

ON THE BURDEN OF PROOF IN GENERAL

E. P. Sanders wrote: "The burden of proof lies with whoever is making a claim." We cannot prove everything so we can also say, "The burden to present favourable evidence and explain contrary evidence lies with whoever is making a claim." A claim is an appeal to reality so by default it has to be a call for proof or evidential support.

So if you say there is no Jesus you are claiming something and must try to show it is true. It is your duty. The same if you say there is a Jesus.

The burden of proof is a message and the message is, "Here is the evidence or proof. Let it show you that the claim is true."

If you assert a truth claim be it, "I believe x" or "X is a fact" it falls on you to verify the claim. That means you have to verify that you believe x or that you know x is true.

The burden is heavier if you call something a fact rather than settling for just saying you believe in it.

Truth claims are one thing. Truth claims that are important practically are another. So do you need the same burden of proof when you say, "My dog hates snow" as you do for saying, "I need to walk my dog a second time every day"? Imagine as far as truth goes both are equally important. But one has an additional importance. It requires an action. The second one is it. If there is a choice between proving one of them then it comes first.

What about the argument that only a true Christian transformed by God's grace can understand Christianity or Christ? This gives that person the burden of proof. How? God is not going to have this communicative two way intimate relationship with a person without being entitled to have that person share the good news and the gospel. The person would be acting ashamed of God for hiding it. And its selfish to hide and not broadcast it. Others can have a relationship with God too like that person's. So if you claim to have a relationship with God that transforms you you cannot expect anybody to take your word for it. You have to show it. This amounts to YOU becoming evidence for God or proof for God. Ordinary goodness would not be enough. You would need to be exceptionally holy and heroically so. So people must see that and see how it shows there probably is a God and then worry about more intellectual or nature based reasons to believe in God. Proofs for God cannot work without the practical proof - the reborn life.

Plantinga says that if you claim there is a God you don't need evidence or proof. Why? Because evidence or proof could be deceptions from demons or nature if there is no honest God to protect evidence and proof. But that looks okay until you realise that there is no such thing as one claim. A claim is always a summary of claims. To claim one thing is to claim all the things that go with it even if you don't state them. See below.

I claim there is a God.

This positive claim brings countless negative (I claim that there is no etc) with it.

Therefore I claim there is no demon manipulating me to put that in my head.

Therefore I claim there is no alien race manipulating.

Therefore, therefore, therefore - you can go on until the middle of the next millenium.

And positive claims do not come alone. To say there is a God is to claim other things too such as that maybe he raised Jesus.

Plantinga is actually picking out one claim for favourable treatment. He cannot do that for even if you don't need evidence for God or proof you still need evidence and proof indirectly for the claims that go with it regardless of whether they are positive or negative. In other words, you have to provide evidence and proof as to why the other claims that come with it are wrong. You cannot say you can simply assume there is a God when you are making no effort to prove there is no demon manipulating evidence.

Plantinga is lying about the burden of proof or evidence by over-simplifying it for his own manipulative agenda. His argument is a lie and if you have to lie to justify faith in an honest God you need an integrity test.

Saying something does not need evidence is making a claim. Plantinga has the burden of proof for he says God does not need evidence. Thus doubters and unbelievers need good and careful and rational arguments from him laying out the

reasons and evidences for accepting there might be a God and then that there is indeed one.

Many of the things we know are not based on evidence - eg that I am awake now and not dreaming. So what do we need evidence for God for? But the difference is that evidence says dreaming happens! You may not be able to see the love your dog has for you. But it is real for it shows it by its actions. Love unlike God cannot let you test its presence. It is just the way it is.

Relevance is important too. It is important to give time and effort to see the evidence and proof for things that are actually very relevant.

God by definition is that which alone matters. God should not be assumed for he is not really important. God cannot have any needs therefore he cannot need to tell us what to do or even advise us thus God is irrelevant. If God has nothing to do with how we behave then God cannot have as big of a burden of proof as would, "Help your neighbour in their time of need."

Jesus, it has been noted, is no good if you want to battle for social change. Thus proving he is the ideal man is not as important as say proving Confucius is.