

Surah 2. Al-Baqara

Asad: NOW THERE IS a kind of man¹⁸⁷ whose views on the life of this world may please thee greatly, and [the more so as] he cites God as witness to what is in his heart and is, moreover, exceedingly skillful in argument.¹⁸⁸

Malik: Among the people there is one whose speech fascinates you in this worldly life; he may even call upon Allah to witness what is in his heart, yet he is your staunch opponent.

Pickthall: And of mankind there is he whose conversation on the life of this world pleaseth thee (Muhammad), and he calleth Allah to witness as to that which is in his heart; yet he is the most rigid of opponents.

Yusuf Ali: There is the type of man whose speech about this world's life may dazzle thee and he calls Allah to witness about what is in his heart; yet is he the most contentious of enemies.²²⁷

Transliteration: Wamina alInnasi man yuAAajibuka qawluhu fee alhayati alddunya wayushhidu Allaha AAala ma fee qalbihi wahuwa aladdu alkhisami

Khatab:

There are some ?hypocrites? who impress you with their views regarding worldly affairs and openly call upon Allah to witness what is in their hearts, yet they are your worst adversaries.

Author Comments

187 - Lit., "among the people there is he" (or "such as"). Since there is no valid reason to suppose, as some commentators do, that this refers to a particular person - a contemporary of the Prophet - the most reliable authorities hold that the above passage has a general meaning (cf. Razi). As the context shows, it is a further elaboration of the allusion, made in {2:200-201}, to two contrasting attitudes: the attitude of people whose only real concern is the life of this world, and that of people who are mindful of the hereafter as well as, or even more than, their present life.

188 - Lit., "the most contentious of adversaries in a dispute". According to Az-Zajaj (quoted by Razi), this signifies a person who is always able to defeat his opponent in a controversy by the use of extremely adroit and often misleading arguments. It is obvious that this passage refers to people who hold plausible and even admirable views regarding a possible improvement of human society and of man's lot on earth, but at the same time refuse to be guided by what they regard as "esoteric" considerations - like belief in a life after death - and justify their exclusive preoccupation with the affairs of this world by seemingly sound arguments and a stress on their own ethical objectives ("they cite God as witness to what is in their hearts"). There is an inescapable affinity between the mental attitude described in the above passage and the one spoken of in {2:8-12}.

227 - The two contrasted types of men mentioned in ii. 200 and 201 are here further particularised: the glib hypocrite who appears worldly-wise but plans harm, contrasted with the sincere believer who is prepared to suffer martyrdom for his faith. The Commentators give names of people who exemplified these types. The mischief maker has a smooth tongue and indulges in plausible talk with many oaths. He appears to be worldly-wise, and though you may despise him for his worldiness, you may not realise his frauds. Behind your back he is an implacable enemy. He stirs up quarrels, and causes all sorts of mischief to you or your friends. He can never win God's love, and we are warned against his tricks.

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