

## Surah 9. At-Tauba

Asad: AND THE JEWS say, "Ezra is God's son," while the Christians say, "The Christ is God's son." Such are the sayings which they utter with their mouths, following in spirit assertions made in earlier times by people who denied the truth!<sup>44</sup> [They deserve the imprecation:] "May God destroy them!"<sup>45</sup> How perverted are their minds!<sup>46</sup>

Malik: The Jews say: "Uzair (Azra) is the son of Allah," and the Christians say: "Messiah (Christ) is the son of Allah." That is what they say with their mouths, imitating the sayings of the former unbelievers. May Allah destroy them! How perverted they are!

Pickthall: And the Jews say: Ezra is the son of Allah, and the Christians say: The Messiah is the son of Allah. That is their saying with their mouths. They imitate the saying of those who disbelieved of old. Allah (himself) fighteth against them. How perverse are they!

Yusuf Ali: The Jews call Uzair a son of Allah and the Christians call Christ the son of Allah. That is a saying from their mouths; (in this) they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. Allah's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the truth! <sup>1283 1284 1285</sup>

Transliteration: Waqalati alyahoodu AAuzayrun ibnu Allahi waqalati alInnasara almaseehu ibnu Allahi thalika qawluhum biafwahihim yudahioona qawla allatheena kafaroo min qablu qatalahumu Allahu anna yufakoona

Khatab:

The Jews say, "Ezra is the son of Allah," while the Christians say, "The Messiah is the son of Allah." Such are their baseless assertions, only parroting the words of earlier disbelievers. May Allah condemn them! How can they be deluded ?from the truth??

## Author Comments

44 - This statement is connected with the preceding verse, which speaks of the erring followers of earlier revelation. The charge of shirk ("the ascribing of divinity [or "divine qualities"] to aught beside God") is levelled against both the Jews and the Christians in amplification, as it were, of the statement that they "do not follow the religion of truth [which God has enjoined upon them]". As regards the belief attributed to the Jews that Ezra (or, in the Arabicized form of this name 'Uzayr) was "God's son", it is to be noted that almost all classical commentators of the Qur'an agree in that only the Jews of Arabia, and not all Jews, have been thus accused. (According to a Tradition on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas - quoted by Tabari in his commentary on this verse - some of the Jews of Medina once said to Muhammad, "How could we follow thee when thou hast forsaken our qiblah and dost not consider Ezra a son of God?") On the other hand, Ezra occupies a unique position in the esteem of all Jews, and has always been praised by them in the most extravagant terms. It was he who restored and codified the Torah after it had been lost during the Babylonian Exile, and "edited" it in more or less the form which it has today, and thus "he promoted the establishment of an exclusive, legalistic type of religion that became dominant in later Judaism" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1963, vol. IX, p. 15). Ever since then he has been venerated to such a degree that his verdicts on the Law of Moses have come to be regarded by the Talmudists as being practically equivalent to the Law itself: which, in Qur'anic ideology, amounts to the unforgivable sin of shirk, inasmuch as it implies the elevation of a human being to the status of a quasi-divine law-giver and the blasphemous

attribution to him - albeit metaphorically - of the quality of "sonship" in relation to God. Cf. in this connection Exodus iv, 22-23 ("Israel is My son") or Jeremiah xxxi, 9 ("I am a father to Israel"): expressions to which, because of their idolatrous implications, the Qur'an takes strong exception.

45 - My interpolation, between brackets, of the words "they deserve the imprecation" is based on Zamakhshari's and Razi's convincing interpretation of this phrase. Originally, the Arabs used the expression "may God destroy him" in the sense of a direct imprecation; but already in pre-Qur'anic Arabic it had assumed the character of an idiomatic device meant to circumscribe anything that is extremely strange or horrifying: and, according to many philologists, "this, rather than its literal meaning, is the purport [of this phrase] here" (Manar X, 399).

46 - See surah {5}, note [90].

1283 - In n. 718 to v. 18, 1 have quoted passages from the Old Testament, showing how freely the expression "sons of Allah" was used by the Jews. A sect of them called 'Uzair a son of Allah, according to Baidhawl. In Appendix II (Sura v.) I have shown that the constitution of Judaism dates from 'Uzair (Ezra). The Christians still call Christ the Son of Allah.

1284 - Taking men for gods or sons of Allah was not a new thing. All ancient mythologies have fables of that kind. There was less excuse for such blasphemies after the Prophets of Allah had clearly explained out true relation to Allah than in the times of primitive ignorance and superstition.

1285 - Cf. v. 75.

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