The Qur'an's Dietary Tetralogue:

A Diachronic Reconstruction[1]

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Abstract

Four Qur'anic passages present a formulaic list of four dietary prohibitions, consisting of carrion, blood, pork, and "that over which something other than God has been exclaimed" (Q 2: 172–173, 5: 3, 6: 145, 16: 114–115). This article attempts to work out the chronological order of these four passages. I shall endorse the view of some earlier scholars that the dietary prohibitions in Surahs 6 and 16 are later insertions and that all four passages in question postdate the *hijra*. By contrast, earlier parts of the Qur'an advocate an attitude of unrestricted consumption of what God has provided and warn against the arbitrary "fabrication" of dietary rules. The overall trajectory that emerges from the analysis here proposed resembles an inverse reading of the Bible, progressing from something akin to Pauline antinomianism to a partial reinstatement of the Mosaic law. The Qur'an's shift

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[1] English translations of Qur'anic passages are based, more or less freely, on the translation by Alan Jones. Biblical passages are quoted according to the New Revised Standard Version (Anglicised). I am grateful to JSAI's anonymous reviewer for valuable comments and to Holger Zellentin for sharing with me the proofs of a forthcoming book chapter.

towards a specific set of dietary taboos appears to have taken place in response to Jewish law, polemical comments on which accompany the two putatively earliest versions of the Qur'anic list of dietary prohibitions in Surahs 6 and 16.

Introduction

The subdivision of the Qur'anic corpus into an earlier Meccan and a later Medinan (= post-*hijra*) layer is a staple of Qur'anic scholarship, both medieval and modern. As I have recently argued, this distinction between two textual layers of the Qur'an remains valid even if we are not inclined to set much store by post-Qur'anic traditions reporting that a given surah or verse was revealed before or after the *hijra*. It is possible to isolate a specifically Medinan stratum of the Qur'an based merely on the distinct stylistic, terminological, and thematic profile of the texts in question.[2] Moreover, the conventional view that the Medinan texts are temporally later than the Meccan ones also stands up to scrutiny. First, there are good reasons for retaining the assumption of Gustav Weil and Theodor Nöldeke that the mean verse length of the Qur'anic proclamations gradually increased over time.[3] This would situate the Medinan material, which is characterised by high mean verse length, towards the end of

[2] Sinai, "The Unknown Known"; Sinai, *The Qur'an*, pp. 124–132.

[3] Sinai, "Inner-Qur'anic Chronology"; Sinai, *The Qur'an*, pp. 111–124.

the Qur'an's genesis. Secondly, a number of Medinan passages would appear to refer back to Meccan ones, and there are also various cases in which a non-Medinan, or Meccan, surah was secondarily expanded by an addition whose stylistic, terminological, and thematic profile is Medinan.[4] This likewise suggests that the Medinan subcorpus is later than the Meccan one.

An important characteristic that sets the Medinan Qur'an apart from the Meccan surahs is what one might describe as its "halakhic" preoccupation with the precise and quasi-legal regulation of specific aspects of the Qur'anic Believers' social interactions (especially in the domains of marriage, divorce, and inheritance) as well as their ritual life (e.g., prayer, fasting). The Medinan Qur'an programmatically accepts and implements the halakhic premise that an essential function of divine revelations is to underpin the "adjudication" (*ḥ-k-m*) of detailed questions of proper and improper human behaviour.[5] By contrast, the earlier Meccan surahs are generally devoid of concrete behavioural rules and confine themselves to enjoining their addressees to adhere to general moral norms, such as solidarity

[4] Two examples are provided by Q 73 and 74, which are discussed in Sinai, "Two Types of Inner-Qur'anic Interpretation" and Sinai, "Processes of Literary Growth." See also Sinai, *The Qur'an*, pp. 92–97, 127–130.

[5] Sinai, *The Qur'an*, pp. 202–203; Sinai, "Muhammad as an Episcopal Figure," pp. 12–14.

with the poor and the marginalised.[6] The adjudicatory turn that is discernible in the Medinan surahs is plausibly viewed as informed by and responding to the Qur'anic community's encounter with a local Jewish community.[7]

This general contrast is however disrupted by the fact that two surahs that are generally considered to be Meccan – namely, Surahs 6 and 16 – contain passages setting out a number of dietary taboos. Such prohibitions presuppose an interest in the detailed regulation of human behaviour that is otherwise confined to the Medinan surahs, which might have led us to expect dietary rules to be limited to the Medinan Qur'an. Of course, this expectation could turn out to be wrong (although even this would not endanger the general case for positing a Meccan-Medinan divide). Yet in what follows, I shall argue that the two passages in question were retrospectively added to Surahs 6 and 16 and are in fact Medinan rather than Meccan.[8] This dating is my main point of disagreement with Holger Zellentin's recent

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[6] Sinai, "The Unknown Known," pp. 66–67.

[7] Sinai, *The Qur'an*, pp. 203–204.

[8] It must be emphasised that I am not proposing a fatuously circular argument positing that all surahs devoid of law are Medinan and that therefore all legal passages in supposedly Meccan surahs must be Medinan insertions. Rather, I *presuppose* (based on prior publications) that it is valid to distinguish an earlier non-Medinan layer of the Qur'an from a later Medinan one by appealing to a bundle of several co-occurent features ranging from phraseological and literary characteristics to thematic and doctrinal ones; and I then *argue* that certain passages

discussion of the Qur'anic food laws, which treats the relevant passages in Surahs 6 and 16 as Meccan.[9] I then go on to address the further question whether we can work out a relative chronology of the Qur'an's various pronouncements regarding dietary restrictions. I conclude by exploring a number of important theological themes – such as the lightness of Qur'anic law as well as God's munificence and general permissiveness – with which the dietary tetralogue appears to be intimately bound up.

Textual and intertextual overview

The Qur'anic corpus as transmitted to us includes four passages (Q 2: 172–173, 5: 3, 6: 145, 16: 114–115) containing a formulaic list of dietary prohibitions, namely, of carrion, blood, pork, and "that over which something other than God has been exclaimed" (*wa-mā uhilla li-ghayri llāhi bihi / wa-mā uhilla bihi li-ghayri llāhi*), which al-Ṭabarī reasonably enough explains as "what has been sacrificed to gods and idols."[10] I shall refer to this four-part list of

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in non-Medinan surahs that evince an interest in legal stipulations can be shown, on the basis of careful textual analysis (and not simply based on their legal preoccupations), to be secondary insertions.

[9] Zellentin, "Judaeo-Christian Legal Culture," pp. 149–153.

[10] Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, on Q 2: 173 = vol. 3, p. 55. This explanation partly overlaps with a segment of Q 5: 3, *mā dhubiḥa ʿalā l-nuṣub*, "what has been slaughtered on sacrificial stones," which would appear to function as an inner-Qur'anic gloss on *wa-mā uhilla li-ghayri llāhi bihi* earlier on in the verse (see below).

Qur'anic food taboos as the Qur'an's "dietary tetralogue." Appendices I and II provide a synoptic juxtaposition of all four versions in the original Arabic and translated into English, according to a chronological reordering for which I shall go on to argue below. All of the dietary tetralogue's four variants share the same basic structure: an opening phrase employing the verb *ḥarrama* (designated as the "*taḥrīm* formula" in my form-critical breakdown in the left-hand column of Appendices I and II), a catalogue of four items whose consumption is forbidden, and a hardship clause exempting those in an emergency situation ("whoever is compelled") from abiding by the preceding prohibitions.

Despite their far-reaching structural overlap, the four versions of the dietary tetralogue display some significant divergences:

(i) Q 16: 114 and Q 2: 172 preface the dietary tetralogue with an almost identical opening injunction.

(ii) Q 5: 3 features by far the most interpretively developed version of the dietary tetralogue. First, it contains a more specific variant of the hardship clause than the other three passages, adding the qualifier "in a state of hunger" to the usual

"whoever is compelled."[11] Secondly, Q 5: 3 intercalates a very substantial amount of text between the four-part list of food taboos and the hardship clause. As I argue elsewhere, this *Sondergut* is a secondary addition to the verse.[12] Its objective is partly to provide further clarification of the preceding prohibitions. Thus, Q 5: 3 includes an enumeration of the different subcategories of carrion ("the strangled, the beaten, the fallen ...") that has appropriately been described as a "running gloss" on the first item of the tetralogue.[13] A similarly interpretive purport underlies Q 5: 3's ban on "that which has slaughtered on sacrifical stones" (*mā dhubiḥa ʿalā l-nuṣub*), a Qur'anic *hapax legomenon* that to all intents and purposes rephrases the dietary tetralogue's final item, "that over which something other than God has been exclaimed."[14] Q 5: 3 may thus be described as betraying a proto-exegetical engagement with the dietary tetralogue. The following verse,

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[11] Q 5: 3 also differs from the other three passages insofar as it replaces the latter's "without being covetous and transgressing" (*ghayra bāghin wa-lā ʿādin*) by "not deviating sinfully" (*ghayra mutajānifin li-ithmin*).

[12] Sinai, "Processes of Literary Growth."

[13] Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food*, p. 139. For an analysis of the individual terms appearing in this middle segment of Q 5: 3, see now Zellentin, "Judaeo-Christian Legal Culture," pp. 155–157.

[14] The fact that parts of the additional material in Q 5: 3 have an interpretive function with respect to two of the four items proscribed in the dietary tetralogue is illustrated by means of arrows in Appendix II. A more detailed discussion of Q 5: 3 is undertaken in Sinai, "Processes of Literary Growth," pp. 79–84.

Q 5: 4, must be yet later than the addition embedded in v. 3: it permits the consumption of animals that have been killed by hunting beasts and is best understood as answering a query arising from Q 5: 3's ban on "what has been devoured by beasts of prey."[15]

(iii) In Q 6: 145, both the introductory *taḥrīm* formula and the core of the dietary tetralogue, the four-part list of food taboos, are more elaborately worded than in the other three passages (see the Appendices). Furthermore, Q 6: 145 has a more pronounced Biblical resonance than its three parallels, insofar as it contains an additional qualification of blood by means of the adjective *masfūḥ* ("shed" or "spilled"),[16] justifies the prohibition of pork with reference to the latter's

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[15] Sinai, "Processes of Literary Growth," pp. 84–85.

[16] It may be conjectured that Q 6: 145's prohibition of consuming *dam masfūḥ* is to be read specifically against the background of Pentateuchal commandments to "pour out" (*shāpak*) the blood of animals that have been killed or sacrificed (Leviticus 17: 13: "And anyone of the people of Israel, or of the aliens who reside among them, who hunts down an animal or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth"; Deuteronomy 12: 16: "The blood, however, you must not eat; you shall pour it out on the ground like water"; cf. Gräf, *Jagdbeute und Schlachttier*, p. 42). These parallels, which like Q 6: 145 occur in a dietary context, suggest that the Qur'anic *dam masfūḥ* should perhaps be understood not as "shed blood" but rather as "blood that is to be poured out." Where the Qur'an refers to the "shedding" of blood by way of a synonym for illicit killing, especially of other humans (as in Genesis 9: 6: שֹׁפֵךְ דַּם הָאָדָם בָּאָדָם דָּמוֹ יִשָּׁפֵךְ, "whoever sheds the blood of a

"impurity" (*rijs*),[17] and describes meat "over which something other than God has been exclaimed" as an "abomination" (*fisq*).[18] The latter two aspects make Q 6:

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human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed"), the verb that is employed is *safaka* rather than *safaḥa*; see Q 2: 30 (prior to the creation of Adam, the angels predict that man will shed blood) and 2: 84 (God's covenant with the Israelites requires them not to shed blood). It is difficult to decide whether the difference between *safaḥa*, used in a dietary context, and *safaka*, used to refer to illicit killing and concatenated with the pural *dimāʾ* rather than with the singular *dam*, is to be interpreted as a principled distinction; but the net result is nonetheless that the received text of the Qur'an weakens the association between "the consumption of animal blood" and "the spilling of human blood" that Holger Zellentin detects in Genesis 9: 3–6 (Zellentin, "Judaeo-Christian Legal Culture," p. 122). In any case, both the use of *safaḥa* at Q 6: 145 and that of *safaka* at Q 2: 30.84 is likely to have had a Biblicising resonance for at least those of the Qur'an's recipients who possessed same familiarity with Hebrew (which seems a likely assumption for the Medinan Jews). The same phraseology (*shāpak* + *dām*) is found in Mishnaic Hebrew (e.g., Sanhedrin 6: 5: אם כן המקום מצטער על דמם של רשעים שנשפך קל וחומר על דמם של צדיקים; "If God is thus troubled at the blood of the wicked that is shed, how much more so at the blood of the righteous?") while Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible (whether the Peshitta or the targums) do not render Hebrew *shāpak* by means of verbs that are cognate with Arabic *safaḥa* or *safaka* but utilise the verbal root *ʾ-sh-d*. Thus, the Qur'an's diction in Q 6: 145 and 2: 30.84 are best placed against a Rabbinic background in which the underlying Hebrew phraseology retained a degree of presence, whether through the liturgical reading of Biblical passages or the study of the Mishnah and Talmud.

[17] See Leviticus 11: 7: "The pig, for even though it has divided hoofs and is cloven-footed, it does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you (טָמֵא הוּא לָכֶם)." Like the Biblical טָמֵא, the term *rijs* (see Q 5: 90, 6: 125, 7: 71, 9: 95.125, 10: 100, 22: 30, 33: 33) would appear to function as an antonym of purity, expressed Qur'anically by *ṭ-h-r*.

[18] Gräf, *Jagdbeute und Schlachttier*, p. 42.

145 the only one of the dietary tetralogue's four variants that contains a vestigial justification of at least some of the stipulated food prohibitions.[19]

(iv) Two of the four versions of the dietary tetralogue (Q 6: 145, Q 16: 115) occur in close proximity to harshly critical comments on Jewish law, specifically Jewish dietary law (Q 6: 146, Q 16: 118). Similar to the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, a Christian church order whose origins go back to the third century CE, Q 6: 146 casts Jewish dietary law as a divine punishment (see also Q 4: 160–161).[20] Q 6: 146 also contains an ostensible summary of some salient features of Jewish dietary law, which are evidently meant to function *pars pro toto* here.[21] Q 16: 118, by contrast, is a much more concise comment that must refer back to Q 6: 146: "To the Jews we have forbidden what we have recounted to you before (*mā qaṣaṣnā ʿalayka min*

[19] It is noteworthy that none of the four Qur'anic passages contains a reprise of the Biblical account why blood may not be consumed; see Leviticus 17: 10–14, which includes the famous statement that "the life of the flesh is in the blood." Apparently, the rationale for these prohibitions was much more evident to the Qur'anic audience than to that of the Biblical Holiness Code (Leviticus 17–26).

[20] See Zellentin, *Legal Culture*, pp. 140–154. A different account of the origin of the Jewish dietary law is given in Q 3: 93–94, according to which the Israelites themselves gratuitously imposed food taboos on themselves. Cf. also Q 5: 87 and its various parallels (16: 116, 10: 59 etc.).

[21] See Gräf, *Jagdbeute und Schlachttier*, pp. 43–44, who cites various relevant passages from Leviticus.

qablu)."[22] Both in Surahs 6 and 16, then, the dietary tetralogue is primarily styled as a less onerous Qur'anic alternative to the alleged burdensomeness of Jewish law, even though the literary environment of Q 6: 145–146 is dominated by polemic against miscellaneous pagan taboos to do with livestock and crops. It is noteworthy that in Surah 2 the dietary tetralogue is followed by criticism of "those who conceal what God has sent down of the Scripture" (Q 2: 174). It is probable that this, too, is a stab at Judaism, for Surah 2 is replete with reminders of the disobedience of the Israelites, while other Qur'anic passages explicitly single out the Jews as guilty of distorting scripture, a polemical motif inherited from Christian anti-Jewish polemics.[23]

It is not impossible that at least the Qur'anic prohibitions of blood and carrion codify existing Arab dietary habits.[24] Nonetheless, scholars have long noticed the partial overlap between the Qur'an's four-part list of food taboos and another four-part list of prohibitions,

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[22] The possibility that Q 16: 118 might refer back not to Q 6: 146 but to Q 4: 160–161 seems much less likely, since the latter passage does not actually detail any of the prohibitions imposed on the Jews.

[23] Reynolds, "On the Qurʾanic Accusation of Scriptural Falsification."

[24] On the likely reluctance of pre-Islamic Arabs to consume blood (which appears to have lapsed in times of famine) see Wellhausen, *Reste*, pp. 117–118. See also Gräf, *Jagdbeute und Schlachttier*, p. 21. Within the Qur'an, see Q 16: 66, briefly discussed below.

the so-called Apostolic Decree from Acts 15 (see Appendix III).[25] The Apostolic Decree prohibits gentile Christians from the consumption of "meat offered to idols," blood, and "things strangled" (*pnikta*), as well as from fornication (*porneia*), meaning a violation of the catalogue of forbidden sexual relations in Leviticus 18: 6–30.[26] Evidently, three of the Qur'an's four dietary prohibitions – carrion, blood, and meat sacrificed to idols – have recognisable counterparts in the Apostolic Decree.[27] Furthermore, like the Apostolic Decree, the Qur'an's dietary tetralogue presents itself as an "alleviating minimal demand."[28] This is very explicit in Q 6: 145 ("Say: I do not find in what has been revealed to me anything forbidden to someone eating it except for ..."), but is equally conveyed by the restrictive particle *innamā* employed in Q 2: 173 and Q 16: 115.[29] Nonetheless, there are enough differences between our four Qur'anic verses and the Apostolic Decree in order to resist

[25] E.g., Gräf, *Jagdbeute und Schlachttier*, pp. 22–24; Zellentin, *Legal Culture*, pp. 77–78.

[26] Wehnert, *Die Reinheit des "christlichen Gottesvolkes*," pp. 232–233.

[27] Of course, all four items listed in the Apostolic Decree in their turn have a background in the Hebrew Bible, specifically in Leviticus 17 and 18. For a much more detailed discussion, see Zellentin, "Judaeo-Christian Legal Culture."

[28] Gräf, *Jagdbeute und Schlachttier*, p. 22.

[29] Wright, *Grammar*, vol. 1, p. 285; vol. 2, p. 335.

viewing the latter as the direct source of the former.[30] For instance, the Apostolic Decree contains no hardship clause, and the Qur'anic prohibition of carrion does not directly map onto the Apostolic "things strangled."[31]

Of course, the most notable difference between the Qur'anic dietary tetralogue and the Apostolic Decree consists in the latter's lack of a prohibition of pork, which palpably sets the Qur'anic food taboos apart from mainstream Christianity. The prohibition of consuming

[30] An indirect link between the two is also posited in Gräf, *Jagdbeute und Schlachttier*, p. 23.

[31] As pointed out by Zellentin ("Judaeo-Christian Legal Culture," pp. 131–132), Jürgen Wehnert has shown that a number of Jewish and Christian sources (including the Mishnah, the Tosefta, and Philo) expand the meaning of the term "strangled" to encompass all meat vitiated by incorrect slaughter, as a result of which it has not been fully drained of blood (Wehnert, *Die Reinheit des "christlichen Gottesvolkes*," pp. 227–232). The category of "strangled" meat in the Apostolic Decree thus has a much wider semantic coverage than it might at first appear. Zellentin also highlights that the expanded version of the Qur'an's dietary tetralogue in Q 5: 3 *does* contain a literal equivalent of *pnikta* (Peshitta: *ḥnīqē*), namely, the term *al-munkhaniqa* (an observation already anticipated in Rivlin, *Gesetz*, p. 71). As regards the Qur'anic ban on *mayta*, this has been liked by Zellentin to a passage in the (Pseudo-) *Clementine Homilies* in which Peter demands that converts to Christianity "abstain from the table of devils, that is, from food offered to idols, from dead carcasses (*nekrôn*), from animals which have been suffocated or caught by wild beasts, and from blood" (7: 8; see Smith, trans., "Clementine Homilies"; see Zellentin, "Judaeo-Christian Legal Culture," p. 155). The prohibition of "dead carcasses" here corresponds directly to the Qur'anic *mayta*. See Zellentin, *Legal Culture*, pp. 79–80, 94.

pork being a conspicuous feature of Pentateuchal law (Leviticus 11: 7),[32] abstention from it was widely perceived as a symbol of Jewish custom.[33] To be sure, it may sometimes have been practised on the margins of Christian communities,[34] yet its Judaising valence seems clear enough.[35] One example for this association is the testimony of the fifth-century author

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[32] As Marcel Simon ("De l'observance rituelle à l'ascèse," p. 41) remarks: "Le porc est pratiquement le seul animal de consommation vraiment courante dans l'Antiquité parmi tous ceux que la Loi mosaique interdit comme impurs."

[33] Zellentin, *Legal Culture*, pp. 99–100: "Throughout Late Antiquity, moreover, Jews and non-Jews alike perceived pork as the epitome of the Israelite notion of impurity; pork functions as a central symbol in many Jewish and non-Jewish texts."

[34] Zellentin, *Legal Culture*, pp. 81–85, citing a passage from the *Didascalia Apostolorum* that bemoans, inter alia, abstention from pork; see Vööbus (ed.), *Didascalia*, pp. 230–231 (Syriac text) = end of Chapter 23 and beginning of Chapter 24. Zellentin plausibly infers that this practice, like others referred to in the same context, is likely to have been observed by Christians at the time of the *Didascalia*'s composition.

[35] Tellingly, the *Didascalia* (ed. Vööbus, p. 231 of Syriac text = beginning of Chapter 24) describes abstention from pork as amounting to a residual observance of the "bonds" (*asurē*) of the "second legislation," the latter term meaning the arduous commandments that were imposed on the Israelites after their worship of the Golden Calf, over and above the Ten Commandments that had been revealed earlier. Incidentally, the *Didascalia*'s reference to the "bonds" (*asurē*) of the Mosaic law may be compared to Q 7: 157, where the Qur'anic Messenger is instructed to announce to the adherents of the Torah and the Gospel that he will "relieve them of their burden (*iṣrahum*) and of the fetters (*al-aghlāl*) that have been upon them." The phonetic similarity between *iṣr* and *asurē* is particularly intriguing here.

Sozomen, who describes Palestinian Arabs around Gaza as shunning pork and ascribes this to their adoption of "Hebrew rites and customs" (*Ecclesiastical History* 6: 38).[36]

It is probable, then, that the Qur'anic ban on pork would have been viewed as endorsing a well-known facet of the Mosaic law.[37] The Qur'an thus combines an invalidation of the full edifice of Jewish law, especially Jewish dietary law, as a divine punishment (Q 6: 146, also 4: 160–161) or a mere human construct (Q 3: 93) with the espousal of a very prominent Jewish dietary prohibition, that of pork. (It may be added that the Qur'an similarly accepts the Biblical proposition that menstruation entails impurity,[38] although

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[36] Fisher, Wood, et al., "Arabs and Christianity," pp. 370–371. Sozomen also mentions circumcision, which is not imposed by the Qur'an but is attested as an Islamic practice already by seventh-century Christian observers (Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, pp. 12–13). Note that the types of livestock listed in Q 6: 142–144 include only sheep, goats, camels and cattle, not pigs.

[37] As observed above, the justification of the prohibition of pork in Q 6: 145 echoes Biblical diction.

[38] See Q 2: 222. The Biblical background here is Leviticus (18: 19, 20: 18) and the Decalogue-like list of observances that are presented as characterising a "just" man in Ezekiel 18. In both cases, the prohibition is explicitly presented as motivated by considerations of purity: both Leviticus 18 and Ezekiel 18 use the term *niddah*, "impurity," which is also used in connection with defilement by corpses and idolatry (in both cases the Peshitta has *kepsā*, "uncleanness"). Although the Qur'an initially describes the menstrual period only as "something harmful" (*adhan*) and does not employ its usual words for impurity (*rijs*, or *najas* as in Q 9: 28; see Rivlin, *Gesetz*, p. 87; *f-ḥ-sh* might also have been used), the Qur'an, like the Hebrew Bible, does adopt the language of purity by saying that women during their menstrual period are not "pure" (verb: *ṭahura*) and

unlike the prohibition of pork this view has also enjoyed a significant resonance in mainstream Christianity.[39]) It seems to me that the best way of explaining this peculiar combination – a general invalidation of Jewish law combined with an acceptance of at least one prominent aspect of Pentateuchal dietary law – is to view the Qur'an as being engaged in an attempt to carve out a religious identity that is independent both of Rabbinic Judaism and mainstream Christianity, by combining certain symbolically charged aspects of Pentateuchal law with an unequivocal dismissal of Rabbinic law as a whole: abstention from pork would have demarcated the Qur'anic Believers from Christians while rejection of the Mosaic law in its entirety would have demarcated them from Jews.[40] As a consequence, an ambiguous borderland between Christianity and Judaism is staked off as independent religious territory.

That being said, it seems eminently possible that the Qur'an's selective forays into aspects of Pentateuchal ritual law take their point of departure from earlier Christian tendencies to elaborate and expand upon the purity regulations of the Apostolic Decree, a

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require "purification" (verb: *taṭahhara*), probably by means of some sort of ablution (both of these verbs are of course cognate with the Hebrew טָהוֹר).

[39] See Zellentin, *Legal Culture*, 93, for pertinent references to the secondary literature.

[40] On communal demarcation as an important function of Qur'anic law, see Sinai, *The Qur'an*, pp. 202–205. As pointed out there, this aspect of Qur'anic law is made explicit in Q 5: 48.

link that has been argued in great detail and with much erudition by Holger Zellentin.[41] Linking Zellentin's research with the central claim of the present article that all four instances of the Qur'an's dietary tetralogue are Medinan and that at least some of them bespeak a clear polemical preoccupation with Judaism, we may say that the Qur'an engages Jewish dietary law by amplifying pre-existing Christian tendencies to endorse and expand upon the purity rules of the Apostolic Decree – a current of late antique Christianity that is easily overlooked from a contemporary Western vantage point. It may be added that Zellentin's hypothesis that Qur'anic dietary law – which unlike him I consider to be virtually exclusively Medinan[42] – builds on Christian concerns with ritual purity emanating from the Apostolic Decree derives additional plausibility from the fact that there are other respects, too, in which the Medinan Qur'an draws on Christian notions and traditions – for instance, with regard to the accusation that the Jews are guilty of scriptural "falsification" (*taḥrīf*) and with regard to the marked amplification and diversification of Muhammad's role and

[41] Zellentin, "Judaeo-Christian Legal Culture," pp. 139–148. Zellentin's main witnesses for what he calls "the expansive tradition of understanding the Decree of the Apostles" are Clement, Origen, Tertullian, and the *Clementine Homilies*.

[42] I say "*virtually* exclusively" because Q 6: 118.121, which prohibit food over which God's name has not been invoked and which I take to have been secondarily wedged apart by the insertion of 6: 119–120 (see below), are not in my view convincingly extricated as Medinan.

authority in the Medinan surahs, which bears considerable resemblance to the figure of the Christian bishop.[43]

Before concluding our initial overview of Qur'anic dietary prohibitions, we need to briefly dwell on one other passage that parallels the final item of the dietary tetralogue. This is Q 6: 118–121. V. 118 enjoins the Qur'anic audience to "eat of that over which God's name has been invoked" (*fa-kulū mimmā dhukira smu llāhi ʿalayhi*), whereas v. 121 prohibits that over which God's name has *not* been invoked as being an "abomination" (*fisq*).[44] In between these two verses, we encounter a generic allusion to the tetralogue's remaining prohibitions as well as to its characteristic hardship clause: according to Q 6: 119, God "has specified for you what He has forbidden to you, except for things to which you are compelled" (*wa-qad faṣṣala lakum mā ḥarrama ʿalaykum illā mā ḍṭurirtum ilayhi*). V. 119 would thus appear to presuppose some temporally earlier version of the dietary tetralogue, whether the one at Q 6: 145 or in a different surah.

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[43] Reynolds, "On the Qurʾanic Accusation of Scriptural Falsification"; Sinai, "Muḥammad as an Episcopal Figure."

[44] Gräf (*Jagdbeute und Schlachttier*, p. 34) considers whether Q 6: 118.121 might only require a mealtime benediction rather than an invocation at the time of slaughter, but rightly dismisses this as unlikely at least in the case of v. 121.

Diachronic and redactional analysis

If one examines other parts of the Qur'anic corpus, one may well be surprised that the Qur'an should contain any dietary prohibitions at all. For instance, there are three passages that refer to "livestock" (*al-anᶜām*) as forming part of God's generous and gracious provision for mankind and explicitly mention that animals are available for human consumption without intimating any applicable restrictions (Q 23: 21, 36: 71–72, 40: 79–80).[45] It is true that Q 16: 66 – according to which God grants humans drink from their livestock, "pure milk ... from between stomach content (? *farth*) and blood" – seems to imply that blood is something that one would not normally wish to consume, yet this is clearly not the same as a divine prohibition of the sort encountered in the dietary tetralogue. One might object that these three livestock passages simply presuppose the food taboos examined above. Yet that seems unlikely: after all, other Qur'anic passages are perfectly capable of signalling concisely yet unmistakably that the enjoyment of God's gifts is subject to certain regulations, e.g., Q 16: 114: "Eat of that which God has provided for you *as permitted* and good!" (*fa-kulū mimmā razaqakumu llāhu ḥalālan ṭayyiban;* similarly Q 5: 88). The fact that the three livestock

[45] A similar tension famously pertains to the Qur'anic statements about wine, which is both listed as a divine grace (Q 16: 67) and prohibited (Q 5: 90; see also 2: 219 and 4: 43).

passages drop no such hint ought to make us wary of resolving the tension obtaining between them and the dietary tetralogue by way of tacit harmonisation.

As a matter of fact, the Qur'an contains not only verses that seem conspicuously silent about any dietary regulations but also verses that warn against arbitrarily prohibiting the things that are generously provided by God: "Say: Have you [plural] considered the provision (*rizq*) that God has sent down to you and [how] you have made some of it forbidden (*ḥarām*) and some permitted (*ḥalāl*)? Say: Has God given you permission, or do you fabricate something against Him?" (Q 10: 59). This passage, which is unaccompanied by any reference to the dietary tetralogue,[46] certainly creates the impression that *any* distinction between lawful and unlawful food is a mere human convention that amounts to a "lie" or "fabrication" (*iftirāʾ*) against God.[47] Such a position is very close to the view expressed by Paul in Romans 14: "I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean (*koinon*) in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean" (v. 14); "Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean (*kathara*) ..." (v. 20). Similarly, Mark presents

[46] This distinguishes Q 10: 59 from Q 16: 116, occurring as it does immediately after one variant of the dietary tetralogue.

[47] The topos of prohibitions that have been "fabricated" by humans also occurs elsewhere in the Qur'an, for instance, at Q 6: 136ff. and 7: 31–33. Q 3: 93–94 employs it in order to discount Jewish dietary law.

Jesus as having taught that “whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile” (Mark 7: 18), whereupon the Evangelist clarifies: “Thus he declared all foods clean” (καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα; Mark 7: 19).[48] In sum, it is not immediately obvious how the quasi-Pauline abrogation of all rules of dietary purity that is strongly implied by a number of Qur’anic verses might be reconciled with the fact that elsewhere the Qur’an does declare certain substances, such as blood and pork, to be prohibited – the rationale behind this prohibition being the inherent impurity ascribed to them at Q 6: 145.[49]

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[48] The Peshitta has ܡܕܟܐ ܟܠܗ ܡܐܟܘܠܬܐ. See also Luke 11: 37–41, culminating in the statement that “everything will be clean for you” (πάντα καθαρὰ ὑμῖν ἐστιν).

[49] My diagnosis of an inner-Qur’anic tension here might be questioned by proposing that we ought to understand the terms *rizq* and *ṭayyib* are to be construed as implying purity. By this line of reasoning, it would only be those foodstuffs that the Qur’an deems to be ritually pure, rather than anything that is edible and nourishing, that qualifies as a divinely-given “provision.” Yet given that Qur’anic Arabic disposes of a sufficiently developed terminology for signalling ritual purity (see, for instance, the reference to *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* in Q 10: 59), I am very sceptical of such an attempt at semantic harmonisation. Thus, it seems to me that when Q 5: 88 and 16: 114 enjoin the audience *wa-/fa-kulū mimmā razaqakumu llāhu ḥalālan ṭayyiban*, we should not interpret *ḥalālan ṭayyiban* as a sort of pleonasm in which the meaning of the first term is comprised in that of the second. Rather, I would maintain that the double accusative ought to be construed as picking out those things that are *ṭayyib* (meaning, roughly, edible, wholesome, and nourishing) that are also *ḥalāl*. For what it’s worth, this understanding of the word is roughly in line with al-Ṭabarī, who glosses the word *ṭayyibāt* in the phrase *lā tuḥarrimū ṭayyibāti mā aḥalla llāhu lakum* (Q 5: 87) as *al-ladhīdhāti llatī tashtahīhā l-nufūsu wa-tamīlu ilayhā l-qulūb* (“the delicious things that the souls desire and to which the hearts incline”), thus omitting any

A time-honoured strategy of making sense of such tensions and contradictions is to adopt an evolutionary perspective, whereby one tries to work out a feasible discursive sequence leading from one part of the contradiction to the other. For instance, we might posit a development according to which an early Qur'anic attitude of unrestricted consumption of what nature has to offer was superseded by a later attitude insisting that certain things are impure and ritually unfit for human consumption. The hypothetical trajectory emerging from this latter approach is somewhat reminiscent of reading the Bible backwards, leading from quasi-Pauline dietary antinomianism to a partial reinstatement of the Mosaic law. Theoretically, the development might of course have been the other way round. However, as pointed out in my introduction, I would argue that we can accept the traditional premise that the mean verse length of the Qur'anic proclamations underwent a gradual increase over time. Given that the three livestock passages referenced above (Q 23: 21, 36: 71–72, 40: 79–80) as well as Q 10: 59 all occur in surahs that have a lower mean verse length than at least three of the surahs incorporating the dietary tetralogue (namely, than Q 2,

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suggestion that the adjective *ṭayyib* presupposes ritual purity; see al-Ṭabarī, on Q 5: 87 = vol. 8, p. 606. (Whether that means that al-Ṭabarī was comfortable applying the term *ṭayyib* to, say, pork requires further research.)

5, and 6), it is preferable to have our hypothetical evolution begin with dietary antinomianism rather than end with it.[50]

As intimated above, the dietary passages in Surahs 6 and 16 seem anomalous: overall both Surah 6 and Surah 16 are best allocated to the Meccan rather than to the Medinan Qur'an, and Meccan surahs generally lack an interest in stipulating detailed and quasi-legal behavioural rules. However, there are good arguments in support of the position that the dietary tetralogue was not originally part of Surahs 6 and 16. Let us commence with Surah 6. As noted above, the wider literary context of vv. 145–146 is devoted to polemics against various rites and taboos observed by the pagan "Associators" (*al-mushrikūn*).[51] The Associators are the opponents targeted in the section immediately preceding the dietary tetralogue, from v. 136 up to at least v. 144, and then reappear in v. 148. The summary and

[50] A surah's mean verse length is conveniently measured in transcription letters (for details, refer to Sinai, "Inner-Qur'anic Chronology"). This approach yields the following values: Q 10: 104.36 transcription letters; Q 23: 56.86; Q 36: 55.01; Q 40: 89.2. By contrast, the mean verse length of the four surahs containing the dietary tetralogue takes the following values: Q 2: 137.19; Q 5: 150.06; Q 6: 117.87; Q 16: 93.41.

[51] Against the background of recent work by Gerald Hawting and Patricia Crone, it cannot be taken to be self-evident anymore that the "Associators" were indeed pagans (see Hawting, *Idolatry*, and Crone, *The Qur'ānic Pagans*). I am fairly confident that they were, but the issue is beyond the scope of this article; see in more detail Sinai, *The Qur'an*, pp. 59–77.

dismissal of Jewish dietary laws in v. 146 thus protrudes as a parenthesis. It is also relevant that the closest Qur'anic parallels to v. 146 other than Q 16: 118, which must be later than it, is Q 4: 160–161, a passage occurring in a surah that clearly fits the thematic and stylistic profile of the Medinan Qur'an. This invites the conjecture (although it does not irrefutably entail) that Q 6: 146 is also Medinan. Of course, this does not automatically cast doubt on the dietary tetralogue itself, which appears in the preceding v. 145. Thus, Gräf maintains that it is only vv. 146–147 that constitute a later addition while he would assign v. 145 to the surah's original layer.[52] However, v. 145 stands in tension with v. 142, where no constraints on the consumption of livestock are envisaged: "eat of that which God has granted you as provision," the verse charges its audience. V. 142 does not seem to suggest that the Associators have the *wrong* dietary prohibitions rather than the correct ones; instead, the problem seems to be that they have *any* dietary prohibitions at all. Q 6: 142 therefore expresses the quasi-Pauline opposition to all dietary restrictions that was briefly outlined above. Pace Gräf, this supports the claim that v. 145 belongs together with v. 146. The upshot is that Q 6: 145–146

[52] Gräf, *Jagdbeute und Schlachttier*, p. 39.

(conceivably including v. 147 as well[53]) are likely to be a later insertion. Similar additions have been identified in many other Qur'anic surahs, meaning that my hypothesis invokes a very well documented type of redactional intervention.[54] The reason for inserting the verses in question would have been to inscribe the dietary tetralogue into a passage whose original concern was merely to argue that certain pagan restrictions on the use and consumption of cattle and tillage (and perhaps, by extension, all such restrictions) are a result of arbitrary human "fabrication" (verb: *iftarā*) – an accusation that recurs in vv. 137, 138, 140, and also 144, immediately before the proposed insertion.

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[53] V. 147 runs, "If they [plural] denounce you as a liar (*fa-in kadhdhabūka*), say, 'Your Lord is endowed with great mercy, but [literally, "and"] His might will not be repelled from the sinful people (*wa-lā yuraddu baʾsuhū ʿani l-qawmi l-mujrimīn*)." As Lowry remarks, it "is possible that Q. 6:147 is meant to report a Jewish response to the unflattering charcterisation of the dietary rules given at Q. 6:146" (Lowry, "When Less is More," p. 25). Gräf also considers v. 147 to be linked to the verse before it (Gräf, *Jagdbeute und Schlachttier*, p. 44). On the other hand, it also seems viable to link up v. 147 with the end of v. 144. The fact that their similar concluding cadences, finishing in *al-qawm al-ẓālimīn* (v. 144) and *al-qawm al-mujrimīn* (v. 147), could be viewed as inviting such a link is not however a compelling argument: later insertions in the Qur'an often echo the phraseology of the environment in which they have been embedded, and this may well be the reason for why v. 147 ends similarly to v. 144. A more cogent argument for considering v. 147 to be part of the passage's basic layer rather than of the insertion would be the observation that threats of falling victim to God's "violent might" (*baʾs*), of the sort that we find in v. 147, are usually deployed against the Unbelievers or Associators in the Qur'an.

[54] Sinai, *The Qur'an*, pp. 92–97; Sinai, "Processes of Literary Growth"; Sinai, "Two Types of Inner-Qur'anic Interpretation."

Now, the preceding argument still leaves open the further question whether the addition we have identified should be assigned to the Meccan or to the Medinan layer of the Qur'an. To be sure, there are some insertions into Meccan surahs that may still be Meccan themselves.[55] However, in the present case we are dealing with a surah whose high mean verse length indicates a very late Meccan origin.[56] An additional consideration is the fact that Q 6: 146's comment on Jewish law fits the historical constellation presupposed by the Medinan corpus (which involves sustained polemical confrontations with a resident community of Scripturalists, most likely, Jews) much better than that implied by the Meccan surahs. This is reinforced by the observation that v. 146, even if not a fully accurate account of Jewish dietary law,[57] would appear to be informed by *some* first-hand awareness of Jewish food law on the part of the Qur'anic community. In sum, we can safely assume that Q 6: 145–146 (or 6: 145–147) are not just an addition but a *Medinan* addition.

Turning to Surah 16, the dietary tetralogue here (in v. 115) occurs as part of the surah's final section, which Neuwirth has cursorily earmarked as being in part composed of

[55] Plausible candidates for this scenario are, for instance, Q 74: 56 and 81: 29 (see Neuwirth, *Studien*, p. 202).

[56] See Sinai, *The Qur'an*, p. 120 (Figure 12).

[57] Gräf, *Jadgbeute und Schlachttier*, pp. 43–44.

Medinan additions.[58] Gräf likewise considers at least v. 115 and v. 118 to have been added to the surah at a later stage.[59] This is decisively supported by our above observation that Q 16: 118 seems to refer back to Q 6: 146. Thus, in view of my preceding argument to the effect that Q 6: 145–146 or 6: 145–147 constitute a Medinan addition, Q 16: 118 must likewise be a (slightly later) Medinan insertion, at least if we make the standard assumption that the body of Surah 16, like that of Surah 6, is Meccan. Since v. 115 is linked to v. 114, which contains the term *ḥalāl* and thus anticipates the following dietary prohibitions, the addition probably encompasses all of vv. 114–118.

One might query whether our conjectured addition should be deemed to include vv. 116–117. These two verses warn the recipients against mendaciously labelling certain things as "permitted" (*ḥalāl*) and "forbidden" (*ḥarām*), an offence that is described as "fabricating lies" against God (*li-yaftarū ʿalā llāhi l-kadhiba*). Given that in Surah 6 the same accusation of *iftirāʾ ʿalā llāh* was part of the text's original layer, should we not similarly consider Q 16: 116–117 to belong Surah 16's basic layer? Yet Q 16: 116–117 seem well integrated with the preceding two verses and the following one: After vv. 114–115 have

[58] Cf. Neuwirth, *Studien*, p. 301.

[59] Gräf, *Jagdbeute und Schlachttier*, p. 16.

established that God has "only" (*innamā*) forbidden the four items listed in the dietary tetralogue, vv. 116–117 dismiss all further dietary prohibitions as human fabrication. V. 118 then adds, in line with Q 6: 146, that the much more wide-ranging dietary restrictions of Jewish law are indeed based on a divine act of prohibition, rather than rooted in human fabrication, but that the imposition of these additional dietary rules did not amount to an act of divine wrongdoing against the Jews but rather was a consequence of the latter's prior disobedience: "We did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves." Thus, vv. 116–117 make for an organic discursive sequence in between vv. 114–115 and v. 118, which militates against the conjecture that our hypothetical addition might only comprise vv. 114–115 and v. 118. It would appear, therefore, that in Q 16: 116–117 we encounter the accusation of *iftirāʾ ʿalā llāh* as part of a Medinan insertion and not, as in Surah 6, as part of the composition's Meccan ground layer. This does not, however, need to cause undue surprise: for although the emergence of the concept of "fabrication against God" clearly dates back to the Meccan period, Medinan verses like Q 3: 24.94, 4: 48.50, or 5: 103 document that the notion remained part of the Qur'an's operative vocabulary after the *hijra*.

It appears, then, that all four passages prohibiting the consumption of carrion, blood, pork, and "that over which something other than God has been exclaimed" belong to the

Medinan Qur'an and postdate the *hijra*. As already stated above, this conclusion tallies well with the fact that one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Medinan Qur'an is its espousal of the halakhic premise that an important function of divine revelations is to regulate ritual behaviour. This amounts to a certain convergence with Rabbinic Judaism, against Christianity, as does the Qur'anic acceptance of the Pentateuchal ban on pork. On the other hand, we have seen that the Medinan Qur'an simultaneously rejects the much more far-reaching system of Rabbinic dietary law, in a manner that is recognisably indebted to Christian anti-Jewish polemics. It appears that it is this polemical context that originally spawned the Qur'an's dietary tetralogue: most likely it arose by way of a response to the Qur'anic community's encounter with Jews and Jewish dietary practice. After all, as observed earlier, two of the four versions of the dietary tetralogue – those contained in Surah 6 and Surah 16 – occur in close proximity to polemical comments on Jewish law, and the dietary tetralogue in Surah 2 is followed by a statement that appears to be at least implicitly directed against Judaism (Q 2: 174).

Can we go further and reconstruct the likely diachronic sequence of the four versions of the dietary tetralogue? There are at least some clues to guide us in devising a plausible sequence, even if certain aspects allow for more than one chronological permutation. Most

importantly, Q 16: 114–118 (or at least 16: 114–115.118) must postdate Q 6: 145–146 due to the fact that Q 16: 118 would appear to refer back to 6: 146. As regards Q 5: 3, it is perhaps the latest passage of the series. The basic layer of Surah 5's introductory section presupposes a historical situation in which the Qur'anic Believers are able to undertake the pilgrimage to the "inviolable house" or the "inviolable place of prostration," traditionally identified with the Meccan sanctuary (Q 5: 2). Even though pagan worshippers are still envisaged as being present at the sanctuary (see again Q 5: 2), the constellation is markedly different from other Medinan surahs, which assume that the Qur'anic Believers are denied all access to the sanctuary (see Q 8: 34–35 and 22: 25). This bears out the traditional placement of Q 5 as one of the latest Medinan surahs, which is further corroborated by the fact that it has the third highest mean verse length of any Qur'anic surah.[60] The interpretively more developed character of the hardship clause in Q 5: 3 – which, as we saw above, expands the usual "whoever is compelled" by the phrase "in a state of hunger" – accords well with the hypothesis that the dietary tetralogue in Surah 5 is the latest of the four passages in question.

[60] See Sinai, "Inner-Qur'anic Chronology," and Sinai, *The Qur'an*, p. 120 (Figure 12). Only Surahs 65 and 60 have a higher mean verse length (157.83 and 179.31 transcription letters, as opposed to Surah 5's 150.06).

If, as posited above, the middle part of Q 5: 3 as well as Q 5: 4 are secondary insertions, they must be later still than the basic layer of Q 5's introductory section.

Can we conjecture which one of the four Qur'anic occurrences of the dietary tetralogue should be dated earliest? As noted above, the version appearing in Q 6: 145 is more Biblical in diction than the other three, and it also intimates a rudimentary justification for at least two of the four prohibitions. Furthermore, unlike the versions of the tetralogue that appear in Surahs 2 and 5, the one in Surah 6 clearly manifests the anti-Jewish polemical context from which the Qur'anic food prohibitions are reasonably considered to have emerged. All things considered, Q 6: 145 is therefore a strong contender for being the earliest Qur'anic occurrence of the four-part list of food taboos. The version from Surah 2 is credibly placed after those found in Surahs 6 and 16, although other possibilities are difficult to rule out. All of this would yield the following relative dating: Q 6: 145 – Q 16: 115 – Q 2: 173 – Q 5: 3.

Finally, what to make of Q 6: 118–121? I would submit that Q 6: 119–120, like Q 6: 145–147 (or 6: 145–146), were only secondarily embedded in Surah 6. Indeed, this must be the case if the full dietary tetralogues in Surahs 6 and 16 are Medinan insertion, for Q 6: 119 (*wa-qad faṣṣala lakum mā ḥarrama ᶜalaykum illā mā ḍṭurirtum ilayhi*, "He [God] has

specified for you what He has forbidden to you, unless you are compelled to it") clearly presupposes, and hence postdates, at least one of the four dietary tetralogues. The function of vv. 119–120 would have been to inscribe the full-blown Medinan dietary tetralogue, including its signature hardship clause, into an earlier version of the passage consisting only of 6: 118 and 6: 121, which link up very well.[61] This precursor version of the canonical text, consisting only in the originally adjacent verses 118 and 121, required merely that God's name be invoked over animals that are about to be slaughtered. It therefore marks an intermediate, and still pre-Medinan, stage in the development of Qur'anic dietary rules: the Qur'anic community is enjoined to invoke God's name during slaughter, on the grounds that to do otherwise would constitute an "abomination" (*fisq*), yet apart from this basic ritual prescription the general Meccan insistence on the permissibility of all God's natural gifts is still in place. At some point after the dietary tetralogue's first promulgation in Q 6: 145 (and perhaps later than Q 16: 115 as well), vv. 118 and 121 of Surah 6 were spliced apart by the addition of vv. 119–120.

[61] Gräf, *Jagdbeute und Schlachttier*, p. 33, similarly considers Q 6: 119–120 to have been inserted later. Gräf actually posits two stages of expansion: first v. 119 was added, then v. 120.

Adding up all of the preceding observations, we arrive at the following diachronic model:

Stage 1: No explicit dietary regulations (dietary antinomianism)

Q 36: 71–72, 40: 79, 23: 21: livestock (*al-anᶜām*) mentioned as a divine gift to mankind, but no reference to any dietary restrictions (although Q 16: 66 presupposes that blood was not seen as fit for consumption); cf. also Q 10: 59, which depicts dietary taboos as an arbitrary human convention.

Stage 2: Requirement to invoke God's name over food

Q 6: 118.121: prohibition of food (very likely, slaughtered meat) over which God's name has not been invoked.

Stage 3: Additional prohibition of carrion, blood, and pork

Q 6: 145–146 or 6: 145–147 (later insertion): first occurrence of the dietary tetralogue, which is presented as an alternative to Jewish dietary laws.

Q 16: 114–118 and Q 2: 172–3: the dietary tetralogue recapitulated (with 16: 118 referring back to 6: 146).

Q 6: 119.120 (later insertion that presupposes at least 6: 145): serves to tie 6: 118.121 to the fully fledged dietary tetralogue including hardship clause.

Stage 4: Further clarification and expansion of the dietary tetralogue

Q 5: 3 (including insertion): enumeration of various subcategories of carrion (the initial item of the tetralogue), reformulation of the tetralogue's final item ("something over which something other than God has been exclaimed"), additional prohibition of belomancy.

Q 5: 4 (second-order insertion): permission of consuming animals killed by hunting beasts.

The theological context of the dietary tetralogue

I have earlier described the general drift of the chronological development for which I have argued as being akin to reading the Bible backwards, as a progression from quasi-Pauline dietary antinomianism to a partial reinstatement of the Mosaic food taboos. Such an

evolution accords well with the fact that the Meccan Qur'an (which generally maintains a position of dietary antinomianism) shows significant parallels to Christian eschatological piety,[62] whereas the Medinan Qur'an exhibits an intense polemical engagement with Judaism.[63] However, it is important to recognise that the antinomian attitude of Stage 1 of the evolutionary trajectory proposed above retains a perceptible presence even as late as Stages 3 and 4. Medinan passages insist on the lightness of the normative burden that is imposed on the Qur'anic audience, as opposed to the allegedly onerous rules of Jewish law. For instance, Q 2: 185 asserts that "God desires ease for you [plural], not hardship," and similar statements are found at Q 5: 6 and 22: 78.[64] Also relevant in this context is the fact, recently studied by Joseph Lowry, that Qur'anic law, and especially Qur'anic *ritual* law, shows a high frequency of what Lowry calls "exculpatory phrases," such as *lā junāḥa* (e.g., Q 2: 158) or *lā ithma* (which appears in the hardship clause of one of our four dietary tetralogues, in Q 2: 173).[65]

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[62] Sinai, "Eschatological Kerygma"; Sinai, *The Qur'an*, pp. 166–169.

[63] Sinai, "The Unknown Known," pp. 67–68.

[64] See Lowry, "Exculpatory Language," pp. 107–108 (also pointing to Q 8: 66 and 73: 20); Paret, *Kommentar und Konkordanz*, on Q 2: 185.

[65] Lowry, "Exculpatory Language," pp. 99–105.

The theme of the lightness of Qur'anic law clearly facilitates the Qur'anic proclamations' polemical critique of Jewish law. But it may also be viewed as additionally addressing the Pauline claim that God's imposition of the Law only serves to demonstrate man's inability to keep it (Romans 7). The Qur'an may be responding to this contention by emphasising that the Qur'anic law, as opposed to the Jewish law, is a law that *can* actually be kept. It is conceivable, therefore, that the Medinan Qur'an is aware of, and keen to forestall, a potential theological objection to which its halakhic turn could give rise.[66]

[66] A similar interest in the forestalling of theological objections would appear to be at play in Q 22: 37, according to which "the flesh and blood" of the animal sacrifices that are commanded in the preceding verse "will not reach God"; instead, it is people's "fear of God" (*taqwā*) that reaches Him. The statement recalls the Biblical prophets' critique of the sacrificial cult, e.g., Hosea 6: 6 (quoted in Matthew 9: 13 and 12: 7): "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings." See also Micah 6: 6–8, Amos 5: 21–24, and Isaiah 1: 10–17. Like the Biblical passages, Q 22: 37 contrasts the performance of sacrifices with some moral or religious virtue that is said to be preferable to God. In order to understand what might motivate this Qur'anic statement, we should note how surprising it would have appeared in the 7th century of the Common Era for a new religion in the Biblical tradition to reinstate a sacrificial cult, after what Guy Stroumsa has characterised as "the end of sacrifice" (Stroumsa, *The End of Sacrifice*). By incorporating the prophetic critique of the sacrificial cult, the Qur'an ensures that it is not being seen as advocating a return to a naive, quasi-magical notion of sacrifice that would have struck contemporaries as a theological anachronism; what one might call the "ethical turn" of the Biblical prophets is fully affirmed.

The Qur'an's insistence on the lightness of its legal prescriptions manifests itself with particular clarity in its dietary prescriptions. Most importantly, there is the hardship clause that is a fixed component of all four dietary tetralogues and to which we shall return further below. Secondly, two of the two dietary tetralogues are preceded by opening injunctions that emphasise God's permissiveness (Q 16: 114) and His munificent provision of "the good things" (Q 2: 172). Thirdly, the dietary tetralogue in Surah 5 is followed by a concessionary verse permitting the consumption of animals killed by hunting beasts (Q 5: 4). It bears pointing out that Q 5: 4's opening, "Permitted to you are the good things" (*uḥilla lakumu l-ṭayyibāt*), employs two consonantal roots that are also prominent in the opening injunction of the dietary tetralogue in Surah 16, namely, *ḥ-l-l* and *ṭ-y-b*.

Thus, even at Stages 3 and 4 of the development posited above, when the Qur'anic revelations had embarked upon a shift towards detailed ritual and other legislation, a streak of Pauline antinomianism remains present. As Lowry notes, this antinomian tendency surfaces with particular prominence in Surah 5, whose beginning incorporates what I have proposed is the latest of our four dietary tetralogues.[67] For instance, Q 5: 87–88 (which I would consider to open the third major part of the surah and which therefore occupy a

[67] Lowry, "Exculpatory Language," p. 109.

structurally exposed position in the text) admonish the Believers "not to forbid the good things that God has permitted to you," and a few verses later, at 5: 93, we find a far-reaching discounting of the importance of dietary rules: "There is no sin (*junāḥ*) for those who believe and do righteous deeds concerning what they eat (*fī-mā ṭaʿimū*), if they are God-fearing and believe and do righteous deeds, and then are God-fearing and believe, and then are God-fearing and do good. God loves those who do good." Although the statement occurs only a few verses after the surah's ban on consuming wine in v. 90, its language is general and ought to be respected as such.[68] Just as Q 22: 37 declares that even though the Believers are bidden to perform animal sacrifices, fear of God (*taqwā*) is ultimately of far greater importance,[69] so Q 5: 93 asserts that fear of God, belief, and righteous deeds trump any violation of the Qur'anic dietary rules. Q 5: 93 does not need to be understood as a downright *abolition* of

[68] Islamic exegetes interpret Q 5: 93 to refer to Muslims who had passed away prior to the promulgation of the ban on wine in v. 90 and had accordingly "died in a state of drinking wine" (*mātū wa-hum yashrabūna l-khamra*; see al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, on Q 5: 93 = vol. 8, pp. 664–670). To my mind, this narrative contextualisation of Q 5: 93 – which capitalises on the fact that the verse has the perfect verb *ṭaʿimū*, understood to express a past tense – downplays the theological weight of the Qur'anic statement at hand. It must be underlined that in assessing the meaning of Q 5: 93 we cannot appeal to the grammatical form of *ṭaʿimū*, since perfect verbs (or, to put it more neutrally, verbs in the suffix conjugation) frequently do *not* express a past tense in the Qur'an. See in more detail Reuschel, *Aspekt und Tempus*.

[69] See above, n. 66.

such prohibitions, which would yield a major contradiction with other parts of the surah; but the salvific importance of abiding by these prohibitions is very decisively minimised.[70] In fact, a tendency to relativise dietary rules becomes apparent already much earlier in the composition. Q 5: 5 states that the "food of those who have been given the Scripture" is permitted to the Qur'anic Believers and vice versa. Although the precise meaning of this approval of mutual commensality between Jews, Christians, and Qur'anic Believers is disputed, my preferred construal would be that it authorises the Believers to consume *all* food deemed permissible by mainstream Christians, which would have included pork.[71]

Within the Medinan Qur'an we thus find a very peculiar mixture of quasi-halakhic legal prescriptions combined with residual expressions of a quasi-Pauline relativisation of their importance and an insistence on God's general permissiveness and His generous provision of good things. The fact that the Medinan Qur'an, even after its halakhic turn, continues to emphasise God's permissivism and to relativise the salvific importance of ritual laws may reasonably be linked to what I have characterised as the Qur'anic endeavour to

[70] The preceding is not to insist on a general policy to the effect that when faced with two potential readings of a Qur'anic verse, we invariably ought to choose the one that reduces inner-Qur'anic tensions and contradictions.

[71] Sinai, "Processes of Literary Growth," pp. 86–88.

carve out an independent religious territory between Judaism and Christianity. At the same time, the themes of God's permissivism and of the ultimately inferior significance of abiding by the Qur'an's dietary prescription also serve to ensure that the Medinan Qur'an remains theologically continuous with chronologically earlier parts of the Qur'anic corpus. Thus, the concept of God's "good things" (*al-ṭayyibāt*), which appears in the immediate vicinity of the dietary prohibitions that are found in Surahs 2 and 5 (see Q 2: 172 as well as Q 5: 4 and 5: 5) and also elsewhere in both surahs (2: 57, 2: 267, 5: 87), already emerges in the Meccan corpus. For instance, Q 10: 93, 16: 72, 17: 70, 20: 81, 40: 64, and 45: 16 all emphasise that God has "provided" (*razaqa*) humans with "the good things" (*al-ṭayyibāt*). Furthermore, I have already alluded to the fact that the critique of pagan dietary taboos contained in Surah 6 accuses the opponents of imposing arbitrary constraints on what God has "provided" (*razaqa*) to humans (Q 6: 140, 6: 142).[72] In view of this, I would submit that there is a considerable theological load resting both on the opening injunctions of the dietary tetralogue in Surahs 16 and 2, which invoke the concepts of God's provision (*r-z-q*) and of "the good things" (*al-ṭayyibāt*) granted by Him, and on the dietary tetralogue's hardship clause. Especially the

[72] The importance of the concepts of divine provision and of "the good things" is also commented upon in Lowry, "Exculpatory Language," pp. 108–109.

latter would appear to be a means of coordinating the dietary rules that emerged in the Qur'an's Medinan stratum with a theology of divine munificence and permissiveness that had previously crystallised in the Meccan corpus. Hence, the dietary tetralogue's hardship clause ought to be viewed as fulfilling a markedly *theological* function, rather than just being taken as an expression of pragmatic realism. This theological importance of the hardship clause is also underscored by two further observations. First, the hardship clause is explicitly recapped in the allusive summary of the dietary tetralogue in Q 6: 119 while three of the actual food taboos themselves are not explicitly listed there. Secondly, in Surah 5 the dietary tetralogue's hardship clause is followed, a few verses later, by a second hardship clause, connected with the commandment of ablution before prayers (Q 5: 6).

Given its manifest theological function, the dietary tetralogue's hardship clause is best understood as a Qur'anic innovation that was generated by doctrinal commitments that had emerged prior to the Medinan Qur'an's halakhic turn and were not subsequently jettisoned. This is not to say that the hardship clause arose from a vacuum: as Zellentin highlights, Christian ecclesiastical authorities sometimes provided reassurance that the physical

ingestion of meat sacrificed to idols, if resulting from coercion, was excusable.[73] Nonetheless, the conspicuous manner in which the Qur'an inscribes a hardship clause directly into its basic catalogue of dietary prohibitions, a feature that contrasts with the Apostolic Decree's lack of any reference to similar exceptions in cases of emergency, should primarily be explained in terms of the Medinan Qur'an's legal theology. The fact that the dietary hardship clauses – all four of which include the phrase *fa-mani ḍṭurra*, "and whoever is compelled" – are tangibly continuous with Qur'anic exculpatory language more generally, as studied by Lowry, is evidently pertinent here. Hence, the concluding point I should like to make is very much the same as that which animates Lowry's study: just as we are wont to investigate Qur'anic narratives for the ways in which the recounting of a story can serve as a vehicle for articulating claims about God, man, and the relationship that obtains or ought to obtain between them, so, too, should we be concerned to excavate the implicit theological import of Qur'anic law.

[73] Zellentin, "Judaeo-Christian Legal Culture," pp. 134–135, citing Böckenhoff, *Speisesatzungen mosaischer Art*, 1–10.

Appendix I: The four versions of the Qur'an's dietary tetralogue in their putative chronological order (Arabic text)

Note: Terms and phrases that are supplementary to the common textual stock shared by all four versions of the dietary tetralogue are highlighted.

	Q 6: 145	**Q 16: 114–115**	**Q 2: 172–173**	**Q 5: 3**
opening injunction		[114] *fa-kulū mimmā razaqakumu llāhu ḥalālan ṭayyiban wa-shkurū niʿmata llāhi in kuntum iyyāhu taʿbudūna*	[172] *yā-ayyuhā lladīna ʾāmanū kulū min ṭayyibāti mā razaqnākum wa-shkurū li-llāhi in kuntum ʾiyyāhu taʿbudūna*	[Q 5: 88: *wa-kulū mimmā razaqakumu llāhu ḥalālan ṭayyiban wa-ttaqū llāha lladhī antum bihi muʾminūn*]
taḥrīm formula	[145] *qul lā ajidu fī mā ūḥiya ilayya muḥarraman ʿalā ṭāʿimin yaṭʿamuhū illā an yakūna*	[115] *innamā ḥarrama ʿalaykumu*	[173] *innamā ḥarrama ʿalaykumu*	[3] *ḥurrimat ʿalaykumu*
catalogue of dietary prohibitions: carrion, blood, pork, meat over which God has not been invoked	*maytatan aw daman masfūḥan aw laḥma khinzīrin fa-innahu rijsun aw fisqan uhilla li-ghayri llāhi bihi*	*l-maytata wa-l-dama wa-laḥma l-khinzīri wa-mā uhilla li-ghayri llāhi bihi*	*l-maytata wa-l-dama wa-laḥma l-khinzīri wa-mā uhilla bihi li-ghayri llāhi*	*l-maytatu wa-l-damu wa-laḥmu l-khinzīri wa-mā uhilla li-ghayri llāhi bihi*
further subcategories of carrion and additional prohibitions				*wa-l-munkhaniqatu wa-l-mawqūdhatu wa-l-mutaraddiyatu* [...]
hardship clause	*fa-mani ḍṭurra ghayra bāghin wa-lā ʿādin fa-inna rabbaka ghafūrun raḥīm*	*fa-mani ḍṭurra ghayra bāghin wa-lā ʿādin fa-inna llāha ghafūrun raḥīmun*	*fa-mani ḍṭurra ghayra bāghin wa-lā ʿādin fa-lā ithma ʿalayhi inna llāha ghafūrun raḥīmun*	*fa-mani ḍṭurra fī makhmaṣatin ghayra mutajānifin li-ithmin fa-inna llāha ghafūrun raḥīmun*

Appendix II: The four versions of the Qur'an's dietary tetralogue in their putative chronological order (English translation)

Note: Terms and phrases that are supplementary to the common textual stock shared by all four versions of the dietary tetralogue are again highlighted. The arrows on the right-hand side indicate that parts of the additional material in Q 5: 3 have an interpretive function with respect to two of the four items proscribed in the standard four-part list of dietary taboos.

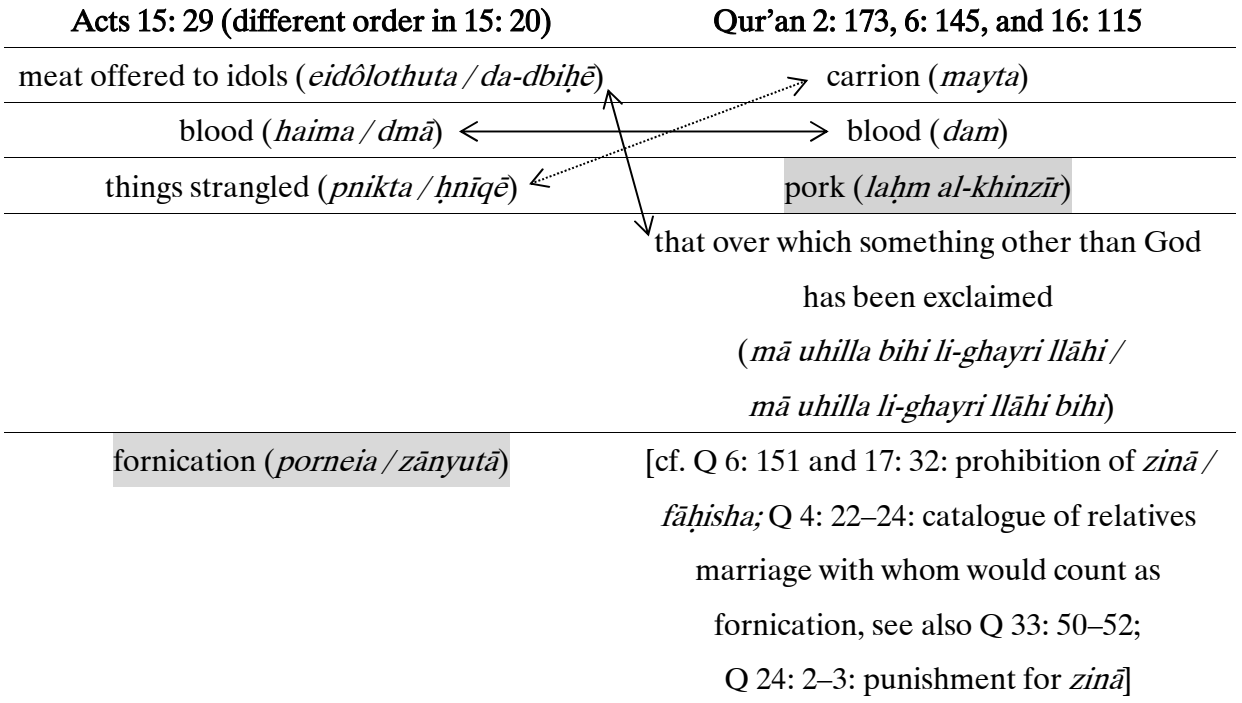
	Q 6: 145	Q 16: 114–115	Q 2: 172–173	Q 5: 3
opening injunction		[114] Eat of that which God has provided for you as permitted and good, and be grateful for God's grace, if it is Him that you worship!	[172] O you who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you, and be grateful to God, if it is Him that you worship!	[Q 5: 88: Eat of that which God has provided for you as permitted and good, and fear God, in whom you believe!]
taḥrīm formula	[145] Say: I do not find in what has been revealed to me anything forbidden to someone eating it except for	[115] He has only forbidden to you	[173] He has only forbidden to you	[3] Forbidden to you have been
catalogue of dietary prohibitions: carrion, blood, pork, meat over which God has not been invoked	carrion or blood that is to be poured out or pork – for it is impure – or an abomination over which something other than God has been exclaimed.	carrion and blood and pork and that over which something other than God has been exclaimed.	carrion and blood and pork and that over which something other than God has been exclaimed.	carrion and blood and pork and that over which something other than God has been exclaimed.
further subcategories of carrion and additional prohibitions				And [forbidden are] the strangled, the beaten, the fallen, the gored, and what has been devoured by beasts of prey – except that which you purify. And [also forbidden is] what has been slaughtered on sacrificial stones, and to practise divination by means of arrows. That is an abomination for you all. [...]
hardship clause	But whoever is compelled, without being covetous and	But whoever is compelled, without being covetous and	But whoever is compelled, without being covetous and	But whoever is compelled in a state of hunger, not deviating sinfully,

	transgressing, then your[s] lord is forgiving and compassionate.	transgressing, then God is forgiving and compassionate.	transgressing, no sin is upon him; God is forgiving and compassionate.	 then God is forgiving and compassionate.

Appendix III: The Qur'anic dietary tetralogue compared with the Apostolic Decree

Acts 15: 28–29

[28] For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: [29] that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication (ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνικτῶν καὶ πορνείας). If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.



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