

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Sacred and The...Profanity

An Online Symposium

8th September 2020

Building on the recent growth of scholarship in the field of humour and religion, this interdisciplinary online symposium aims to bring together scholars from a wide range of fields to explore the multifaceted relationship between humour, obscenity, and religion, and to consider what happens when these worlds collide.

There are many examples that seem to support the view that religion and humour have a tense relationship; whether it be 'comic' representations of religious figures in the media, jokes about God, or films and television which focus on religion and morality that are considered blasphemous or offensive. These occurrences are often enthusiastically cast as a conflict between religious freedom and the right to dignity in belief, on the one hand, and freedom of expression and the right to offend, on the other. However, the intersection of humour, obscenity, and religion is much more complex than this, and this symposium invites participants to work through various aspects of this relationship. Of particular interest is the place of humour and the obscene *in* religion, the positive functions it can serve and ultimately its value. We want to ask: what role can humour play in the sphere of religion, and how comfortably? Even if joking might be allowed, can it ever truly fit in? Who decides on the value of humour for religion?

We welcome submissions which consider these, and other, questions in relation to a number of topics including, but not limited to:

- Historical or contemporary examples of humour or obscenity in religion
- Gendered experiences of laughter, humour, and joke-telling
- Ritual
- Joke-telling
- Satire
- The Media

- Blasphemy
- The usefulness of humour and the obscene
- Limits of humour
- The policing of humour

We welcome papers that address one of these themes in a 15-minute talk. All papers will be presented remotely and observed online. Each talk will be followed by a discussion. To submit a proposal, please send an abstract of approximately 200 words to Dr Paul Martin: paul.s.martin@bristol.ac.uk and Nicole Graham: ng338@kent.ac.uk by **15th July 2020**. The organisers will review all submissions anonymously.

In addition to the panel of papers, the symposium will include a round table entitled: "Exploring Religion and Ritual in Humour and the Obscene". Confirmed speakers for this round table are: Professor Bernard Schweizer (Co-Founder of the Humour and Religion Network), Dr Emily Selove (Senior Lecturer of Medieval Arabic Language and Literature), Dr Lieke Stelling (Assistant Professor in English Literature), and Dr Simon Weaver (Senior Lecturer in Media and Communications).