PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

MIKHAIL SERGEEV (Philadelphia, PA, USA)

ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD IN 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S WRITINGS[*]

". . . if the inner perception be open, a hundred thousand clear proofs [of God's existence] become visible…"

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Mikhail Sergeev holds his master's degree and a doctorate in religious studies from Temple University, Philadelphia. He teaches history of religion, philosophy and modern art at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. He is the author of several books, including *Sophiology in Russian Orthodoxy: Solov'ev, Bulgakov, Losskii, Berdiaev.*

Introductory Remarks

The Bahá'í Faith is a monotheistic religion, and the notion of one supreme Deity occupies the central place in Bahá'í thought. On various occasions 'Abdu'l-Bahá stressed the importance of formulating the rational proofs of God's existence. The purpose of human life on earth consists of spiritual progress. However, one cannot strive toward this goal rationally without achieving some certainty about the source of spirituality and life after death. Hence, acquiring the knowledge of God may serve as the first step in the human intellectual journey – an important step that would facilitate our further spiritual advancement. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá admonishes his audience during one of his public addresses:

Day and night you must strive that you may attain to the significances of heavenly Kingdom, perceive the signs of Divinity, acquire certainty of knowledge and realize that this world has a Creator, a Vivifier, a Provider, an Architect – knowing this through

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proofs and evidences and not through susceptibilities, nay, rather, through decisive arguments and real vision.[1]

In many of his talks and writings 'Abdu'l-Bahá points out that the essence and the nature of the Supreme Being are hidden from human cognition. The "reality of the Godhead," he writes in one letter,

> . . . is beyond the grasp of the mind . . . how could it be possible for a contingent reality, that is, man, to understand the nature of that preexistent Essence, the Divine Being? . . . man graspeth his own illusory conceptions but the Reality of Divinity can never be grasped. . . . That Divinity which man doth imagine for himself existeth only in his mind, not in truth.[2]

Since no one can ever have knowledge of God-in-himself, the only way for humans to acquire some understanding of divinity is to turn to the effects of God's work on the human plane or to prove the reality of God-for-others. "The utmost one can say," 'Abdu'l-Bahá argues, "is that [the Ultimate Reality's] existence can be proved, but the conditions of Its existence are unknown."[3] And although "the Divine Essence is unseen of the eye, and the existence of the Deity is intangible," he adds in another tablet,

> . . . yet conclusive spiritual proofs assert the existence of that unseen Reality. . . . For instance, the nature of ether is unknown, but that it existeth is certain by the effects it produceth: heat, light and electricity being the waves thereof. By these waves the existence of

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1. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* (*PUP*), in *Writings and Utterances* of *'Abdu'l-Bahá* (New Delhi, India: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2000), p. 1002.

2. *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (*SW*), *ibid.*, pp. 321-22. 'Abdu'l-Bahá repeats his arguments for the impossibility of knowing the nature of God in many of his writings. In "The Tablet to Dr. Forel" (TF), for example, he writes: "Now concerning the essence of Divinity: in truth it is on no account determined by anything apart from its own nature, and can in nowise be comprehended. For whatsoever can be conceived by man is a reality that hath limitations and is not unlimited; it is circumscribed, not all-embracing. It can be comprehended by man, and is controlled by him. . . . Moreover, differentiation of stages in the contingent world is an obstacle to understanding. How then can the contingent conceive the reality of the absolute?" *Ibid.*, p. 646.

3. *'Abdu'l-Bahá , SW, ibid.*, p. 326.

ether is thus proven. And as we consider the outpourings of Divine Grace we are assured of the existence of God.[4]

My paper thus aims at the systematic exposition in the historico-philosophical context of the arguments for God's existence that 'Abdu'l-Bahá uses in his various writings and speeches.

Historical Background

Philosophical reflections about divine reality had already originated in antiquity. The Bible preserves for us, perhaps, the earliest examples of that. In the final book of the Torah, *Deuteronomy,* Moses taught his people how to distinguish false from true prophecies. He said: "If a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD but the thing does not take place or prove true, it is a word that the LORD has not spoken."[5] In other words, Moses' argument was that God's existence should be inferred from the results of his actions that can be predicted by the prophets – the messengers of God's will in the human world. And if the outcomes of those actions, as well as the prophecies themselves, do not turn out to be right, then the divine will had nothing to do with it.

Classical Greek philosophers Plato (428-348 BCE) and Aristotle (384-322 BCE) developed the first known logical arguments for the existence of God. Both thinkers,

> . . . Plato . . . in *Laws X*, and Aristotle . . . in *Metaphysics XII*, argued that the finitude or contingency of objects or events in the world . . . could not provide adequate grounds for the world's coming into being. An endless chain of contingent or finite causes, they argue, remains implausible. Similarly movement or change within the world points to a Being who is changeless, or the ground of change; to a Being who is "necessary" rather than contingent.[6]

In the Middle Ages this approach was revived and expanded upon by a variety of arguments not only within the Muslim and Christian religious traditions but also in the Hindu philosophical speculation.[7] In Modern

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4. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, TF, *ibid.*, p. 647.

5. *New Revised Standard Version, Deuteronomy,* 18:15, 20-22. *The Complete Parallel Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments with the Apocryhal/Deuterocanonical Books* (New York – Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993).

6. Anthony C. Thiselton, "God, arguments for the existence of," *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Philosophy of Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2002), p. 117.

7. See, for example, a selection from Udayana Ācārya's (10th century AD) *Kusumāñjali: The Kusumāñjali or Hindu Proof of the Existence of a Supreme Being*,

times, and especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the debates over the existence of God took a new turn in light of the most recent scientific developments in cosmology, biology, and human psychology.

Typology of Proofs – Inner Perception

The basic typology of arguments for the existence of God can be traced back to the early Fathers of the Christian Church. A second-century Christian thinker Clement of Alexandria (b. c. 150 CE) already distinguished between the arguments from the observation of nature and from the contemplation of the soul. The external cosmological proofs and the inner realization of the innate idea of God in one's soul, however, according to Clement, can only lead to the belief in God's existence but not to the discovery of God's nature or to the meaning of divine actions.[8]

In modern philosophical terminology these two types of arguments are called *a priori* (internal proofs) and *a posteriori* (external proofs). The *a priori* proofs of the existence of God were well known and discussed in the early Christian theology. A second-century Christian thinker Athanagoras, for example, was the first in the history of Christian thought to provide a philosophical argument for the existence of one God against the belief of pagan polytheism. Sometimes called "topological," his argument states that by its very definition, God is limitless. If one admits the existence of more than one God, then, those gods will limit each other, thus contradicting the basic premise of the argument. Hence, Athanagoras concludes, there must exist only one God.[9]

The classic formulation of the *a priori* proof, which is known in the history of philosophy as the ontological argument, belongs to the medieval Christian thinker, the Archbishop of Canterbury St. Anselm (1033-1109 CE). In his *Proslogion*, St. Anselm wrote that God

> . . . exists so truly that it cannot be thought not to exist. For it is possible to think that something exists that cannot be thought not to exist, and such a being is greater than one that can be thought not to exist. Therefore, if that than which a greater cannot be thought can be thought not to exist, then that than which a greater cannot be thought is not that than which a greater cannot be thought; and this

in *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*, eds. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 379-85.

8. Mayorov, G. G. *Formirovanie srednevekovoi filosofii. Latinskaia patristika* [Formation of Medieval Philosophy: Latin Patristics] (Moscow: "Mysl'," 1979, p. 88.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 67. Mayorov points out that the topological argument, as Athanagoras formulated it, presupposes the spatial and, therefore, the bodily existence of God.

is a contradiction. So that than which a greater cannot be thought exists so truly that it cannot be thought not to exist.[10]

In Modern times it was René Descartes (1596-1650) who revived St. Anselm's position and in the twentieth century Alvin Plantinga (b. 1932) discussed it in the context of modal logic of probabilities.[11]

The founder of German Idealism, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), proposed another version of the *a priori* argument – in his case, from the freedom of human will. Kant rejected any proofs that were based on observation of the external world since they rely on the nature of human experience that reflects the workings of the mind rather than the world as it actually is. Instead he appealed to the moral imperative as a necessary pre-condition of God's existence because, without the fear of divine retribution, humanity would lose its most vital incentive for good moral behavior. Kant's reference to morality, however, is not, strictly speaking, a valid proof but rather a postulate of practical reason that in no way – according to Kant himself – can be supported by the conclusions arrived at by theoretical reason. As a result, the Kantian approach turns into a paradox – in order for humanity to pursue moral virtues God must exist although we cannot prove that he does.

The third argument from inner perception addresses human emotions, especially those associated with faith and religiosity. The feelings of reverence and love toward God, the fear of losing connection with divinity, by the virtue of their very existence, seem to prove the existence of the object of those feelings. An Anglo-Catholic thinker, A. E. Taylor (1869-1945), provided a modern restatement of the argument in his essay "The Vindication of Religion." He wrote here about the uniqueness of religious experience:

> It is universal voice of the mutable and temporal brought face to face with the absolutely eternal. . . . As nearly as we can express our attitude towards that which awakens this sense of being immediately in the presence of the "other-worldly" by any one word, we may say that it is the attitude of "worship."[12]

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10. St Anselm and Gaunilo, "The Ontological Argument," from *Monologion and Proslogion, with the replies of Gaunilo and Anselm*, in *God*, Hackett readings in philosophy, edited, with Introduction, by Timothy A. Robinson Indianapolis – Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996), pp. 2-3.

11. See, for example, Alvin Plantinga, *The Ontological Argument* (New York: Doubleday, 1965).

12. A. E. Taylor, "The Vindication of Religion," in *The Existence of God*, ed. and with an introduction by John Hick (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), p. 159.

This attitude of worship and the sense of the holy that are universally present in all of human civilizations, in Taylor's view, already represent a sufficient proof of the reality of God.

Classical *A Posteriori* Arguments

In contrast to the *a priori* proofs, the *a posteriori* arguments for the existence of God rely on the observation of the external world. Thus, the holy book of Islam, the *Qur'ān*

> . . . teaches that God's revelation has occurred in several forms: in nature, history, and Scripture. [Therefore,] God's existence can be known through creation [that] contains pointers or "signs" of God… [through the] history of the rise and fall of nations [that provide the] lessons of God's sovereignty and intervention in history [and] through a series of messengers.[13]

In Islamic, Christian and Jewish philosophy one finds mostly the arguments from the nature of creation that lead to the conclusion of God's existence. The substance of the arguments goes back to Plato and Aristotle who discuss motion and causality and argue for the necessity of the "Prime Mover" in light of the contingency of the physical universe. This line of thought, which is known in the history of philosophy as the cosmological argument, received further development in the Middle Ages.[14]

Medieval Muslim thinkers al-Kindī (c. 813-c. 871 CE) and al-Ghazālī (1058-1111 CE), for instance, held that the universe was created and, therefore, finite, which made the infinite regress of "caused causes" in this universe impossible. Other Muslim philosophers, such as Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, 980-1037 CE) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes, 1126-98 CE), distanced themselves from the Islamic theology of *kalam* by rejecting the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. For Ibn Rushd, "the world is eternal but caused; God is eternal and uncaused, since God is God's own ground…and is a 'necessary Being'."[15] Both Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd, furthermore, argued that since our eternal universe contains contingent beings it must have the Necessary Being as its foundation.[16]

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13. Esposito, John L. *Islam: The Straight Path* (New York – Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), p. 19.

14. For a historical exposition of the cosmological argument see, for example, Craig, W. I. *The Cosmological Argument from Plato to Leibniz* (London: Macmillan, 1980).

15. Thiselton, "Cosmological argument for the existence of God" in *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Philosophy of Religion*, p. 52.

16. For a modern version of Avicenna's cosmological proof, see an article by a Bahá'í philosopher William S. Hatcher "From Metaphysics to Logic: A Modern For-

Jewish and Christian thinkers – Moses Maimonides (1135-1204 CE) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-74 CE) – took the middle way between the interpretations of Muslim *kalam* and the speculations of Islamic philosophy. They sided with Muslim theologians in affirming the doctrine of creation, which is explicitly stated in the scriptures. At the same time they supported the rationalism of Muslim philosophers with respect to the laws of nature and in contrast to the providentialism of al-Kindī and al-Ghazālī who argued, "God is the only true causal agent of every event."[17]

Overall, the following table can represent the different positions of Muslim, Christian and Jewish thinkers with respect to the cosmological argument:

	Universe is finite	Universe is infinite
God created the universe and is the only true cause agent of every event.	al-Kindī (c. 813–c. 871) al-Ghazālī (1058–1111)	
God created the universe but is not the only true cause agent of every event.	Maimonides (1135–1204) St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–74)	Ibn Sīnā or Avicenna, (980–1037) Ibn Rushd or Averroes, (1126–98)

The doctor of the Christian Church, St. Thomas Aquinas, is especially known for his formulations of the *a-posteriori* arguments for God's existence. In his *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas wrote about the "Five Ways" one could prove the existence of the Almighty. The first three of them represent various versions of the cosmological argument that arrives at its conclusion on the basis of the existence of motion or change, causation and contingency in the world. The fourth way proceeds "from the gradation to be found in things" that points to the superlative degree of exist-

mulation of Avicenna's Cosmological Proof of God's Existence" in his book *Logic and Logos: Essays on Science, Religion and Philosophy* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1990), pp. 60-80.

17. Thiselton, "Cosmological argument for the existence of God," *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Philosophy of Religion*, p. 52.

ence or divine perfection, to "something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God."[18] Finally, the fifth way presents the teleological argument that postulates the purposive character of the universe, which, in its turn, refers back to the existence of its Designer.

The *a posteriori* arguments that appeal to history and divine revelation, to my knowledge, have not been sufficiently explored in the Christian tradition. Their examples can be traced in medieval Hindu speculation, more specifically in the Nyāya school of religious philosophy. Here one finds proofs, which are based on the authority of scriptural texts and the very nature of religion and religious rituals that originate in sacred scriptures:

> The right knowledge caused by testimony is one which is produced by a quality in the speaker, viz., his knowledge of the exact meaning of the words used; hence the existence of God is proved, as he must be the subject of such a quality in the case of the [Hindu scripture of the] Veda.[19]

Or: "The knowledge produced by the Veda is produced by a virtue residing in its cause, because it is right knowledge, just as is the case in the right knowledge by perception…"[20]

'Abdu'l-Bahá's Arguments from Nature

As far as I know, in his writings and public addresses, 'Abdu'l-Bahá never mentions the *a priori* arguments for God's existence. Sometimes he hints at the inner perception as the source of those arguments but even then he does not explore this line of thought in more detail. In *Some Answered Questions* he mentions the depth of inner perception as a sign of strength and adds that the external arguments are needed for those whose spiritual understanding is limited and whose souls are weak. He says, "if the inner perception be open, a hundred thousand clear proofs become visible…but for those who are deprived of the bounty of the spirit, it is necessary to establish external arguments."[21]

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18. St Thomas Aquinas, "The Five Ways," from *Summa Theologica,* Part I, Question 2, articles 1 & 3, in *God*, Hackett readings in philosophy, p. 16.

19. Udayana Ācārya's (10th century AD) *Kusumāñjali: The Kusumāñjali or Hindu Proof of the Existence of a Supreme Being*, in *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*, p. 381.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 384.

21. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions* (*SAQ*), in *Writings and Utterances*, p. 133.

All of the proofs of God's existence that 'Abdu'l-Bahá discusses are the *a posteriori* arguments, which are based on our observation of the external world. Most of them involve the order and composition of the natural universe, and echo the "Five Ways" of St. Thomas Aquinas. In his various writings and talks, 'Abdu'l-Bahá formulates his own versions of the cosmological argument, which Aquinas divided into three separate parts that address change, causation and contingency of the world. With regard to change, in *Some Answered Questions* 'Abdu'l-Bahá notes, that "the least change produced in the form of the smallest thing proves the existence of a creator: then can this great universe, which is endless, be self created and come into existence from the action of matter and the elements?"[22] The logic behind the argument is that change or motion in the world necessarily requires the existence of an entity, which set the world in motion, and that is what people call God.

In "The Tablet to Dr. Forel" 'Abdu'l-Bahá turns to the second part of the cosmological argument, which is related to causation. He writes:

> As we . . . reflect with broad minds upon this infinite universe, we observe that motion without a motive force, and an effect without a cause are both impossible; that every being hath come to exist under numerous influences and continually undergoeth reaction…Such process of causation goes on, and to maintain that this process goes on indefinitely is manifestly absurd. Thus such a chain of causation must of necessity lead eventually to Him who is the Ever-Living, the All-Powerful, who is Self-Dependent and the Ultimate Cause.[23]

The third part of the argument that involves the existence of contingent beings as proof of the reality of the Necessary Being, takes several forms in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's writings. In *Some Answered Questions*, for example, he argues, "a characteristic of contingent beings is dependency, and this dependency is an essential necessity, therefore, there must be an independent being whose independence is essential."[24] In another place, 'Abdu'l-Bahá correlates dependency, which is essential to the entities in the contingent world, with limitations and mutual influences that follow from this notion. He points out: "although all created things grow and develop, yet are they subjected to influences from without." He writes,

22. *Ibid.*
23. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, TF, *ibid.*, p. 647.
24. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *SAQ*, *ibid.*, p. 133.

Thus each one of these entities exerteth its influence and is likewise influenced in its turn. Inescapably then, the process leadeth to One Who influenceth all, and yet is influenced by none, thus severing the chain. And further, all created beings are limited, and this very limitation of all beings proveth the reality of the Limitless; for the existence of a limited being denoteth the existence of a Limitless One."[25]

Yet another version of the same argument in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's writings is related to the creation of man – the highest creature who is still a contingent being that has limited abilities and depends on divine help in his intellectual and spiritual growth. "One of the proofs and demonstrations of the existence of God," he writes, "is the fact that man did not create himself…the creator of man is not like man because a powerless creature cannot create another being. The maker, the creator, has to possess all perfections in order that he may create."[26]

The "Fourth Way" of St. Thomas Aquinas is based on the gradations of things and various degrees of perfection, which presuppose the necessity of the superlative degree or God. 'Abdu'l-Bahá makes a similar argument in *Some Answered Questions* where he says that the "imperfections of the contingent world are in themselves a proof of the perfection of God" and, hence, "the smallest thing proves the existence of a creator."[27] In the "Tablet to Dr. Forel" he uses the idea of limitation in the same context:

. . . limitation itself proveth the existence of the unlimited, for the limited is known through the unlimited; just as weakness itself proveth the existence of wealth. . . . Darkness itself is a proof of the existence of light, for darkness is the absence of light.[28]

25. *'Abdu'l-Bahá , SW, ibid.*, p. 323.

26. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *SAQ, ibid.*, p. 132. 'Abdu'l-Bahá repeats the same argument in *PUP*: "It is perfectly evident that man did not create himself and that he cannot do so. . . . Therefore, the Creator of man must be more perfect and powerful than man. If the creative cause of man be simply on the same level with man, then man himself should be able to create, whereas we know very well that we cannot create even our own likeness." *Ibid.*, p. 876.

27. 'Abdu'l-Bahá , *SAQ, ibid.*, pp. 132-33.

28. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, TF, *ibid.*, p. 648. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, repeats the same argument in *PUP*: "Among the proofs of the existence of a divine power is this: that things are often known by their opposites. Were it not for darkness, light could not be sensed. Were it not for death, life could not be known. . . . Therefore, our weakness is an evidence that there is might. . . . In other words, demand and supply is the law, and un-

The "Fifth Way" of St. Thomas Aquinas is known as the teleological argument, and it states that the natural order and harmony of the universe must have the intelligent Designer as their ultimate source. 'Abdu'l-Bahá often makes use of this argument in his speeches and writings. In "The Tablet to Dr. Forel," for instance, he points out "as we observe the coming together of elements giveth rise to the existence of beings, and knowing that beings are infinite, they being the effect, how can the Cause be finite?" Later in his letter to Dr. Forel, 'Abdu'l-Bahá elaborates on this point in greater details.

He begins with the assumption that "formation is of three kinds and of three kinds only: accidental, necessary and voluntary." As for the first one, he argues, the "coming together of various constituent elements of beings cannot be accidental, for into every effect there must be a cause. It [also] cannot be compulsory," he continues,

> . . . for then the formation must be an inherent property of the constituent parts and the inherent property of a thing can in nowise be dissociated from it…Thus under such circumstances the decomposition of any formation is impossible, for the inherent properties of a thing cannot be separated from it.
>   Hence, only one possibility remains, namely, that of the voluntary formation, meaning, "an unseen force described as the Ancient Power, causeth these elements to come together, every formation giving rise to a distinct being.[29]

Therefore, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá concludes, "this infinite universe with all its grandeur and perfect order could not have come to exist by itself." And "[a]s one's vision is broadened and the matter observed carefully," he goes on,

> . . . it will be made certain that every reality is but an essential requisite of other reality. Thus to connect and harmonize these diverse and infinite realities an all-unifying Power is necessary, that every

doubtedly all virtues have a center and source. The source is God, from Who all these bounties emanate." *Ibid.*, p. 647.

29. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, TF, *ibid.*, pp. 647-48. The argument is restated on page 650: ". . . every arrangement and formation that is not perfect in its order we designate as accidental, and that which is orderly, regular, perfect in its relations and every part of which is in its proper place and is the essential requisite of the other constituent parts, this we call a composition formed through will and knowledge. There is no doubt that these infinite beings and the association of these diverse elements arranged in countless forms must have proceeded from a Reality that could in no wise be bereft of will or understanding."

part of existent being may in perfect order discharge its own func-
tion.[30]

To sum up, the perfect composition of the natural world presupposes
its intelligent Designer in the same way as a "piece of bread proves that it
has a maker."[31] Similarly, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá points out,

> . . . what has been written presupposes and proves the existence of
> a writer. These words have not written themselves, and these letters
> have not come together of their own volition…And now consider
> this infinite universe. Is it possible that it could have been without a
> Creator? Or that the Creator and cause of this infinite congeries of
> words should be without intelligence?[32]

'Abdu'l-Bahá's Arguments from History

One has to note that 'Abdu'l-Bahá provides significantly less argu-
ments for the existence of God with regard to history and historical events
than he does with respect to the nature and order of the universe. His de-
tailed explanations of the function of prophecy belong rather to the field
of philosophical anthropology while his discussions of the evolution of
religion and progressive revelation constitute an integral part of his phi-
losophy of history. Nevertheless, one finds in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's writings
one implicit argument from history that is supposed to deliver a definite
proof of divine existence. It involves the effects, or, in Biblical terms, the
fruits of the lives and teachings of the prophets.

"A Cause which all the governments and peoples of the world, with all
their powers and armies, cannot promulgate and spread, one Holy Soul
can promote without help or support!" – 'Abdu'l-Bahá exclaims in *Some
Answered Questions* and asks his readers: "Can this be done by human
power?" He continues: "For example, Christ, alone and solitary, upraised
the standard of peace and righteousness, a work which all the victorious
governments with all their hosts are unable to accomplish." "What I
mean," he says in conclusion, "is that Christ sustained a Cause that all the
kings of the earth could not establish!"[33] This achievement alone, accord-
ing to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, stands as a definite proof of the divine source of
Christ's power. It also represents, we may add, the mother of all proofs
that relate to history, and can be extended to the teachings of all the
prophets and founders of world religions as well as to the influences,

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30. *Ibid.*, pp. 648-49.
31. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *SAQ, ibid.*, p. 133.
32. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *PUP, ibid.*, p. 876.
33. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *SAQ, ibid.*, p. 135.

which the sacred writings exert on people, and to the survival of religious minorities despite severe persecutions and cruel conquests by countless empires – the list of derivative historical proofs of the existence of God and his involvement in human affairs could be multiplied almost *ad infinitum*.

Conclusions

The aim of my paper was to systematize and present in the context of world philosophy the arguments for the existence of God that are scattered throughout the numerous writings and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. From a Bahá'í perspective, 'Abdu'l-Bahá occupies a unique place in religious history and Bahá'ís believe that his knowledge was inspired by the Holy Spirit. From the standpoint of comparative philosophy, one could also make the following conclusions:

(1) Most of the arguments that 'Abdu'l-Bahá explicitly uses are known in the history of philosophy as the so-called *a posteriori* proofs of the existence of God;

(2) Although 'Abdu'l-Bahá never mentions St. Thomas Aquinas, most of the arguments he discusses – with certain individual variations – fall under the rubric of Aquinas' "Five Ways." Since medieval Christian thought was largely influenced by classical Muslim philosophy and theology, it is possible that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was well versed in and may have drawn from the Muslim thought on the subject.

(3) 'Abdu'l-Bahá never wrote a systematic philosophical treatise on the subject of proofs and was not obliged to analyze the historical development of the topic. In his writings and public addresses he usually does not mention the names of individual philosophers but rather goes to the heart of the argument with the intention of strengthening the faith of his readers or listeners. Still, in my opinion, it is significant that he does not address modern Western thought on the subject of proofs, more specifically, the Kantian rebuttal of *a priori* and *a posteriori* arguments from his *Critique of Pure Reason*[34] and especially Kant's critique of the ontological argument, which (the argument), as far as I know, 'Abdu'l-Bahá never discusses. It seems to me that 'Abdu'l-Bahá may have been less familiar with modern Western thought on the subject than with classical philosophical arguments for the existence of God.

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34. See Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Pure Reason,* trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), ch. III, Sections 3-6, pp. 495-524, where Kant unfolds his critique of traditional arguments for the existence of God.

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