into this. We already know what they are and where they come from. They are deceivers. Demons.”

Others simply couldn't seem to wrap their minds around phenomena which stretched the imagination of what is possible. As Elizondo pushed harder and dug deeper, the resistance increased rather than decreased. Following leads that crashed UAP material had been farmed out decades ago to Aerospace companies such as Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman, they told Lue that indeed they were in possession of such material but that only the Secretary of the Air force could grant access. Of course, the Secretary denied the request.

Increasingly frustrated by being blocked within DOD, Elizondo began to consider resigning in protest and finding a way to bring this topic out into the light of public awareness. He was joined in this effort by Christopher Mellon, scion of the Mellon banking family but more importantly a former National Security insider who had served as Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence and as director of staff on the Senate Intelligence Committee. Despite having worked in the upper echelons of intelligence for years, Mellon had specifically been told that there was nothing to this subject. When he met and was briefed by Lue, he learned otherwise and became determined that this information should be made public. He and Lue launched a plan where Lue would resign and go public, while others in the department would continue to work behind the scenes, hopefully making greater strides once the issue was one of national attention.

Mellon understood that to get the DOD seriously behind the effort, it would require getting Congress behind the effort, and that would require getting the public behind the effort. He contacted journalists at the New York Times and led them to the recently-resigned Lue Elizondo, now ready to talk. The result was a front-page story in the *New York Times* in December of 2017. Suddenly Elizondo was everywhere. On CNN, FOX News, on the history channel documentary *Unidentified*. Follow up articles in the Times appeared in 2019 and 2021. In 2021 Elizondo was the feature on a UAP segment on CBS's 60 minutes, which has been viewed 12 million times on youtube alone.

The plan hatched by Elizondo and Mellon had worked. The media attention was minor compared to other issues, but it was enough to bring this topic out of the shadows and into the light. People began asking politicians for comments. President Obama admitted, for example,

What is true... is that there's footage and records of objects in the skies, that we don't know exactly what they are, we can't explain how they moved, their trajectory.

John Ratcliff, Director of National Intelligence under Trump, went further:

There are a lot more sighting than have been made public. We're talking about objects that have been seen by Navy or Air Force pilots or have been picked up on satellite imagery that frankly engage in actions that are difficult to explain."

H.R. McMaster, national security advisor under Trump, observed:

"There are things that cannot be explained. I don't know what the explanation is for those unexplainable things, but I will say that there are phenomena that have been witnessed by multiple people that are just inexplicable by any kind of science available to us."

Mitt Romney was refreshingly frank:

"Well, I don't believe they're coming from foreign adversaries. If they were that would suggest they have a technology that's in a whole different sphere from what we understand. Frankly China and Russia are just not there. And, frankly, neither are we by the way."

Congressman Matt Gaetz of Florida was able to view a classified image and speak to a pilot who took it, based out of Eglin airforce base:

"One of the pilots goes to check out that diamond formation [seen on radar] and sees a large floating, what I can only describe as an orb, again, like I said, not any human capability that I'm aware of. And when he approached, he said that his radar went down. He said that his FLIR (infrared camera) system malfunctioned and that he had to manually take this image from one of the lenses."

Perhaps most remarkable of all, John Brennan, CIA director under Obama, had this to say in an interview, stumbling over his words and looking down from the camera as if barely able to get out what is clearly a tortured statement:

I think some of the phenomena we're going to be seeing continues to be unexplained and might in fact, be some type of phenomenon that is the result of something that we don't yet understand and

that could involve some type of activity that some might say constitutes a different form of life.

In other words, Brennan has stated for the record that some of these phenomena likely represent a non-human intelligence.

Mellon's plan—to get congress interested by getting the public interested by getting the media interested—had worked, such that Congress held two UAP hearings in 2022 and 2023, the first in more than 50 years. At the second hearing, testimony under oath was given by two Navy pilots and a new central figure in this drama, David Grusch, who had worked at the highest levels of intelligence before resigning, like Elizondo, to go public. Although his knowledge was second hand, it involved interviews with more than forty individuals with first-hand knowledge of recovery and reverse engineering programs. He offered a strong defense of the claims Elizondo had been making for years, and he did it under oath before congress. The hearing was wild, with congressmen and women openly discussing crashed craft and non human "biologics."

It certainly is difficult to know what to make of all this. Have credulous politicians and bureaucrats at the highest levels been duped by over-eager advocates who are deluded or disingenuous? Or is there something to this story, which for decades has been ridiculed and made taboo? Anything is possible, but it's hard to believe that so many officials of high rank and credibility are confused or delusional. Such widespread confusion from so many sober individuals would seem just as or even more far-fetched than a non-human explanation. Perhaps Senator Marco Rubio summarized the situation the best:

Either what [Grusch] is saying is partially true or entirely true, or we have some smart educated people with clearances with very important positions in our government who are crazy and are leading us on a goose chase. One of these two things are true.... Either one is a problem. We've got to figure this out. We can't ignore it."

Rubio is right: In either case this issue needs the disinfectant of sunlight and needs to be pursued seriously. If indeed a large number of public officials—up to and including the Senate Majority Leader and former Presidents—have been led on a "wild goose chase" in pursuing this topic, such a fact is itself a threat to national security, for such a thing should not be possible. If on the other hand, it is not a wild goose chase, the implications for national security and our own view of the world are even more enormous.

Whatever is going on, this entire issues raises very serious issues about what has come to be referred to as the "deep state" or the related issue of what President Eisenhower called the "military-industrial complex". Eisenhower in his farewell address in 1960 specifically warned about defending against the "influence—whether sought or unsought" of these forces. He understand that since World War II, the national security apparatus of the US had run amok. Eisenhower was the first to understand—or at least state publicly—the dangerous confluence of power and secrecy. Kennedy understood the risks as well. His short tenure was marked by frequent tension with the national security state, and many not unreasonably suspect the national security state played some role in his murder. By the 1970s, the abuses in the the intelligence committee were too great to ignore, and in 1973 a Senate Committee chaired by Frank Church brought many such abuses to light. Reforms were made and the concept of bringing the intelligence community back under the oversight of congress was re-emphasized.

But 50 years later there has clearly been backsliding. None other than Senator Majority Leader Harry Reid tried to get to the bottom of some of these claims:

"I was told for decades that Lockheed had some of these retrieved materials. And I tried to get, as I recall, a classified approval by the Pentagon to have me go look at the stuff. They would not approve that. I don't know what all the numbers were, what kind of classification it was, but they would not give that to me."

If the Senate Majority Leader himself—who is supposed to have access to the most deeply buried secrets in our government—is unable to exercise oversight of our national security apparatus, we have very serious problems indeed. If nothing else, this topic demands a re-examination of the power of the intelligence community and their continued efforts to avoid oversight. In a democracy, such lack of oversight is unacceptable. The time has come for a new Church Committee to look into the excessive secrecy and over-classification which dominates our national security state. If there is nothing to hide, why are politicians seeking answers to these claims being blocked at every turn?

Which brings us to the uncomfortable possibility that there is something behind these claims and the extraordinary possibility that a non-human intelligence of some kind is present on our planet. It raises the equally shocking possibility that there is proof of such non-human intelligence in the form of craft and biological remains.

If it's true or even partially true and it turns out that elements within the government and private aerospace have in fact been hiding evidence of non-human intelligence from Congress (and perhaps even some Presidents, as Elizondo has suggested), this clearly raises a constitutional crisis rather unprecedented in our history. Many have theorized that the reason for the continued stonewalling is that indeed crimes were committed in illegally avoiding congressional scrutiny. Grusch and Elizondo have gone further, suggesting that indeed people have been murdered over the decades in order to keep this secret. As an intelligence insider, Elizondo has sympathized with the initial need for secrecy. As he points out, the military and intelligence community were forced to deal with this at the height of the Cold War, where any advantage we could accrue to ourselves and keep from the Soviets could mean the difference between life and nuclear

holocaust. If we could in any way use such knowledge to win the Cold War, by reverse engineering craft for example, such knowledge would have to be kept immensely secret.

We learned from the Manhattan Project, for example, that even the most secret program could be poisoned by espionage, and that only the most extreme level of secrecy held by the smallest number of people would be effective. Indeed, many in Roswell recount stories of being visited by military or intelligence personnel threatening them literally with death if they told their stories. Or perhaps another strategy was adopted. Knowing that such stories could never be kept secret, perhaps the strategy was to make them seem deliberately ridiculous and to create a stigma around them such that they would never be discussed seriously. That way, such secrets could be hidden in plain sight. If this was indeed the strategy, it has worked brilliantly, as the stigma around this topic has been strong enough to keep serious public conversation at bay, at least until the *New York Times* article and Lue Elizondo.

As an American who believes in democracy and as a conservative who believes in a limited role for government paired with strong oversight, I am deeply concerned about the depth of what seems to be being covered up here, whatever it is. I am deeply concerned about the risk which power without oversight creates. And I deeply share Eisenhower's fear of a military-industrial complex run amok, whose influence can transform (and perhaps already has transformed) our society's bedrock belief in citizen government. Even if it is not knowledge of non-human intelligence being hidden but something else, a national security apparatus immune to oversight and civilian control is an unacceptable, existential threat to our form of government.

But if what is being hidden does turn out to be knowledge of non-human intelligence (one might wonder who else is operating vehicles that defy the laws of physics as we know them), we have even more profound issues to consider, for it raises not simply concerns for our form of government but profound, revolutionary issues for what it means to be human and what our place in the universe is. We once believed life in the universe to be rare and it could have been reasonably considered then that human life is unique. But those days are long gone and we now understand that the size of the universe and the nature of life is such that the universe must be teeming with life, whether intelligent or not. Statistically speaking, it is not a matter of if but when humans will encounter another form of intelligent life in the universe. Even if that time is not now, how we would and should respond to encountering a non-human intelligence is an issue which deserves sustained and careful thought.

President Obama speculated on the consequences of such a revelation:

"I would hope that the knowledge that there were aliens out there would solidify people's sense that what we have in common is a little more important," he said. "But no doubt, there would be immediate arguments about, well, we need to spend a lot more money on weapons systems to defend ourselves," Obama said. "And new religions would pop up, and who knows what kind of arguments we'd get into. We're good at manufacturing arguments for each other."

This is a fascinating statement because it really lays out a whole number of possible outcomes. The first is that disclosure would lead to a unifying of the human race. President Ronald Reagan once said (what did he know?):

Perhaps we need some outside, universal threat to make us recognize this common bond. I occasionally think how quickly our differences worldwide would vanish if we were facing an alien threat from outside this world.

Some push back against such a "threat narrative" by asserting that any non-human intelligence which is here is friendly toward humans, as they could have wiped us out long ago if so desired. They cite the fact that UAP have reportedly turned off nuclear weapons at our nuclear sites. The argument is that they're here to help us and that there's nothing to fear.

But Obama reminds us not to be so naive as to not contemplate darker possibilities. He suggests certain factions would panic and declare that only massive military spending could save us from such a potential threat. Far from curbing the power of the national security state, under this scenario we might give up all our freedom for safety. Intriguingly, Obama suggests that new religions might pop up. He sees that a more advanced non-human intelligence might seem like Gods to us and many would be tempted to develop new world views and religions that can account for such a non-human intelligence. Christianity and other religions would clearly be under threat.

These scenarios need to be considered because part of being conservative means being prepared. When I think of being unprepared, it's impossible not to think of the Native Americans. Perhaps the discovery of the New World is the closest parallel we have of the scope of cultural revolution we could face if these claims turn out to be true. Of course, we can't generalize about the Native American response to European colonization because the number of tribes was significant and their responses diverse. Suffice it to say, in the end, European colonization was fatal to Native American culture. Native American tribes did not unite to defend against the European threat. Instead they allowed their own internal divisions to weaken them. Some saw Europeans as a threat while others saw them as allies against other hostile Indian nations. Some perhaps were indifferent or naive. Whenever we first encounter a more advanced non-human intelligence, we do not want to repeat that history, with humans playing the role of the Native Americans.

It seems to me the overriding response should be caution, and that we should keep open a wide array of possibilities. Too often we make naive assumptions that a technologically advanced intelligence would be morally advanced as well and therefore benevolent. But this is only one possibility. We need to start by asking more questions and remaining open to a whole host of possibilities: Is the non-human intelligence benevolent, malevolent, or indifferent? Is there one or

more than one intelligence? Have they come from far away, or are they somehow native to our planet? If there has been or will be any sort of communication or contact, should we believe what they say or treat it with skepticism? How would we respond if we realize we are no longer at the top of the food chain, and that we live with an intelligence which could destroy us at any time if it wished?

One thing we need most of all in confronting this potential reality is imagination, a quality our culture sorely seems to lack at the moment. Too often, skeptics consider the issue only from our limited human perspective. For example, one might think that a non-human intelligence couldn't possibly be here because of the vast distances of space and the limitation of the speed of light. But so too would an ancient Roman have been skeptical of the claim that I could talk face to face with a friend in China using a little device that I can hold in my hand. Or imagine the incredulity of an Ancient Athenian if I told him that tiny life forms called bacteria lived symbiotically with the human body and that our very life processes depend on their presence. The hypothesis that the UAP phenomenon represents extra-terrestrial visitation is only one of a large number of possibilities. It could be spiritual forces for whom space and time have no meaning. It could be an intelligence which has been here longer than human beings, as we have anecdotal accounts of what we today call UAP going back to the very beginning of written human history. It could be a parasitic intelligence that somehow exists in symbiosis with life on earth (as we do with bacteria). It could be an intelligence that would no more be able to communicate with us than we would be able to communicate with ants. There's of course no way to know. But what presents itself as skepticism is, too often, rather a form of dogmatism. Instead of asking, "How can this be true?" the response is "It can't be true, so it's not."

In 1900, just before Einstein blew wide open the field of physics with his radical and revolutionary theories about space and time, Lord Kelvin opined that "There is nothing new to be discovered in physics now. All that remains is more and more precise measurement." Kelvin's foolishness reminds me of our own age. Too often, dogmatic skepticism and hubris unscientifically hinder our understanding. Instead we need to approach our world with imagination, awe, and wonder. Nothing could seem more crazy and counterintuitive than Einstein's theory that space and time are not objective and independent but connected and relative. And yet, we've come to know that it is true.

President Obama mentioned the possibility that encountering a more advanced intelligence could give rise to new religions, and we would be wise to wonder whether such an encounter would be a threat to traditional religions. Thinking about how religion could be affected is among the most important work we can do, given the centrality of religion to both culture in general and to our personal lives in particular. There are those who see no threat to religion from such a revelation. After all, traditionally Christians always recognized that God had created non-human intelligences. They're called angels and demons! Congressman Tim Burchett has repeatedly argued that passages in the Bible, including the description Ezekiel's Wheel, clearly discuss what we now would refer to as UAP. Some have speculated that what we're seeing in our skies is just the modern form of angels and demons (as was suggested to Elizondo). Others have quipped "Martians need Jesus too!" No less than C.S. Lewis (who had rare gifts of imagination) grappled with the question of non-human intelligence in a 1950s essay in which he speculates that perhaps the incarnation has not been unique to the human race:

Why for us men more than for others? If we find ourselves to be but one among a million races, scattered through a million spheres, how can we, without absurd arrogance, believe ourselves to have been uniquely favored?"

Influenced by such a confident optimism, many would welcome the discovery of non-human intelligence without fear or concern. As C.S. Lewis writes in the same essay, perhaps nothing would change with the discovery of other intelligent life:

But usually, when the popular hubbub has subsided and the novelty has been chewed over by real theologians, real scientists and real philosophers, both sides find themselves pretty much where they were before. So it was with Copernican astronomy, with Darwinism, with Biblical Criticism, with the new psychology. So, I cannot help expecting, it will be with the discovery of 'life on other planets' if that discovery is ever made.

But other scenarios are more ominous. Europeans seemed like Gods to many Native Americans. They displayed technology that appeared as magic. They presented themselves as friends. It came naturally to many to welcome Europeans to the new world. It ended, of course, in tragedy.

What if a non-human intelligence were to claim that what we thought was divine revelation was really just them the whole time? What of claims they "created" humans by interfering in the process of evolution? What if—in the most extreme form—they claim that the resurrection itself was a deception to manipulate or perhaps improve human culture? These speculations might seem far-fetched (and probably are), but to be prepared means to consider all possibilities. Near the end of his essay, C.S. Lewis has a darker thought:

We have been warned that all but conclusive evidence against Christianity, evidence that would deceive (if it were possible) the very elect, will appear with the Antichrist.

How would we respond if presented with seemingly convincing proof of the falsehood of our religions?

One short-sighted and wrong-headed conservative response would be to close ranks and stick our heads in the sand. We see this in the tragic tale of Galileo. At the time the Catholic Church was under assault from the Protestant Reformation, and as a result was touchy and defensive. At a different time, Galileo's defense of Copernicus might have been met with more openness. But under those difficult circumstances, the Church chose to reject what was ultimately proven to be true. We don't want to repeat that mistake. We've seen it repeated more recently with the rejection of the theory of evolution by fundamentalist Christians.

As the rejection of the geocentric worldview did centuries ago, the potential reality of non-human intelligence raises the central issue of just how flexible our beliefs can be. What can we abandon without giving up the core of our convictions? Probably more than we think. There were those at the time of Galileo who saw the rejection of the geocentric worldview as fatal to Christianity itself. We now know better. Christianity was able to recognize that centuries of tradition were wrong and it was able to adapt without changing the essential core truths of the faith. It was eventually able to bend without breaking. How would Christianity be able to adapt to new truths revealed to us through encountering non-human intelligence without either completely folding or breaking through excess rigidity? This is an absolutely essential question that conservatives must be asking about this topic. Based on the evidence currently amassing, we should be asking it *now*.

In fact, one could assert that this is *the* central tension in conservatism: How do we discern what changes can be accommodated and which are a threat to human flourishing? This perennial question is perhaps the central one in our human drama, never to be answered definitely but always to be wrestled with in each generation, and indeed, in each of our lives. The delicate balance between openness to the new (the progressive tendency) and the love for tradition (the conservative tendency), is at the heart of our political and personal lives, and it absolutely should inform how we think about the this topic.

The subjects of UAP and non-human intelligence have been stigmatized and kept at arm's length for far too long. For far too long we've failed to engage with a topic that has often seemed ridiculous (and perhaps made intentionally so). But at this moment, the evidence is far too great to continue to ignore, and as a culture we need to engage. Whether we do so from a naive and unprepared point of view or from a more thoughtful and considered one could make all the difference for our future.

The reality we're facing might be very positive, but it also could be dark and bad news indeed. If such a reality were confirmed, we might very well wish it had not been. Yet, as Elizondo has pointed out, if one has cancer or if one's spouse is unfaithful, it is better to know it than to be kept in the dark. At least then, one has a choice about how to deal with such crushing news. When asked how we should respond to the reality we are potentially facing in regard to non-human intelligence, Elizondo has stated that simply we should recognize what's most important—our family and those dearest to us—and love them. Hold them closer. Focus on the quiet at the center of the storm that might erupt, and focus on what matters most even in the midst of uncertainty. In the end, whatever we are dealing with, this is perhaps the most conservative and best response of all.

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