

Surah 2. Al-Baqara

Asad: ALL MANKIND were once one single community; [then they began to differ -] whereupon God raised up the prophets as heralds of glad tidings and as warners, and through them bestowed revelation from on high, setting forth the truth, so that it might decide between people with regard to all on which they had come to hold divergent views.¹⁹⁷ Yet none other than the selfsame people who had been granted this [revelation] began, out of mutual jealousy, to disagree about its meaning after all evidence of the truth had come unto them. But God guided the believers unto the truth about which, by His leave, they had disagreed: for God guides onto a straight way him that wills [to be guided].¹⁹⁸

Malik: Mankind was one nation having one religion. Later when people invented other religions, Allah appointed Prophets as bearers of good news and warnings; and revealed to them the Book with the True Guidance to settle the matters of dispute between mankind. But the very people to whom it was given, started disputes after the clear arguments had come to them, because of rivalry between one another. Allah has guided the believers by His will to the truth in those matters in which they had differences. Allah guides whom He pleases towards the Right Way.

Pickthall: Mankind were one community, and Allah sent (unto them) Prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and revealed therewith the Scripture with the truth that it might judge between mankind concerning that wherein they differed. And only those unto whom (the Scripture) was given differed concerning it, after clear proofs had come unto them, through hatred one of another. And Allah by His will guided those who believe unto the truth of that concerning which they differed. Allah guideth whom He will unto a Straight path.

Yusuf Ali: Mankind was one single nation and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth to judge between people in matters wherein they differed; but the People of the Book after the clear Signs came to them did not differ among themselves except through selfish contumacy. Allah by His Grace guided the believers to the truth concerning that wherein they differed. For Allah guides whom He will to a path that is straight.

Transliteration: Kana alInnasu ommatan wahidatan fabaAAatha Allahu alInnabiyyeena mubashshireena wamunthireena waanzala maAAahumu alkitabaa bialhaqqi liyahkuma bayna alInnasi feema ikhtalafoo feehi wama ikhtalafa feehi illa allatheena ootoohu min baAAadi ma jaathumu albayyinatuu baghyan baynahum fahada Allahu allatheena amanoo lima ikhtalafoo feehi mina alhaqqi biithnihi waAllahu yahdee man yashao ila siratin mustaqeemin

Khatab:

Humanity had once been one community ?of believers before they lost faith?. Then Allah raised prophets as deliverers of good news and as warners, and revealed to them the Scriptures in truth to judge among people regarding their disputes. And no one disputed the Scriptures except the very people who received them after clear proofs had come to them—out of jealousy. Then Allah, by His grace, has guided the believers to the truth regarding those disputes. And Allah guides whoever He wills to the Straight Path.

Author Comments

197 - By using the expression ummah wahidah ("one single community") to describe the original state of mankind, the Qur'an does not propound, as might appear at first glance, the idea of a mythical "golden

age" obtaining at the dawn of man's history. What is alluded to in this verse is no more than the relative homogeneity of instinctive perceptions and inclinations characteristic of man's primitive mentality and the primitive social order in which he lived in those early days. Since that homogeneity was based on a lack of intellectual and emotional differentiation rather than on a conscious agreement among the members of human society, it was bound to disintegrate in the measure of man's subsequent development. As his thought-life became more and more complex, his emotional capacity and his individual needs, too, became more differentiated, conflicts of views and interests came to the fore, and mankind ceased to be "one single community" as regards their outlook on life and their moral valuations: and it was at this stage that divine guidance became necessary. (It is to be borne in mind that the term al-kitab refers here - as in many other places in the Qur'an - not to any particular scripture but to divine revelation as such.) This interpretation of the above Qur'anic passage is supported by the fact that the famous Companion 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud used to read it thus: "All mankind were once one single community, and then they began to differ (fakhtalafu) - whereupon God raised up...", etc. Although the word fakhtalafu interpolated here by Ibn Mas'ud does not appear in the generally-accepted text of the Qur'an, almost all of the authorities are of the opinion that it is implied in the context.

198 - Or: "God guides whomever He wills onto a straight way." As is made clear in the second part of verse {253} of this surah, man's proneness to intellectual dissension is not an accident of history but an integral, God-willed aspect of human nature as such: and it is this natural circumstance to which the words "by His leave" allude. For an explanation of the phrase "out of mutual jealousy", see [23:53](#) and the corresponding note [30].

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