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science, emphasizing that Bahá'í teachings "expressly support the notion of the agreement of science with religion and vice versa."²⁵ Troxel adds that "a

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clear logical deduction of the existence of ETI can be drawn from statements of `Abdu'l-Bahá," a revered Baha'i teacher.²⁶

Bahá'u'lláh apparently taught the eternal existence of the human race, which virtually necessitated other inhabited planets: before the Earth's existence, people must have lived somewhere. Troxel writes that the Prophet's teaching "implies the existence of men somewhere at all times!"²⁷ The Prophet had taught that "there are creatures in every planet," and another Baha'i teacher added, "It remains for science to discover one day the exact nature of these creatures."²⁸ In another place, Bahá'u'lláh had written, "Verily I say, the creation of God embraceth worlds besides this world, and creatures apart from these creatures." The teacher Shoghi Effendi also commented that "there are other worlds than ours which are inhabited by beings capable of knowing God."²⁹

An evolutionary view marks the Baha'i vision of planetary inhabitants. According to Troxel, some Baha'i teaching suggests that "the form" of beings on other planets "exhibit[s] the power of adaptation and environment moulds their bodies and states of consciousness, just as our bodies and minds are suited to our planet."³⁰ Troxel's study of Baha'i writings leads to the suggestion that "sentient beings on other planets have evolved in a different time frame and have different capabilities than us"; or perhaps they are "at nearly the same evolutionary state that we are." The eventual goal of the evolutionary process is "planetary unity" through the "founding of a world civilization and culture."³¹ The prophet Bahá'u'lláh is believed to have inaugurated a "cycle" of 500,000 years, leading to the question, "What comes after the achievement of planetary unity? . . . Inter-planetary unity?"³² After all, the Prophet spoke of "His appearance in 'other worlds,'" but the meaning of the phrase is unclear.³³ "Nevertheless," adds Troxel, "Shoghi Effendi does not limit the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh to our star system alone."

Troxel notices "the remarkable flexibility of Bahá'í Exotheology," that is, religious insights originating in planetary exploration or theories about space. As for other, less-flexible faiths, Troxel is confident that "discovery of extrasolar life-forms will require a significant recasting of traditional dogma before the majority of faithful Catholics—for example—can fit such a conception within its worldview." Among the doctrines that may need revising in light of extraterrestrial intelligence are original sin, incarnation, atonement

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and resurrection. "There will need to be," for example, "a considerable

shift in the existing Catholic exotheological paradigm to accommodate such an understanding.” Faiths that can accommodate extraterrestrials will have an easier time facing the inevitable interplanetary future.

...

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Conclusion

... Space and its residents are a source of indisputable religious truth for a New

Age, or so the Myth of Space Religion would suggest. Whether in the form of a twentieth-century UFO religion or a long-established organization such as Seventh-Day Adventism or Bahá'í, involvement with space and distant planets is a feature, not just of science fiction, but of some religious thought as well.

We have always had a fascination with the stars and planets, often imagining that beings there must possess truths beyond those available to us.

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Footnotes:

Duane K. Troxel, “Intelligent Life in the Universe and Exotheology in Christianity and the Baha’i Writings,”

bahai-library.com/troxel_extraterrestrials_exotheology.

Troxel (ibid.) cites, among other passages in Baha’i literature, statements in The Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 56 <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bhi/aqdas.htm>

Troxel (“Intelligent Life”) cites Sayings and Quotations [sic: Should be Some Answered Questions -A.M.] (SAQ), p. 197.

Troxel (“Intelligent Life”) cites Gleanings (GL), p. 150.

Troxel (“Intelligent Life”) cites a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, February 9, 1937, Lights of Guidance, p. 478.

Troxel (“Intelligent Life”) cites Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh, p. 188.

Troxel (“Intelligent Life”) cites Light of Divine Guidance, 2:82.

Troxel (“Intelligent Life”) cites Lights, #1374.

Troxel (“Intelligent Life”) cites Gleanings (GL), p. 163.

Troxel (“Intelligent Life”) cites World Order of Bahá’u’lláh, p. 132; Citadel of Faith, p. 5.

Troxel (“Intelligent Life”) cites a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 24, 1941; Lights, #1555. The Baha’i faith accepts some of the major teachings of Ellen G. White.

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