

The Quran and its Message

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Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

BURDEN OF PROOF - PROPHET ABRAHAM'S ^(pbuh) ARGUMENT

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In any epistemic dispute or debate, the burden of proof is with the party asserting the claim to provide sufficient warrant for their position. For example, if a Muslim asserts that the Hadith of the Prophet is an authority in religion, then the burden of proof lies with them to prove this position from the Quran as it is the Quran that is the primary and ultimate authority from God.

The concept of appropriate burden of proof is enshrined within the methodology of argumentation utilised by the Quran.

It is important to remember that the everyday usage of the term 'argue' and 'argumentation' differs from the technical definition of 'argumentation' as understood in discussions and debates. The technical definition and as understood for the purposes of this article is as follows:

"Argumentation is a verbal, social, and rational activity aimed at convincing a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint by putting forward a constellation of propositions justifying or refuting the propositions expressed in the standpoint" [1]

PROPHET ABRAHAM'S ^(pbuh) ARGUMENT

From a Quranic perspective, associations with God or to set up partners with God is not merely restricted to worshipping idols. It can take the form of desire (25:43), intercessors (10:18), property, goods and assets (18:34-42), other sources of knowledge holding authority in religion (6:19), religious leaders, scholars and revered personalities (9:31).

(Please see related article [1] below)

In the context of Prophet Abraham's ^(pbuh) predicament, let us note the argument which he utilised whilst clearly remaining cognizant of where the burden of proof rested.

006.081 -82

"And how should I fear what you associate (with God), while you do not fear what you have associated with God without any authority having been given to you? So which of the two parties has more right to security? (tell me) if you know. It is those who believe and do not confuse their beliefs with wrong that are in security and they are rightly guided".

006.083

"And this (is) Our argument which We gave to Abraham (to use) against his people. We raise by degrees whom We will. Indeed, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing"

The crux of the argument above is a clear recognition of the burden of proof and with whom it rests with. In the above scenario, the burden of proof remained with those that asserted that their Idols had authority with God.

BRING YOUR EVIDENCE

046.004

"Say: "Do you see what you invoke besides God? Show me what they have created on earth, or have they a share in the heavens? **Bring me a book (revealed) before this, or any remnant / trace of knowledge** if you are truthful!"

021.024

"Or, have they taken besides Him gods? **Say: Bring your proof.** This (is) a reminder of those with me and the reminder of those before me. Nay! most of them do not know the truth so they (are) averse"

023.117 (part)

"...**he has no proof of this.** Then his account is only with his Lord. Indeed the unbelievers shall not be successful"

027.064 (part)

"...Say: **Bring your proof** if you are truthful"

Conversely, the Quran also clearly recognises when the burden of proof rests with itself. As an example, we note that the Quran's fundamental doctrine is that God is One.

112:001

"Say: **He is God, the One and Only.**"

The Quran then uses multifaceted argumentation techniques throughout the scripture to prove the veracity of this view.

For example, the notion of multiple 'gods' is struck at its core. By nature a God is supreme and **alone in authority**. If He is not, then he cannot be God. Sole authority is twinned with Divinity. The belief in multiple deities or shared authority is then challenged.

021:022

"If there were, in them both (heavens and the earth), other gods besides God, **surely they would have been ruined (disordered, corrupted, confused - Arabic: fasadata)**! So glory to God, the Lord of the Throne: (High is He) above what they attribute to Him!"

023:091

"Never did God take to Himself a son, nor is there any god along with Him: (if there were many gods), **behold, each god would have taken away what he had created, and some of them would have surely overpowered others!** Glory to God! above what they allege!"

A God cannot be by nature a 'God' if He is not sole authority or remains equal or subservient to another in authority.

THE QURAN IS THE SOURCE AUTHORITY FOR BELIEVERS TO ASCERTAIN PROOF

Many theological assertions are argued for by use of [Islamic secondary sources](#) for which the Quran gives believers absolutely no authority. All religious assertions or theological standpoints must find unequivocal support from the Quran.

006:114

"Say: "Shall I seek for judge other than God? - when He is the One who has sent to you the Book, **explained in detail (Arabic: Mufassalan)**." They know full well, to whom We have given the Book, that it has been sent down from your Lord in truth. Never be then of those who doubt"

068.036-38

"What is the matter with you? How (do) you judge?" Or have you a book through which you learn, that you shall have through it whatever indeed you choose?"

The Quran must remain the starting point, the central core and final source for any theological belief or claim in the name of religion.

"There is no point in venturing to resolve a difference of opinion through an argumentative exchange of views if there is no mutual commitment to a common starting point, which may include procedural commitments as well as substantive agreement" [2]

FINAL THOUGHTS

The burden of proof is with the party asserting the claim to provide sufficient warrant for their position and this understanding is fully supported by the Quran and utilised. We noted an example in the narrative which captured Prophet Abraham's ^(pbuh) argumentation against his people.

Similarly, for those who attest the Sunna as an authority, for those that profess the Shia imamate and those that assert **any theological standpoint whatsoever in the name of God's religion**, must provide unambiguous, unequivocal proof and authority from the Quran for their position.

It is a source of great sadness, that most theological positions in Islam are argued from authorities that exist **outside the text of the Quran**, whether this is literature or the opinion of a favoured leader, teacher or preacher ([Islamic secondary sources](#)).

To set up an authority outside the Quran as part of religion is akin to setting up partners with God. Many sadly remain oblivious to this fact or the extent of their actions.

This remains a very serious matter.

Related Articles:

- (1) [Idolatry According to the Quran](#)
- (2) [The Quran Stands Alone As Sole Religious Guidance](#)

REFERENCES

- [1] VAN EEMEREN. F.H and GROOTENDORST. R, **A Systematic Theory of Argumentation, The pragma-dialectical approach**, Cambridge University Press, First published 2004, 1 Introduction, Page 1
[2] Ibid., Page 60

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