

# THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

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Unlike the cosmological causal and teleological fine-tuning arguments which are either partially or wholly *a posteriori*, the ontological argument is wholly *a priori*.

St Anselm first developed the ontological argument in the eleventh century in his *Proslogium* Chapter II. It has been translated from Latin, as follows:

*Hence, even the fool is convinced that something exists in the understanding, at least, than which nothing greater can be conceived. For, when he hears of this, he understands it. And whatever is understood exists in the understanding. And assuredly that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, cannot exist in the understanding alone. For, suppose it exists in the understanding alone: then it can be conceived to exist in reality; which is greater.*

*Therefore, if that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, exists in the understanding alone, the very being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, is one, than which a greater can be conceived. However obviously this is impossible. Hence, there is no doubt that there exists a being than which nothing greater can be conceived, and it exists both in the understanding and in reality.<sup>1</sup>*

Therefore, St Anselm develops his argument from the concept of God to the reality of God and this is broken down in the following stages:

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HENCE, EVEN THE FOOL IS CONVINCED THAT SOMETHING EXISTS IN THE UNDERSTANDING, AT LEAST, THAN WHICH NOTHING GREATER CAN BE CONCEIVED.

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In other words, God is that *than which nothing greater [or more perfect] can be conceived*.

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FOR, WHEN HE HEARS OF THIS, HE UNDERSTANDS IT

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In other words, something than which nothing greater or more perfect can be conceived is understood, even by *the fool*.

Here, St Anselm makes an implicit assumption that the something than which nothing greater or more perfect can be conceived is that which is not contingent on anything. Were it to be contingent on anything, there would something else that would not be and therefore there would be something that would be greater or more perfect than it.

So, in other words, something than which nothing greater or more perfect can be conceived is understood to mean something which is not contingent on anything.

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AND WHATEVER IS UNDERSTOOD EXISTS IN THE UNDERSTANDING.

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In other words, the concept of *whatever is understood exists in the understanding*.

Therefore, the concept of God exists in the understanding.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from "The Ontological Argument" in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, William L Craig and JP Moreland, 2009

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AND ASSUREDLY THAT, THAN WHICH NOTHING GREATER CAN BE CONCEIVED,  
CANNOT EXIST IN THE UNDERSTANDING ALONE.

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In other words, the concept of whatever exists in the understanding either exists in the understanding alone or it exists also in reality.

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FOR, SUPPOSE IT EXISTS IN THE UNDERSTANDING ALONE: THEN IT CAN BE  
CONCEIVED TO EXIST IN REALITY; WHICH IS GREATER.

---

In other words, if God A exists in the understanding only, then God B which also exists in reality is greater or more perfect than God A which exists in the understanding only.

Therefore, God A is that than which a greater or more perfect can be conceived i.e. God B.

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THEREFORE, IF THAT, THAN WHICH NOTHING GREATER CAN BE CONCEIVED, EXISTS  
IN THE UNDERSTANDING ALONE, THE VERY BEING, THAN WHICH NOTHING  
GREATER CAN BE CONCEIVED, IS ONE, THAN WHICH A GREATER CAN BE CONCEIVED.  
BUT OBVIOUSLY THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE.

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In other words, that than which a greater or more perfect cannot be conceived [God B] is also that than which a greater or more perfect can be conceived [God A] because both A and B are Gods. This is a contradiction, a logical impossibility.

Therefore, God cannot exist in the understanding only.

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HENCE, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THERE EXISTS A BEING THAN WHICH NOTHING  
GREATER CAN BE CONCEIVED, AND IT EXISTS BOTH IN THE UNDERSTANDING AND IN  
REALITY.

---

In other words, something than which nothing greater or more perfect can be conceived must exist in the understanding *and* also in reality.

*Therefore, God exists in reality.*

## WHY NOT THE JEWISH GOD?

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### NOT ALL-KNOWING AND NOT TRANSCENDENT

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The Jewish God is not all-knowing.

For example, He does not know Prophet Adam's whereabouts, when Prophet Adam and his wife, Eve, ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

*Then the man [Prophet Adam] and his wife [Eve] heard the sound of the Lord God as He was walking in the Garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the Garden. But the Lord God called out to the man, "Where are you?"<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Genesis Chapter 3 Verses 8

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The Jewish God is not transcendent because He cannot see Adam and Eve hiding in the Garden that He is supposed to have created.

A God can be conceived:

- that is all-knowing and therefore knows where Adam and Eve are hiding
- that is transcendent and therefore can see where Adam and Eve are hiding

This God would, therefore, be greater or more perfect than the Jewish God who is not all-knowing and is not transcendent.

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### NOT ALL-POWERFUL

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The Jewish God is not all-powerful.

- *And the Lord God said, "The man [Prophet Adam] has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.*<sup>3</sup>

The Jewish God fears his own supposed creation, Adam, because he *has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil*. Adam must, therefore, not be allowed to gain immortality like the Jewish God. Therefore, the Jewish God *banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken*.

A God can be conceived whose attributes can never be attained by any of His creation so that this God cannot by definition fear any of His creation.

This God would, therefore, be greater or more perfect than the Jewish God.

- *That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, "Let me go for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome." Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."<sup>4</sup>*

In this case, Prophet Jacob wrestled with God and defeated Him!

A God can be conceived Who can destroy His creation simply by willing it. He does not need to demean Himself by adopting a material form and then losing a wrestling match with His own creation!

This God would, therefore, be greater or more perfect than the Jewish God.

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<sup>3</sup> Genesis Chapter 3 Verses 22-23

<sup>4</sup> Genesis Chapter 32 Verses 22-30

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### WHY NOT THE CHRISTIAN GOD?

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#### THE INFERIORITY OF THE TRINITY

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The Christian God is the Trinity: the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit.

The Son is Prophet Jesus.

One third of the Christian God, therefore:

- is not eternal, because he only lived in the period c6-4 BCE to c30 CE
- is material and therefore imperfect
- had material needs of food and drink
- suffered pain and could not prevent his own death
- is not all-knowing, because, for example, he does not know the Last Day
- is without an independent will, because, for example, he prays to the Father

The doctrine of the Trinity is also inherently illogical, because it requires God to be immaterial and divine and material and mortal at the same time, and this violates the law of non-contradiction.

What is a logical impossibility is a nothing.

Therefore, the Christian God is a nothing!

A God can be conceived:

- that is eternal
- that is immaterial
- that has no material needs
- that can neither suffer pain and nor die
- that is all-knowing, because, for example, He Alone knows the Last Day
- that has an independent Will, because He does as He chooses

This God would, therefore, be greater or more perfect than the Christian God.

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### WHY THE MUSLIM GOD?

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The Arabic words to denote greatness used in the following verses of the Qur'an are:

- *'azim*, which means "great," "magnificent," "splendid," "big," "stupendous," "most grand," "huge," "immense," "monstrous," "grave" and "all-great"
- *al-kabir*, which means "big," "great," "enormous," "grave thing" and "all-great"

The Arabic word used to denote perfection in the following verses of the Qur'an is *as-salam*, which means "peace," "security," "soundness," "perfection" and "perfect."

Saheeh International Translation [SIT] translates *as-salam* as "the perfection."

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### 'AZIM

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ  
بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ  
الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

*Allah [swt]! None has the right to be worshipped but He, the Ever Living, the One Who sustains and protects all that exists. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is he that can intercede with Him except with His Permission? He knows what happens to them [His creatures] in this world and what will happen to them in the Hereafter. And they will never compass anything of His Knowledge except that which He wills. His footstool extends over the heavens and the earth and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them. And He is the Most High, the **Most Great**.<sup>5</sup>*

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

*To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth and He is the Most High, the **Most Great**.<sup>6</sup>*

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ

*So glorify with praises the Name of your Lord, the **Most Great**.<sup>7</sup>*

<sup>5</sup> Surah Al-Baqarah Chapter 2 Verse 255

<sup>6</sup> Surah Ash-Shura Chapter 42 Verse 4

<sup>7</sup> Surah Al-Waqi'ah Chapter 56 Verses 74, 96

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وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِشِمَالِهِ فَيَقُولُ يَلِيَّتَنِي لَمْ أُوتَ كِتَابِيَهٗ ۖ وَلَمْ أَدْرِ مَا حِسَابِيَهٗ ﴿١٦﴾  
يَلِيَّتَهَا كَانَتْ الْقَاضِيَهٗ ﴿١٧﴾ مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنِّي مَالِيَهٗ ﴿١٨﴾ هَلَكَ عَنِّي سُلْطَانِيَهٗ ﴿١٩﴾ خُذُوهُ فَغُلُّوهُ  
﴿٢٠﴾ ثُمَّ الْجَحِيمَ صَلُّوهُ ﴿٢١﴾ ثُمَّ فِي سِلْسِلَةٍ ذَرْعُهَا سَبْعُونَ ذِرَاعًا فَاسْلُكُوهُ ﴿٢٢﴾ إِنَّهُ كَانَ لَا  
يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٢٣﴾

*But as for him who will be given his Record in his left hand will say, "I wish that I had not been given my Record! And that I have never known how my Account is? Would that it had been my end [death]! My wealth has not availed me; my power has gone from me!" [It will be said,] "Seize him and fetter him; then throw him in the blazing Fire. Then fasten him with a chain whereof the length is seventy cubits!" Verily he used not to believe in Allah [swt], the **Most Great**."*<sup>8</sup>

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٥٢﴾

*So glorify the Name of your Lord, the **Most Great**.*<sup>9</sup>

### AL-KABIR

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۗ  
فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَنَاطُتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ۗ وَالَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ ۗ  
وَأَهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاصْرَبُوهُنَّ ۗ فَإِنِ اطَّعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ  
عَلِيًّا كَبِيرًا ﴿٢٤﴾

*Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah [swt] has made one of them to excel the other and because they spend [to support them] from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient and guard in the husband's absence what Allah [swt] orders them to guard. As to those women on whose part you see ill-conduct, admonish them, [next] refuse to share their beds, [and last] beat them [lightly if it is useful]; but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means [of annoyance]. Surely Allah [swt] is Ever Most High, **Most Great**.*<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Surah Al-Haqqah Chapter 69 Verses 25-33

<sup>9</sup> Surah Al-Haqqah Chapter 69 Verse 52

<sup>10</sup> Surah An-Nisa' Chapter 4 Verse 34

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عَلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْكَبِيرِ الْمُتَعَالِ ﴿٩﴾

All-Knower of the unseen and the seen, the **Most Great**, the Most High.<sup>11</sup>

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّ مَا يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ هُوَ الْبَطْلُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ  
الْكَبِيرُ ﴿١٢﴾

That is because Allah [swt] – He is the Truth and what they [the polytheists] invoke besides Him, it is falsehood. And verily Allah [swt] – He is the Most High, the **Most Great**.<sup>12</sup>

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّ مَا يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ الْبَطْلُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ ﴿١٣﴾

That is because Allah [swt], He is the Truth and that which they invoke besides Him is falsehood; and that Allah [swt], He is the Most High, the **Most Great**.<sup>13</sup>

وَلَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ <sup>ط</sup> حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فُزِعَ عَنْ قُلُوبِهِمْ قَالُوا مَاذَا قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ <sup>ط</sup>  
قَالُوا الْحَقُّ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ ﴿١٤﴾

Intercession with Him [God] profits not except for him whom He permits. So much so that when fear is banished from their [angels'] hearts they [the angels] say, "What is it that your Lord has said?" They say, "The truth. And He is the Most High, the **Most Great**."<sup>14</sup>

ذَلِكُمْ بِأَنَّهُ إِذَا دُعِيَ اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ كَفَرْتُمْ <sup>ط</sup> وَإِنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ <sup>ط</sup> تَوَمَّنُوا <sup>ط</sup> فَالْحُكْمُ لِلَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْكَبِيرِ ﴿١٥﴾

[It will be said], "This is because when Allah [swt] Alone was invoked you disbelieved but when partners were joined to Him you believed! So the judgement is only with Allah [swt], the Most High, the **Most Great**!"<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Surah Ar-Ra'd Chapter 13 Verse 9

<sup>12</sup> Surah Al-Hajj Chapter 22 Verse 62

<sup>13</sup> Surah Luqman Chapter 31 Verse 30

<sup>14</sup> Surah Saba' Chapter 34 Verse 23

<sup>15</sup> Surah Ghafir Chapter 40 Verse 12



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### AS-SALAM

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ  
الْمُتَكَبِّرُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

He is God other than Whom there is no deity, the Sovereign, the Pure, **the Perfection**, the Bestower of Faith, the Overseer, the Exalted in Might, the Compeller, the Superior. Exalted is God above whatever they associate with Him.<sup>16</sup>

The Qur'an confirms the rationally derived attribute of God – all-greatness and perfection.

### THE ALL-GREATNESS AND PERFECTION OF THE MUSLIM GOD

It has been shown elsewhere that, unlike the Jewish God and the Christian God, the Muslim God:

- is transcendent
- is immaterial
- is self-sufficient without any material needs
- is all-knowing
- is all-powerful
- is eternal
- has an independent Will

The Muslim God, therefore, is that *than which nothing greater [or more perfect] can be conceived* and, by the ontological argument, exists in reality.

On the other hand, the Jewish and Christian God cannot exist in reality because they are inferior to the Muslim God, Who is, therefore, Alone worthy of worship.

As the Qur'an states, the Muslim God is so great and so perfect that:

### THERE IS NOTHING LIKE THE MUSLIM GOD

فَاطِرُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ أَزْوَاجًا يَذُرُّكُمْ فِيهِ  
لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴿١٧﴾

The Creator of the heavens and the earth. He has made for you mates from yourselves and for the cattle mates. By this means He creates you [in the wombs.] **There is nothing like Him**; and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> SIT Surah Al-Hashr Chapter 59 Verse 23

<sup>17</sup> Surah Ash-Shura Chapter 42 Verse 11

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### THERE IS NOTHING COMPARABLE TO THE MUSLIM GOD

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ﴿٤﴾

“And there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him.”<sup>18</sup>

### THEREFORE, NO GOD IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP, EXCEPT THE MUSLIM GOD

ذَٰلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَاعْبُدُوهُ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ﴿١٢﴾

﴿١٢﴾

Such is Allah [swt], your Lord! **None has the right to be worshipped but He**, the Creator of all things. So worship Him and He is the Guardian-Trustee over all things.<sup>19</sup>

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي ﴿١٢﴾

“Verily I am Allah [swt]! **None has the right to be worshipped but I** so worship Me and perform prayer for My Remembrance.”<sup>20</sup>

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ ۖ فَقَالَ يَنْقُومِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنِّ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۖ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

And indeed We sent Nuh [Prophet Noah (as)] to his people and he said, “O my people! **Worship Allah [swt]! You have no other God but Him.** Will you not then be afraid?”<sup>21</sup>

فَأَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنِّ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۖ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

And We sent to them a Messenger from among themselves, [saying] “**Worship Allah [swt]! You have no other God but Him.** Will you not then be afraid?”<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Surah Al-Ikhlās Chapter 112 Verse 4

<sup>19</sup> Surah Al-An’am Chapter 6 Verse 102

<sup>20</sup> Surah Ta-Ha Chapter 20 Verse 14

<sup>21</sup> Surah Al-Mu’minun Chapter 23 Verse 23

<sup>22</sup> Surah Al-Mu’minun Chapter 23 Verse 32

## THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

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وَمَا تَفَرَّقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَةُ ۗ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ  
مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقَيِّمَةِ ۗ

*And the people of the Scripture [Jews and Christians] differed not until after there came to them clear evidence. And they were commanded not, but **that they should worship Allah [swt] and worship none but Him Alone** and perform prayer and give obligatory charity and that is the right religion.<sup>23</sup>*

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<sup>23</sup> Surah Al-Bayyinah Chapter 98 Verses 4-5