

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-83160-4 - The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an

Edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe

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QUR'ĀN

As the living scriptural heritage of more than a billion people, the Qur'an speaks with a powerful voice in our contemporary world. Despite the predictions of sociological theorists that secularity would inexorably eradicate the social and political influences of religious belief, the effective force of faith-based rhetoric continues to expand. Nowhere is that more evident than with the religious tradition of Islam. Like its sibling faiths, Judaism and Christianity, Islam professes a belief in divine-human communication as expressed and encoded in written form and has canonised a core set of documents as the repository of this revelation. Just as other scriptural religions, Islam has also developed a centuries-long tradition of interpretation or exegesis of its holy writings. Generations of exegetes, shaped by their particular contexts and confessional orientations, have moulded meaning from the words of the Qur'an, tying traditional understandings to the ever-evolving task of reinterpretation.

Nevertheless, efforts to introduce the Qur'an and its intellectual heritage to English-speaking audiences have been hampered by the lack of accessible and available resources. Scholarship in qur'anic studies, a field that has flourished in the last few decades, remains sequestered in specialised monographs and journals. *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an* promises to remedy that situation. Jane McAuliffe, a distinguished scholar of the Islamic tradition, has brought together some of the best and most knowledgeable scholars in the field to explain the complexities of this world-changing text. The *Companion* comprises fourteen chapters, each devoted to a single topic of central importance to the study of the Qur'an. While rich in historical, linguistic and literary detail, chapters also reflect the influence of other disciplines as the field of qur'anic studies increasingly draws on the work of anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers, art historians and cultural critics. For both the university student and the general reader, *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an* provides a clear, compact and comprehensive entrée to a text that for centuries has guided and shaped the lives of millions.

JANE DAMMEN MCAULIFFE is Professor in the Departments of History and Arabic and Dean of Arts and Sciences at Georgetown University. Her numerous publications have focused primarily on the Qur'an, on early Islamic history and on the multiple relations between Islam and Christianity. Her books include *Qur'anic Christians: An analysis of classical and modern exegesis* (1991), *Abbāsid authority affirmed* (1995) and *With reverence for the Word: Medieval scriptural exegesis in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (2003), and she has edited the five-volume *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an* (2001–6).

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This book is dedicated
to
Sister Mary Roy McDonald
12 October 1917–27 March 2006
and
George Michael Wickens
7 August 1918–26 January 2006

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Mekka bis zur Mitte des 2./8. Jahrhunderts (1991; Eng. trans. *The origins of Islamic jurisprudence: Meccan fiqh before the classical schools* (2002)), *The biography of Muhammad: The issue of the sources* (2000) and *Ḥadīth: Origins and developments* (2004).

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