

## About the Conference

In the tradition of Émile Durkheim, ritualization as the practice which sets apart our mundane reality from what we consider to be sacred is closely connected with the idea of religion. However, as ritual theories have shown over the past decades, ritual practices which create the sacred by differentiating it from the profane are not merely religious but relate to all kinds of social acts. Roy Rappaport therefore once called ritualization "*the basic social act*" (*Ecology, Meaning, and Religion*, Richmond, CA, North Atlantic Books, 1979, 176).

A close reading of this finding in the light of norm theory suggests that practices of differentiating between the sacred and the profane may in fact be at the core of norm creation. And yet, as this normative practice, ritualization is not merely a creation of order *ex nihilo*, but seems to be highly reliant on a normative fundament itself. This finding invites us to study the mutual relationship between ritual and order, as both appear to serve as a constitutive factor for the other. Rituals as social practices which distance themselves from everyday actions by doing them differently rely on order to transcend our common experiences in an attempt to engage with the sacred. On the other hand, norms—as the very peculiar social facts which markedly distinguish our everyday life from alternative worlds which might prevail—rely on ritualization to contrast the world we have with "our projections of alternative 'worlds-that-might-be'" (R Cover, "The Folktales of Justice," *Cap. U. L. Rev.* 14 (1985), 181). This understanding of norms as bridges between "the world we have" and "a world we can imagine" (R Cover, "Bringing the Messiah through the Law," in Pennock & Chapman, eds., *Religion, Morality, and the Law*, New York, NYU Press, 1988, 201) resonates in many academic fields which have to face the enduring question of how to relate social facts to those atypical facts we call "norms".



# Sacred Order

The Reliance of Ritual  
on Norms, the Emergence  
of Norms from Ritual

Conference, 4–6 July 2023

### Conference Venue

University of Bonn  
Ceremonial Hall, Senate Hall  
Regina-Pacis-Weg 3  
53113 Bonn  
Germany

### Contact Details

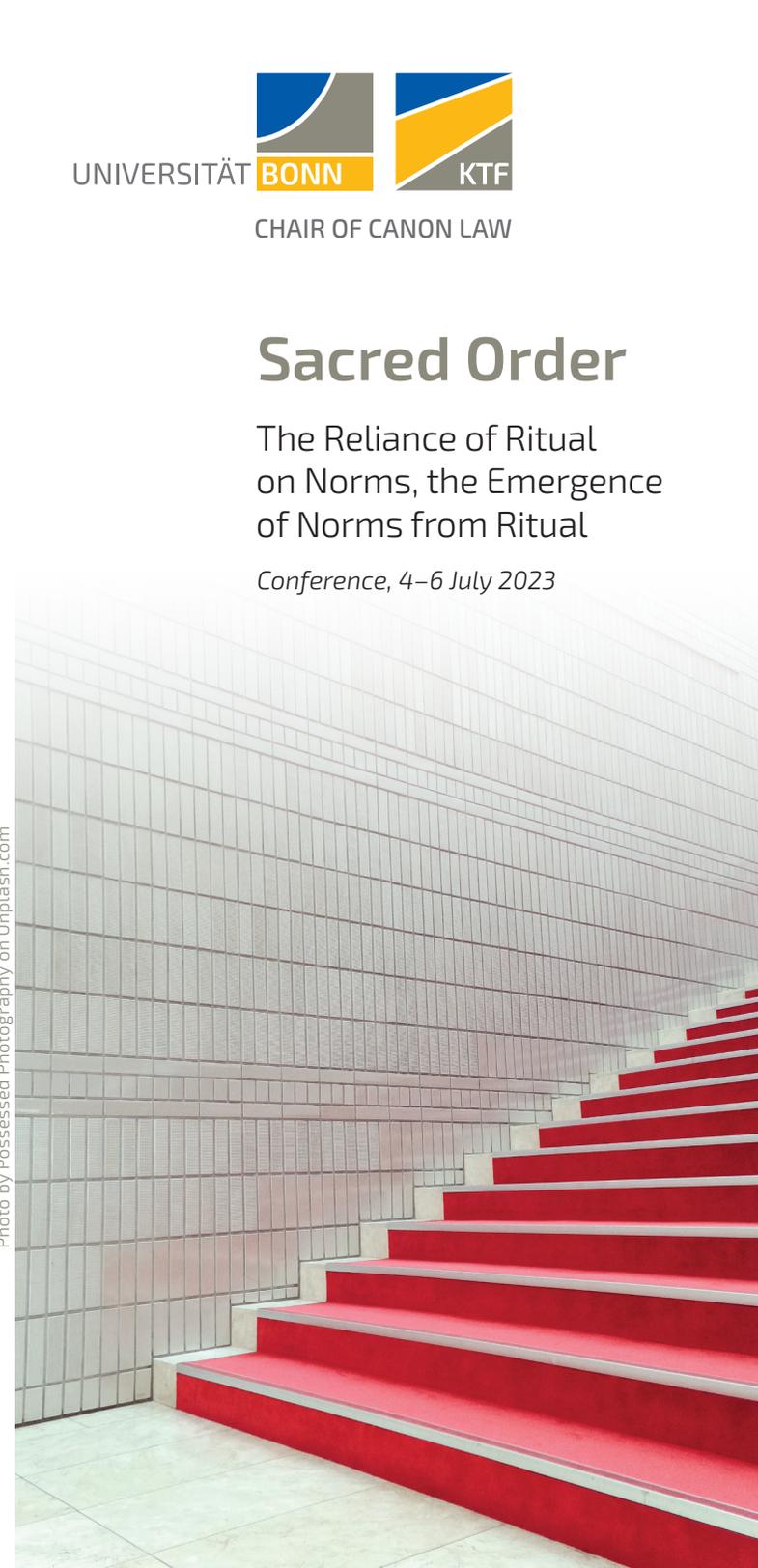
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Register for the conference  
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## Aim of the Conference

To elaborate the connection between normativity and ritual more profoundly, scholars from various disciplines reflect on the question of whether and how rituals, as normative practices for identifying the sacred as "a counter-world that is part of the world" (C Möllers, *The Possibility of Norms*, Oxford, OUP, 2020, 75), may be a factor underlying common phenomena which we study when we muse about norms. Uniting scholars with backgrounds in theology and religion, social studies and legal studies, the conference seeks to shed some light on how rituals depend on norms to connect with the sacred, and on how norms evolve from and remain connected with the sacred.

Discussing the roots of rituals in norms, and the roots of norms in basic social acts, such as ritual, we examine

- how the normative roots of rituals and the functioning of ritualization serve to identify the profane, construct the sacred and mark the boundary between the two;
- how order evolves from the space between the profane and the sacred;
- how the sacred infuses our normative worlds;
- how it might be possible to understand norms as alternative facts born out of ritual and what we learn about norms from their eschatological character as images of "worlds-that-might-be";
- how norms evolve once their visions turn real, as "worlds-that-might-be" collide with reality;
- how to comprehend the overlapping of normativities, such as the ritual character of social and legal liturgies, as well as the social and even legal character of religious worship;
- how it is possible to conceive of human norms as divine law and to conceive of divine ordinances as changeable.

Based on these findings we hope to come to a clearer understanding of what lies at the bottom of normative orders and what unites them, with the aim of discovering common grounds in social, moral, legal and liturgical norms as well as in norms from custom and etiquette.

## Programme

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### Day 1: Tuesday, 4 July 2023

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1:30 p.m.

Welcome and Introduction

2 p.m.–3:30 p.m.

#### Session 1: The Sacred, the Profane and the Normative

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WERNER GEPHART | University of Bonn

The Law and the Sacred: The Durkheimian Legacy

STEPHAN WINTER | University of Tübingen

Liturgical Order: The Normative Function of Ritual Power

*Coffee break*

4:15 p.m.–5:45 p.m.

#### Session 2: Immanence and Transcendence

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CHRISTOPH MÖLLERS | HU Berlin, Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin

Norms as Counter-Worlds and Part of Our World

MÅRTEN BJÖRK | Lund University, Campion Hall, Oxford

The End of Law: An Eschatological Vision of the Law

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### Day 2: Wednesday, 5 July 2023

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9 a.m.–10:30 a.m.

#### Session 3: Narratives of the Normative

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RYSZARD BOBROWICZ | KU Leuven

Nomos and Narrative:

How Narrations Contribute to Norm Creation

GIANLUCA PAROLIN | The Aga Khan University, London

The Imaginary of Secular and Religious Justice in Egyptian Television Drama

*Coffee break*

11 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

#### Session 4: Laws of Rituals, Rituals of the Law

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ALEXIS ALVAREZ-NAKAGAWA | Queen Mary, University of London

Law, Magic, Performativity: Persons and (some) Things

VALENTIN JEUTNER | Lund University, Pembroke College, Oxford

Legal Liturgy and International Law

*Lunch break*

2–3 p.m.

JUDITH HAHN | University of Bonn

The Sacraments of the Law: Finding Common Ground of Law and Religion (Inaugural Lecture)

*Reception*

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### Day 3: Thursday, 6 July 2023

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9 a.m.–10:30 a.m.

#### Session 5: Sacred Norms in a Human World

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SILVIO FERRARI | University of Milan

"What God Really Meant": Divine Law and Interpretation

MICHAEL SEEWALD | University of Münster

Changes to the Unchangeable: On Law, Revelation and Contingency

*Coffee break*

11 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

#### Session 6: Uncertainty, Dissent and Change

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JUDITH GRUBER | KU Leuven

Dissent! The Function of Disagreement and Contestation for the Development of Norms

CHRISTINE HAYES | Yale University, Shalom Hartman Institute, Jerusalem

Against Certainty: Early Rabbinic Strategies against Dogmatism

*Conclusion*