

PART TWO: MORALITY AND RELIGION

Syllabus Objectives	<p><i>Knowledge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be familiar with the variety of meanings of the term morality • understand that morality is a human phenomenon which has been the basis of much thought and reflection since ancient times • be aware of the importance of personal and communal values and their expression in secular and religious law codes • be familiar with the ethical teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and the incorporation of these into the moral teachings of the Christian traditions • be familiar with the ethical systems of two religious traditions other than the Christian traditions <p><i>Understanding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand that a person can be a moral person independent of religious belief or affiliation • be aware that a religious perspective on morality emerges from the traditions and belief of each religious tradition • recognise that the Christian tradition draws its inspiration for its moral teaching from several sources • have an understanding of the insight of religions into the implications of moral failure • understand that sin – moral failure from the perspective of the Christian tradition – has personal, social, and structural implications <p><i>Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • differentiate between morality and religion • identify and evaluate the values proposed by the variety of sources and traditions encountered <p><i>Attitudes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to dialogue constructively with legal and religious traditions • awareness of the religious perspective on morality, in particular the Christian perspective and its influence on Irish society in the past and at the present time • awareness of and openness to the moral dimension of the issues of the day • personal moral dispositions
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Topic: 2.1 The relationship between morality and religion

Procedure

Description of content: - a contrast and comparison between the religious and moral person
- ethical systems proposed by two traditions other than Christianity

Present students with the following newspaper headline:

Passer-by rescues drowning person - Story on page 4

Group work: Divide students into five groups. Group 1 are asked to imagine that the passer-by was a Christian. Group 2 a Humanist. Group 3 a Muslim. Group 4 a Hindu. Group 5 a Buddhist. Each group is given time to research the basic principles of each ethical system and outline the story describing the motivation, intention, way of looking at the world (worldview), etc. of the passer-by in this incident written from their different viewpoints.

When each group has completed the exercise, take feedback from students and compare the stories.

Discuss: How can we distinguish one story from the other, as the action is the same in all?

What is the difference between a religious and a moral person?

Take feedback and conclude explaining how a person who is not religious can be moral, but what underlies his / her good action differs from that of the religious person, whose morality is shaped by their religious worldview. Similarly, a person can be 'religious', in the sense of believing in God, praying, etc., but (s)he can also do wrong.

Written Assignment:

Outline the basic ethical code of one religious tradition you have studied other than Christianity.

Description of content: - morality since the Enlightenment: changes in the understanding of morality in two of the following: the morality of slavery; the morality of war; the morality of capital punishment; the morality of child labour.

Research Assignment: Give students time to research the history of the morality of two of the following issues: slavery; war; capital punishment; child labour.

When students have completed their research take feedback.

Discuss: How has the understanding of the morality of this issue changed in the course of history?

Outcomes:

- state the similarities and differences between a religious person and a moral person
- outline the basic principles of the ethical systems of two religious, non-Christian traditions
- identify moments of change in the development of morality since the Enlightenment.

Topic: 2.2 Morality and the Christian tradition

Procedure

Description of content:

- *the context of the Covenant and the Decalogue*
- *the ethical vision of the preaching of Jesus*
- *the idea of “right relationship” and the law of love in this preaching*

Review course content covered in relation to the ethical vision of Jesus i.e.

- Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus Section B Part 2
- Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus Section B Part 3

Review the religious, cultural and social context of the Covenant and the Decalogue

“The spirit and the letter of the law” - review the preaching of Jesus (e.g. Matthew 5 to 7) and explain how this was a key principle in the ethical vision in Jesus’ preaching.

Review Jesus’ parables / miracles and identify examples that show his understanding of “right relationship” and the law of love.

Read a Gospel account of one of Jesus’ parables / miracles.

Discuss: What does this show us about Jesus’ view of right and wrong?

Scripture Assignment: Imagine this parable being told in a modern day setting.

What present-day issues do you think Jesus would focus on?

What do you think he would say in such a parable?

Description of content: • *Christian perspectives on the relationship between religion and morality*

e.g. The Roman Catholic understanding of natural moral law:

Human beings, using their capacity to reason, can reflect upon human experience and human nature in order to see what is good, even without divine revelation.

Discuss: How does this understanding of natural law show that human beings, whether or not they are religious, can come to know what is good?

Does this mean that a person’s morality is independent of their religious faith?

Written Assignment:

1. Jesus of Nazareth spent his adult life sharing a vision for ethical living. You have been asked to write an article for a teenage magazine in which you are to describe these ethical teachings. Write the article suitable for your age group and include in it the following ideas:
 - a. Jesus’ moral vision
 - b. Jesus’ understanding of right relationship
 - c. Jesus’ understanding of the law of love.
2. The relationship between religion and morality in Christianity has been described as reason informing faith and faith informing reason. Explain what this means in your own words.

Outcomes:

- briefly outline the religious, social, and cultural context of the Decalogue and Covenant
- state five of the key principles in the ethical vision in Jesus’ preaching
- give an account of Jesus’ understanding of “right relationship”
- give an account of Jesus’ understanding of the law of love
- state the perspective of one Christian tradition on the relationship that exists between religion and morality.

Topic: 2.3 Religious perspectives on moral failure

Procedure

Description of content: • *the Christian understandings of sin and reconciliation*

- *personal and social sin and the relationship between them*
- *the concept of structural injustice*
- *the perspectives of one tradition, other than the Christian traditions, on moral failure.*

Reflection exercise: Write the word SIN on the chalkboard.

Invite students to reflect on: What does this word bring to mind?

Invite students to describe in words or drawings what the concept of sin brings to mind.

Take feedback on the students' reflection by placing the words or drawings on display for all to see.

Discuss: What do we have in common in our understanding of the word "sin"?

How do we differ in our understanding of the word "sin"?

Take feedback and conclude by explaining that a person's understanding of sin is shaped by their religious vision. e.g. a person who sees God as -

- the maker of laws and the granter of salvation may see sin as 'the breaking of God's law'
- a loving parent figure might see sin as the failure to love in return

Sin creates a distance and lack of harmony because what I have done is contradictory to my moral vision, and damages my relationship with those I claim to love and have concern for.

Present students with the following statements:

<i>Personal sin can be understood as any wrong chosen freely by an individual which has consequences for him / herself and / or for those directly affected by the wrong (s)he does</i>	<i>Sin can be social because the actions of an individual can have social consequences and because society itself can choose to do wrong</i>
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Discuss: Which of the words or drawing displayed above describe personal sin?

Which of the words or drawing displayed above describe social sin?

Which of the words or drawing displayed above describe both personal and social sin?

Take feedback and explain a number of ways in which personal and social sin are related e.g.

- the greed of individual people can be reflected in a society which ignores the needs of others
- the pursuit of wealth by individual people can develop into the widespread exploitation of poor workers in developing countries

Buzz: What is structural injustice?

Take feedback and conclude by explaining that social sin can take the form of structural injustice, when something wrong is supported by the official, organised structures of society (e.g. racism).

View relevant extracts from the film Cry Freedom or

Research Assignment: Look up references to structural injustice and the relationship between personal and social sin in church documents e.g. Roman Catholic encyclicals / pastoral letters etc.

Interview members of a non-Christian tradition, to research their understanding of moral failure / sin, and how this stems from their understanding of God.

Written Assignment:

1. Define the following: a) personal sin b) social sin.
2. War and drug-taking are two issues where both personal and social sin come into play. Discuss how personal sin and social sin play a part in one of these issues.

Outcomes:

- Explain the understanding of sin and reconciliation in one Christian tradition
- Define personal sin; social sin
- Give a contemporary example of the relationship between the two
- Define and give an example of structural injustice
- Take one non-Christian religious tradition and outline briefly its understanding of moral failure
- Present the similarities and differences that may exist when compared with the Christian understanding outlined above.

Resources which teachers have suggested include:

- Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org) & Antislavery International (www.antislavery.org).
- Trócaire (www.trocaire.org)
- Structural injustice - Roman Catholic encyclicals / pastoral letters (www.vatican.va.)