



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ARTS

The Department of Classics and Religion presents

The 2025 Peter Craigie Memorial Lecture

Monotheism and its defense in the Late Meccan Period Suras of the Qur'an

Dr. Walid Saleh, University of Toronto



The Late Meccan Period (LMP) of the Qur'an includes some of the longest Suras of the preaching of Muhammad in Mecca, and they have been usually seen as repetitive and mere elaborations of previous themes of the early teachings of Muhammad. Muhammad the eloquent prophet of the early Meccan Period, has for long been argued was followed by a repetitive, no originality, verbose prophet of the Third Meccan Period. The LMP, I will argue, was the most creative of Muhammad's preaching phases, and it is here where the implications of a monotheistic universal

imperial religion came back to haunt a provincial prophet. The main problem facing Muhammad in Mecca was the deep suspicion that a universal religion posed to a rational understanding of human destiny, where national and city Gods were the norm.

Muhammad's originality is thus not his preaching of one God, not his Hell and Fire, not resurrection, not his apocalypticism, and thus not his Early Meccan Period. It is rather his grappling with these suspicions that are some of the most profound reflections on what monotheism means from Late Antiquity.

Walid A. Saleh is a Professor at the University of Toronto specializing in Islamic Studies, with appointments in the Department for the Study of Religion and the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations. He is an award-winning specialist on the Qur'an, the history of its interpretation (*Tafsir*), the Bible in Islam, and Islamic religious literatures. He has published two monographs, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsir Tradition* (2004) and *In Defense of the Bible* (2008) and is the author of dozens of articles on the history of the Qur'an, Qur'anic interpretation, and Islamic apocalyptic literature.

The Peter Craigie Memorial Lecture Series: Inaugurated in 1988, this lecture series honours the memory of our colleague and friend, Peter Craigie (d.1985). Prof. Craigie was a member of the department of Religious Studies, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, and Vice-President (Academic) of the University. Each year, a distinguished lecturer is invited to address the University and Calgary-area communities on topics from the discipline of Religious Studies.

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