# *A Study of concept of "Ibn Ullah " (The Son of God) in the Context of Gordon D. Nickel's book The Qur'an with Christian Commentary*

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**Abstract:**

*For a long time, the Orientalists have been targeting Islam and its sources with various accusations and objections. One name in this list is that of Gordon D. Nickel who has criticized various aspects of the Qur'an in his book "The Qur'an with Christian Commentary". Among these objections, one point is about Uzair's AS. He wrote that the Qur'an accuses the Jews of believing Uzair to be the son of Allah, which is contrary to historical facts. Gordon D. Nickel is either misunderstood in this context or he has deliberately presented this point in this way, because Islamic sources associate this accusation with a specific group of Jews instead of the entire community of Jews. In this paper, this point will be studied in the light of Islamic teachings and Bible and the actual facts about the said point will be stated.*

**Keywords:** *Orientalists, Accusations, Godon D. Nickle, Son of God, Quran Narrative, History.*

## Introduction

The Holy Qur'an is the last inspired book of Allah, which was revealed to the last Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. Allah has taken responsibility for the protection of this book. Allah says: *"Verily, We, it is We Who have sent down the Dhikr (i.e. the Quran) and surely We would guard it (from corruption).*[1]

Allah is the first interpreter of the Quran.[2] Similarly the Messenger of Allah ﷺ explained the Qur'an with his words and deeds, in this sense the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is the second interpreter of the Qur'an. )[3]( The Prophet PBUH explain the meanings of the Quran to his Companions, as Jalaluddin Syuti writes: *Just as the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) taught his companions the words of the Qur'an, he also explained their meaning to them*.[4] Ibn Taymiyyah writes: *This knowledge of the interpretation of the Qur'an and the understanding of its meanings was transferred from the Companions to the Tabieen and in the same way those who came after them became the inheritors of this knowledge*.[5] In this regard, Muslim commentators have written thousands of commentaries in different languages, in which the meaning of each verse and word of the Holy Quran can be understood by considering. Each commentary has its own characteristics. Someone has explained the discussions of vocabulary and rhetoric, while someone has focused on the rulings. Some have kept the literary aspects in front of them, while some have discussed about logic, philosophy and rationality. In short, these commentators have considered every aspect of the Qur'an and have written about it and are still doing so.

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[1] Al Hijr: 9

[2] Shah WaliUllah, Al Fawzul Kabir Fi Usool ut Tafsir, Islamic Books, Lahore, P. 13

[3] Ibid

[4] Syuti, Abul Fadhl abdurrahman bin abi bakr, alatqan, fi uloolel Quran, mktbtul Ilm, Lahore, V.2, P. 352

[5] Ibn e Taimiyyah, Abul Abbas Ahmad bin Abdul Halim, Muqaddmah Tarikh Ibn e Khaldun, Dar al Kutb Ilmiyyah, Bairut, 1433H/2012, V.1, P 48

A large part of the Holy Qur'an deals with other religions and nations, so naturally the interest of non-Muslims has also been with the study of the Qur'an. In this context, various efforts have been made by the followers of other religions to learn the Qur'an.

In this regard, the names of various Orientalists who have translated the Qur'an in their own languages are mentioned. According to Dr. Mustafa Saba'i, one of them is the name of the French monk Gerbert, who translated the Holy Quran and other Arabic books into his own language. [6]( The first Latin translation of the Holy Qur'an was done in 1143 AD.[7] Similarly, Noldiki, Bila Shir, Geoffrey and Goldziher also got fame due to the study of the Qur'an and the sciences of the Qur'an.[8]

The Orientalists attacked from different angles to reduce the importance of the Holy Quran, sometimes they denied that this book is the word of God, sometimes they objected to its preservation. Sometimes they raised questions about its eloquence and sometimes Its subjects, style and arrangement were criticized. This is the reason why Muslim scholars at different times critically evaluated the works of the Orientalists and proved that the Orientalists were guilty of academic, historical and linguistic errors in this field. Along with this, the establishment of baseless assumptions and misunderstandings of Orientalists also have a lot of influence in these objections. A contemporary name in this list of Orientalists is that of Gordon D. Nickle.

## Introduction to Gordon D. Nickel

Gordon D. Nickel was born in the United Kingdom in 1953. He received his MA degree from the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, in 1987, and his doctorate from the University of Calgary, Canada (University

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[6] Sabayi, Mustafa, Dr., Istishraq aur Mustashriqeen, translation: Muhammad Nur ul Hasn Khan Naeemi Azhari, kitab Mahl, Lahore, 1438H/2017, P. 30

[7] Alam Khan, Dr., Istishraq aur Ilm e Hadith, Aks Publications, Lahore, 1442H/2013, P. 21

[8] Sabahuddin Abdur Rahman, Sayyed, Islam aur Mustashrqeen, Dar Al Musannifin, Azam Garh, India, 1424H/2004, V.6, P. 6

of Calgary) in 2004 on the subject of the Qur'an. He is a Christian scholar and writer. He has written a lot about Christianity as well as Islam and you have given many lectures on the subject of Quran in Pakistan, India, Malaysia, Canada and America. Along with this, he wrote several books about Islam and Muslims, three of which became famous, for example:

1.Peaceable witness among the Muslim
2. The Gentle Answers to the Muslim Accusation of Biblical Falsification
3.The Quran with Christian Commentary.[9]

His first supervisor, Harold Gentz. He learned a lot about language and writing from them. Apart from this, he also gave him a lot of good advice regarding teaching. He completed his doctorate degree under the supervision of Dr. Andrew Rippen. In addition to them, his wife Gwenyth Nickle worked with him for thirty years regarding teaching and writing. His wife helped him a lot in writing various books. Apart from these people, he also got full support from the Mennonite Brethren Church (Mennonite Brethren Church). Various people in the church gave him advice and it was to them that you studied Islam for the first time. He worked as the director of the Institute of Advanced Christian Studies in Bangalore.[10]

He is a Christian and consider the Bible to be the Word of God as well as a document for faith. He has a special relationship with the Church and the Church plays an important role in his spiritual growth and upbringing. He Worked with committed Christians, and believe the beliefs and teachings of orthodox Christians to be true.[11]

He studied Islam in great depth and wrote a translation of the entire Qur'an as well as a brief commentary on it in the form of short notes for Muslim

[9]Academia.edu.com، Gordon D. Nickel, The Quran with Christian Commentary, Zondervan Academic, New York,2020, P.11
[10] Gordon D. Nickel, The Quran with Christian Commentary, P.31
[11] Ibid, P. 24

and non-Muslim readers. Gordon D. Nickel is still alive and doing various scholarly activities.

An important work by Gordon D. Nickel is "The Qur'an with Christian Commentary". This book has been published by Zondervan Academic, a New York 2020. The said book consists of 663 pages in which the translation of all the surahs of the Quran and short notes are found. The translation of the Qur'an listed here is by "AJ Drogue" while the footnotes are by Gordon D. Nickel. The said book started with Surah Fatiha and ended with Surah Al-Nas. In between, some other topics of other authors are also discussed, for example, Abraham in the Quran[12] which is an article written by George Bristow, as well as J. Scott Bridger's article, Early Christian Exegesis of the Quran. Gordon D. Nickel's own essay Tempering with pre-Islamic Scripture in The Quran.[13] etc.

## An overview of the author's ideas

Gordon D. Nickel believes that the Qur'an accuses the Jews of believing Uzair to be the son of God, and that this is contrary to history. The above claim is examined below.

Uzair (peace be upon him) is mentioned with the name only once in the Holy Quran. Allah says:

وقالت اليهود عزيرابن الله وقالت النصارىٰ المسيح ابن الله، ذالک قولهم بافوامهم يضامؤن قول الذين كفروامن قبل قٰتلهم الله انى يؤفكون۔[14]

*"The Jews say that Uzair is the son of Allah and the Christians say that the Messiah is the son of Allah. They are speaking like those who have become disbelievers before them. Allah's curse be on them, How they are deluded away from the truth.?"*

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[12] Ibid, P.90
[13] Gordon D. Nickel, The Quran with Christian Commentary, P. 142
[14] Al. Tawba: 30

The opinion of the Muslim commentators about this verse is that this verse of the Qur'an is not about all Jews, but about certain Jews. Allama Ibn Jarir narrated this tradition of Ibn Abbas that Salaam bin Mishkam, Numan bin Ufa, Abu Anas, Malik bin Al-Dhaif and Shas bin Qays came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said: *How should we listen to you and obey you? One thing is that you have abandoned our Qibla and the other is that you do not consider Hazrat Uzair to be the son of Allah*.[15]

Allama Qurtubi writes:

هٰذا لفظ خرج على العموم ومعناه الخصوص لان ليس كل اليهود قالوا ذالک ۔[16]

*"This word is not general but specific because not all Jews said it".*

Examples of this type are found in the Qur'an in many other verses, for example, Allah says:

الذين قال لهم الناس ان الناس قد جمعوا لكم۔[17]

*"Those to whom the narrators said, ``The people have gathered to fight you."*

Allama Qurtubi writes in this regard:

ولم يقل ذالک كل الناس۔[18]

*"This thing was not said by all people"*. Mean the said words Meaning the words *"all the people have gathered to fight you"* were not spoken by all the people. But the Qur'an explained in such a way that it appears that all people said this. The same approach has been adopted regarding the related sayings of the Jews.

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[15] Ibn Jarir, Abu Jafr Muhammad Ibn Jarir, Tafsir Jami ul Bayan un Tawil Aayil Quran (Tafsir Ibn Jarir), Dar Ibn Hazm, 1434h/20113, Al. Tawba:30
[16] Tafsir Qurtubi, Al Tawba:30
[17] Al e Imran: 173
[18] Tafsir Qurtubi, V. 8. P. 108

Allama Alosi has also stated this point:

ونسبة الشيئ القبيح اذا صدر من بعض القوم الى الكل مما شاع۔[19]

"Doing an abominable act towards the whole nation while it was committed by some people".

Maulana Maududi has also written the same thing: The intention of the statement of the Holy Quran here is not that all the Jews have unanimously made Ezra the priest the son of God, but the intention is not to say that the error that occurred in the beliefs of the Jews regarding God is due to this. It progressed to such an extent that even those who declared Ezra to be the son of God were born among them.[20]

The opinions of Muslim commentators prove that this belief did not belong to all Jews, but to a particular group in Madinah, which is the reason why Jews did not deny this in the Qur'an at that time. Many questions about the Qur'an have been narrated by the Jews of Madinah, but no objection has been narrated by them on this point of the Qur'an, which is a proof that this belief existed among some of the Jews.

## Cause of the above belief

Allama Ibn Katheer has explained the reason why some Jews call Uzair the son of Allah, the summary of which is that when the Amalekites prevailed over the children of Israel, they killed their scholars and inflicted all kinds of oppression on them. Hazrat Uzair (A.S.) was deeply saddened by this injustice that the children of Israel lost their knowledge, now who will teach them the Book of Allah again. They kept crying because of this grief until Allah gave them the knowledge of the Torah and one day they tied a pen to their finger and wrote down the entire Torah. The people of Israel had hidden the copies of the Torah somewhere in the mountains. He took out those manuscripts and compared both of them and found them to be

[19] Alusi, Abul Fadhl Shahabuddin Syed Mahmud, Ruhul Maani Fi Tafsiril Quran Wa al. sabil Maani,Mktab Rashidia, Lahore, Al. Tawbah: 30

[20] Mawdudi, Tfahimul Quran, Al. Tawbah: 30

absolutely correct. He was so impressed that Satan whispered in his heart that Uzair (A.S.) was the son of Allah.[21]

In the same way, Allama Qurtubi, describing the reason for their belief, has written: The Jews killed many prophets after Moses, so Allah erased the Torah from their hearts. At that time, Uzair (a.s.) went out to get it in the earth, Gabriel (a.s.) came to him and asked what he was saying, he said that he was going to get knowledge, so Allah gave him the teaching of the entire Torah. Uzair (a.s.) took the Torah, and came to Bani Israel and started teaching them about it. It has also been said that Allah made Uzair (a.s.) memorize the entire Torah as a gift. [22]

The Israelites hid the manuscripts of the Torah when they took them out

فاذا هی متساوية لما كان عزير، فضلوا عن ذالک وقالواان هٰذا لم يتهيئا لعزير الا هو ابن الله۔[23]

*"That Torah was like the one that Hazrat Uzair (A.S.) had, because of this they went astray and said that Uzair (A.S.) must be the son of Allah, then he did not forget that Torah."*

Allama Alusi has written that Uzair (a.s.) had found the coffin in which the Torah had been read safely, so people said:

والله مااوتی عزيرا الالانه ابن الله--------ان الله تعالیٰ لم يقذف التوراة فی قلب عزير الا لانه ابنه۔[24]

*"Allah placed the Torah in the hands of Uzair (a.s.) because he is the son of Allah or that Allah did not erase the Torah from the heart of Uzair (a.s.) because he is the son of Allah."*

He further writes:

وذالک جماعة من يهود المدينة۔[25]

[21] Tafsir Ibn e Kathir, Al. Tawbah:30
[22] Tafsir Qurtubi, Al. Tawbah:30
[23] Tafsir Qurtubi, Al. Tawbah:30
[24] Alusi, Ruhul Maani, Al. Tawbah:30

*"And it was a group of Jews of Madinah."* Allama Qurtubi also writes the same:

صح ان تقول الجماعة قول نبيها۔[26]

*"The truth is that this was said by a group".*

From the above statements it is clear that this belief belonged to the Jews of Madinah, and the reason for this was Uzair's re-revealing of the Torah to the Israelites.

## Historical status of Uzair

When Uzair (a.s.) is studied in the light of history, it comes to light that he was indeed highly revered among the Israelites, and it is a clear hypothesis that for this reason he was called Ibn Allah. be

The genealogy of Uzair (a.s.) is described in the Bible as follows:

Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Ahitub, the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, the son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, the son Abishua, the son of Eleazer, the son of Aron the chief priest, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him. ([27]) Although people have not written much on the historical status of Uzair or Ezra, but it is known from the Bible that King Artaxerxes, who became the guarantor of Ezra's cause, was from 405 BC to 359 BC. Therefore, this is the time of Uzair.

Encyclopedia Britannica has written about Uzair:

*Ezra Hebrew 'EZRA' ($5^{th}$ ,$4^{th}$ century B.C Babylon and Jerusalem) religious leader of Jews, who returned from exile in Babylon, reformer who reconstituted the Jewish community on the basis of Torah. His work helped make Judaism a religion in which law was central, enabling the Jews to*

[25] Ibid
[26] Tafsir Qurtubi, Al, Tawbah: 30
[27] Ezra 7:1-6

*survive as a community when they were dispersed all over the world…….called the father of Judaism……..so important in the eyes of his people that later tradition regarded him as no less than Moses*.[28]

It is mentioned further that:

*Ezra come to Jerusalem in seven seventh century, He is introduced before the Nehemiah who was the governor of a province of Judah, from 445 to 433 BC again after an interval.*[29]

Likewise, he was a priest and a scribe and expert in the Jewish law.

*Ezra was a priest and a scribe skilled in the Law.*[30] and *his title was Scribe of the Law of God of heaven.*[31]while *he died and buried in Jerusalem. According to another tradition he returned to Babylonia and where his supposed grave is a holy site.*[32]

In the Old Testament of the Bible, there is a regular book called Ezra, which clearly shows how much respect he had among the Jews, and the reason for this was to revive the teachings of the Torah. Therefore, when the Jews lost the Torah during the attacks of Bakht Nasr, it was Ezra who went in search of it and rewrote the Torah, which is clear from the following text.

*For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statues and judgments.*[33] Similarly, *he went from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given.*[34]

Further writes:

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[28] Encyclopedia Britannica, V. 4, P. 644, word: Ezra
[29] Ibid
[30] Ibid
[31] Ibid
[32] Ibid
[33] Ezra 7:10
[34] Ibid 7:6

*And thou, Ezra after the Wisdom of thy God, that is thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river all such as know the laws of thy God, and teach ye them know them not.*[35]

Before that, in the introduction of King James, it is said that after Bakht Nasr's conquest, it was because of Uzair that the Jews returned to their home in Jerusalem and Uzair was their leader.

*Ezra the head of new emigration, to promote the temple and to impose the law of the Lord of heaven.*[36]

It is clear that Uzair revived the Torah and tried to implement these teachings among the Israelites, which is why he was revered and held a position of great honor within the nation. In the introduction to the King James Bible, it is mentioned that:

*Within two centuries of book's completion Jewish tradition had begun to revere Ezra as a holy sage.*[37]

From these phrases of the Bible, it can be estimated how much importance they had among the Jews. This is the description of this book which is included in the Bible, but apart from this there are also books which are not found in the Bible but in them also the mention of Uzair is found in great detail. In this regard, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan writes:

It should be noted that three books are attributed to Hazrat Uzair. There is a book known as the Book of Ezra, which is included in the books of the present era and people believe it to be true and reliable. *Apart from this, there are two more books which are known as Book I "Ezdras" and Book II " Ezdras". Ezra's name is "Ezdras" in Greek.*[38]

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[35] Ibid 7:25
[36] The English Bible, KJ version, P. 817
[37] The English Bible, KJ version, P.819
[38] Sir Sayyed Ahmad Khan, Tafsir ul Quran, Dost Associate Publishers, Lahore, 1418H/1998, P. 30

Regarding the first book, Sir Syed writes:

*There was also a translation of this book in the Arabic language and there can be no doubt that the same Arabic translation will be popular in Arabia and especially in Madinah, where many Jews lived, and it is highly probable that the translation will be in such words that the people of Hazrat Ezra will be interpreted as Ibn Allah, just as Christians interpret Hazrat Masih as Ibn Allah because of such words. So, this view of our scholars that this was the idea of the Jews of Madinah seems to be a very correct and reliable hypothesis.*[39]

The Jews deny this verse of the Qur'an, and say that we did not call Uzair the son of Allah. In this context, Sir Syed writes: *Their denial does not necessarily mean that no sect was of this belief. If you ask the Christians at that time, all the Christians will deny that they considered Hazrat Maryam to be God. Although, at the end of the 4th century, a sect was born among the Christians, which was called Kolli Rasi Danes. These people considered Mary as God besides the Father and the Son (i.e. God and Christ). This sect lasted for a few days. lived and disappeared from time to time. Likewise, there was a special sect of Jews who are mentioned in the Holy Quran and now it has become extinct.* [40]

Sir Syed considers it to be extinct, but according to Maulana Hifzur Rahman Siwhaari, this sect is still found, after mentioning the denial of this by the Jews, he writes: *This objection of the Jewish scholars, like their predecessors, is falsified and concealed. is based on otherwise they know and in addition everyone who has traveled to Islamic countries and has been interested in researching the religions of the world knows that even today there is a sect of Jews in Noah Palestine which is Uzair. Believes the Prophet (peace be upon him) to be the son of God and like the Roman*

[39] Ibid, Al Tawbah:30
[40] Sir Sayyed, Tafsir ul Quran, P. 908

*Catholic Christians, by making a statue of him, he deals with him as should be done with God.*[41]

## Summary

The summary of the above discussion is that the claim of the Jews that the Qur'an has quoted that they call Uzair (A.S.) the son of Allah, is not about all the Jews, but it was said with reference to a particular group in Madinah. is Muslim commentators have explained this. As far as the historical status of Uzair is concerned, not much has been written in this regard in the Qur'an and Sunnah as well as in the rest of the literature.

However, it is clear that, like Moses, Uzair was highly revered among the Jews, due to his reviving the Torah and spreading its teachings among the Israelites. This is the reason why there is a regular book with his name in the Old Testament, which is respected by both Jews and Christians. Apart from this, two other books are also found in the name of Eez Dras, in which there are many details about Uzair and in which the words of the son of God are also found.

Most of the Muslim commentators believe that this sect of Jews is now extinct, but Allama Hifzur Rehman Siwahari believes that this sect is still found in some areas of Palestine.

[41] Siwhaari, Hifzurrahman, Mawlana, Qasas ul Quran, Idar Islamiat, Karachi, 1426h/2006. V.2, P. 554