AUTHOR’S RESPONSE TO COMMENTARY ON “A SCIENTIFIC PROOF OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD”

Commentator: Ross Woodman

I have read with interest the thoughtful comments of Ross Woodman in response to my article on the scientific proof of the existence of God. The scientific approach to truth deliberately articulates a minimalist description of reality. This is the price science pays for putting a premium on precision over adequacy, and when we are trying to heal diseases or fly airplanes, precision is the spiritually dominant norm. The scientific approach is also particularly useful in articulating truth to those with either an extremely skeptical or an extremely credulous turn of mind. But when trying to come to grips with the infinitely faceted human reality in its totality, then I really appreciate the opportunity of indulging in the maximalist approach of the artist, poet, seer, and philosopher.

Woodman is quite right that all forces are expressions of God (not manifestations, but emanations), even as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has said that, for example, the magnetic force of attraction is really a form of love. Similarly, gravity and the other known forces are also expressions of divine love at the lowest (material) level of reality. And they express God’s love for humanity, because they order the physical world in such a way that makes it bearable (just think if we really did have to live in a gravity-less world and worry about objects flying in all directions while still attending to the major task of saving our souls).

Moreover, I would say that all these forms or expressions of the divine have always been present in our midst; the only thing that changes is our (degree of) awareness of them. Thus, Woodman’s one stated reservation about my article (82) could perhaps be overcome by viewing my argument not so much as proving anything genuinely new, but rather as a somewhat novel articulation of the awareness of the divine presence in one of its forms. Indeed, everything that happens to us every day may be viewed as an expression of the divine in some way: life is a constant, ongoing dialogue with God, but most of us remain unaware of that fact. God is hidden from us by His very closeness not, as many imagine, by His remoteness.

So, what proves that God exists? Everything, literally everything that is proves that God exists, because God is the Essential Being (the origin of the isness) of reality. But rather than seeing this for the miracle that it is, we take it all for granted and then ask for more proof. What is consciousness, in the last analysis, but a primary intuition of being itself? (For a more systematic and complete discussion of these points, see the collection of essays by John Hatcher and William Hatcher, The Law of Love Enshrined, Oxford: George Ronald, 1996.)

There is undoubtedly much truth in Woodman’s assertion that many of the current forms of traditional religion represent arrested development and articulate an immature conception of true human potential. However, what is perhaps not so clear is the extent to which such arrested forms were unavoidable products of our history or just accidents de parcours. In any case, it is certainly
true that the Bahá’í Faith brings a more mature awareness of the potential of the self (what the Finnish Bahá’í educator Partow Izzadi calls “megaconsciousness”), rather than just awareness (consciousness) of the mere existence of the self.

I also agree that both Freud and Marx saw clearly that the psyche, on the one hand, and society, on the other hand, had to be understood for humanity to advance to a higher level of consciousness. But, as Woodman says, their approach was reductionist (and materialistic, of course) and therefore unable to meet their respective goals. The failure of both these worldviews will finally heighten the general awareness and appreciation of the adequacy of the Bahá’í viewpoint, which incorporates what is valid in the insights of Freud, particularly the whole important notion of unconscious motivation, and what is most positive in the values of Marx, namely, the social ideal of nonexploitative human relationships.

More generally, I conceive of created reality as an infinite-dimensional space: it takes an infinite number of parameters (conditions) to determine anything completely. Since God is the only infinite Being, God alone can (and does) control all of these parameters. However, as a concession to our finiteness, God establishes certain local laws. Gravity and the other physical forces are examples of these local laws. Thus, the real law of gravity is something like this: if all of the infinite number of nonphysical parameters of created reality are held constant, then the four-dimensional projection of the law of gravity is the Einstein–Newton law. Thus, in order to “suspend” or change the operation of the law of gravity as we perceive it, God does not have to intervene in physical reality in some arbitrary or miraculous way but only to change slightly the “settings” or conditions of one or more of the nonphysical parameters.

Consider the following analogy: A and B live on a plane (two-dimensional space). They live next to each other, but there is a line segment (fence) that separates them. For A to visit B, A must go to the end of the fence, around and back down the other side to B. This is a “law.” There is (in two dimensions) no other way for A to get to B.

However, if A and B were aware of the third dimension, they would see that in reality they are almost infinitely close, and if they could have access to the third dimension, they could visit one another in a split second (by jumping over the fence). Thus, by bringing in the third dimension, a seemingly intractable law of two-dimensional reality is “violated” (actually the law remains valid in two dimensions, but anyone having access to the third dimension is no longer affected by the law in the same way).

This example illustrates how I understand the impact of spiritual forces on our lives. It shows how it is possible for our interactions with God and with the spiritual world (the spiritual dimensions of reality) to be dynamic, rational, and lawful all at the same time. In the future, it is intended to publish a much fuller articulation of this infinite-dimensional model.

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