FROM “CLERGY” TO “CELIBACY.” THE DEVELOPMENT OF RAHBĀNĪYYAH BETWEEN THE QUR’ĀN, ḤADĪTH AND CHURCH CANON¹

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Abstract

The term rabbāniyyah is used differently in the Qurʾān than it is in the ḥadīth and subsequent classical Islamic literature. The former discusses the term in the context of clergy and religious leadership, and the latter in the context of celibacy and marriage. This shift in meaning may be taken into account by examining Christian legal texts that were contemporaneous with the Qurʾān on the one hand, and the ḥadīth on the other. These texts are the Didascalia Apostolorum and the canons of the Quinisext Council respectively. The development of rabbāniyyah informs our knowledge of the early Muslim community’s evolution into an imperial power around the time of the Caliph ‘Abd al-Mālik b. Marwān (d. 86/705).

Keywords: Rabbāniyyah, Clergy, Celibacy, Marriage, Church, Canon Law, Qur’ānic Law, ḥadīth, ‘Abd al-Mālik b. Marwān

Introduction

The Near East has long been home to a multiplicity of holy men and the religious institutions they established. By the 7th century CE, among them were the leaders of the Jewish Rabbinate and the bishops of the Eastern Churches (Monophysite, Nestorian and Melkite). As the new scripture of the 7th century Near East, the Qurʾān was

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witness to the Jewish rabbis (aḥbār, lit. “scribes”) and Christian priests (ruḥbān, lit. “pious, fearful ones”) of its day. The text criticizes them as well as their followers for perceived misdeeds (Q 9:31-34). Q 57:27 goes on, furthermore, to illustrate the corruption of the Christian “clergy” (raḥbānīyyah) after an earlier period of favor. However, among the ḥadīth reports which circulated a century or so after Muḥammad’s death in 10/632, the term raḥbānīyyah loses its institutional connotation and takes on a personal and legal one. The term becomes synonymous with “celibacy,” which is viewed categorically as negative and curtailed alongside excesses in fasting and prayer. In other words, whereas the term raḥbānīyyah in the Qur’ān is part of a discourse on the leadership of the church as a whole, later on the same term becomes part of a more acute debate within the ḥadīth on the role of celibacy, fasting and prayer. This debate gave shape to the laws and rituals of Islam.

What can explain this discursive shift among the sensibilities of the earliest Muslim generations and, furthermore, the introduction of the ‘celibacy debate’ into Islam? There may be a number of internal as well as external factors that contributed to the development of raḥbānīyyah in early Islam. On the one hand, the Qur’ān’s criticism of the Christian clergy’s neglect or abuse of widows and orphans is in dialogue with an ancient book of (pre-) Canon Law known as the Didascalia Apostolorum. On the other hand, the debate within the ḥadīth should be considered in parallel with debates on celibacy, fasting and prayer found in the late 7th century Canon Law of the Eastern Churches. Especially significant in this regard are the canons of the Quinisext Council of Trullo, held in 692 CE. This council was convened after ‘the Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Church Councils’ in 553 and 681 CE at the behest of emperor Justinian (d. 711 CE) to serve as “the word on such legislation” concerning the much debated

2 According to my reading of Q 57 the text favors the Early Church that Jesus’ disciples—especially Peter—established in Jerusalem because it preserved the practice of circumcision under Jewish Law. Once Paul did away with the requirement of circumcision for Gentile converts the Church went astray—from a qur’ānic perspective. The ensuing ‘Hellenization’ of the Jewish, or even Jewish-Christian, church in Jerusalem took place between the time of the Council of Jerusalem in 50 CE and the relocation of the Jerusalem Patriarchate to Aelia Capitolina in 135 CE.

3 See Holger Zellentin, The Qur’ān’s Legal Culture: The Didascalia Apostolorum as a Point of Departure (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013).
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marriage of clerics. Given their importance, it is little surprise that early Muslim debates found within the ḥadīth belong to a larger scope of discussion, which included the canons of the Ecumenical Church Councils and which were too influential and illustrious to be ignored by early ḥadīth collectors and jurists alike.

There are a number of reasons to consider Christian debates in order to shed light on similar debates within early Islam. First, the ḥadīth corpus is the most integral part of Islamic jurisprudence and should be taken as an equal to the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Canon Law (and the Rabbinic Talmudim for that matter). It should not surprise us that the development of jurisprudence as the quintessential Islamic science is, furthermore, not a novelty to the religious traditions of the Near East. Bishops and rabbis were every bit as concerned with preserving the laws and teachings of God and, furthermore, set the foundations for later Muslim clerics to formulate Islamic Law (shari‘ah).

Second, it is well known that in other areas of intellectual discourse - especially philosophical theology (kalām) - Islamic scholarship responded to Christian impulses. Thus, Islamic theological debates - such as those centered on the createdness of the Qur’ān or between the qadariyyah and jabriyyah - flourished in dialogue with debates concerning the nature of Christ and the problem of free will vs. predestination.

Third and last, the timing of late 7th century church councils - especially the Quinisext Council - and corresponding ḥadīth reports coincides with the articulation of an Islamic state for the first recorded time under the caliph ‘Abd al-Mālik b. Marwān (685-705 CE). Fred Donner’s “believers to Muslims” thesis proposes that prior to the reforms of the Umayyad state bureaucracy under ‘Abd al-Mālik, “believers” (mu‘minūn) in the revelation of the Qur’ān and

4 Roman Cholij, Clerical Celibacy in East and West (Hereford, UK; Madison, WI: Fowler-Wright Books, 1988) 5-6.
5 See Chibli Mellat, Introduction to Middle Eastern Law (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 5-11. Furthermore, this appreciation may inform our reading of the allusion made to the “Law of Moses” (kitāb mūsā) as a “leader and mercy” in Q46:12, which may refer as much to Rabbinic as it does Canon Law.
prophethood of Muḥammad (d. 10/632) included Christians, Jews and other monotheists. After the passing of ‘Abd al-Mālik - and we may add the Quinisext Council - believers were finally instilled with an Islamic identity that differentiated them from their Christian and Jewish brethren.

The development of rahbānīyyah, therefore, may shed light on this tremendously important and transformative period in early Islam. Let us begin by discussing the origins of the term in the Qurʾān.

The Perversion of the Clergy: Rahbānīyyah in the Qurʾān

The term rahbānīyyah occurs once in the entire Qurʾān, more specifically in Q 57:27. Before discussing this particular verse we must first understand the context of Q 57. This sūra, entitled “The iron, blade” (al-ḥadīd; v. 25), is fundamentally concerned with upholding “the law and the scale that people may live equitably” (al-kitāb wa’l-mīzān li-yaqūm al-nās bi’l-qisṭ; v. 25). As such, the sūra is preoccupied with wealth (re-) distribution. And it addresses a wealthy audience who were, furthermore, reluctant to believe and sacrifice their worldly possessions.

In this vein, vv. 1-6 reminds them that God alone possesses dominion over the heavens and the earth. They—i.e. the rich—are merely trustees of His dominion (mustakhlafūn fīh) and are warned to believe in God and his Prophet, as well as to “spend in the way of God” (infāq fī sabīl allāh; cf. vv. 7-11). Otherwise they are condemned as “hypocrites” (munafiqūn; v. 13) and likened to the “proud boasters, the greedy who command others to be greedy” (v. 23-24) among the “people of the scripture” (al-ladhīn ūtū al-kitāb, ahl al-kitāb; esp. Jews and Christians). The discourse of vv. 7-24 is consistent with Q 9:31-34’s condemnation of “scribes and priests”

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8 Notable achievements in this regard were the Arabicization of the state bureaucracy, minting new coinage inscribed with Arabic, standardization of the Arabic script and editing of the Qurʾān text.
9 Unless otherwise noted all Qurʾān translations are my own.
for devouring the wealth of people and Q 4’s concerns with the protection and welfare of widows and orphans. It is also in close dialogue with the condemnation of the ‘scribes and Pharisees’ in the Gospels, whose crimes include greed, hypocrisy and stealing from widows (e.g. Matthew 23; Mark 12:40; Luke 11:44, 20:47).

Going back to Q 57 continues the text continues,

> Indeed We sent (arsalnā) Noah and Abraham; and we placed in their offspring prophecy and teachings (al-nubuwwah wal kitāb). Some of them are guided but many of them are corrupt. Then We matched their followers with our messengers; and We matched them with Jesus the son of Mary. And We gave him the Gospel and placed in the hearts of those who followed him leniency (ra'fah), mercy (rahmah) and clergy which they perverted (rahbāniyyah ibada'ūhā) [and which] We did not require of them except [rather] for the desire to please God. However, they did not care for it as it should have been cared for. Thus We gave to those among them who believed their wage, but many of them are corrupt (Q 57:26-27).

Q 57:26-27 recalls a number of episodes from the early Christian history narrated in the Syriac New Testament, where “prophets and teachers” were sent to help found the Church of Antioch (Acts 13:1), Paul’s address to the newly entrusted Christian “clergy, leaders” (ēpīsqūpē; Acts 20:28) and the abandonment of circumcision by the Church after the council of Jerusalem in 50 CE (Acts 15; Galatians 2). The details of this intertextual dialogue have been discussed elsewhere. Our concern here is the semantic use of rahbāniyyah in the series of alliterated feminine nouns “leniency (ra'fah), mercy

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10 The text in Arabic reads:

(rahmah) and clergy (rāhbāniyyah),” which God “placed in the hearts” of Christians, and which connote a deliberate, coherent and unmistakable intimacy with Christian terminology (cf. Q 5:82). According to v. 27 God did not require there to be a clergy—except to please Him. In other words, God did indeed require there to be a clergy. The problem is that this clergy was ‘not cared for’ and ‘perverted,’ rendering most of its members “corrupt.”

English-Muslim Qur’an translations and traditional Muslim exegetical literature (tafsīr) largely mistranslate and misinterpret rāhbāniyyah in Q 57:27. Translators usually assign to it words at face value, like “monasticism” (Yūsuf ‘Alī; Pickthall; Ahmed Razā Khān), “monkery” (Shākir) or “hermetism” (Khalīfā), all of which ultimately criticize an arbitrary notion of lonely asceticism—not offering a systematic critique of the religious institution of the Church better suiting the context of the sūra as a whole. These less than perfect translations of rāhbāniyyah partly built upon the tafsīr. However, the tafsīr itself offers a dizzying and sometimes incoherent array of interpretations of the term, only a handful of which echo the slightest reference back to the New Testament. Among the interpretive options offered by some tafsīr works is the association of rāhbāniyyah with an abstention from ‘marriage’ or ‘women,’ i.e. celibacy, which is a discourse removed from the Qur’an in both place and time. As this article will show situating rāhbāniyyah within a discourse on celibacy does not emanate from within the text of Q 57 but is colored rather by the ḥadīth reports which came to influence almost every genre of medieval Islamic scholarship. These ḥadīth reports, furthermore, were probably linked to the Canons of certain Church councils (see later discussion).

Concluding our discussion of Q 57, the Sūra is critical of elite members within an Arabian society steeped in Judeo-Christian

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12 Majd al-Dīn Abū Ṭāhir Muḥammad b. Ya’qūb al-Fayrūzābādī (d. 817/1414), Tanwīr al-miqbās min tafsīr ibn ‘abbās, ed. Yousef Meri, tr. Mokrane Guezzou (Amman: Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2007) 652, speculates that “they built monasteries and cloisters to escape the sedition of Paul, the Jew.”

scripture and law.\textsuperscript{14} The example of the early Church is retold to demonstrate what goes wrong when a religious community’s “leadership” or “clergy” (rahbāniyyah) fails to give charity and uphold the laws that care for their flock. Thus, the perversion of the clergy in vv. 26-27 directly relates to the debate on wealth distribution in vv. 7-24. This perversion also relates to the legislation found in Q 4, which is best understood in concert with the Didascalia Apostolorum, a source of Canon Law for the Eastern Churches.

\textbf{Warning the Clergy in the Didascalia Apostolorum}

The name Didascalia Apostolorum, or “teachings of the apostles [of Christ],” is a legal treatise that circulated within the churches of the Near East in numerous languages including Syriac between the 3\textsuperscript{rd}–7\textsuperscript{th} centuries CE, but was not incorporated into the Bible canon.\textsuperscript{15} Its teachings built upon earlier Christian and Jewish legal discourse and scripture, especially the Didache, Gospel of Matthew and Pentateuch. It is little wonder, therefore, that the Qur’ān is in dialogue with such an important book of law.

The criticism of the “clergy” (rahbāniyyah) and misappropriation of wealth found in Q 57 (cf. also Q 9:31-34) and Q 4’s legislation in order to protect the wealth of widows and orphans in Q 4 (cf. also Q 6:152; 17:32; 18:82) is identical to the context of the Didascalia’s warning of bishops (ēpisqūpē), especially with regards to wealth distribution within the Church. For example, chapter 7 which is entitled “Warnings to Bishops; how they ought to conduct themselves,” begins,

\begin{quote}
You shall not be lovers of wine, nor drunken; and you shall not be extravagant, nor luxurious, nor spending money improperly. You shall make use of the gifts of God not (as alien [funds], but) as your own, as being appointed good stewards of God, who is ready to
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} The greatest evidence that the audience of the Qur’ān were primarily Jews and Christians comes from the text itself. The text explicitly addresses the Jews, Christians, Children of Israel and People of the Scripture dozens of times. Yet it tangentially addresses followers of pagan cults a handful of times (see Q 53). See further Donner, Muhammad and the Believers, 101.

require at your hands an account of the discharge of the stewardship entrusted to you. Let that suffice you therefore which is enough for you, food and clothing and whatsoever is necessary. And you shall not make use of the revenues (of the Church) improperly, as alien (funds), but with moderation; and you shall not procure pleasure and luxury from the revenues of the Church: for sufficient for the laborer is his clothing and his food. As good stewards of God, therefore, dispense well, according to the command, those things that are given and accrue to the Church, to orphans and widows and to those who are in distress and to strangers, as knowing that you have God who will require an account at your hands, who delivered this stewardship unto you. Divide and give therefore to all who are in want (Did. 7).

Numerous references in this passage are paralleled in Q 57, esp. “you shall make use of the gifts of God...who is ready to require at your hands an account of the discharge of the stewardship entrusted to you;” and “divide and give therefore to all who are in want.” In sum, the Arabic term rahbānīyyah used in Q 57:27 is synonymous with the Syriac term ēpēsqūpē (see earlier), admonishing the “clergy, leadership” of the church to distribute wealth equitably among the body politik.

A New Discourse on Celibacy, Fasting and Prayer: Rahbānīyyah in the Ḥadīth

Assuming the Qur’ān was more or less articulated by 10/632 which marks the death of the prophet Muḥammad, the relocation of the early Arab-Muslim state capitol outside the borders of the Hijāz to the cosmopolitan cities of the Near East - esp. Damascus, Fusṭāt, Kūfah, Baghdād - brought the community of believers in contact with new interlocutors and debates. If we accept the plethora of Ḥadīth reports as reflecting the historical context in which they were first collected and written—and not from when they allege to originate—then we can recognize layers of development concerning a term like rahbānīyyah. For example, given the military nature that
defined Arab-Muslim expansion (ca. 632-750 CE) some reports claimed to be from Anas b. Mālik (d. ca. 93/712) equate the term with the ummah’s “struggle in the way of God” (jihād fī sabīl Allāh). Other reports discuss rahbāniyyah, not in a military or clerical context, but rather as part of a debate on celibacy among the prophet’s companions. These include the story, preserved in both Sunnī as well as Shī‘ī hadīth collections, of ‘Uthmān b. Maẓ‘ūn whom the Prophet Muḥammad admonished on account of his abstention from sexual relations with his wife. In the Majmū‘at al-fatāwā of Ibn Taymīyyah (d. 728/1328) is a volume on “conduct” (sulūk) which preserves a number of hadīth reports that sum up the attitude towards celibacy. The reports he cites are found in Ṣaḥīḥ Bakhrī (d. 256/870), the Sunan of Aḥmad (855/241) as well as Dārimī (255/869). His text reads, He [Muḥammad] said, “do not burden yourselves lest God burden you. For people have burdened themselves and so God has burdened them. So behold their remains in the cells and monasteries, and a rahbāniyyah ibtada‘ūhā which We [God] did not require of them’ (Q 57:27).” He also said, “there is no monasticism in Islam.” He also said, “however, I fast and I feast; I stand in prayer and I sleep; I marry women; and I eat flesh. So whoever abandons my tradition (sunnatī) he is not of me.”

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17 Perhaps later?

18 e.g. ‘Alī b. Abī Bakr al-Haythamī (d. 807/1405), Majma‘ al-Zawā‘id wa Manba‘ al-Fawā‘id (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Ma‘ārīf, 1406/1986) 4:304-5 records the whole narrative; Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1110/1698), Bihār al-anwār, Al-Majma‘ al-‘Ilmī li-Ahl al-Bayt, 70:114:1. <http://www.mezan.net/books/behar.html> This report occurs in a section entitled “prohibiting celibacy” (al-nahy ‘an al-rakhbāniyyah) and states, بِيَادِحِيْلْوَعْيَنِ أَنْ أَلْقًى رَهْبَانِيَّةَ أَنْمَا رَهْبَانِيَّةُ أُمَّتِي الْجِهَادَ فِي سَبِيلِ الله


20 Ibid. Furthermore, one of the fullest versions of text in the third and final report is preserved in Ibn Taymiyyah, Minhāj al-sunnah al-nabawiyyah, ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim (Riyadh: Jāmi‘at Muḥammad b. Sa‘ūd al-Islāmīyyah, 1406/1986) 4:29,
The above text is composed of three hadith reports, the first of which—not unlike countless others—cites a Qur’anic sound bite as evidence for an argument transforming the meaning of Qur’anic passage in the process. The phrase *rahbānīyyah ibtada’ūhā* in this context may be translated as “a monasticism they invented,” a discussion somewhat removed from that of the clergy, leadership or wealth distribution. That the meaning of Q 57:27 has been modified to answer new questions facing the community. Thus, the meaning and context of *rahbānīyyah* throughout Islamic scholarship changes forever.²¹ It becomes part of a discourse prohibiting the practice of celibacy in the new faith. Hence the second report, “there is no monasticism (*rahbānīyyah*) in Islam.”²² The third and final report is most significant in so far as it gives some detail concerning the development of *rahbānīyyah*. This report may be broken up into 4 sections, “On Marriage;” “Fasting and Prayer;” “Eating Flesh;” and “Excommunication,” as follows:

- **[On Marriage]** I fast and I feast; I stand in prayer and I sleep.
- **[On Fasting and Prayer]** I marry women.
- **[On Eating Flesh]** I eat flesh.
- **[Excommunication]** So whoever abandons my tradition (sunnatī) he is not of me.

This categorization will be revisited in the following section. At any rate, beyond the inference that this report comes in response to believers who were ‘burdening’ themselves with excessive fasting, prayer, and abstention from marrying women and eating flesh, what is the precise context of this report, and when could this debate have taken place? To answer these questions we turn our attention to the which states,

> وأَنَّهُ بَلَغَهُ أَنَّ رِجَالًا يُقِلُّ إِلَى الْحَلَّةِ. إِنَّمَا أَنَا فَأَصْمُومُ وَلَا أُفْطَرُ. وَيَقُولُ الَّذِي أَتَرَكَ الْحَلَّةَ: إِنَّمَا أَنَا أَكْلُ اللَّحْمَ وَيَقُولُ الَّذِي أَتَرَكَ الْحَلَّةَ: إِنِّي مَعْنَىٰ في الْإِسْلَامِ وَلْيَخْزَمَ في الْإِسْلَامِ وَلْيَرْهَبْنَةَ في الْإِسْلَامِ وَلْيَتَبَتُّلَ في الْإِسْلَامِ وَلَا يَنَاكُرَ الْإِسْلَامَ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي.

²¹ As a result, the association of the term with celibacy is latent throughout the Tafsīr. See Qurṭubī, *al-lāmi‘ li ahkām al-qur‘ān*, 20:271.

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Canon Law of the Eastern Churches.

Debating Celibacy, Fasting and Prayer in the Canon Law of the Eastern Churches

The canons from first seven Ecumenical Church Councils held during the 4th-8th century CE preserve debates on whether and under what conditions clergymen could marry. The complete details of these debates are too vast to discuss herein and may be researched elsewhere. Furthermore, the canons of the Quinisext Council of Trullo, held in 692 CE, come closest to the Ḥadīth reports cited earlier. Counter to the celibacy preached by the Western (Latin) Churches at that time, canon 6 deems marriage lawful for the clergy and no impediment to ordination.23 Similarly, if we break up canon 13 into sections “On Marriage”; “Fasting and Prayer;” and “Excommunication” corresponding to the text of the Ḥadīth report cited earlier, it reads,

[On Marriage] Since we know it to be handed down as a rule of the Roman Church that those who are deemed worthy to be advanced to the diaconate or presbyterate should promise no longer to cohabit with their wives, we, preserving the ancient rule and apostolic perfection and order, will that the lawful marriages of men who are in holy orders be from this time forward firm, by no means dissolving their union with their wives nor depriving them of their mutual intercourse at a convenient time…

[On Fasting and Prayer] So that what has been handed down through the Apostles and preserved by ancient custom, we too likewise maintain, knowing that there is a time for all things and especially for fasting and prayer…

[Excommunication] If therefore anyone shall have

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...dared, contrary to the Apostolic Canons, to deprive any of those who are in holy orders, presbyter, or deacon, or subdeacon of cohabitation and intercourse with his lawful wife, let him be deposed. In like manner also if any presbyter or deacon on pretence of piety has dismissed his wife, let him be excluded from communion; and if he perseveres in this let him be deposed.24

The absence of a section “On Eating Flesh” in this canon may be compensated by insight gained from reading canon 56, which states that “the whole Church of God which is in all the world should follow one rule and keep the fast [of Lent] perfectly, and as they abstain from everything which is killed.”25 However, the relation of this canon to the earlier ḥadīth report remains tentative at best.

Aside from the explicit relationships that may be drawn concerning celibacy (rahbānīyyah in the ḥadīth), fasting and prayer, the idea in canon 13 that “that there is a time for all things and especially for fasting and prayer” echoes the iterative statements of the ḥadīth report, “I fast and I feast; I stand in prayer and I sleep…” Furthermore, the significance of the prophetic tradition (sunnah) accredited in the ḥadīth report reflects that of the “[preservation of] the ancient rule and apostolic perfection/canons.” Failing to practice marriage, fasting and prayer as legislated by the religious community excluded one from the apostolic tradition (for Christians) and prophetic tradition (for Muslims).26

Conclusion

What are the implications for the development of rahbānīyyah between the Qur’ān, Ḥadīth and Church Canon upon our knowledge of early Islamic history and tradition? Some very basic and insightful facts may be gleaned from this study, most notably that the entire discourse surrounding the term rahbānīyyah in the Qur’ān is not the same as that in the ḥadīth. One need not have recourse to extreme

24 Ibid., 371.
25 Ibid., 391.
26 Of course within Christianity the apostles (Syriac sblīhē) are themselves considered prophets (cf. Acts throughout).
revisionism to make sense of this discursive shift, for it is plausible - if not expected - that the community of believers’ discussion on clerical authority evolved - along with the community - into a more complex discussion concerning how such authorities and exemplars in the community ought to marry, fast and pray. In other words, the new community of believers which developed around the Qurʾān (Christians, Jews, etc) in the early 7th century CE was searching for leaders among its ranks but were disillusioned by the ostensibly failing leadership model of the fragmented churches surrounding them. Once the community found firm leadership under the rule of the Umayyad Caliphate late during the 7th / early 8th century CE - culminating in the person of ʿAbd al-Mālik - the exigencies of everyday life and worship needed to be articulated, making use in part of the legislative conventions of Canon Law (perhaps in addition to Rabbinic Law).

It is important to point out that this study does not imply any sort of simplistic, direct textual relationship between the church canons and the ḥadīth reports cited. To the contrary, this study argues for the relative antiquity of such reports - at least to the late 7th / early 8th century CE - and their vitality within an early Muslim context.27 One of the aims of this study has been to prove that the wording of such reports is not necessarily arbitrary, nor the subject of a limited and localized conversation, but that it is instead in dialogue with the globalized imperial religious debates (Byzantine in this case) which the Umayyads and Abbasids came to dominate. The ensuing process of cross-pollination between Islamic and Christian civilization occurred not only in the sphere of theology, philosophy or mysticism but also—and quite importantly—law.

As rahbāniyyah became integrated into a debate on celibacy, the intertextual dialogue between ḥadīth and Canon Law was likely mediated—among other things—by Muslim jurists. Those who live during the late 7th/ early 8th century CE operated in a world where the majority of subjects within Islamic lands were Christian, i.e.

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they lived according to recorded Church canons going back to the Apostolic Canons. As subjects began to convert, the new laws of Islam promulgated by jurists had to fill the place of Canon Law. However, in order to establish a legitimate and authoritative body of Islamic Law, it too would have to come from recorded traditions going back to the Prophet Muḥammad—besides he Qur’ān of course. This was the premise of the Islamic legal theory (usūl al-fiqh) pioneered by Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820). Ultimately, in cases like that concerning rahbāniyyah, the ḥadīth reports used as a source of Islamic Law were modeled after canons in order to replace them. Concerning this and other matters we may have perhaps provided as much answers as we have raised new questions. My hope is to tackle such questions in future studies.