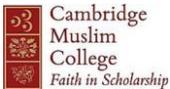




**‘Green Theology’  
Emerging 21st Century Muslim and  
Christian Discourses on Ecology**

International Conference  
Cambridge, UK - 30-31 March 2019

**Biographies and Abstracts**



**Augustinos BAIRACTARIS** (born 1977, Thessaloniki) is Assistant Professor of Ecumenical Theology, teaching history of the ecumenical movement and systematic theology, inter-Christian and inter-religious dialogue at the University Ecclesiastical Academy of Heraklion – Crete. He studied theology in Thessaloniki at the Orthodox Theological Faculty (BA, MA & PhD), in Geneva at the Autonomous Protestant Theological Faculty (MA at the UNIGE) and in Fribourg at the Roman Catholic Theological Faculty (MA at the Université de Fribourg). Since 2010 he has actively been member of the *Focolari Movimento* of the Roman Catholic Church attending in two general assemblies (Italy 2011) and (Istanbul 2012), and taking part in various international conferences. Augustinos Bairactaris publishes regularly in periodicals and collective volumes on the development of ecumenism (ethics, eco-theology, inter-cultural dialogue, the Orthodox ecclesiology and the Orthodox Church's participation within the World Council of Churches).

## **Abstract**

### ***The Ecological Crisis as a Challenge for Religious Connectedness and Reconciliation***

Today it is commonly witnessed that the ecological crisis is a sign of our cultural failure and bankruptcy. Climate change is regarded as one of the main global risks threatening not only the distant future, but also the current present. Statistics of increased pollution and deforestation, limiting nature's capacity to absorb carbon emissions, prove that *'by 2050 there will be more plastic waste in the oceans than fish, and oceans are warming up by 40% faster than expected'*. In other terms the environmental crisis reflects the failure of the way in which we think and act as religions and as humans in general. In the last World Council of Churches' General Assembly in Busan in 2013 eco-theology and climate justice were identified as two of the key priorities for the next working period of the Council (2014-2021). Thus, it is clear that issues such as eco-theology, climate and economic justice are components in the global pilgrimage for peace, for present and future generations, in order to promote a sustainable world for tomorrow. Additionally, climate change and ecological destruction are getting more and more menacing for humanity, providing a global challenge which should be reflected in theological education and formation worldwide. There is a deep moral obligation to promote *ecological justice* through the development of so-called *eco-theology* in order to formulate a new ethos and a new lifestyle based on ecological responsibility. Theological institutes, seminaries and faculties should work together sharing information in the field of the *eco-theological formation* of the ministers, youth and communities.

**Alexei BODROV** is founder and rector of the St Andrew's Biblical Theological Institute in Moscow, editor-in-chief of St Andrew's Institute Press and a researcher in residence at Amsterdam Free University. He is editor of an academic quarterly *Pages: Theology, Culture, Education*. St Andrew's Institute develops academic and publishing programmes to promote theological education and interconfessional/interreligious dialogue in Russia and CIS countries. Alexei Bodrov is a founding Board member of the European Christian Convention; co-editor of the Russian editions of *History of Vatican II* (5 Vols.) and *Handbuch christlich-islamischer Dialog*, a member of the editorial boards of 'Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture' series and journals *Contagion* (Michigan) and *Religionen unterwegs* (Vienna).

**Dave BOOKLESS** is Director of Theology for A Rocha International ([www.arocha.org](http://www.arocha.org)) and Priest-in-Charge of St. Mary-the-Virgin, Norwood Green in London Diocese. He writes and speaks widely around the world on faith-based approaches to ecology and nature conservation, has authored or contributed to over 20 books, is a Member of the Church of England’s Environment Working Group, a Lausanne Global Catalyst for Creation Care, and has recently completed a PhD at Cambridge University on a Biblical theology of wildlife conservation.

## **Abstract**

### ***The Place of Biodiversity in the Purposes of God***

In the twenty-first century we face an era of unprecedented human impact upon nature including ‘an overall decline of 60% in [wildlife] population sizes between 1970 and 2014’ (according to the 2018 Living Planet Index). Such a situation should surely provoke theological reflection and ethical response from those who believe that God has made, delights in, and cares for an abundant diversity of creatures, and moreover has entrusted their well-being to humanity’s care. Many Christian readings of the Bible have assumed an anthropocentric stance, wherein creation was made primarily or exclusively for humans to enjoy and even exploit. However, certain Biblical passages, particular in the Wisdom literature and Psalms, suggest an approach that is more ecocentric, emphasising God’s care and provision for all species and questioning human superiority. Taking the Old Testament and New Testament together, this paper suggests that both anthropocentric and ecocentric readings are ultimately mistaken, and only a Theocentric understanding holds together the diverse strands of the Biblical text. Furthermore, it is possible to trace God’s concern for all creatures – biodiversity – through each of the major Divine initiatives towards his creation: in the process of creation itself, in establishing covenant relationship, in the incarnation and saving work of Jesus Christ, and in God’s future plans for the whole created order. This paper will conclude by proposing a novel yet profoundly Biblical approach to understanding humanity’s place amongst the community of God’s creatures, and tracing some ethical implications for the human treatment of other creatures.

**Khalil CHAMCHAM** is Professor of Physics and Astrophysics. He holds a doctorate in Nuclear Physics from the University Claude Bernard-Lyon (France), a D.Phil in Astrophysics from Sussex University (UK) and an MSt in Theology (Science and Religion) from the University of Oxford (UK). He taught for many years in Morocco and worked at several international institutions before moving to Oxford. His main research interests are galaxy formation, dark matter and gravity, the foundations of cosmology, Time and Consciousness, scientific development in the Islamic world and the interfaith dialogue. He is currently working on a project on the nature of knowledge and the meaning of progress.

## **Abstract**

### ***The Standard Model of Cosmology and the Paradigm of Qur'anic Cosmology***

The modern vision of the universe is consistently described by the standard model of cosmology: we live in an expanding universe whose content is dominated by cold dark matter, dark energy and a tiny fraction of visible matter that makes up all living biological beings, galaxies, stars and their planets. General Relativity is the core mathematical framework to which other models and theories have been plugged into to build a consistent picture of the origins of chemical elements, galaxies, fossil radiation and related observations: history of the universe is deciphered in its thermal history. However, the standard model does not explain how this history originated from non-being to being, how life and consciousness emerged and the human mind that is describing it came into being. There is no room for purpose. The Qur'an offers a holistic vision of a universe sustained by laws, home to knowledge and mercy, to mankind and other beings: a universe driven primarily by care, harmony and justice. Clearly this holistic vision is not perceived as scientific within the current paradigm of science. However, it sets the metaphysical grounds for the paradigm of a science that incorporates not only a mathematical description of the universe but also considers the wellbeing of nature and life in all its forms, a principle of care and harmony rather than the anthropocentric principle. This is not a denial of the standard model of cosmology, but a call for a creative Islamic vision inspired from the Qur'an to contribute towards moving humanity out of the destructive path in which the reductionist paradigm of current science and its technological offshoots are engaging it: a restoration of the covenant between the revealed Word and human knowledge.

**Yaqub CHAUDHARY** is a Templeton Research Fellow in AI, Philosophy and Theology at the Cambridge Muslim College. As a Research Fellow in Science and Religion, his research interests relate to recent developments in the fields of AI, cognitive science and neuroscience in connection with Islamic conceptions of the mind, intelligence, human reasoning, cognition, knowledge, the nature of perception and consciousness. Previously, he conducted his doctoral work in Physics at Imperial College London, where he worked on the Physics of Plastic Electronic Materials and their potential use in future types of lasers. Prior to this, he studied Electronic Engineering at the same institution.

## **Abstract**

### ***Illuminating Ecology with the Full Spectrum of Theological and Spiritual Light***

In this paper, we will first consider the mechanistic and cybernetic influences that have shaped conceptions of life, ecology and mind, leading to the present ecological crisis, as well as tracing the deeper philosophical roots of the crisis. In particular, we will consider how views that unified matter, nature and mind, such as the monism at the origins of ecology introduced by Haeckel’s proposal of a ‘cultural age of monism’ to supersede the ‘cultural age of dualism’, eventually gave rise to the ideological circumstances for ecological destruction. Nature, life and mind have thus been unified under the monism of ‘principles of organisation’ and recast in terms of algorithmic information processing systems. This reconceptualization of life as a blueprint, for the fabrication of living beings, and broad definitions of living organisms as self-replicating information processing systems, has led to speculations about the future of life as ‘artificial life’, which, we argue, will further distort our understanding of nature and will not be equipped to address the problems of the de-sacralised treatment of nature that have led to the ongoing ecological crisis. We will finally argue that recourse to techno-scientific solutions alone will be constrained to etiolated future developments, hence, what is required for life, nature, mind and spirit to flourish is the full spectrum of theological and spiritual light, which will be discussed with reference to the vibrant tapestry of colours depicted in verses 27 to 28 of *Sūra Faṭīr*.

**Lejla DEMIRI** is Professor of Islamic Doctrine and Deputy Director of the Centre for Islamic Theology, University of Tübingen. She received her PhD from the University of Cambridge (2008), and held post-doctoral fellowships at Trinity Hall, Cambridge (2007–10) and the Free University of Berlin (2010–12). Her research explores systematic theology, the intellectual history of Islam and Muslim-Christian theological encounters. She is the author of *Muslim Exegesis of the Bible in Medieval Cairo* (Brill, 2013), and serves as Team Leader (Middle East and North Africa) and Section Editor (Turkish World) for the CMR1900 project: *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History (1500–1900)* (Brill, 2012-present).

**David F. FORD** is Regius Professor of Divinity Emeritus in the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Selwyn College. He co-chairs Global Covenant Partners, Rose Castle Foundation, and Faith in Leadership; and serves on boards of: Kalam Research and Media; Princeton Center of Theological Inquiry; Institute for Comparative Scripture and Interreligious Dialogue, Minzu University, Beijing; Elijah Interfaith Institute, Jerusalem; and Cambridge Muslim College. He was a co-founder of the inter-faith practice of Scriptural Reasoning, and awarded the Coventry International Prize for Peace and Reconciliation in 2012. His publications include: *Self and Salvation*; *The Drama of Living*; *Interreligious Reading After Vatican II*; and *Christian Wisdom*.

**Oleh KINDIY** Assistant Dean for International Relations and Professor of Theology at Ukrainian Catholic University. He gained his PhD in historical theology at the Catholic University of America (CUA), Washington, DC in 2007. His main research interests are: Late Antiquity, Patristics and Medieval Studies, Byzantine Studies, Ukrainian Studies, Christian Social Teaching, Eco-Theology, Ecumenism, and translation of historical, theological and philosophical literature. He is the priest in Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. Married, has four children.

## **Abstract**

### ***Clement of Alexandria's Notion of Autarkeia and its Impact on Contemporary Eco-Theology***

This presentation intends to show how in the early Christian context, especially as conceived by one of the early Church Fathers, Clement of Alexandria, the notion of *autarkeia*, self-governing ability of human nature, can and should have a positive impact on the relationship between humans, God, and nature. The Stoic ideal of *apatheia* was revisited by early Church Fathers, adopted, and transformed. It offered an important contribution to construing an anthropological balance, which is translated into a macro-cosmic and economic system. A renewed version of this concept can and should also help contemporary society to rediscover a sensible relationship with nature, basic human needs and the Creator. Research by such scholars as John Zizioulas, Elizabeth Theokritoff, Jame Schaefer, Brian Matz, Harry O. Maier, and David Gormley-O'Brian reviews Biblical and patristic sources in the field of socio-economic issues and in eco-human studies. Contemporary eco-theological scholarship presents conclusions that the relationship between God, humans, and the world builds positive dynamics of relationships and indicates not the consumerist nature of the Christian doctrine, but, conversely, the caring and salvific attitude towards the environment.

**Daniel A. MADIGAN** is the Jeanette W. and Otto J. Ruesch Family Associate Professor in Georgetown University's Department of Theology, where he has worked since 2008. He is also a senior fellow at Georgetown's Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding and an honorary professorial fellow of the Australian Catholic University. His interests include Qur'anic studies, interreligious dialogue, and comparative theology, with special focus on Muslim-Christian relations. Madigan previously taught in Rome from 2000 to 2007, where he was the founder and director of the Institute for the Study of Religions and Cultures at the Pontifical Gregorian University.

### **Abstract**

#### ***Green Theodicy: Getting a Clearer perspective on Human Life under God***

'Green Theology' poses a major question to us: have human beings fully accepted our embeddedness in creation? Or do we take the idea that we are created 'in the image of God' as implying that we are the crowning completion of creation, somehow exempt from the fragility, the wildness, the unpredictability, the apparent disposability of the rest of creation? There is no denying, of course, that our lives are marked with misfortunes, accidents, frailties and ultimately mortality. However, people of faith tend to treat these things not as the logical entailment of being created, but as inscrutable divine actions, sent either to test us and so increase our virtue, or to punish us for our vices. Human religiosity has evolved, so they tell us, from polytheism towards monotheism. In the process, all the power over human life and all the manipulations of natural phenomena once attributed to a multitude of spiritual forces came to be attributed to the One God. This creates an almost insurmountable problem of theodicy, since an understanding of natural phenomena appropriate to an animist and polytheist past is incompatible with what we have come to believe about the One God. Can a greener theology help us?

**Samir MAHMOUD** is a graduate of the University of Cambridge (2012) in philosophical aesthetics. He is currently Assistant Professor of Architectural History & Theory at the Lebanese American University (LAU). Between 2013 and 2016 he was Visiting Assistant Professor of Architecture at the American University of Beirut (AUB). He was Postdoctoral Fellow at the Khalili Centre for Research in Art & Material Culture, University of Oxford (2012-2013) and Agha Khan Postdoctoral Fellow at MIT (2012). His interests vary widely and include: art & architecture (Islamic and Western), philosophy (Islamic, Neoplatonism, and Continental), Islamic studies, urban & landscape design, and psychology (particularly the dialogue between Islamic and Western “therapeutics of the soul”).

### **Abstract**

#### ***Nature, Life & Order: Architecture & the Sacred Art of Healing the World***

When we speak of nature we speak of ‘life’ and ‘vitalism’ yet rarely do we hear architects speak of life, though they have been invoking nature for centuries. As I will demonstrate in this paper, ‘life’ is absolutely necessary for rendering a building or space beautiful. Yet Modernism gave birth to a deadening orthodoxy in architectural theory that valued open-ended innovation, solipsistic form, and infinite space, which have produced spaces that are alienating. Modernism (and Postmodernism for that matter) has been more concerned with utility, internal consistency, and innovations for innovation’s sake than with harmony, beauty, balance, order, and life. This has had disastrous consequences for the built environment in the Islamic world that has uncritically appropriated such an ‘ideology’. The presentation will show how pre-modern edifices were built within the context of sacred cosmologies that nurtured and made possible the buildings in the first place. Without a renewed sacred cosmology within which nature, the built environment and the human being exist as a whole, no architecture of life is possible again. The presentation will draw heavily on the works of Ibn ‘Arabi, Goethe, John Ruskin, Henri Bergson, Heidegger, and Christopher Alexander and will critically engage with contemporary architectural theory.

**Rusmir MAHMUTĆEHAJIĆ** is a Bosnian academic, author, and former statesman. For the past 21 years, he has been President of International Forum Bosnia, a prominent civil society organization dedicated to the development of critical intelligence and a plural society in Bosnia. He is the author of more than 20 books in Bosnian, some 15 of which have been published in English, French, Italian, Bulgarian, Albanian and Turkish translations. He is also the author of several hundred academic articles and essays, both in his original field of electrical engineering and on the social and political issues affecting his country, on political philosophy, philosophy of religion more generally, on religious phenomenology, the critique of ideology, the religious traditions and the potential for interfaith dialogue viewed from a Muslim perspective, literary criticism, and the history of his country.

### **Abstract**

#### ***On Rediscovering Anthro-Cosmological Integrity***

‘There is nothing that does not proclaim His praise’ (Qur’an 17:44)

The chasm between fear and hope in the human heart has never been so broad, deep, or dark. It induces helplessness. The burgeoning body of science and its technical might increasingly exclude the role of the knowing subject, just as its catastrophic impact on the natural world is accelerating. The forgotten and vanishing anthropo-cosmological viewpoint, which God, the Lord of all the worlds, gave expression in human words through his prophets, reminds us that all things around or within us have meaning, but it is drowned out by voices of worry and fear. This study examines how these two anthropologies and cosmologies, the traditional and the modern, relate to each other and the epistemological framework of the philosophies of religion and science. The sacred heritage of the prophets and their books, the intellectual inheritance of Christians and Muslims, cannot be dismissed as old hat. Breathing new life into their stories reinvigorates the higher ecologies of the self’s deepest recesses, of thinking and discourse as preconditions for bridging that chasm between fear and hope. Such new perspectives on our sacred heritage allow us to develop our decision-making on a different basis and within a different orientation than the currently dominant one.

**Ingrid MATTSON** (PhD, Chicago) is a scholar of Islamic Studies, an expert in interfaith relations and a Muslim religious leader. Since 2012 she has held the London and Windsor Community Chair in Islamic Studies at Huron University College in London, Canada. Previously she was Professor of Islamic Studies and Director of the Center for Christian-Muslim Relations at Hartford Seminary (Connecticut) where she developed and directed the first accredited graduate program for Muslim chaplains in America. Her writings focus on Qur’anic Studies, theological ethics and interfaith engagement. She is past president of the Islamic Society of North America (Washington, DC and Plainfield, IN), a Senior Fellow of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in Jordan and has served on many boards, including the Interfaith Taskforce of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Some of her work can be found on her website: [ingridmattson.org](http://ingridmattson.org).

## **Abstract**

### ***The Community of Created Things***

What does it mean to love a mountain? How can a person comfort a tree? Some modern Muslim and Christian reformers expressed disbelief and disdain towards reports that the Prophet Muhammad demonstrated love and mercy towards ‘inanimate’ objects. A scientific age decries ‘animism’ and ‘anthropomorphism’. But there is no doubt that the Qur’an describes a cosmic landscape of creation filled with non-human intelligent life and the Prophet expressed reciprocal love even towards rocks and trees. Corruption of the self and the world is rooted in man’s arrogant delusion that he is ‘self-made’; revelation reminds us that we are created and belong to the broader community of created things. It is not by disassociating ourselves from our non-human neighbours that we find the distinctive place of humanity in the cosmos. We do not bring ourselves low by grounding ourselves in the earth. Rather, by knowing, loving and caring for other created things, by deeming even a stone worthy of our respect, our perspective and spirit expand and we take a step closer to the Creator of all.

**Munjed M. MURAD** is a doctoral student at the Harvard Divinity School, with a focus on religion and nature in Islamic and Christian traditions. He is also a graduate of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, where he studied religion and ecology. He has published articles and delivered presentations on the topic of Islam and nature. Thus far, his research at Harvard has concerned the writings of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Origen of Alexandria. His work mainly involves the process of studying traditional religious texts for their environmental philosophies.

## **Abstract**

### ***Human Purpose and Cosmic Worship: Rumi on the Spiritual Life of the Apparently Inanimate***

In his *Mathnawī-i ma'navī* (*Spiritual Couplets*), which I read for its commentary on Qur'anic verses, Rumi offers a view of what many people perceive as the inanimate as rather being alive, in love, and in prayer. The light that he sheds on the life and prayers of natural phenomena also sheds light on human beings. In his epistemology, spiritual realization deepens intellectual perception, and so those who know God are also those who truly know the world, thereby witnessing, for example, a tree's prayers, a stone's invocation, and the love of all cosmic beings for their Beloved. In other words, those who are spiritually realized are more capable to perceive nature in her true state, praying. What appears to be dead to profane eyes contrarily is alive in the perceptive eyes of the saintly. That one must attain spiritual realization in order to truly know nature tells us that one's relationship with the environment hinges on one's relationship with one's self and with God. Moreover, in perceiving the spiritual reality of the natural environment—as a congregation of worshippers—Rumi gives us an alternative view of the cosmos to those that have given birth to the Anthropocene. Reading Rumi today offers us an approach to the environmental crisis that is a reconciliation between us, on the hand, and God, nature, and our own selves, on the other.

**Donna ORSUTO**, born in Ohio, USA, has lived in Rome for the last forty years. She is a full professor in the Institute of Spirituality, Pontifical Gregorian University, and also the Director of the Lay Centre at Foyer Unitas ([www.laycentre.org](http://www.laycentre.org)).

## **Abstract**

### ***Laudato Si': Francis of Assisi and Pope Francis on Care for our Common Home and its Implications for Contemporary Believers***

Pope Francis both begins and ends his encyclical letter on *Care for our Common Home* with the words *Laudato Si'*: 'Praise be to you, my Lord' (1) and 'Praise be to him' (245). By choosing to use St. Francis of Assisi's well known *Canticle of the Creatures* as bookends, Pope Francis places his comprehensive theological and practical reflection on the ecological crisis in the context of prayer. In this paper, I will first explore the link between Pope Francis and Francis of Assisi's understanding of the Creator and the creature as seen in both the *Canticle of the Creature* and the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Then, in the second part, I will explore the meaning of 'an integral ecology' as described in Chapter Four of Francis' encyclical. In the final section, I will demonstrate how the encyclical provokes in the believer a response of both prayer and action. *Laudato Si'* calls for everyone to enter into a 'new dialogue' about how we are shaping the future of our planet.

**Christoph SCHWÖBEL** has been Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of St Andrews since 2018. He is a Professor emeritus of the University of Tübingen where he had the Chair in Systematic Theology and was Director of the Institute for Hermeneutics and Intercultural Dialogue from 2004 to 2018. Before that he held chairs in the universities of Heidelberg (1999-2004) and Kiel (1993-99). From 1986 to 1993 he was Lecturer in Systematic Theology at King's College London and Founding Director of the Research Institute in Systematic Theology. His books include: *God: Action and Revelation* (1992); *Gott in Beziehung* (2002); *Christlicher Glaube im Pluralismus* (2003); *Die Religion des Zauberers* (2008) and *Gott im Gespräch* (2011). With Susanne Heine, Ömer Öszoy and Abdullah Takim he is the editor of *Christen und Muslime im Gespräch* (2014). He is a past President of the *Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft für Theologie* and editor of *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* (De Gruyter).

**Sohaira Z. M. SIDDIQUI** is an assistant professor at Georgetown University Qatar. She is the author of the forthcoming monograph, *Law and Politics under the Abbasids: An Intellectual Portrait of al-Juwayni*, and an edited volume titled, *Locating the Shari'a: Legal Fluidity in Theory, History and Practice*. She has published a series of articles in the *Journal of Islamic Studies*, *Islamic Law and Society*, *the Journal of the American Oriental Society*, and *Middle East Law and Governance*. She has held fellowships at the University of Cambridge and Harvard Law School and is a series co-editor for *Sapientia Islamica* (Mohr Siebeck).

## **Abstract**

### ***Between the Heavens and the Earth: Translating Green Theology into Law***

Central to Islamic theological discourses is the notion that human beings are stewards over the earth. Applied to the world of Islamic law, human stewardship is translated into legal responsibility which entails that human beings have both rights, and responsibilities. Although contemporary scholars have not frequently connected notions of human stewardship to legal responsibility, this paper will argue that in order for Green Theologies to be more effective, exploring these interconnections will be effective. As a starting point, this paper will explore the hadith of the Prophet in which he states, 'He who cultivates land that does not belong to anybody is more rightful to [own] it'. This paper will explore how legal scholars incorporated this hadith into their classification of land and how it exemplifies a connection between human stewardship and legal rights and responsibilities. The paper will end by indicating fruitful avenues through which Green Theologies can be translated into effective legal norms.

**Rebecca WATSON** is a Research Associate at the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge, where her research focuses on Biblical portrayals of the sea and especially their ecological implications. One output of this, co-authored with oceanographer Meric Srokosz, is *Blue Planet, Blue God: The Bible and the Sea* (SCM, 2017). Her Oxford DPhil, on the theme of ‘chaos’ in the Psalter, was published as *Chaos Uncreated: A Reassessment of the Theme of ‘Chaos’ in the Hebrew Bible* (De Gruyter, 2005). She is also Dean of Studies at St Hild College, a ministerial training college in Yorkshire.

## **Abstract**

### ***Chaos and Cosmos: Biblical Perspectives for a Changing World***

The Bible offers a spectrum of views on the maintenance of order in the cosmos, ranging from those in which good order is understood as firmly established, upheld and guaranteed by God in the present, through others in which some level of threat is inbuilt into the system, to those in which vulnerability and instability is the dominant experience of reality. Threats to a safe inhabitable world can be internal to the system and sanctioned by God within an overarching order, or may derive from human agency through sin or the actions of foreign powers; or ultimately such principalities and powers may come to represent a fundamental level of evil and opposition to God that must be overcome. ‘Chaos’ imagery, therefore, provides a framework through which to debate the necessity, extent and causation of threat and disorder in the world and offers a spectrum of models for understanding the relation of God and humanity to it. Although certain passages are vulnerable to being read as abrogating human responsibility, often the Bible balances trust in God’s maintenance of the created order with awareness of human agency in threatening that order, thereby offering a helpful metaphor for our time.

**Tim WINTER**, born 1960, is University Lecturer in Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge, and is dean of the Cambridge Muslim College, which trains imams for British mosques. He is Director of Studies in Theology at Wolfson College, and is a holder of the Pilkington Teaching Prize at the University of Cambridge. He has been described as Britain's most influential Muslim thinker by *The Independent* newspaper. In 2006 he published *Abraham's Children*, co-edited with Bishop Richard Harries and Rabbi Norman Solomon. He is the editor of the *Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology* (2008). His most recent book is *Commentary on the Eleventh Contentions* (2012).

**Ralf K. WÜSTENBERG**, born 1965, is Chair for Systematic Theology at Europa-University Flensburg and Senior Research Associate in the Von Hügel Institute, University of Cambridge. After studying Theology in Berlin, Cambridge (UK) and Heidelberg, he graduated from Humboldt-University Berlin (Dr. theol.) and Ruprecht-Karls-University Heidelberg (Habilitation). In 2013/2014, he was a Visiting Fellow in the Faculty of Divinity, Cambridge University and St. Edmund's College; in 2002/2003 he taught as Dietrich-Bonhoeffer-Scholar at Union Theological Seminary, New York, and in 1999 he was a Visiting research fellow at the University of Cape Town. His publications include *Christology: How do we talk about Jesus Christ today?* (Cascade Books, 2014), *The Political Dimension of Reconciliation in South Africa and Germany* (Wm B. Eerdmans, 2009), *Theology in Dialogue. The impact of Arts, Humanities and Science on contemporary religious discourse* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), *A Theology of Life. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Religionless Christianity* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998) and a forthcoming book: *Islam as Devotion, Minneapolis* (Fortress Academic/Lexington, 2019).

### **Abstract**

#### ***Calvin and al-Ghazali: Theologies of Creation in Comparative Perspectives***

For both, the Christian reformer John Calvin and the Sufi Theologian al-Ghazali creation is an important topic in their theologies. The paper will ask for similarities and differences in both theological outlines (knowledge of God through observation of the nature, its limitations and cognitive questions) and draw ethical consequences from their insights into creation theology (normative questions, such as the inexcusability of mankind since God made Himself known through His signs/imprints in creation). Such insights will finally be discussed in light of current environmental questions and the responsibility of mankind).





Picture: *Acanthus* by William Morris, © V&A Museum

