



## Charles C. Torrey's Concept of the Qur'an and Its Narratives

İsmail ALBAYRAK\*

### Özet

19. ve 20. yy. Kur'an'ın Yahudi ya da Hıristiyanlık kökenini gösteren sayısız eserlere tanık olmuştur. İçerik, yapı ve sunuş bakımından ele alınan bu benzerliklerde Yahudi ve Hıristiyan araştırmacılar, mensup oldukları dinin lehine sonuçlar çıkarabilmek için Kur'an'ı adeta savaş alanına çevirmişlerdir. C. Charles Torrey yazdığı kitap ve çok sayıdaki makalesiyle, Yahudiliğin sözcüsü durumundadır. Makalemizde yazarın Kur'an'ı Yahudi gözüyle okumasından kaynaklanan problemleri irdelemeye çalıştık. Torrey, bir yandan Hıristiyan meslek taşlarına cevap vermeye çalışırken öte yandan da ateşli bir şekilde Kur'an'ın Yahudiliğin hâkim olduğu bir atmosferde ortaya çıktığını iddia etmektedir. Yazarın Kur'an'a yaklaşımı ise hiçbir kriter tanımayan, peşin hükümlerle dolu ön kabullerin ötesine geçememiştir. Makalemiz ise bu tür bir yaklaşımın detaylarını irdeleyerek son iki yüzyılda Yahudi ilim adamlarının Kur'an'a yaklaşımının bir özeti kabul edilen Torrey'in söylemlerini ana hatlarıyla özetlemektedir.

Naturally, 'scholars do not work in historical abstraction; their minds are formed by the culture of their age and previous ages, and they bring to the task of interpreting what they have extracted from their sources, principles of selection, emphasis and arrangement derived from the ideas and convictions their lives have taught them.'<sup>1</sup> The Western scholarship of Islam is not independent of these convictions. The earlier modern Western literature on the Qur'an mainly concentrates on two issues. The first group try to seek to trace the influence of Jewish and Christian ideas in the Qur'an while the second group pay more attention to the reconstruction of the chronological order of the Qur'an. Unfortunately, the zealots of the first group, who treat the Qur'an as a Book which is no more than an echo of Judaism (or Christianity), tend to exaggerate the importance of their methods and to attempt to show that the Qur'an is the product of the prophet, and that the prophet was no

\* SAÜ. İlahiyat Fakültesi Tefsir Anabilim Dalı Öğretim Üyesi Yrd. Doç. Dr.

1 Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1992, 1.

more than student of one or more Jewish or Christian mentors of that time<sup>2</sup>. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries in particular saw many publications which sought to prove that the Qur'an had grown out of a Jewish or Christian background. The Qur'an is the battlefield of Jewish and Christian scholars. Instead of looking deeply into the content, presentation, structure and so forth, they prefer to find materials with which to invalidate the opinion of their opponents. They are more concerned with the origin of the Qur'an than with its content and presentation. Therefore the aim of this article is to show the convictions of this kind held by one of the most prominent scholars in the West. The works show this approach at its most extreme: Charles C. Torrey's *The Jewish Foundation of Islam* and his other publications. We devote a lengthy analysis to his works in this article.

The Jewish Foundation of Islam was originally given as five lectures by C. C. Torrey in 1931 and was published in 1933. First of all, Torrey, following the fashion of his time, provides a lengthy explanation of the milieu in which the Qur'an was received. Although he accepts that there is uncertainty about the Mecca of that day, he suggests that Jewish settlements were to be found in northern Arabia after the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem in 586 BC. He believes that among the many scattered Jews some groups migrated to more remote lands, especially to those cities (Theima, Khaibar, Yathrib, and Mecca) where they established a chain of trade settlements<sup>3</sup>. Torrey insists that these were real Israelite communities and rejects any possibility that there were no genuinely Jewish settlements in Mecca and Madina. Torrey explains that the theory of the 'loss of the Ten Tribes' is a most important key to the identification of Jewish people in Arabia. In other words, the Jews who settled in Arabia were Israelite in origin but remained unknown to many Jews at that time. As to the question of when they came to Arabia, Torrey puts the date at around 7 BC on the basis of his conjecture<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, Torrey, in contrast to many Western scholars, is convinced that most of what the prophet had learned of Jewish material was acquired in Mecca. As he has argued in several places, the reason for this conclusion lies in the Qur'anic data. According to Torrey, the prophet received at

2 Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993, 17-8.

3 Charles Cutler Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, New York: KTAV Publishing House 1967 (first pub. in 1933), 12.

4 *Ibid.*, 9.

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least the Biblical and haggadic narratives (which occupy a large part of the Qur'an) in his hometown. So the existence of much Jewish material in the Qur'an during the Meccan period indicates the presence of an important Jewish settlement in Mecca<sup>5</sup>.

Torrey also explains why the tradition is silent about the existence of the Jews at Mecca. Having seen what happened to their fellows in Madina they departed from Mecca during the prophet's lifetime and thus disappeared from history before they came to the attention of the historians<sup>6</sup>. He maintains that Muhammad's personal contact with the Jews was closer (and more sustained) before the Hijra than after it. Thus, Torrey holds the opinion that there was Jewish opposition to the prophet in Mecca<sup>7</sup>.

Due to his strong conviction that there was a large Jewish community in Mecca, Torrey avoids the theory of interpolation of Madinan verses in the Meccan surahs by making them refer to the Jews in Mecca. This point is interesting and he rejects in this regard many modern scholars' approach to Qur'anic studies. He has noted that there are some Qur'anic passages which deal with Jewish affairs and the hypocrites in the Meccan surahs<sup>8</sup>. Torrey's unusual attitude, however, should be questioned. Like many Western scholars, Torrey does not rely on the Muslim tradition; on the contrary, he sees it as a strong obstacle to understanding the Qur'an. He asserts that the only safe course is to leave it out of account. Moreover, he states that the Christian and Pagan historians and geographers contribute nothing to our knowledge of this particular time<sup>9</sup>. However, there is one important difference between Torrey's reluctance to use tradition and that of other scholars. As Rosenthal has pointed out, Torrey is always ready to accept the opposite of what the tradition says and tries to establish it as a historical verity<sup>10</sup>. In other words, he believes that only the opposite of tradition makes sense, and so his preference is always predictable. Because of this total rejection of tradition he is obliged to depend mainly on conjecture, and confesses as much at various points in his works. Conjecture, however, is not dependable concrete evidence, so most of his explanations can be categorised

5 *Ibid.*, 13.

6 *Ibid.*, 97.

7 *Ibid.*, 97.

8 *Ibid.*, 96-97.

9 *Ibid.*, 8.

10 *Ibid.*, xix.

as exceptional. It seems strange that Newby, while drawing attention to Torrey's atypical approach, fails to refer to his extreme dependence on conjecture. Having emphasised the distinction between the questions 'how' and 'what', Newby says that Torrey is among the few scholars who seek to answer both 'what' and 'how' Muhammad borrowed from Judaism, Christianity and pre-Islamic paganism<sup>11</sup>.

Another important point on which Torrey places great emphasis is the question of Muhammad's teacher or teachers. He believes that not only the Qur'anic vocabulary and chief characters but also the teachings and cult details flow from Jewish sources. The major doctrines and practical teachings concerning alms, fasting and prayer are clearly rooted in Judaism. According to Torrey some Qur'anic verses such as 16:105 and 25:5 refer to a mentor whose Arabic was not native but who was acquainted with Biblical tradition. Torrey says that both passages are Meccan and provide evidence to suggest that the prophet had been consulting other people. These mentors, Torrey says, were learned Jews in Mecca. The prophet learned from many people, and in many ways<sup>12</sup>.

Nonetheless, Torrey does not deny the prophet's originality. In his doctoral dissertation in 1892, Torrey had asserted that Muhammad was not original; indeed, lack of originality might almost be considered his chief characteristic when comparing him with other founders of religious systems<sup>13</sup>. Forty-one years later Torrey rectified his previous ideas about the originality of the prophet, conceding that the prophet was not only thoughtful, but also a man of very unusual originality and energy<sup>14</sup>. But although he accepts that the Qur'an is the product of the prophet's mind and bears to some extent the brand of his personality, he never ceases to emphasise the contribution of Judaism. For Torrey, Muhammad was both sincere and wise in his effort to establish a new religious system, but the main ideas which awakened him and changed his whole view of life were not his own discovery, but were the fruits of his intercourse with the Jews of Mecca. Without this personal experience, seeing the actual example with his own eyes and observing it for a considerable time, he could not possibly have conceived Islam<sup>15</sup>.

11 G. Newby, 'Observation about an Early Judaeo-Arabic', *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 51 (1969-70) 213.

12 Torrey, *op. cit.*, 1967, 45, 74, 43, 78.

13 Charles C. Torrey, *The Commercial-Theological Terms In The Koran*, Leyden: E. J. Brill 1892.

14 Torrey, *op. cit.*, 1967, 7.

15 *Ibid.*, 64-5.

Torrey even goes so far as to say that Muhammad's idea of the 'People of the Book', as regards their influence in Arabia and their importance to his cause, does not appear to have been changed by his migration from Mecca to Madina. He also adds that the prophet certainly could not cut his ties with the Jews by adopting Abraham when he moved to Madina and suffered his great disappointment. So he concludes that the prophet never attempted to emancipate Islam from Judaism. The Qur'anic evidence, according to Torrey, shows that the prophet not only leaned heavily on Moses, but openly professed to do so<sup>16</sup>. Torrey tries to prove by these arguments, on the one hand that Islam in general, and the Qur'an in particular, are derived from the Jewish tradition, and on the other hand, that Christianity has nothing to do with Islam and the Qur'anic materials. For instance, when he discusses the identification of the so-called mentor (or mentors) of the prophet he raises a very interesting question: have we any good reason for supposing that he also received personal instruction from a Christian? Torrey's answer is predictable to those familiar with his writings. Before dealing with the precise answer to this question it is well to recall that Torrey, like many Occidental scholars, states that the prophet seems to have known very little about the Christians during the early years in Mecca, and considered the Jews and the Christians essentially as a single class, namely the Israelites<sup>17</sup>. After the prophet's break with the Jews in the Madinan period, he gave some particular attention to the Christians. However, most of his knowledge about Christianity came at second hand. Torrey also notes that the information about Christian history and doctrines is surprisingly slight and superficial.<sup>18</sup> This, Torrey suggests, is evidence that the prophet received nothing directly from a Christian source. Furthermore, Torrey asserts that the prophet never saw Christian scripture<sup>19</sup>. Torrey is also convinced that it is unsafe to seek the origin of the Qur'an outside Arabia. Therefore he rejects any suggestion that the prophet may have discovered religious sources abroad, during his sojourn in Syria, for example<sup>20</sup>.

If we return to Torrey's question concerning subject matter, it can be seen that there are two main sources for the information about the Christians in the Qur'an.

16 *Ibid.*, 88-9.

17 *Ibid.*, 73, 76-8.

18 *Ibid.*, 8.

19 *Ibid.*, 50, 57.

20 *Ibid.*, 41.

One is undoubtedly the Jews and the other is the common materials to be found among the Arabs<sup>21</sup>. For Torrey, the former is very important because he believes that, although Judaism and Christianity had much in common, most of Muhammad's information about Christianity came through Jewish channels. The doctrines of the resurrection of man, the Day of Judgement, the reward of paradise and the punishment of Hell, those concerning angels and evil spirits, and so on, were obtained by the prophet from Judaism.<sup>22</sup> Torrey even asserts that three passages in the Qur'an: 7:38, 57:13 and 19:1-15, which clearly deal with Christian narratives, were delivered to the prophet by his Jewish teachers. He says that the story of the birth of John the Baptist together with his father, the aged priest, Zachariah, in 19:1-15 is a fine example of purely Jewish narrative in the style of the Old Testament<sup>23</sup>.

Torrey was deeply preoccupied with Jewish sources and tried to disregard any other possibilities. The main motive behind this extreme approach probably lies in his attempt to respond to those Christian authors such as Wellhausen, Ahrens, Bell and Rudolph, whose primary concern was to prove that the dominant influence on the prophet came directly from Christianity. Torrey closes his eyes to any influence other than Judaism on the creation of Islam. Guillaume, in his review of Torrey's *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, criticises his attempt to narrow the scope of Islam:

I feel misgivings about the author's emphasis on Jewish influence. One might pass a title such as *The Jewish Foundation of the Qur'an*, which after all is what the author deals with, but the foundation of Islam is something larger than Judaism<sup>24</sup>.

If Torrey encounters anything in the Qur'an alien to Judaism he concludes that Muhammad's own imagination (or his long meditation) is the main source for this verse (or verses). For example, regarding chapter 19, which is concerned with Jesus and his Mother, Torrey says that these passages are the result of Muhammad's ignorant conclusion, since nobody could have told him to make a connection between Mary and the sister of Aaron<sup>25</sup>.

21 *Ibid.*, 73.

22 *Ibid.*, 60.

23 *Ibid.*, 57-8.

24 A. Guillaume, 'Review of C. C. Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*,' in *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 1935, 207.

25 Torrey, *op. cit.*, 1967, 58.

Furthermore, Torrey gives his opinion about the personality of the prophet to explain the nature of the revelation. Having accepted that every great genius, to be sure, is more or less of a mystery, he rejects the idea that the prophet is deliberately mystifying the people. However, he believes that the prophet obtained the revelation through self-hypnotism, learning to produce this abnormal mental condition in times of most urgent need<sup>26</sup>. He also adds that this phenomenon (self-hypnotism) agrees strikingly with the description of the prophet's 'fits' given by his biographers<sup>27</sup>. The difference between the self-hypnotism suggested by Torrey and the hysterical epilepsy suggested by Weil<sup>28</sup> is small. In the former situation the message is under the control of the prophet; in the latter the prophet is out of control. Be that as it may, both insist on the human origin of the Qur'anic revelation.

Another important point Torrey deals with is the prophet's literacy; whether he could read and write, or use writing materials. He holds the opinion that *ummî* (illiterate) referred to those who do not have (or know) the ancient holy scriptures, whereas traditional Islam accepts the normal meaning of the word, 'unable to read and write'<sup>29</sup>. For Torrey, the attitude of the mainstream (orthodox) Muslim is chiefly influenced by dogmatic considerations. Therefore, the Muslims' belief in the illiteracy of the prophet enhances the miracle of the Qur'an: that it should have been delivered by one entirely unlettered. Although he briefly refers to the existence of the Muslim tradition which allows the prophet the ability to read and write, Torrey never tries to make use of these materials. Instead, as is his usual habit, he prefers to rely on conjecture. First of all, the grammar, i.e. the forms of literary language, had long been completely developed in the pre-Islamic poems. In other words, the structure of the Arabic language which the prophet learned was already clear. Secondly, the prophet, according to Torrey, did not learn to read and write during his prophethood but during his childhood. His grandfather cAbd al-Muttalib and his uncle Abû Tâlib, in whose care he was brought up, might certainly have been expected to give him some of the education which Meccan boys of good family were wont to enjoy.

26 *Ibid.*, 59.

27 *Ibid.*, 60.

28 T. Kronholm, 'Dependence and Prophetic Originality in the Koran', *Orientalia Suecana.*, 31-32 (1982-3) 62.

29 Torrey, *op. cit.*, 38.

In addition, Torrey says that even the prophet's selection by Khadija (whom he afterwards married) shows his acquaintance with writing and reading<sup>30</sup>. Above all, for Torrey, the Qur'an is conclusive evidence of the prophet's literacy. The Qur'an, Torrey continues, not only gives no ground whatever for supposing Muhammad unlettered but contains several indications to the contrary. Basing his opinion on 87:6, Torrey concludes '...when all the evidence is taken into account, that Muhammad did write down the whole of the Qur'an with his right hand.'<sup>31</sup>

Strangely, Torrey goes further and says that the probability that the prophet had learned to read Hebrew or Aramaic with any competence may nevertheless seem remote. These two languages, however, in both vocabulary and grammar, bear enough resemblance to Arabic to enable one who is accustomed to read and write the latter to labour through the sentences of a Jewish document after a comparatively short period of study with the aid of Jewish instructors<sup>32</sup>. He also says that it is known that Hebrew and Aramaic writings were numerous in Mecca and Madina. However he provides no evidence to support this supposition, and the conclusion may be drawn that he is still relying exclusively on conjecture.

As regards the Qur'anic narrative, Torrey has several suggestions. First of all, he expresses his dissatisfaction with those who claim that the sources of Muhammad's knowledge of Biblical characters and events owe less to the Bible than to extra-canonical literature. Torrey believes that even in the stories where the prophet makes greatest use of the haggadah there is frequent evidence that he also knew the canonical account. The Qur'anic silence on Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the minor prophets (except Jonah), according to Torrey, is not due to the absence of these books in Mecca or the prophet's lack of knowledge about them, but because they are utterly outside his interest<sup>33</sup>. Nonetheless, Torrey has pointed out that there are some Qur'anic narratives, such as the incident of the breakers of the Sabbath (2:61, 4:50, 5:65, 7:166), David's invention of coats of mail (21:80) and Job's producing a spring of cool water by stamping on the ground (38:41-43), for which no Biblical or haggadic source is known, despite the fact that they sound like Jewish lore<sup>34</sup>.

30 *Ibid.*, 39.

31 *Ibid.*, 36.

32 *Ibid.*, 39-40.

33 *Ibid.*, 67.

34 *Ibid.*, 68.



The prophet, says Torrey, wanted to give the new Arabian religion a clear and firm connection with the existing monotheistic religions, and especially with the Hebrew Bible. In addition, the prophet, using the Biblical narrative, tried to show his countrymen how the earlier prophets had been received in the former time; and how the religion which they preached was carried on from age to age, while the successive generations of men who rejected it were punished<sup>35</sup>. In the beginning, the Qur'an contained no sustained narrative, but by the time the prophet started putting forth longer narratives, the size of the Qur'an grew rapidly. The main part of the narrative was produced by the prophet in his last years at Mecca and at the beginning of his career in Madina. According to Torrey, these periods gave satisfaction to the prophet in the thought that the Qur'an was beginning to attain the dimension of a sacred book, the scripture of the new revelation in the Arabic tongue<sup>36</sup>.

The question of whether the prophet, who appears to use predominantly Jewish sources, was successful or not, occupies a prominent place in Torrey's discussion. He does not answer it clearly, but he implies in several places that the prophet spoils the Biblical narrative. Before discussing Torrey's comment on the Qur'anic narrative, it is important to note that he tries to evaluate it from the perspective of the Biblical narrative. In his analysis of the differences between the Qur'anic and Biblical narratives, Torrey explains that the Biblical narratives were the product of consummate literary art, written at various times, for religious instruction, by men who were born story-tellers. They were preserved and handed down by a process of selection. The matter in the Qur'anic narrative is completely different. In Torrey's words, the creation of the Qur'anic narrative was the most forbidding undertaking: the production of narrative as divine revelation, to rate from the first as inspired scripture; narrative, moreover, which had already been given permanent form in the existing sacred books. The prophet's dilemma, according to Torrey, was to decide whether he would reproduce the Biblical narrative or tell the stories with an essential difference. For if he did the former he would be charged with plagiarism, but if he did the latter he would be accused of falsifying<sup>37</sup>. Torrey argues that a skilful narrator might have escaped this difficulty by his literary art, but Muhammad was very far from being a skilful narrator:

35 *Ibid.*, 105.

36 *Ibid.*, 105-7.

His imagination is vivid, but not creative. His characters are all alike, and they utter the same platitudes. He is fond of dramatic dialogue, but has very little sense of dramatic scene or action. The logical connection between successive episodes is often loose, sometimes wanting; and points of importance, necessary for the clear understanding of the story, are likely to be left out. There is also the inveterate habit of repetition, and a very defective sense of humour<sup>38</sup>.

In short, the Qur'anic narrative, for Torrey, lacks most of the qualities which the typical story ought to have. As regards the experiences of Noah in 11:27-51, Torrey says that the narrative contains very little incident but consists chiefly of the same religious harangues which are repeated scores of times throughout the Qur'an, uninspired and uniformly wearisome<sup>39</sup>. Torrey's dissatisfaction with the Qur'anic narratives is not limited to their style and presentation. He also criticises the motives behind them. Some of the Qur'anic narratives, Torrey maintains, were produced by the prophet out of his imagination. Muhammad wanted to attract as well as convince his people; therefore, he adorned his Qur'an with extended narratives. Furthermore, these narratives delighted him too.

Torrey believes that the prophet showed some freedom in his retelling of the stories of the early life of Moses. Because of this, Torrey thinks, the prophet omitted many haggadic materials necessary for the understanding of the story. Thus many things made plain in the Midrash or Hebrew Bible are presented abruptly in the Qur'an. The narrative of Joseph in chapter 12 is a good illustration. In his analysis of this surah, Torrey declares that the prophet spoils a good story. Regarding 12:31-34, Torrey notes that it is not evident what the episode of the banquet has to do with the course of events, nor why the ladies are provided with knives; nor even why Joseph is put in prison. These things are all made clear in the Midrash, however<sup>40</sup>. In addition, Torrey points out that after a religious discourse of some length in 12:37-40, Joseph gives the two prisoners the interpretation of their dreams; and it is

37 *Ibid.*, 107-8.

38 *Ibid.*, 108.

39 *Ibid.*, 108; In another place Torrey says 'His colourless scraps of history were hooted at as 'old stories'; and we happen to be told on more than one occasion he suffered from competition with a real raconteur. The Meccans, like St. Paul's auditors at Athens (Acts 17:21), were ready to hear 'some new thing', if only to laugh at it, but their patience was easily exhausted.' (*Ibid.*, 106)

40 *Ibid.*, 111.

implied, though not definitely said, that his prediction was completely fulfilled. The dream of Pharaoh in 43, however, is then introduced abruptly<sup>41</sup>. Clearly, Torrey is still reading the Qur'an from his Biblical perspective. Concerning the occasion when Joseph makes himself known to his brothers, Torrey concludes that the scene is not as effective in the Qur'an as in the Hebrew story<sup>42</sup>.

One interesting suggestion forcefully made by Torrey is that some of the Qur'anic narratives are not religiously oriented. Those concerning Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, Dhû al-Qarnayn and Joseph in Egypt are given as examples.

Torrey also argues that the prophet is particularly interested in the episodes in which women figure prominently, for example the accounts of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, Joseph and Potiphar's wife and the two ladies in Midian in 28: 23-24. The last, according to Torrey, is very important. Here the prophet doubles the romance in the story, patterning it, in a general way, upon the Biblical account of Jacob and Rachel<sup>43</sup>. Torrey's argument reflects the general view among Western scholars of the prophet's personality. Torrey attempts to persuade the reader that the prophet has a lively interest in those episodes in which women are the major figures. In 28:23-26 the prophet, Torrey says, neither names the father of the girls nor shows the least interest in him. This means that the prophet is interested in the girls. Torrey fails to note, however, that the Qur'anic narrative does not give the name of the girls either. If this scene is read carefully it will be seen that it contains no romance. The presentation is pure in its characterisation. The main theme is Moses' need of his Lord's blessing (help). It should also be remembered that the Qur'anic language shows harmony and homogeneity in its presentation of intimate issues, such as a couple's sexual relations, fornication and so on. It also speaks of such figures as the wife of Pharaoh, the mother of Jesus and Moses' mother. It is therefore not difficult to see the religious orientation of Qur'anic narrative in which women figure prominently, and to dismiss Torrey's point as implausible.

In his comment on 2:247, the narrative of Tâlût and Jâlût (Saul and Goliath), Torrey says that the prophet's memory failed him: this narrative is obviously confused with the tale of Gideon and his three hundred chosen men (Judges 7:4-7)<sup>44</sup>.

41 *Ibid.*, 111.

42 *Ibid.*, 112.

43 *Ibid.*, 118.

44 *Ibid.*, 116.

Regarding the identification of the boy who is rescued from the sacrificial knife by divine intervention, however, Torrey criticises those scholars who claim to show that the prophet is confused and uncertain in regard to this story. Torrey is convinced that the prophet, far from being confused, shows here both his acquaintance with the Old Testament narrative and his practical wisdom<sup>45</sup>. 'Practical wisdom' in Torrey's terminology, however, means that the prophet himself manipulates this story. In other words, whoever reads through the Qur'an must feel that he has the prophet before him in every verse<sup>46</sup>.

Besides prophetic confusion and manipulation, Torrey also suggests that the prophet derived some of the Qur'anic narratives from folk-lore. Khidr (the wise man) in 18:65-82 is a good illustration. Like many others, Torrey does not neglect to refer to certain ancient Arabian religious and social influences which are the property not merely of the Hijaz, but of the Arabian Peninsula. Apart from the customs and ceremonies connected with the Kacba and Mecca, there are many commercial terms in the Qur'an which are characteristically Arabic. Torrey's principal conclusion is that Muhammad's idea of God, as exemplified in the Qur'an, is in its main features of a somewhat magnified picture of a Meccan merchant; it could hardly have been otherwise<sup>47</sup>. Keeping in mind the mercantile background of the prophet Torrey tries to prove that the Qur'an itself infers that the prophet himself produced the Qur'an. In other words these terms are not acquired from other languages. As for the mathematical accounting on the Day of Judgement in the Qur'an, Torrey claims that this is alien to Judaism and Christianity, though he admits in a footnote, 'I have been informed by Professor Dümichen that the balance plays an important part in Egyptian Eschatology from earliest times.'<sup>48</sup> Be that as it may, Torrey believes these materials show the dependence of the prophet on his native community.

*In The Jewish Foundation of Islam* Torrey deals with many issues. His interest in the Qur'an goes beyond the narrative sections. He believes that many rituals such as prayer<sup>49</sup>, the manner of fasting<sup>50</sup>, almsgiving<sup>51</sup>, shahâdah<sup>52</sup>, tawhîd<sup>53</sup>, the ethics

45 *Ibid.*, 99.

46 *Ibid.*, 95.

47 Torrey, *op. cit.*, 1892, 15.

48 *Ibid.*, 14, 17 ft. 3.

49 Torrey, *op. cit.*, 1967, 46, 82.

50 *Ibid.*, 138.

51 *Ibid.*, 14, 42.

in the Qur'an<sup>54</sup>, and even other institutions such as the mosque, are derived from Judaism. The number of the prophets mentioned in the Qur'an, according to Torrey, is a fair indication of the prophetic dependence. Twenty-five are named; among them are the three Arabian prophets: Hûd, Sâlih and Shucaib, and three only from the Gospels: Zachariah, John the Baptist and Jesus. All the rest are from the Old Testament<sup>55</sup>. In addition, Torrey is also convinced that the majority of the loan words in the Qur'an are derived from Judaism. He criticises Jeffery for his disinclination to recognise many borrowings from Jewish sources<sup>56</sup>. As an example he gives the Qur'anic term *raqîm*. Torrey suggests that *raqîm* is a corruption of the name of the Emperor Decius, which in the Hebrew alphabet would be spelled *dqys*. The Hebrew *s* is mistaken for *m*, and *d* for *r*, by Muhammad's informant, who read or recited the story to him<sup>57</sup>. Jeffery rejected Torrey's suggestion on the basis that the two words do not resemble each other very closely in the Syriac scripture<sup>58</sup>. Here, Torrey's dissatisfaction with Jeffery's comment is related to his approach to the story. The story of the Ashâb al-Kahf (Seven Sleepers) according to Torrey, is also based on Jewish sources. Any suggestion contradicting this confession is unacceptable to him. In sum, it is clear that Torrey is intent on showing that Judaism was the primary historical antecedent of the Qur'an.

### Concluding Remarks

The debate on Jewish and Christian elements in the Qur'an is generally very intense in Torrey's works. Torrey, who is also well-known for his extremist convictions as a Biblical scholar<sup>59</sup>, believed that it was certain fact that the main historical source of the Qur'anic teaching was Arabian Judaism, which was both learned and

52 *Ibid.*, 133.

53 *Ibid.*, 134.

54 *Ibid.*, 6, 140.

55 *Ibid.*, 67.

56 C. C. Torrey, Review of A. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an*, in *The Moslem World*, 29 (1939) 359-363.

57 C. C. Torrey, 'Three Difficult Passages in the Koran,' in *A Volume of Oriental Studies Presented to Edward G. Browne*, (ed) by T. W. Arnold and R. A. Nicholson, Cambridge 1922, 458; A. James Bella, 'Brief Communications: Al-Raqîm or al-Ruqûd? A Note on Surah 18:9', *Journal of American Oriental Society*, 111 (1991) 115.

58 A. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an*, Baroda: Oriental Institute 1938, 144.

59 Zev Garber, 'C. C., Torrey', *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, XV.1267; Kronholm, T., *op. cit.*, 56.

authoritative, and altogether worthy of its Palestinian and Babylonian ancestry. Thus the prophet of Islam is regarded as mainly a disciple of the synagogue, and especially of the Jewish community at Mecca. Torrey was less concerned with the message (the Qur'anic verses themselves) than with the origin of the Qur'an, and maintained that there was a large colony of Jews in Mecca despite the lack of any hard evidence. In fact, Torrey's arguments appear to derive from intelligent guesswork. This is not a satisfactory way of identifying the Qur'anic sources.

Torrey discloses his dissatisfaction with the Muslim tradition, and acknowledge his exclusive reliance on the Qur'anic data. Nonetheless, in practice his analysis marries understanding to value judgement or classical non-Muslim bias. Torrey is more interested in finding the borrowed Jewish material in the Qur'an. He rarely refers to issues related to the Qur'anic order, preferring mainly to analyse the Qur'an through his own Jewish eyes. As has already been stated, Torrey's main aim was to respond to Christian scholars, and therefore he could not able to keep his study of the Qur'an and his polemic against Christians scholars separate.

Following the fashion of their time, he dealt with such matters as the question of the prophet's literacy, the identification of the hanîfs, the existence of foreign vocabulary in the Qur'an, and the explanation of al-furqân. Despite the fact that his conclusions are quite different from his Christian counterparts, the way he works is similar. Briefly, he assented to the dominant opinion of his time: that the Qur'an is little more than an echo of the Bible.