“Why are Prophets Necessary? The Social Utility of Religion in Muslim Thought”

A prophet in the classical Muslim conception was the bearer of a law revealed by God, and forming a community on the basis of that law was to escape from anarchy and oppression. But was prophecy actually real? Might the so-called prophets be power-seeking politicians in disguise, or perhaps well-meaning politicians who disguised their law as revelation? There was a wide range of views on the prophetic phenomenon, especially in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The lecture examines these views and the classical solution to the problem of how the bearers of such different views could coexist within the same community.

A lecture by:

PATRICIA CRONE
Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Historical Studies
Institute for Advanced Study