

Surah 2. Al-Baqara

Asad: For, when they meet those who have attained to faith, they say, "We believe [as you believe]" - but when they find themselves alone with one another, they say, "Do you inform them of what God has disclosed to you, so that they might use it in argument against you, quoting the words of your Sustainer?"⁶² Will you not, then, use your reason?"

Malik: When they meet the believers (Muslims) they say: "We too are believers," but when they (people of the Book) meet each other in private they say: "Would you disclose to the believers (Muslims) what Allah has revealed to you? So that they (Muslims) may use it as an argument against you in the court of your Rabb? Have you no sense?"

Mustafa Khattab:

When they meet the believers they say, "We believe." But in private they say "to each other?", "Will you disclose to the believers the knowledge Allah has revealed to you,¹ so that they may use it against you before your Lord? Do you not understand?"

Pickthall: And when they fall in with those who believe, they say: We believe. But when they go apart one with another they say: Prate ye to them of that which Allah hath disclosed to you that they may contend with you before your Lord concerning it? Have ye then no sense?

Yusuf Ali: Behold! when they meet the men of Faith they say: "We believe" but when they meet each other in private they say: "Shall you tell them what Allah hath revealed to you that they may engage you in argument about it before your Lord?" Do ye not understand (their aim)?⁸³

Transliteration: Waitha laqoo allatheena amanoo qaloo amanna waitha khala baAAaduhum ila baAAadin qaloo atuhammadithoonahum bima fataha Allahu AAalaykum liyuhajjookum bihi AAinda rabbikum afala taAAaqqiloon

Author Comments

62 - Lit., "before [or "in the sight of"] your Sustainer". Most of the commentators (e.g., Zamakhshari, Baghawi, Razi) agree in that the expression "your Sustainer" stands here for "that which your Sustainer has revealed", namely, the Biblical prophecy relating to the coming of a prophet "from among the brethren" of the children of Israel, and that, therefore, the above phrase implies an argument on the basis of the Jews' own scriptures. (See also note [33] above.)

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i.e., verses prophesizing the coming of the Prophet (?) in the Torah (including Deuteronomy 18:15-18 and

83 - The immediate argument applies to the Jews of Medina, but the more general argument applies to the people of Faith and the people without Faith, as we shall see below. If the Muslims of Medina ever entertained the hope that the Jews in their city would as a body welcome Muhammad Mustafa as the Prophet prophesied in their own books, they were mistaken. In Deut. xviii. 18, they read: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee." (i.e., like unto Moses) which was interpreted by some of their doctors as referring to Muhammad, and they came into Islam. The Arabs are a kindred branch of the Semitic family, and are correctly described in relation to the Jews as "their brethren"; and there is no question that there was not another Prophet "like unto Moses" until Muhammad came; in fact the postscript of Deuteronomy, which was written many centuries after Moses, says: "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." But the Jews as a body were jealous of Muhammad, and played a double part. When the Muslim community began to grow stronger they pretended to be of them, but really tried to keep back any knowledge of their own Scriptures from them, lest they should be beaten by their own arguments. The more general interpretation holds good in all ages. Faith and Unfaith are pitted against each other. Faith has to struggle against power, position, organization, and privilege. When it gains ground, Unfaith comes forward insincerely and claims fellowship. But in its own mind it is jealous of the armoury of science and knowledge which Faith brings into the service of Allah. But Allah knows all, and if the people of Faith will only seek knowledge sincerely whereever they can find it, -even as far afield as China, as Muhammad said, they can defeat Unfaith on its own ground. [Even though the directive that Muslims should derive knowledge regardless of its location is an acceptable proposition from the Islamic viewpoint, the tradition to which the author refers here is not authentic].

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