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# The Qur'ān's Legal Culture

The Didascalia Apostolorum  
as a Point of Departure

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albeit marginal, role in shaping the legal culture in the Near and Middle East and in Northeast Africa from the third through the seventh centuries C.E. and beyond, and thereby influenced the legal culture which the Qur'ān assumes as established among part of its audience.<sup>40</sup>

*The Veil in the Didascalia and in the Qur'ān*

As the example of the veil will illustrate, the Qur'ān's specific affinity with the Didascalia points less to any direct *literary* relationship between the two texts, and more towards the Qur'ān's familiarity with the *oral* legal discourse of which the Didascalia gives evidence.<sup>41</sup> While the

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<sup>40</sup> The Qur'ān, without being reducible to its legal predecessors, participates in and departs from a legal culture that can best be appreciated in its comparison with the Didascalia – analyzing cultural similarity is meaningful only if the purpose is to evaluate cultural difference. As Joseph Witztum puts it, we should try to understand “how the Quran appropriated, revised and adapted its building blocks in order to convey its own message. ... [It] is more productive to ask in what ways the Quran reflects earlier trends and in what ways it develops its received traditions in new directions,” in idem, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 4; see also the following note.

<sup>41</sup> For a summary of the recent critical discussions of the concepts of “dependence” and “influence” in cross-cultural intertextuality in rabbinics, see Holger Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies*, 21–2; for a discussion in Qur'ānic studies, see Michael Pregill, *The Living Calf of Sinai: Polemic, Exegesis, and “Influence” from Late Antiquity to the Islamic Middle Ages*, a study in preparation building on *The Living Calf of Sinai: Orientalism, “Influence,” and the Foundation of the Islamic Exegetical Tradition* (PhD Dissertation, New York, NY, 2007), which Professor Pregill kindly shared with me. For the Qur'ān's own cognate view of the history of subsequent revelations, see Angelika Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike. Ein europäischer Zugang* (Berlin: Insel Verlag, 2010), 128–34.

establishment of such an oral discourse is by definition elusive, the Qurʾān's endorsement and development of the legal culture constituted by the Syriac version of the Didascalia follows an established pattern. Recent scholarship emphasizes the Qurʾān's familiarity with Syriac Christian and, to a lesser degree, also with rabbinic, narrative Scriptural traditions, equally in the framework of orality.<sup>42</sup> The Qurʾān uses these Syriac and Aramaic narrative traditions in order to criticize the perceived "excesses" of rabbinic Judaism and Christianity (see e.g. Q2:111, Q4:171, Q5:77, Q9:30–1). Likewise, the Qurʾān's recasting of the Judaeo-Christian legal culture, which can be reconstructed with the help of the Didascalia, shows evidence of its intimate dialogue with, as well as its clear emancipation from, distinctive aspects of the Judaism and Christianity

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<sup>42</sup> For the orality of scriptural traditions in Arabia, see Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, esp. xii–iii, 43–6, and 90–1. Using orality as a central aspect of ancient Jewish or Christian culture has been long established, but has yet to be fully integrated in Qurʾānic studies. For the importance of orality in the formation of the Qurʾān, see Angelika Neuwirth, "Two Faces of the Qurʾān: Qurʾān and Muṣḥaf," *Oral Tradition* 25 (2010): 141–56; and Daniel A. Madigan, *The Qurʾān's Self-image. Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). The methodologies developed in Late Antique studies may be helpful when seeking further to enhance our understanding of the Qurʾān's orality. "The oralist approach to the rabbinic text," Martin Jaffee writes, "is a variant of the intertextualist approach to literary interpretation combined as well with a kind of 'audience-response' sensibility" (idem, "What Difference Does the 'Orality' of Rabbinic Writing Make for the Interpretation of Rabbinic Writings?" in Matthew Kraus (ed.), *How Should Rabbinic Literature Be Read in the Modern World?* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006), 20). For Christian orality see e.g. Samuel Byrskog, *Story as History – History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History* (WUNT 123; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

of its time – such as the pervasive religious dominance of the Aramaic language.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> The Qurʾān sees itself as an “Arabic” confirmation of Scripture (see Q46:12) and thereby shows acute awareness of the linguistic difference between itself and what it considers previous revelation. The Qurʾānic emphasis on Arabic only makes sense if its audience was also exposed to other languages; among those, Jewish and Christian forms of Aramaic, i.e. Jewish Aramaic and Syriac, were likely the most prominent. The growing importance of the Jewish and Christian Aramaic languages and literatures (and especially of the *memre* of Jacob of Serugh and the Syriac Gospel of Matthew) for the study of the Qurʾān is well exemplified in two recent dissertations: Joseph Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran* (see also idem, “The Foundations of the House (Q2: 127),” *Bulletin of the SOAS* (2009): 25–40); and Emran al-Badawi, *Sectarian Scripture: The Qurʾan’s Dogmatic Re-Articulation of the Aramaic Gospel Traditions in the Late Antique Near East* (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2011); while al-Badawi may occasionally overstate his case, the main thrust of his argument seems valid. See also the weighty contributions by the two volumes edited by Gabriel Said Reynolds, *New Perspectives on the Qurʾān* and *The Qurʾān in its Historical Context*; especially Sidney H. Griffith, “Christian Lore and the Arabic Qurʾān: The ‘Companions of the Cave’ in Surat al-Kahf and in Syriac Christian Tradition,” in *ibid.*, 109–37; Kevin van Bladel, “The Legend of Alexander the Great in the Qurʾān 18:83–102,” in *ibid.*, 175–203; and Joseph Witztum, “Joseph Among the Ishmaelites: Q12 in Light of Syriac Sources,” in Reynolds (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Qurʾān*, 425–448. On Jacob of Serugh see also below, page 45, note 55. For a bibliography of the classical works on the question of the relationship of the Qurʾān with Aramaic and esp. Syriac literature see Witztum, *The Syriac Milieu of the Quran*, 10–65 and Claude Gilliot, “Language and Style of the Qurʾān,” in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān* (Brill: Online, 2013, <<http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopaedia-of-the-quran>>), ad loc.; a missing reference in Gilliot is Karl Ahrens, “Christliches im Qoran: Eine Nachlese,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 84 (1930): 15–68 and 148–90.

After the opening example of the veil, this introduction will proceed by summarizing the nature and the dynamic development of the Didascalia throughout Late Antiquity, focusing on its Syriac iteration. I then present the Didascalia's laws and its (mutually constitutive) legal narratives in conceptual comparison and contrast with those of the Qurʾān. I will make reference throughout to the broader legal culture and lexicon of Late Antique Judaism and Christianity to which both the Qurʾān and the Didascalia belong, in order to show how both texts share a distinct subset of laws and legal narratives. Likewise, I will note the stylistic and lexical commonality between the respective presentation of legal and ritual concepts in the Syriac of the Didascalia and in the Arabic of the Qurʾān. Given the contentiousness of the recent "Syriac turn" in Qurʾānic studies, it may be apposite to illustrate what the lexical commonality proves, and what it does not.<sup>44</sup> Namely, the

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<sup>44</sup> In light of the recent advances – and derailments – of the use of Syriac materials for the reading of the Qurʾān, it must be emphasized that lexical affinity between two literary corpora has limited significance in and of itself. The Didascalia and the Qurʾān are both simply written in Semitic languages and will naturally share many lexemes. More concretely, both of the Semitic texts from Late Antiquity are reflective of a similar tradition of preserving and interpreting Scripture in and around Arabia and will naturally share stylistic elements. The lexical affinity between the Didascalia and the Qurʾān, however, remains a doubly potent device of inquiry, first by guiding us towards the especially close lexical affinity in matters of law and ritual, and second by corroborating the adjacent conceptual affinities. For a clear warning against the excesses of the "Syriac turn" see, e.g., Walid Saleh, "The Etymological Fallacy and Qurʾanic Studies: Muhammad, Paradise, and Late Antiquity," in Neuwirth et al. (eds.), *The Qurʾān in Context*, 649–698; Sidney H. Griffith, "Syriacisms in the 'Arabic Qurʾān': Who were those who said 'Allāh is third of three' according

Didascalia endorses the veiling of women in a way that may have been endorsed and altered by the Qurʾān:

If you want to become a believing woman (*mbymntʿ*),  
 Be beautiful (*šprʿ*) for your husband (*lbʿlky*) only.  
 And when you walk in the street,  
 Cover your head with your garment (*blbwšky*),  
 That because of your veil (*thpytky*) your great beauty (*dšwprky*)  
 may be covered.  
 And paint not the countenance of your eyes,  
 But have downcast looks  
 And walk being veiled (*mbypyʿ*). (DA III, 26, 5–11)<sup>45</sup>

The Didascalia’s admonition is hardly surprising in the light of centuries of Jewish and Christian discourse on female modesty and veiling.<sup>46</sup> The Qurʾān also shares this

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to al-Māʾida 73?” in Meir M. Bar-Asher et al. (eds.) *A Word Fitly Spoken: Studies in Mediaeval Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and the Qurʾān, Presented to Haggai Ben-Shammai* (Jerusalem: The Ben Zvi Institute, 2007), 83\*–110\*; and Angelika Neuwirth, “Qurʾan and History – A Disputed Relationship. Some Reflections on Qurʾanic History and History in the Qurʾan,” *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 5 (2003): 1–18.

<sup>45</sup> See also Apostolic Constitutions I.8 (*ibid.*, 27) for the current passage, see also page 41, note 48, and pages 46–7, note 57 below.

<sup>46</sup> Veiling of women is attested since ancient times, see Karel van der Toorn, “The Significance of the Veil in the Ancient Near East,” in David P. Wright et al. (eds.), *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 329–30; for references to the veil in Islamic tradition see Mona Siddiqui, “Veil,” McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ad loc. Some trends in rabbinic law require married women to cover their hair. See esp. Mishna *Ketuboth* 7.7, which lists as one of the transgressions against Jewish law to go out with “a wild head” (*wrʿšb prwʿ*). See also Mishna *Ketubot* 2.1, Sifre *Bemidbar* 11, Yerushalmi *Ketubot* 2.1 (26a, 75–26b, 5), Bavli *Ketubot* 72a–73a, Bavli *Gittin* 90a, Bavli *Yoma* 47a; as well as Arthur Marmorstein, “Judaism and

aspect of the broad heritage of Scriptural culture, instructing the veiling of women. Yet within the broader legal cultural framework, we should also consider the more precise conceptual, stylistic and lexical affinities between the ways in which the Didascalia presents its teaching and the Qur'ān's respective rendering:

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Christianity in the Middle of the Third Century," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 10 (1935): 233; and "Veil," in Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2007), 20, 489. In the Christian tradition, the veil seems to have been introduced as a requirement for worshipping women early on (see 1Cor. 11:3–15); the practice was later extended as a permanent garment to consecrated virgins and widows, see for example Tertullian, *On the Veiling of Virgins* (see Tertullien, *Le Voile des vierges (De uirginibus uelands)*, *Sources Chrétiennes* 424 (Intr. by Eva Schulz-Flügel, trans. by Paul Mattei) (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1997); *Acts of Thomas* 13–14 (see Paul-Hubert Poirier and Yves Tissot (eds.), *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens I, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 1341–2); and Ephrem, *On Virginité* 17 (see Edmund Beck (ed.), *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers: Hymnen de Virginitate, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 224 (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1962), 11). For the veiling of women in Najran see Eleanor A. Doumato, "Hearing Other Voices: Christian Women and the Coming of Islam," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23 (1991): 177–99. For veiling of nuns see Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Susan Marti, *Crown and Veil: Female Monasticism from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). For a general overview see Roland de Vaux, "Sur le voile des femmes dans l'orient ancien," *Revue Biblique* 44 (1935): 397–412. The extent to which women in Byzantium, as well as in Arabia and Persia, were veiled in general remains disputed; see the lucid summary by Timothy Dawson, "Propriety, Practicality, and Pleasure: the Parameters of Women's Dress in Byzantium, A.D. 1000–1200," in Lynda Garland, (ed.), *Byzantine Women: Varieties of Experience 800–1200* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 41–75.

Tell the believing men (*mu'minīna*) to cast down their looks,  
 And to guard their private parts  
 And tell the believing women (*mu'mināti*)  
 To cast down their looks  
 And to guard their private parts,  
 And not to display their beauty (*zīnatabunna*)  
 Except for what is outward  
 And let them draw their veils (*ḥumurihinna*) over their bosoms  
 And not display their beauty (*zīnatabunna*),  
 Except to their husbands (*bu'ūlatihinna*)  
 Or their fathers,  
 Or their husband's fathers ...  
 Or children uninitiated  
 To women's parts (*'alā 'aurāti'n-nisā'i*) (Q24:31)

The similarity between both texts, to begin with, goes far beyond the broadly shared tradition of the veil. Both texts here agree on the veiling of married women, and both construct a narrative of sexual modesty around it. Rather than condemning sexual attraction, as is common in the ascetic strands of the Christian tradition, both texts channel it into the approved sphere of matrimony. Most importantly, both the Didascalia and the Qur'ān formulate their instructions in very similar ways, indicated in italics, using partially overlapping lexemes:

- Both texts are addressed to the *believing* women (*mbymnt', mu'mināti*).
- Both indicate that these women should *cast down* their *looks*, likely in order to avoid unwanted attention, as the Qur'ān spells out in the parallel passage Q33:59.
- According to both texts, such attention should also be avoided by *covering/not displaying* the women's *beauty* from the general public, and reserve it for the *husbands* (*lb'lky, bu'ūlatihinna*).



- And of course, both exhort married women to wear a *veil* over part of their bodies in order to achieve this end.

Hence, the manifold conceptual overlaps in the presentation allow us to speak of a shared aspect of the legal culture between the Qur'ān and the Didascalia insofar as both texts endorse the same law and justify it with the same minimal, yet recognizable narrative about modesty, female beauty, and matrimony. This commonality extends to part of the lexicon common to both Syriac and Arabic when describing central concepts: “faith” and “husband,” based on the shared Semitic roots *'mn* and *b'l*, are identical in both languages.

Because of the lexical affinities, the texts' differences are all the more noteworthy: the Qur'ān's choice to use the vernacular Arabic stands out as starkly against the Didascalia's Syriac as Luther's German did against the Vulgate's Latin. The Syriac *šwpr'* denotes “beauty” first of all and “adornment” only secondarily, while the Arabic term employed for the women's *zīna* more often denotes “adornments” than “natural beauty” – even if the context of the Qur'ānic passage here suggests reading these “adornments” as being mostly natural, as explicated with the reference to “women's parts.”<sup>47</sup> Further, the terms here employed in both texts for “veil,” “casting down” and even “looks,” share no kinship whatsoever. While this

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<sup>47</sup> Note that the respective distinct lexemes for “beauty,” *šwpr'* and *zīna*, both occur *twice* in each text. For the Syriac term *šwpr'* denoting “beauty” and “adornment” see Sokoloff, *A Syriac Dictionary*, 1533–4. In the Qur'ān, esp. in Q24:60, *zīna* seems to imply a similarly “natural” adornment of older unmarried women that is to be covered; however, in Q7:26, 31 and 32 for example, the “adornment” is clearly external to the body.

fact could be explained with the distinct lexicon of both languages, we should consider also the structural dissimilarities between the two passages, which far outweigh the parallels.

Distinctness is apparent on the conceptual level, perceived with particular clarity against the background of shared aspects. While the Didascalia emphasizes the veiling of the head, the Qur'ān emphasizes that of the bosom (even if later Muslim tradition understood it in line with the Didascalia). The Qur'ān moreover demonstrates a stricter stance toward veiling, *expanding* the shared injunction for married women to veil in some way to include apparently unmarried “daughters” (Q33:59), and likely all “women of the believers,” unless they be of advanced age and without intent to marry (Q24:60). Along the same lines, the Qur'ān extends the instruction to females to “cast down their looks” to include believing men as well. Finally, the Qur'ān *exempts* other close male family members, in addition to the Didascalia’s “husbands,” from the prohibition to see the women unveiled.

Hence, as striking as the conceptual, stylistic, and, to a lesser degree, lexical commonalities may be, they are at the same time very limited and do not point to the Qur'ān’s rephrasing of a written text. Rather, the combination of partial sameness and broad difference between the Qur'ān and the Didascalia testifies to the Quran’s participation in an oral tradition at least partially approachable through the Didascalia, as well as to its development of an independent legal stance.

The laws of behavior regarding the veil were likely iterated and more importantly applied countless times between the time of the Didascalia’s composition and that of

the Qur'ān, making a direct textual line between the two texts seem unlikely.<sup>48</sup> To summarize, the example of the veil affords us a glimpse of the Qur'ān's participation in and development of an established legal culture for which the Didascalia, in my view, is our best witness. This becomes apparent in the Qur'ān's doubly broadened application of both the established law (to include unmarried women) and its exemptions regarding the veil (to include male relatives); similarly, the Qur'ān presents all of its shared laws with greater specificity than the Didascalia and tends to make allowance for reasonable exemptions (on which more below).

*The Didascalia Apostolorum from the Third to the Seventh Century C.E.*

Before turning to the further legal and narrative comparison, a few words on the nature of the Didascalia are necessary. The *Didascalia Apostolorum* is a church order that circulated in a number of languages throughout Late Antiquity and early Islamic times. It is presented as writ-

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<sup>48</sup> A comparison of the Qur'ān with the adaptation of the Didascalia's instruction for veiling in the Apostolic Constitutions I.8 (Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, volume I, 27), to be found in note 57 on page 46–7 below, shows that the Qur'ān's affinity with the Didascalia is closer than with the Didascalia's retelling in the Apostolic Constitutions. While the Apostolic Constitutions continue to share a few of the similarities we saw between the Didascalia and the Qur'ān – the casting down of eyes appears here, as do the instructions to focus on husbands, and the covering of the women – other significant aspects do not appear, such as the veil itself, and the repeated focus on “beauty.” At the same time, the Apostolic Constitutions introduce additional stylistic elements not shared with the Qur'ān, such as the exhortation to “pay attention.”

ten by Jesus' disciples who then became the apostles.<sup>49</sup> Its affirmative attitude towards divine law as essential for salvation, as well as its legal hermeneutics more broadly, can be understood within, or at least in dialogue with the intellectual framework of "Judaeo-Christianity," as Charlotte Fonrobert and more recently Joel Marcus note.<sup>50</sup> In my view, however, the Didascalia's rejection of many aspects of ritual purity and its self-designation as *krystyn'* (DA I, 13.6), "Christian," merely incorporates momentous rabbinic and Judaeo-Christian elements while remaining Christian. Hence, the voice of its implied authors – the

<sup>49</sup> On the identity of the apostles behind the Didascalia, including Jesus' original disciples, Peter (DA XXIII, 229.17) and Matthew (DA X, 118.17), as well as later Clement (DA Proem, 10.15.), see Stewart-Sykes, *The Didascalia Apostolorum*, 22–5; see also Georg Schöllgen, "Pseudapostolizität und Schriftgebrauch in den ersten Kirchenordnungen. Anmerkungen zur Begründung des frühen Kirchenrechts," in: idem and Clemens Scholten (eds.), *Stimuli: Exegese und ihre Hermeneutik in Antike und Christentum. Festschrift für Ernst Dassmann* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1996), 96–121.

<sup>50</sup> Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, "The Didascalia Apostolorum: A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001), 483–509 and Joel Marcus, "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Didascalia Apostolorum: A Common Jewish Christian Milieu?," *Journal of Theological Studies* 61 (2010), 596–626. In many of the Didascalia's later manuscripts, we find an additional proem in which the Didascalia's self-designation indeed has shifted from *krystyn'* (DA I, 13.6), "Christians," to *nšry' mšyly'*, "Messianic Christian," (DA Proem, 10.16); here we also find the attribution to Clement (see the previous note). The proem, however, is extant only in manuscripts E F G H I J K N (see Vööbus, I, 36\*–37\*). The evidence from these manuscripts should best be bracketed; it may equally be the result of post-Qur'ānic developments or a reflection of the Arabic environment of later scribes, as François de Blois aptly notes, see idem, "Našrānī (Ναζωραῖος) and ḥanīf (ἑθνικός)," 8 note 41. On the identity of the Qur'ān's Christians see also my Conclusion.

apostles – represents what I will call a “Christian group,” as opposed to a heteropractical “Judaeo-Christian group,” within its congregation that I will discuss at length. In the case of the Didascalia, it seems more efficient to speak of communal “authors” than in the case of the Qur’ān. In contrast to the role that orality played in the composition of the Qur’ān, the Didascalia is a text that claims apostolic authorship in the first place and whose text was revised over centuries; it is simply much more a “written” text than the Qur’ān.

The Didascalia’s “origins” can be traced to a Greek composition of the third century C.E. of which only fragments remain. The Didascalia is in turn partially modeled on earlier texts, such as the *Didache*; the Syriac version also incorporated the *Teaching of the Apostles* and other materials in its third chapter.<sup>51</sup> Epiphanius attests that the Didascalia circulated in Syria in the fourth century C.E. and we possess one complete Latin translation whose survival in the fifth century *Verona Palimpsest* is nothing short of a literary miracle.<sup>52</sup> The earliest manuscript that

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<sup>51</sup> On the textual history of the added materials in Chapter Three of the Didascalia, among them the “Teaching of the Apostles,” see Vööbus, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, volume II, \*39–\*43. On the Didascalia’s relationship to the *Didache*, see esp. R. H. Conolly, “The Use of the *Didache* in the *Didascalia*,” *Journal of Theological Studies* OS 24 (1923): 147–157 and Stewart-Sykes, *The Didascalia Apostolorum*, 4.

<sup>52</sup> On the origins of the Didascalia and a possible redaction history, see esp. Stewart-Sykes, *The Didascalia Apostolorum*, 22–44; W. Witakowski, “The Origin of the ‘Teaching of the Apostles,’” in: Han J. W. Drijvers et al. (eds.), *IV Symposium Syriacum, 1984: Literary Genres in Syriac Literature (Groningen – Oosterbesselen 10–12 September)* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium,

contains the Syriac version is the long collection of legal text, Ms. Vatican Syr. 560, which also contains the letter of Athanasius of Bālād, written in 683. To reiterate, the Didascalia is given the place of highest prominence in the copyist's legal canon.<sup>53</sup>

The fact that pre-Islamic manuscripts have survived only for the materials contained in the Syriac Didascalia's third chapter does not affect the cumulative secondary evidence for the pre-Qur'ānic date of the translation as a whole.<sup>54</sup> The respective scholarly consensus is based on its use of archaic Syriac, its affinity with Christian practice in Syria and Mesopotamia, and its likely spread among Syriac-speaking communities indicated by its echoes among

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1987), 161–171; Arthur Vööbus, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, volume I, 11\*–69\*; and Paul Galtier, “La date de la Didascalie des Apôtres,” *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 42 (1947): 315–351. For Epiphanius' evidence on the Didascalia see Frank Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis* (Leiden: Brill 1994), volume II, 412–3. Epiphanius' *heresiological* attribution to a quartodeciman group is of secondary interest for the present inquiry, but happens to correspond to the Didascalia's calendar according to Chapter XXI; see Sacha Stern, *Calendars in Antiquity: Empires, States and Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 415–22. For an argument that the Didascalia circulated in yet another recension, see James John Charles Cox, “Prolegomena to a Study of the Dominical Logoi as Cited in the Didascalia Apostolorum. II: Methodological Questions,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 15 (1977): 1–15 and 17 (1979): 137–167.

<sup>53</sup> See page 15, note 26.

<sup>54</sup> Ms. London Br. Mus. Add. 14, 644, dated to the fifth or sixth century C.E., and Ms. London Br. Mus. Add. 14, 531, dated to the seventh or eighth century, both contain the Teaching of the Apostles which the Didascalia incorporates in Chapter Three, see above, page 43, note 51 and Vööbus, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac* I, 50–1\*.

some Syriac church fathers.<sup>55</sup> Hubert Kaufhold correctly emphasizes that there is no clear proof that the translation of the Syriac Didascalia dates before Athanasius. Hence, if future research were to date all of the extant Syriac translations of the Didascalia closer to the time of the Qurʾān, it would further strengthen the ongoing relevance of this text for later religious culture. Inversely, while the extant Syriac translations of the Didascalia may well incorporate

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<sup>55</sup> Vööbus has drawn attention to the Didascalia's use of archaic terms such as *tlyty'* (for "mediator") and *dyr'* (for "fold") which would allow us a dating to the time of Aphrahat in the fourth century C.E. – these terms are even translated into later Syriac ones in the marginal notes of some manuscripts; see idem, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac I*, 26–7, based on Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, xvii; see also Stewart-Sykes, *The Didascalia Apostolorum*, 90. For the relationship to patristic literature, esp. Aphrahat, see also Michael Pregill, *The Living Calf of Sinai*, Chapter Three. Vööbus has also recognized several affinities between the gospel quotations of the Didascalia and those of the fourth-century Syriac writer Evagrius Ponticus, as well as those of the sixth-century writings of Philoxenus of Mabbug and, intriguingly, of Jacob of Serugh; see Vööbus, *Studies in the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 128, Subsidia, 3 (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1951), 112 and idem, *Studies in the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac, volume II, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 496, Subsidia, 79 (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1987), 148. My gratitude to Steven Ring for bringing these works to my attention. Temporal proximity to writers such as Jacob of Serugh would in turn reinforce the recent scholarship highlighting the importance of this church father for the study of the Qurʾān mentioned above on page 34 in note 43. See also Maria Doerfler, "Didascalia," in Sebastian Brock et al. (eds.), *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2011), 124–5; Reinhold Meßner, "Die 'Lehre der Apostel' – eine syrische Kirchenordnung," in Konrad Breitsching and Wilhelm Rees (eds.), *Recht – Bürge der Freiheit. Festschrift für Johannes Mühlsteiger SJ zum 80. Geburtstag* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2006), 305–335.

minor changes reflective of the Muslim conquest, the text as a whole clearly predates the Qurʾān.<sup>56</sup>

There is no consensus regarding the Coptic translation of the Didascalia, of which only one alleged fragment exists, yet this fragment allows us to appreciate how fluid the Didascalia tradition really was – and how much closer the Qurʾān’s affinity is with the Syriac Didascalia than with either this Coptic fragment or the Didascalia’s later iterations.<sup>57</sup> In the late fourth century, the Didascalia

<sup>56</sup> The consensus of an “early” Syriac Didascalia has been challenged by Hubert Kaufhold, who cautions that the evidence for the Syriac Didascalia even in the seventh century is insufficient; see “La littérature pseudo-canonique syriaque,” in: M. Debié et al. (eds.), *Les apocryphes syriaques* (Paris: Geuthner 2005), 157. Kaufhold’s views would place the Syriac Didascalia in even closer temporal proximity to the Qurʾān – in his view even perhaps *later*. Still, if one were to judge solely on manuscript evidence, as Kaufhold here suggests, other literary artifacts, for example the *entirety* of the rabbinic corpus (whose earliest manuscripts are early medieval) would have to be re-dated by as much as half a millennium; cf. the debate inspired by Peter Schäfer (see idem, “Research into Rabbinic Literature: An Attempt to Define the Status Quaestionis,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 37 (1986): 139–152). How the Didascalia was understood by Syriac Christians after the establishment of the Caliphates is an intriguing question that deserves further study. There are, however, no clear traces of any response to Islam in the earliest extant Syriac versions, with two possible exceptions. First, for the self-designation as *nšry’ mšyhy’*, “Messianic Christian,” in the later manuscripts (DA *Proem*, 10.16), which may reflect the Arabic term *naṣārā*, see above page 42, note 50; and second, for the Syriac Didascalia’s explicit permission for intercourse during the menses in contrast to the prohibition preserved both in an earlier passage in the Syriac Didascalia and in the Latin, see below page 91, note 21. Neither case would fundamentally alter the conclusion of this study should they be proven to be post-Islamic.

<sup>57</sup> For the alleged Coptic version of the Didascalia see Alberto Camplani, “A Coptic Fragment from the Didascalia Apostolorum (M579 F.1),” *Augustinianum* 36 (1996): 47–51. Camplani concludes



was thoroughly revised and incorporated, as chapters one through six, into the Greek *Apostolic Constitutions*, further attesting to the Didascalia's pre-Qur'ānic use and circulation, likely including North Africa from the on-

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correctly that he is dealing with “different stages of a very fluid canonical writing,” (ibid., 50), but then he insists that the fragment he examines represents the Didascalia rather than the Apostolic Constitutions, simply because it includes a quotation of Proverbs that is attested in the former but missing in the latter. One may ask what such an omission can prove, especially since Camplani correctly states that “the omission and the addition of biblical quotations is one of the features of the compiler of the [Apostolic Constitution]” (ibid., 51). Moreover, when discussing the preserved Coptic passage about the veiling of women “[if you] want to become believing, take care especially to please your husband only and cover your head in the streets so that your beauty remains hidden” (Camplani's translation, ibid., 48), Camplani correctly states that only the Syriac and the Latin Didascalia, but not the Coptic fragment under discussion, mention a garment (*lbwš/ueste*) or veiling (*thpyt/uel[atio]*, DA III, 26, 5–11, Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 27) with which to cover the head. Likewise, the women's *walking* in the streets is found in the Latin and Syriac only, but not found in the Greek Apostolic Constitutions – or in the Coptic fragment under discussion. Camplani simply dismisses as “not meaningful” the strong argument according to which the Coptic fragment is a translation of the Apostolic Constitutions rather than of the Didascalia (ibid. 49). Most egregiously, Camplani does not note that the Greek Apostolic Constitutions and the Coptic fragment not only share the cognate Greek and Coptic lexeme for faith, *pistis* (as may be expected), but also the introductory instruction of “paying attention,” equally using the cognate Greek and Coptic lexeme *proseke*; this specification again is *not* part of the Latin and Syriac Didascalia. While the fragment may require further study, in my view, the extant evidence strongly suggests that no Coptic fragment of the Didascalia has been transmitted and that the extant version is part of the “Apostolic Constitutions” tradition. The comparison here also reconfirms that the text of the Apostolic Constitutions in any language does not share the Syriac Didascalia's close affinity with the Qur'ānic passage discussed above.