2026, Cilt 3, Sayı 3, 261-270

OPEN ACCESS

ISSN: 3062-262X

Akademik Eğitim ve Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi (AJESS Journal)

Argumentation in the Account of the People of the Book and the Prophet (Peace and Blessings Be upon Him) in Surat Āl ʿImrān: A Case Study

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Article History
Received: 11/01/2026; Accepted: 27/06/2026; Published: 01/09/2026

Abstract:

Classical and modern Arab rhetoricians have devoted considerable attention to the study of argumentation theory. They have sought to elucidate its conceptual framework and identify its most important features, as well as its artistic and linguistic characteristics, by applying its procedures to various forms of linguistic and literary discourse, such as poetry, prose, Qurʾānic narratives, novels, sermons, and other types of discourse. Their aim has been to highlight its theoretical and practical dimensions for recipients and to provide them with various mechanisms and procedures through which the semantic, syntactic, morphological, and aesthetic structures of written texts and orally delivered discourse may be interrogated.

Accordingly, this study seeks to examine the conceptual framework of argumentation theory and apply its mechanisms and procedures to the discourse of the account of the People of the Book and the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in Surat Āl ʿImrān. This is undertaken in order to interrogate its argumentative structures, explore its linguistic and non-linguistic features, unveil its various subtleties and its artistic and epistemological dimensions, and identify its aesthetic, suggestive, doctrinal, and ideological implications.

Keywords: Argumentation, Arab heritage, New Rhetoric, Arabic rhetoric, the account of the People of the Book, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).

Introduction:

No previous era has witnessed linguistic advancement comparable to that of our own age across numerous fields. Among its most significant manifestations is the scientific and intellectual revolution that has taken place in linguistic studies, particularly in linguistic research, which crystallized through the work of the eminent linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. This development consequently led to the emergence of systemic approaches whose perspectives and epistemological and linguistic dimensions became increasingly diverse, culminating in the rise of such disciplines as linguistics, semiotics, narratology, stylistics, poetics, aesthetics, and argumentation. The latter constitutes the central focus of the New Rhetoric, which has accorded it particular attention and made it the cornerstone of rhetorical studies.

What, then, is meant by argumentation?

Have Arab scholars succeeded in structuring argumentation theory within their linguistic studies and freeing it from the confines of Western imitation?

How can the mechanisms of argumentation, in their various forms and procedures, be applied to the study of the account of the People of the Book and the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him)?

1. The Concept of Argumentation

The concept of argumentation is among those concepts that have generated ambiguity among linguists, philosophers, and rhetoricians because of the multiplicity of its uses and fields. Consequently, its definitions vary and multiply from one field to another according to the scientific disciplines in which it is employed.

1.1. The Linguistic Meaning of Argumentation:

In Arabic dictionaries, argumentation is used in the sense of persuasion and disputation. Ibn Manẓūr defines it in his dictionary Lisān al-ʿArab as follows:

"I argued with him (ḥājajtuhu, uḥājjuhu, ḥijājan wa-muḥājjatan) until I defeated him in argument (ḥajajtu-hu), meaning that I prevailed over him by means of the arguments I presented. […] The ḥujjah is proof; it has also been said that the ḥujjah is that by which an adversary is rebutted. […] The plural of ḥujjah is ḥujaj and ḥijāj. To argue with someone (ḥājjahu muḥājjatan wa-ḥijājan) means to dispute an argument with them; and to defeat someone in argument (ḥajjahu yaḥujjuhu

ḥajjan) means to prevail over their argument. […] A man described as miḥjāj is one who is highly disputatious, while taḥājj means quarrelling. To argue with someone means to dispute an argument with them, and to invoke something as an argument means to adopt it as proof. […] The ḥujjah is evidence and demonstration. It is said: 'I argued with him, and therefore I am a disputant (muḥājj) and an opponent in argument (ḥajīj).' […] This meaning is also found in the report attributed to Muʿāwiyah: 'I began to defeat my adversary in argument,' meaning that I prevailed over them by means of proof." (Manẓūr, 1997, p. 442)

On the basis of the foregoing, we find that, according to Ibn Manẓūr, the linguistic concept of argumentation revolves around dispute and conflict structured upon the principle of presenting evidence and proof during debate.

Al-Jurjānī, for his part, defines it in his dictionary Al-Taʿrīfāt as follows:

"The argument (ḥujjah) is that by which the validity of a claim is demonstrated. It has also been said that argument and evidence are one and the same." (Al-Jurjānī, ed. Al-Abtārī, n.d., p. 442)

In other words, argumentation, in his view, is connected with establishing the validity of a claim by presenting evidence in order to persuade the other.

From this perspective, it becomes clear that the linguistic meaning of argumentation is associated with the debate that arises during conflict and dispute through the presentation of evidence and proofs, with the aim of defending one's position, persuading the other, and influencing them.

1.2. The Technical Meaning of Argumentation:

Chaïm Perelman and the Belgian linguist Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca define argumentation in their book The New Rhetoric as follows:

"The object of argumentation is the study of the discursive techniques that make it possible to induce or increase the mind's adherence to the theses presented for its assent." (Bouhadam, 2012, p. 82)

This means that argumentation is fundamentally based on dialogue between disputants for the purpose of persuading and influencing listeners.

Taha Abderrahmane also defines it in his book Al-Lisān wa-al-Mīzān aw al-Takāthur al-ʿAqlī (Language and the Balance, or Mental Proliferation) as follows:

"Argumentation may be defined as every utterance addressed to another person in order to make them understand a particular claim to which an objection may legitimately be raised."

According to this view, argumentation is the foremost mechanism through which the sender employs language and through which persuasion and subsequently understanding is achieved. Argumentation thus possesses a pragmatic and contextual dimension whose objective is persuasion during debate.

Abu Bakr al-ʿAzzāwī, for his part, divides argumentation into two types:

Directive argumentation: This consists in establishing evidence for a claim through the act of directing, by conveying the argument to the recipient.

The second type: This consists in proving a claim on the basis of the arguer's ability to abstract from themself a second self and place it in the position of an objector. In other words, the person does not confine themself to the act of delivering the argument but goes beyond it to engage in the act of reception.

Accordingly, argumentation, in al-ʿAzzāwī's view, is a dialectical and pragmatic mechanism characterized by intellectual, situational, and social dimensions. Within it, the requirements of the communicative situation—including shared knowledge, informational demands, and contextual directives are employed to accomplish the pragmatic act, which is founded upon the construction of scientific knowledge addressed to the recipient in order to persuade them through dialectical means.

3. Argumentation in Classical and Modern Arab Studies

3.1. Argumentation among Classical Arab Scholars:

Classical and modern Arab scholars have shown considerable interest in argumentative studies because of the important role that argumentation has played in both political life and the Arab-Islamic environment. Furthermore, ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī employed argumentative structures in rhetorical discourse while addressing the inimitability of the Qurʾān. He attempted to persuade readers of the validity of the Theory of Composition (Naẓm) by presenting various forms of evidence within a clearly argumentative framework.

Other scholars, such as Abū al-Ḥasan Isḥāq ibn Wahb and Ḥāzim al-Qarṭājannī, also devoted attention to argumentation. In his book Al-Burhān fī Wujūh al-Bayān (Demonstration of the Modes of Eloquence), Ibn Wahb provided precise definitions of both debate and disputation. He regarded debate as an instructive and persuasive form of discourse, distinguished between its different types, and divided it into praiseworthy and blameworthy debate. He also discussed the "ethics of debate" and stipulated a set of conditions that an arguer must fulfil for their statements to be accepted. These conditions included presenting an argument in such a manner that it could only be refuted for a valid reason, refraining from responding before the questioner had finished asking the question, and neither belittling nor underestimating one's opponent. (Ismāʿīl, 2010, p. 9)

Ḥāzim al-Qarṭājannī, for his part, based his rhetorical theory on the two elements of "imagination and persuasion" in his book Minhāj al-Bulaghāʾ wa-Sirāj al-Udabāʾ (The Method of the Eloquent and the Lamp of Writers). He distinguished between two modes of discourse and maintained that speech may admit either truth or falsehood according to the manner in which it is presented, in conformity with the principle of reporting. He states:

"Since all discourse admits either truth or falsehood, it is presented either by way of reporting and narration or by way of argumentation and inference." (Ismāʿīl, 2010, p. 9)

He also discussed two methods that must be employed to persuade an opponent and refute their argument: embellishment and courteous conciliation. He states:

"Embellishments are directed towards the addressee, together with courteous conciliation, so that the speaker's discourse becomes acceptable to the judge while the opponent's discourse becomes unacceptable." (Ismāʿīl, 2010, p. 9)

Several factors contributed to the development of Arabic rhetoric and encouraged the emergence of scholarly writing in this field. Among the most prominent were studies concerned with the Noble Qurʾān. Foreign influences also played an active role in developing and enriching rhetorical studies by opening them to neighbouring disciplines and fields of knowledge. This included engagement with Greek rhetorical studies, particularly the works of Aristotle, which received considerable attention through translation and commentary. Arab rhetoricians were consequently influenced by these works, as is evident in their Arabic writings, beginning with Abū ʿUbaydah's Iʿjāz al-Qurʾān (The Inimitability of the Qurʾān) and extending to Ḥāzim al-Qarṭājannī's Minhāj al-Bulaghāʾ (The Method of the Eloquent). (Amīn, 2008, p. 209) This contributed to the emergence of a new rhetoric founded upon eloquence, dialogue, and argumentation.

Al-Jāḥiẓ likewise took an interest in argumentation and defended dialogue by developing a theory of argumentative and persuasive rhetoric "based upon taking the circumstances of the addressees into consideration." He also regarded the linguistic act as the foundation of every eloquent and argumentative process because, in his view, the concept of bayān fulfils two functions:

An explanatory function aimed at ensuring understanding.

An argumentative or persuasive function.

One of the factors that prompted al-Jāḥiẓ to adopt an argumentative orientation was his doctrinal affiliation with the Muʿtazilah, as reflected in his leading role in defending many of their intellectual theses. (Amīn, 2008, p. 209)

On the basis of the foregoing, we may observe that Arabic rhetoric paid considerable attention to argumentation theory. Its rhetorical perspective developed around most elements of the communicative situation and its internal and external determinants, resulting in the emergence of two forms of rhetoric: one poetic and the other pragmatic and argumentative.

3.2. Argumentation among Modern Arab Scholars:

Modern Arab scholars have shown considerable interest in contemporary rhetoric and have sought to develop it through engagement with both Arabic and Western rhetorical studies, with the aim of establishing an autonomous contemporary rhetoric. The Egyptian school is regarded as one of the most prominent Arab schools concerned with this field in general and with argumentative rhetoric in particular. Its scholars attempted to reread the Arabic rhetorical heritage in light of contemporary concepts of poetics while also engaging with Western critical studies and drawing upon them in rhetorical research.

It may be observed, however, that most of these studies were predominantly concerned with reviving the classical Arabic heritage, from al-Jāḥiẓ to al-Sakkākī and al-Suyūṭī. They focused on the historical development of Arabic rhetoric from the era of codification to the periods of formal rule-setting and theoretical systematization, rather than undertaking a systemic study of artistic texts and discourses. (Amīn, 2008, p. 243)

Ṣalāḥ Faḍl is considered one of the most prominent rhetoricians to have addressed argumentative rhetoric, particularly in his book Balāghat al-Khiṭāb wa-ʿIlm al-Naṣṣ (The Rhetoric of Discourse and the Science of the Text). This book is among the earliest works in the field of contemporary critical studies to examine Perelman's "rhetoric of argumentation." It also identifies the persuasive features of certain classical Arabic speeches, particularly those dating from the Islamic era. This interest in persuasion constituted a stage that subsequently led Ṣalāḥ Faḍl to focus his attention on argumentation.

As for the Tunisian school, scholarly interest in argumentation began with the rhetorician Ḥammādī Ṣammūd, who regarded argumentative rhetoric as one of the most precise subjects of rhetorical inquiry. (Amīn, 2008, p. 243) His approach involved employing all relevant contextual elements that contribute to understanding discourse and conveying it to the recipient.

All these scholarly endeavours sought to reread argumentative rhetoric by focusing on the methods and mechanisms capable of persuading addressees. They aimed to reformulate it in a new manner compatible with modern linguistic studies and to draw upon contemporary pragmatic concepts in order to move beyond the confines of Western imitation. Their ultimate objective was to construct a contemporary Arab theory of argumentation that would engage with both classical and modern thought through a balanced perspective combining the Arabic rhetorical heritage with contemporary linguistics in the analysis of certain genres. One example of this approach is found in Abū Bakr al-ʿAzzāwī's book Al-Lughah wa-al-Ḥijāj (Language and Argumentation).

4. Types of Argumentation

Researchers have differed in their classifications of argumentation because of their divergent perspectives on the subject. Three types of argumentation may be identified:

A. Philosophical Argumentation:

This type takes philosophy as one of its dimensions and employs it as one of its mechanisms. Its effectiveness is measured according to external criteria, such as strength or weakness and success or failure in achieving persuasion. Its objective is to influence the recipient and secure their acceptance. (Mudqin, 2005, p. 173) Thus, this type of argumentation relies primarily on philosophy and its procedures as means of persuading and influencing the recipient.

B. Pragmatic Argumentation:

This form of argumentation is founded upon use and interaction. Within the argumentative process, it focuses on language in use in order to achieve its communicative and persuasive objectives. The term pragmatics evokes Speech Act Theory and its application to discourse for the purpose of persuading the addressee, notwithstanding the diversity of

pragmatic dimensions through which argumentative discourse may be directed. (Al-Raḥmān, 1998, p. 272) It consequently seeks to address a range of problems and questions surrounding the argumentative communicative process in order to persuade the recipient.

C. Rhetorical Argumentation:

This is a form of argumentation that employs rhetoric as one of its mechanisms because rhetoric relies on influence and persuasion through figurative imagery and aesthetic devices in order to convince the recipient. (Mudqin, 2005, p. 173) In this type, rhetoric constitutes the field from which argumentation derives its means and mechanisms. Its purpose is to persuade and influence the recipient through an artistic form that draws their attention to the aesthetic qualities of linguistic structures, rhetorical images, and stylistic devices of various kinds within linguistic and Qurʾānic texts and discourses.

On the basis of the foregoing, we find that the different types of argumentation are associated with the particular field in which the argumentative process is practised. Philosophical argumentation is closely connected with philosophy, while pragmatic argumentation is associated with the pragmatic theory of speech acts, founded upon the principle of language use. Rhetorical argumentation, meanwhile, is connected with the aesthetic qualities of rhetorical imagery in poetic and prose texts.

5. Argumentative Techniques and Mechanisms

Perelman divided argumentative techniques into two categories. This classification concerns the techniques of linguistic argumentation, represented by methods of association and methods of dissociation:

"The former refers to the procedures through which elements that were originally separate are brought closer together, thereby allowing them to be unified and organized, as well as enabling one form to be evaluated through another, either negatively or positively. Techniques of dissociation, meanwhile, aim to separate, distribute, or dismantle elements that are regarded as a single whole or at least as a unified group within certain systems of thought." (Al-Shahrī, 2004, p. 477)

On the basis of the foregoing, we may conclude that argumentative techniques consist of association and dissociation. These are based on the principle of bringing elements closer together and determining how they are distributed within the linguistic and discursive structure.

Argumentative techniques may also be divided into the following categories:

Purely Linguistic Devices: These include expressions of causation and justification, such as relative connectives and conditional constructions, as well as speech acts, reciprocal argumentation, description, and tautology.

Rhetorical Mechanisms: These include dividing a whole into its constituent parts, metaphor, rhetorical embellishment, and analogy.

Quasi-Logical Mechanisms: These are embodied in the argumentative scale and its linguistic devices and mechanisms. They encompass numerous features, including argumentative connectives such as "but," "even," "in addition to," and "not only …," as well as emphasis markers and varying degrees of emphasis. They also include mechanisms involving morphological forms, such as causative constructions, comparative and superlative forms, analogy, and intensive forms. (Ṭāhā, 2000, p. 98)

6. An Argumentative Analysis of the Account of the Delegation of the People of the Book and the Prophet (Peace and Blessings Be upon Him) in Surat Āl ʿImrān, Verses 64–74

6.1. Qurʾānic Verses from Surat Āl ʿImrān Relating the Account of the Delegation of the People of the Book and the Prophet (Peace and Blessings Be upon Him):

Allah Almighty says:

﴿قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تُحَاجُّونَ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَا أُنزِلَتِ التَّوْرَاةُ وَالْإِنجِيلُ إِلَّا مِن بَعْدِهِ ۚ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ هَا أَنتُمْ هَٰؤُلَاءِ حَاجَجْتُمْ فِيمَا لَكُم بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلِمَ تُحَاجُّونَ فِيمَا لَيْسَ لَكُم بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَٰكِن كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُّسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾ إِنَّ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ لَلَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ وَهَٰذَا النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَدَّت طَّائِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يُضِلُّونَكُمْ وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَأَنتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُونَ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَقَالَت طَّائِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ آمِنُوا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَجْهَ النَّهَارِ وَاكْفُرُوا آخِرَهُ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوا إِلَّا لِمَن تَبِعَ دِينَكُمْ ۗ قُلْ إِنَّ الْهُدَىٰ هُدَى اللَّهِ أَن يُؤْتَىٰ أَحَدٌ مِّثْلَ مَا أُوتِيتُمْ أَوْ يُحَاجُّوكُمْ عِندَ رَبِّكُمْ ۗ قُلْ إِنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾ يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٧٤﴾﴾

(The Noble Qurʾān, Surat Āl ʿImrān, 2015, pp. 58–59)

The account of the People of the Book in Surat Āl ʿImrān is one of the Qurʾānic narratives distinguished by the force of its disputation and argumentation. It demonstrates the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) wisdom in responding and his strength in disputing with the People of the Book by means of arguments and evidence. By contrast, the argument advanced by the People of the Book was weak, since they rejected the Book of Allah and the unifying word of truth, claiming that they followed the religion of Abraham while everyone else had departed from it. Their purpose was to disparage the Prophet's religion (peace and blessings be upon him) and the Noble Qurʾān.

This prompted the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) to invite them to engage in argumentation and dialogue and to demonstrate to them that his religion was true and that they were in error. The speakers in this discourse were therefore Allah Almighty and the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him), while the addressees were the People of the Book, as stated by Allah Almighty:

﴿قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾﴾

The language of the discourse was pure Arabic the inimitable language of the Qurʾān.

Furthermore, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) invited the People of the Book to worship Allah Almighty, embrace Islam, and refrain from associating partners with Him. He demonstrated to them that our master Abraham (peace be upon him) had been sent before our masters Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them both). Abraham was therefore not, as they claimed, an adherent of either Judaism or Christianity. This is because the scriptures revealed to Abraham preceded both the Torah and the Gospel.

6.2. Types of Argumentation

Directive Argumentation:

Directive argumentation consists in establishing evidence for a particular claim or idea by relying on the arguer's act of "directing" that is, conveying the argument to another person. This form of argumentation focuses primarily on the speaker's intention and the actions accompanying their statements, while paying less attention to the recipient's response and direct interaction with the discourse. (Al-Raḥmān, 1998, p. 255)

The People of the Book attempted to deceive the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) through a directive strategy. They instructed their followers to profess belief before the Prophet in the morning, reject what had been revealed at the end of the day, and then return to adherence to their own religion. Allah Almighty says:

﴿وَقَالَت طَّائِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ آمِنُوا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَجْهَ النَّهَارِ وَاكْفُرُوا آخِرَهُ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوا إِلَّا لِمَن تَبِعَ دِينَكُمْ قُلْ إِنَّ الْهُدَىٰ هُدَى اللَّهِ أَن يُؤْتَىٰ أَحَدٌ مِّثْلَ مَا أُوتِيتُمْ أَوْ يُحَاجُّوكُمْ عِندَ رَبِّكُمْ ۗ قُلْ إِنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾﴾

This directive argumentation took the form of advice given to the followers of the People of the Book, urging them to deceive the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in order to gain his trust. They sought to deceive him by belittling the religion of Allah Almighty and leading those whose faith was weak to follow them in their error. This incurred the wrath of Allah Almighty, who exposed their scheming and malice to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and made it clear that the religion of Allah is the true guidance and that all bounty is in His Hand, which He grants to whomever He wills among His servants.

Evaluative Argumentation:

Evaluative argumentation is the art of proving a claim through the arguer's ability to anticipate and deconstruct the recipient's objections. In this form of argumentation, discourse combines "the act of delivery with the act of reception." It is based on the arguer's ability to engage in dialogue with themself and test their argument by abstracting themself from their own position and thereby creating a "second self." (Al-Raḥmān, 1998, p. 255) This second self assumes the position of an objector or an addressee who opposes the claim being advanced.

Evaluative argumentation is manifested in the Messenger's invitation (peace and blessings be upon him) to the People of the Book to come to an equitable word of truth between him and them. This occurs through his abstraction from his own self and its replacement with a second self that seeks to follow the truth, instil faith in the hearts of the People of the Book, and construct the edifice of Islam according to the principle of doctrinal dialogue.

He sought to persuade them through wisdom and gracious counsel, inviting them to worship and affirm the oneness of Allah Almighty, believe in Him, and refrain from associating partners with Him. This required them to avoid worshipping Satan and false deities and not to take any lords besides Allah Almighty. Allah, Glorified be He, says:

﴿قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾﴾

(The Noble Qurʾān)

Through this, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) succeeded in establishing the argument against the People of the Book and demonstrating that they were following falsehood. He did so by presenting a set of arguments and proofs calling for belief in the oneness of Allah Almighty and the rejection of all forms of association with Him. He also demonstrated that their argument was weak and founded upon false evidence that had no basis in truth.

6.3. Argumentative Mechanisms

6.3.1. Linguistic Mechanisms:

Linguistic mechanisms are the devices and elements upon which the speaker relies to direct their message in order to influence the recipient and persuade them towards a particular argumentative position. This is achieved by establishing connections between conclusions and the arguments that serve and support them. These mechanisms include linguistic devices morphological, syntactic, and lexical argumentative connectives, performative constructions such as interrogation and command, emphasis, and description. (Al-Shahrī, 2004, p. 447) Collectively, these mechanisms aim to transform convictions and substantiate a particular viewpoint.

A. Assertive Speech Acts:

Assertive speech acts are illocutionary acts used by the speaker to state information, establish facts, or convey data. Although they may appear to be mere descriptions of reality, they perform a powerful argumentative function by persuading the recipient (Naḥlah, 2011, p. 103), directing their opinion, and compelling them to adopt a particular position or reach a specific conclusion.

Several assertive speech acts occur in these noble verses. One example appears in the words of Allah Almighty:

﴿أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ﴾

Here, a negative declarative construction is employed to emphasize that Allah Glorified and Exalted be He alone deserves to be worshipped. This is achieved by denying divinity to all others, including idols and false deities, and affirming

the prophethood of the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) as the Seal of the Messengers, who must be followed because he was sent to all humankind.

This meaning is conveyed through the following imperfect verbs: "we worship," "we associate," and "take." These verbs function as informative statements possessing argumentative value, establishing that divinity belongs exclusively to Allah Almighty and that no being in the heavens or on earth deserves worship except Him Glorified and Exalted be He.

A negative declarative construction also occurs in the words of Allah Almighty:

﴿مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَٰكِن كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُّسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾﴾

(The Noble Qurʾān)

The verb "was" is repeated three times: twice in negative constructions and once in an affirmative construction. This repetition emphasizes that our master Abraham (may the finest prayers and peace be upon him) was an upright Muslim prophet who followed the religion of Allah, sincerely worshipped his Lord alone, and did not associate any partners with Him.

It also refutes the argument of the People of the Book concerning our master Abraham (peace be upon him): Christians claimed that he was a Christian who followed Christianity, whereas Jews claimed that he was a Jew who followed Judaism. The construction thereby demonstrates the weakness of their argument.

B. Performative Speech Acts:

Performative speech acts are constructions that cannot be judged as either true or false. Rather, they are used to produce a direct effect through such forms as command, prohibition, interrogation, and vocative address. (Hārūn, 2001, p. 13) These acts therefore aim to direct the recipient's mind, attract their attention, and persuade them of the viewpoint being presented.

Several performative speech acts are employed in these noble verses. One example is found in the words of Allah Almighty:

﴿قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾﴾

Imperative verbs occur frequently in these verses, including "say," "come," "say," and "bear witness." They serve to guide and direct the People of the Book towards the right path by inviting them to worship Allah Glorified and Exalted be He alone and to abandon the worship of false deities.

As for the two imperative verbs "believe" and "reject," they are employed to demonstrate the malice of a group among the People of the Book and their followers. They attempted to deceive the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and his Companions by claiming to follow Islam, although the opposite was true.

On the basis of the foregoing, we find that performative speech acts contributed to giving the text an argumentative dimension. They contain a set of arguments that establish the truthfulness of the Messenger's call (peace and blessings be upon him) and reveal the extent of the scheming of the People of the Book and their insincerity in following the Prophet and Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him).

6.3.2. Rhetorical Mechanisms:

Rhetorical mechanisms in argumentation comprise a set of techniques, linguistic devices both figurative and ornamental and communicative strategies employed by the speaker to persuade the recipient, influence their emotions and intellect, and direct their convictions towards a particular idea without coercion. (Al-ʿAzzāwī, 2006)

A. Metonymy:

Metonymy occurs in the words of Allah Almighty:

﴿وَقَالَت طَّائِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ آمِنُوا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَجْهَ النَّهَارِ وَاكْفُرُوا آخِرَهُ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾﴾

This constitutes unrestricted metonymy based on a part-for-whole relationship associated with the day. The People of the Book instructed their followers to deceive the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and his Companions by professing belief before them at the beginning of the day and subsequently rejecting what had been revealed at its end. Their purpose was to cast doubt upon the Islamic faith. They also advised their followers to remain committed to their own religion and not abandon it.

The metonymy thus serves to exaggerate their outward display of belief as a means of gaining the trust of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and his Companions. It also emphasizes the extent of their adherence to their own creed and their determination to remain steadfast in it. Their objective was to achieve a single outcome: to deceive those whose faith was weak and turn them away from their religion.

B. Metaphor:

Metaphor occurs in the words of Allah Almighty:

﴿يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُونَ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧١﴾﴾

(The Noble Qurʾān)

The metaphor is employed as an argument revealing the extent of the scheming and cunning of the People of the Book in altering facts. They do so by reversing realities, making truth appear false and falsehood appear true.

This argument is strengthened by the implicit metaphor, "you clothe the truth with falsehood." Falsehood is likened to clothing that is worn and that covers and conceals the human body. The object of comparison clothing is omitted, while the verb "clothe" remains as an indication of it, thereby forming an implicit metaphor.

This metaphor consequently deprives the People of the Book of the qualities of truthfulness and noble morality and attributes to them the characteristics of lying and falsification. They are depicted as a community that knows the truth yet conceals it, spreads error and falsehood, and seeks to destroy Islam and the Muslims.

C. Antithesis:

Positive antithesis between "truth" and "falsehood" occurs in the words of Allah Almighty:

﴿يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُونَ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧١﴾﴾

(The Noble Qurʾān)

This antithesis demonstrates the persistence of the People of the Book in deceiving others by hiding the truth, mixing it with falsehood, and concealing it in order to distort the signs of Allah, distance people from Islam, and turn them away from the religion of truth. The argumentative function of this antithesis therefore reveals the extent of their malice and scheming despite their knowledge that what the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) brought was the truth.

Negative antithesis between "lead you astray" and "they lead none astray" is also employed in the words of Allah Almighty:

﴿وَدَّت طَّائِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يُضِلُّونَكُمْ وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾﴾

(The Noble Qurʾān)

This antithesis demonstrates the extent of the hostility of the People of the Book towards the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) and his Companions, as well as their attempts to mislead and deceive the believers in order to turn them away from faith and the worship of Allah Almighty. Its argumentative function establishes that the People of the Book only lead themselves astray and are incapable of deceiving or misleading the believers.

Quasi-Logical Mechanisms

6.3.3. Argumentative Connectives:

An argumentative connective is defined as a device "that links two or more utterances within a single argumentative strategy" (Al-ʿAzzāwī, 2006, pp. 26–27), in which the subsequent utterance is related to the preceding one.

The argumentative connective "but" occurs in the words of Allah Almighty:

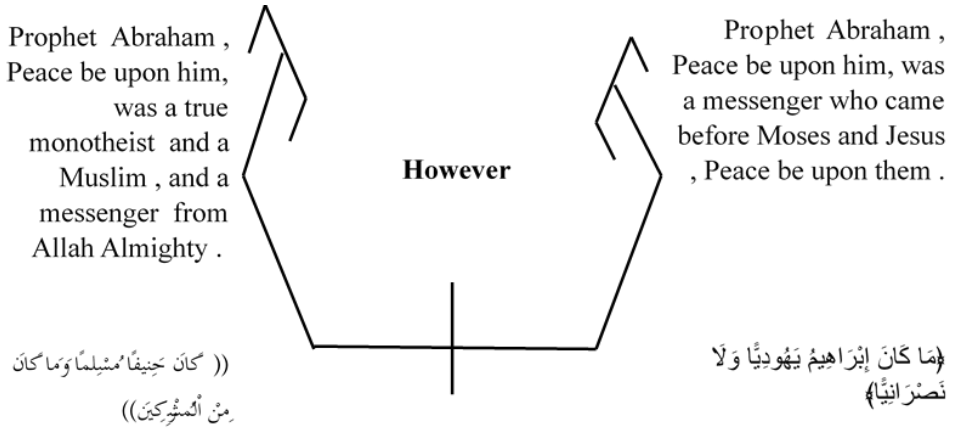
﴿مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَٰكِن كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُّسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾﴾

An argumentative opposition is established between the statement preceding the connective "Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian" and the statement that follows it. The first part of the verse presents the argument that our master Abraham (peace be upon him) was neither Jewish nor Christian. In the second part, this argument is followed by the corrective statement:

"But he was an upright Muslim, and he was not one of the polytheists."

This corrective construction affirms the upright monotheism and submission to Allah of our master Abraham (peace be upon him) and denies that he was a polytheist, since he was a messenger sent by Allah.

The first argument thus supports the conclusion that our master Abraham (peace be upon him) was sent before Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them both). The second argument is stronger than the first and leads to the conclusion that our master Abraham (peace be upon him) was the intimate friend of Allah and the father of the prophets and messengers. Allah sent him to guide people, invite them to worship Him, affirm His oneness, and refrain from associating any partners with Him.



Argumentative Link Diagram

6.3.4.1. Argumentative Operators:

An argumentative operator is "a morpheme which, when applied to a particular content or utterance, transforms the argumentative force of that utterance." (Al-Nājiḥ, 2011, pp. 19–20) In other words, argumentative operators are linguistic devices and components such as particles of negation, restriction, and exception used to direct discourse towards a particular conclusion. Their importance lies in limiting and narrowing the possible interpretations of an utterance, thereby preventing the recipient from drawing erroneous conclusions and decisively persuading them of the writer's or speaker's viewpoint. (Al-ʿAzzāwī, 2006, p. 26)

6.3.4.2. The Argumentative Operator "mā … illā" ("not … until/only"):

The operator "mā … illā" occurs in the words of Allah Almighty:

﴿يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تُحَاجُّونَ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَا أُنزِلَتِ التَّوْرَاةُ وَالْإِنجِيلُ إِلَّا مِن بَعْدِهِ ۚ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾﴾

This operator supports the argument that our master Abraham (peace be upon him) was neither Jewish nor Christian. It also emphasizes that he was sent before Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them both) that is, before the revelation of the Torah and the Gospel and demonstrates that the argument advanced by the People of the Book was false. The restrictive

construction was therefore appropriate to the circumstances of the People of the Book, who claimed that Abraham (peace be upon him) had followed their religion.

6.3.5. The Argumentative Scale:

The argumentative scale is an ordering relationship among arguments whereby they are arranged in ascending or descending order according to their strength. It involves progressing from a weaker argument to a stronger one and ultimately reaching a conclusion. (Al-ʿAzzāwī, 2006, p. 21) Its purpose is to influence the recipient and persuade them of the conclusion reached.

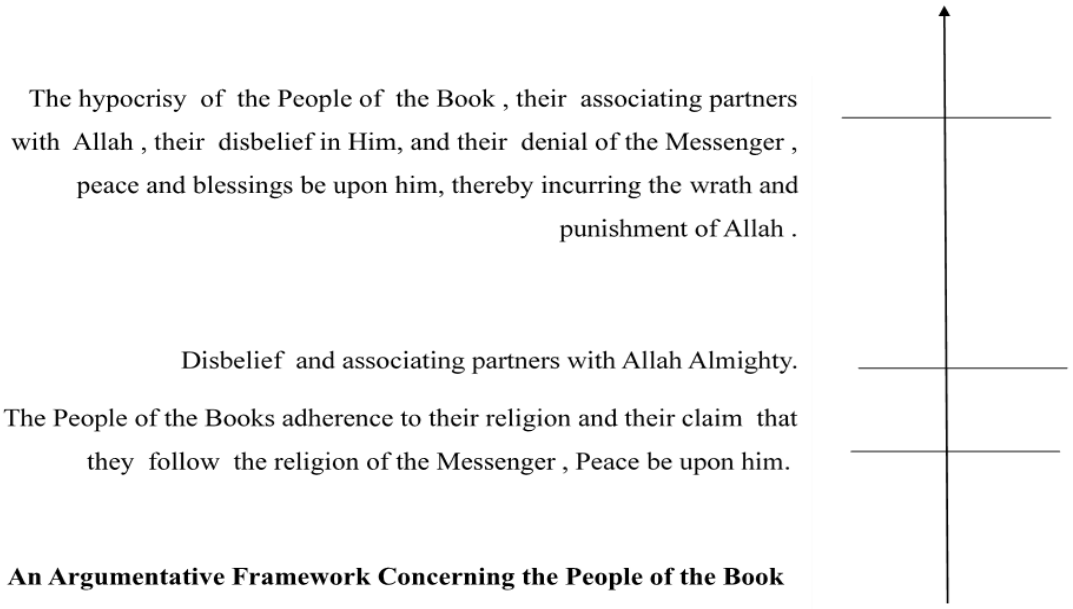
A. The First Argumentative Scale:

Anyone examining the words of Allah Almighty:

﴿وَقَالَت طَّائِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ آمِنُوا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَجْهَ النَّهَارِ وَاكْفُرُوا آخِرَهُ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوا إِلَّا لِمَن تَبِعَ دِينَكُمْ قُلْ إِنَّ الْهُدَىٰ هُدَى اللَّهِ أَن يُؤْتَىٰ أَحَدٌ مِّثْلَ مَا أُوتِيتُمْ أَوْ يُحَاجُّوكُمْ عِندَ رَبِّكُمْ ۗ قُلْ إِنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾ يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٧٤﴾﴾

will find that these verses contain several arguments varying in their degree of strength. They begin with the argument advanced by the People of the Book, which took the form of advice and instructions to their followers to remain committed to their religion. They instructed them to claim that they were Muslims who followed the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and adhered to his religious law. Their purpose was to mislead Muslims whose faith was weak and undermine their belief by concealing the truth and claiming that the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) and his Companions were following falsehood.

These verses therefore came to expose them, reveal the weakness of their argument, and inform the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) of their malicious intentions and wickedness so that he might remain vigilant against them.

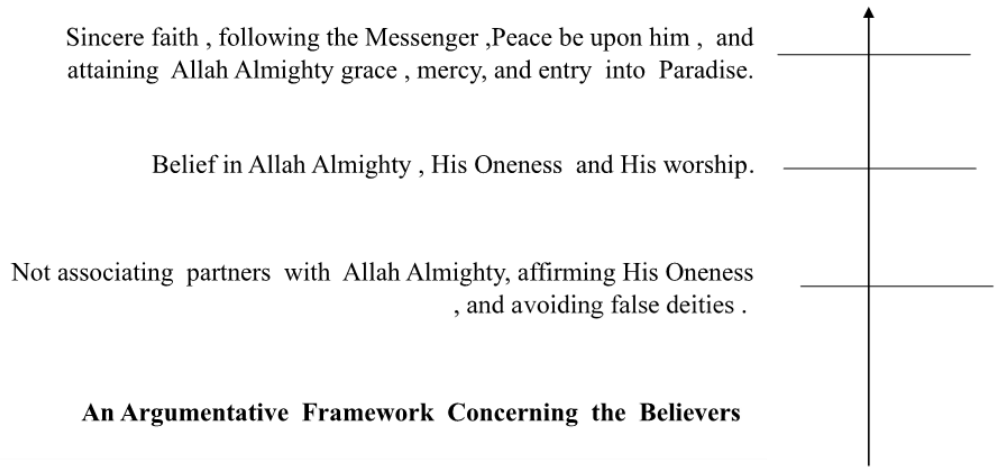


An Argumentative Framework Concerning the People of the Book

B. The Second Argumentative Scale:

In addition, the preceding noble verses contain further arguments demonstrating that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was following the truth, whereas the People of the Book were following falsehood. He therefore invited them to worship Allah Almighty alone, abandon polytheism, and devote themselves to His worship.

Consequently, associating partners with Allah Almighty and worshipping false deities constitute a weak argument. By contrast, the Prophet's call to the believers and the People of the Book to affirm the oneness of Allah constitutes a strong argument. It leads to Allah Almighty granting victory to His believing servants, increasing His bounty upon them, guiding them to the straight path, bestowing His mercy upon them, and admitting them into Paradise.



On the basis of the foregoing, we conclude that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) established the argument against the People of the Book by directing them to worship Allah, affirm His oneness, abandon the worship of false deities, and embrace Islam in order to attain Allah's bounty. However, this counsel and guidance were met with rejection, as they claimed to follow the religion of Abraham and equated their religion with his. Allah Almighty therefore responded to them and demonstrated that their argument was false, for Abraham was neither a Christian nor a Jew; rather, he was an upright Muslim who followed the religion of Allah Almighty and was sent before Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them both).

Conclusion:

By the grace of Allah Almighty, this research has been completed and its various sections brought to a close. Nevertheless, its methodological aspirations have not been exhausted, nor have its epistemological horizons been fully explored. In this paper, we examined the concept of argumentation from both linguistic and technical perspectives. We demonstrated that classical Arab scholars were concerned with argumentation theory and succeeded in articulating its conceptual framework in their writings. Their understanding of argumentation became evident within rhetorical and Qurʾānic studies, which played a significant role in constructing and shaping modern argumentative inquiry.

Modern rhetoricians and linguists, for their part, drew upon both classical and modern Arabic rhetorical studies in constructing their theories, considering argumentation to be a rhetorical and linguistic concept founded upon the principles of persuasion and disputation.

These studies also sought to reread argumentative rhetoric from a modern perspective. They focused on the methods and mechanisms capable of persuading addressees and reformulated them in a manner compatible with modern linguistic inquiry by drawing upon contemporary pragmatic concepts and Arabic rhetoric.

As for the account of the People of the Book and the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in Surat Āl ʿImrān, it is rich in argumentative mechanisms, operators, and connectives. The linguistic mechanisms employed include both assertive and performative speech acts, while the rhetorical mechanisms include metonymy, metaphor, and antithesis. Quasi-logical mechanisms are also employed, particularly the argumentative connective "but," in addition to argumentative operators such as "mā … illā" ("not … except/only"). As for the argumentative scale, its arguments are structured to support the final conclusion.

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