**The Nature of Morality**

**“Morality and Religion”**

**Learning Objectives:**

**Knowledge**

* Understand the relationship between morality and religion: not related, contradictory, or mutually supplemented
* Understand three situations in which religion promote the development of morality: Retribution and guilt, moral precepts and religious beliefs

**Skills**

* Critical thinking skills
* Communication skills
* Problem solving skills

**Values and Attitudes**

* Rationality, open-mindedness, inclusiveness and simplicity

Important notes:

1. This learning resource is prepared for teachers of Senior Secondary Ethics and Religious Studies. Teachers are expected to make adaptation and enrichment according to the needs of their students. Moreover, after each learning activities, teachers should provide debriefing to students for their development of positive values and integrative application of generic skills.

2. The ERS curriculum is for S4-S6 SS students. This learning resource uses plain language as far as possible to explain theories of ethics, which, in some cases, are simplified to suit the learning needs of the students.

3. Cases, stories, movie plots, and classic moral dilemmas are included for the purpose of students’ reflection in the learning process. To illustrate moral dilemmas, some viewpoints in this material may seem exaggerated and critical. Teachers should always remind their students of the difference between these viewpoints and the reality in the present world. Judging the past with contemporary standard is not the intended perspective, rather, students should be guided to make contrast and holistic understanding of the relationship between these practices and their historic, cultural and social contexts.

4. The discussion questions, key points and knowledge content of the learning resource are suggestion in nature. Learning and teaching should not be limited to these suggestions. Teacher should use them flexibly for ongoing development of school-based resource according to the learning objectives of the curriculum.

**Suggested teaching period: 6 lessons**

**Teacher shall prepare:**

* Introductory Activity: Problems in practicing morality, Euthyphro dilemma
* Knowledge Content of the Subject (1): Morality and religion: not related and contradictory
* Knowledge Content of the Subject (2): Morality and religion: mutually supplementary
* Case Study (1)**: Catholic Church opposes contraception**
* Case Study (2): Buddhism and consumerism
* Case Study (3): Christianity and consumerism
* Case Study (4): Peace begins with mindfulness: Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh
* Case Study (5): Pope’s encyclical on workers’ rights and interests
* Case Study (6): Beliefs in hell
* Case Study (7): Observing religious precepts
* Case Study (8): Five Precepts of Buddhism
* Case Study (9): Conscience of Taiwan: Master Cheng Yen
* Case Study (10): Angel of Calcutta: Mother Teresa

Teaching process:

1. Teacher discusses “Introductory Activity: Problems in practicing morality” with the students.

* The focus of the problems in practicing morality is that many people observe ethical norms out of fear of punishment. If there were not any punishment, there would not be a need to observe any ethical norms. Religion sometimes follows this understanding by urging people to do good to avoid God’s final punishment or karmic retribution.
* However, religion sometimes encourages people to do good by pointing out the benefits of doing so with the help of positive believes and values. (e.g. increasing happiness and satisfaction; reducing pain or conforming to nature) This activity aims to prepare students to explore the role of religion in moral practice.

1. Teacher may choose to discuss with students “Introductory Activity: Euthyphro dilemma”

* This activity aims at stimulating students to think about the following issue: Some of the universal moral principles are cross-cultural. Different religions put these moral principles into practice in their particular ways, echoing the later case studies of global ethics.

1. Teacher may choose to divide the students in groups of 4-5 and ask them to discuss “Case Study (1): Catholic Church opposes contraception”

* Let students think about the conflict between religious and secular moral norms.
* In this case, religious morality is limited to a specific tradition that is in conflicts with the general ethical norms in the society. It can be said that, in the non-Catholic world, contraception is a moral act which is universally recognized.

1. Teacher explains Knowledge “Content of the Subject (1): Morality and religion: not related and contradictory” and asks students to summarize the key points of morality:

* In history, morality was inseparable from religion. Before entering the modern time, human societies in different places had been dominated by religion.
* After humanity has stepped into a world of modernisation and globalisation, moral standards are becoming more diverse. Secular society can no longer take a single religious authority or tradition as the basis of its moral standards but has to turn to rational discussion.
* Not related: In most cases, secular society and religious groups are not related in moral life and both live together in harmony.
* Contradictory: In some cases, religion stands on the side of traditional morality and opposes secular morality. Religion would speak out when they see existing social customs or laws violating their fundamental moral principles.

1. Divide the students in groups of 4-5 and ask them to discuss “Case Study (2): Buddhism and consumerism” or “Case Study (3): Christianity and consumerism”:

* These cases further explore the contradictory situations between morality and religion.
* These cases intend to show that while "consumerism" is the value accepted by mainstream society, religion tries to point out, based on their fundamental ideas (religious beliefs), the limitations and problems of current consumerism.
* The contradictions in “Case Study (2), (3)” are different from that in the case “Catholic Church opposes contraception”. The latter is an attempt of a religion to maintain its own traditional position, while the former is standing in the ethical position of the survival of humanity and other living things. The former is easier to gain supports from non-religious believers.

1. Divide the students in groups of 4-5 and ask them to discuss “Case Study (4): Peace begins with mindfulness: Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh” or “Case Study (5): Pope’s encyclical on workers’ rights and interests”

* These cases further explore the contradictory situations between morality and religion
* Teacher may watch with students the movie *Walk with Me* or its trailers (<https://goo.gl/LhXgpm)>
* The religious leaders in the cases and the social movements they initiated were contradictory to the moral norms of the mainstream society. Similar to previous case of “consumerism”, when Thich Nhat Hanh and the Pope advocated the universal value of equality and the workers' rights respectively, the society at those time rejected and stood against such calls.

1. Teacher explains “Knowledge Content of the Subject (2): Morality and religion: Mutually supplementary” and asks student to summarize the key points of morality:

* Religion in some cases contributes to the moral development of society:
* Retribution and guilt: God or the law of the universe will reward the good and punish the evil to maintain morality.
* Moral precepts: Religion, in a form of precepts, regulates the behaviour of believers. Some groups summarize and revise these precepts, hoping to make them into ethical codes for the global humanity.
* Religious beliefs: Inspired by religious beliefs, some religious believers insist on practicing the principles of caring and respecting others.
* Most of the moral rules of religion have a long history and may not be able to deal with the problems of contemporary social life. They need the help of secular moral principles and reasoning in dealing with ethical issues in areas such as animal cloning, the media and social actions.

1. Divide the students in groups of 4-5 and ask them to discuss “Case Study (6): Beliefs in hell”

* The case aims to illustrate the role of retribution in promoting morality.
* In modern times, there are many people who still believe in the existence of hell. There are studies showing that beliefs in hell may help reduce crime rates.

1. Divide the students in groups of 4-5 and ask them to discuss “Case Study (7): Observing religious precepts”

* This case aims to show that although religious precepts originate from individual religions, some of them have universal moral significance.
* “Declaration towards a Global Ethic” is trying to extract from different religions some precepts that they can agree upon. The declaration expects these precepts to serve as moral principles that fit the living conditions of modern people and hopes to promote these precepts globally to establish a common ethical code for all humankind.

1. Teacher may choose to discuss with students “Case Study (8): Five Precepts of Buddhism”

* This case can serve as a support for “Case Study (7): Observing religious precepts”.

1. Divide the students in groups of 4-5 and ask them to discuss “Case Study (9): Conscience of Taiwan: Master Cheng Yen” or “Case Study (10): Angel of Calcutta: Mother Teresa”

* Teacher can watch with students the documentary “Taiwan History: Master Cheng Yen” (<https://goo.gl/YJiTrh)> or “Giant of Love: Mother Teresa” (<https://goo.gl/shKZBU)>.

1. Teacher may guide students to reflect on how religious beliefs promote social development towards the fulfilment of moral rules.

**Introductory Activity: Problems in Practicing Morality**

There is a famous question of moral practice: “If I’m sly enough, I can break moral rules when they benefit me but never get caught and thus avoid being punished. What motivation is there for me to act morally at all?”

1. What is your answer to this question?
2. In your opinion, how will different religions answer this question? Are these answers influential to the society?

Euthyphro dilemma

According to Plato, the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates asked Euthyphro a question, “Do the gods love holiness because it is holy, or is it holy because the gods love it?”

Later, this question is rewritten and becomes a famous philosophical dilemma, "(1) Is what is morally good approved by God because it is morally good, or (2) is it morally good because it is approved by God?"

Reference:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euthyphro\_dilemma#Explanation\_of\_the\_dilemma

Questions for discussion:

What is your answer to the Euthyphro dilemma?

Students may give answers containing the following key points (other reasonable answers are also acceptable):

* Ethicists generally agree that if (1) is right, then the right or wrong of moral behavior precedes God's approval. In this way, God must follow moral principles, right and wrong in morality is independent of God's approval.
* On the contrary, if (2) is correct, then the moral behavior will change according to God's preferences, which violates the moral intuitions of the general public. If so, God can recognize murder or theft as moral, but this violates our general intuition that murder or theft is immoral.

There are many philosophers in history who made much effort on solving this dilemma and created a lot of interesting discussions.

**Case Study (1): Catholic Church opposes contraception**

Traditionally, the Roman Catholic Church did not favor contraception and the Church considered procreation one of the important goals of sexual act. After 1968, Pope Paul promulgated encyclicals such as "Humanae Vitae" on the issue of "family planning" and the key points about contraception are as follows:

The Church's teachings on “Responsible Procreation”

1. The Church has always taught the intrinsic evil of contraception, that is, of every marital act intentionally rendered unfruitful. This teaching is to be held as definitive and irreformable. Contraception is gravely opposed to marital chastity; it is contrary to the good of the transmission of life (the procreative aspect of matrimony), and to the reciprocal self-giving of the spouses (the unitive aspect of matrimony); it harms true love and denies the sovereign role of God in the transmission of human life. (33)
2. A specific and more serious moral evil is present in the use of means which have an abortive effect, impeding the implantation of the embryo which has just been fertilized or even causing its expulsion in an early stage of pregnancy. (34)
3. However, profoundly different from any contraceptive practice is the behaviour of married couples, who, always remaining fundamentally open to the gift of life, live their intimacy only in the unfruitful periods, when they are led to this course by serious motives of responsible parenthood. This is true both from the anthropological and moral points of view, because it is rooted in a different conception of the person and of sexuality. (35)

The witness of couples who for years have lived in harmony with the plan of the Creator, and who, for proportionately serious reasons, licitly use the methods rightly called "natural," confirms that it is possible for spouses to live the demands of chastity and of married life with common accord and full self-giving.

Reference:

<http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_12021997_vademecum_en.html>

Questions for discussion:

1. In our society today, what are the mainstream moral views and values on “contraception” (including natural and unnatural methods)?
2. How does the Catholic Church view "contraception"?
3. Why does the Catholic Church hold the above position? What are their reasons?
4. On the issue of contraception, what is the relationship between the Catholic Church and mainstream social morality?

**Knowledge Content of the Subject (1): Morality and Religion: Irrelevant and Contradictory to Each Other**

As far as we can tell from the written literature, the relationship between morality and religion has always been inseparable. Almost all religions advocate a set of moral standards to guide people in achieving their ideal life. The Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments of Christianity, the Five Precepts of Buddhism and the Five Pillars of Islam are all typical examples. Before entering the modern time, many societies in different places were dominated by religions. Some countries revered one religion as a state religion. Religion narrow the distance between moral ideals and real life through beliefs, practice, stories, rituals, festivals, etc.

In the modern world featured with intense globalization, societies become more and more pluralist. Even members in the same society can have different religious beliefs and may hold different moral standards. To deal with the ethical issues across different religions, secular society (Note 1) cannot rely on a single religious authority or tradition as the morality basis but has to employ rational discussions as its guide as far as possible.

Therefore, the relationship between morality and religion is no longer as straightforward as in the past. Although individual religions maintain their own moral requirements, secular society can handle common ethical issues through the discussions in a civil society. On different ethical issues, religious and secular societies sometimes stand on the same front but sometimes in opposition. At times, the religious community holds the universal ethical principles and points out the problem of moral issues in society. Sometimes the situation is just the opposite. Secular society promotes universal values such as fairness, equality and human rights. Religion, however, holds on to its tradition and opposes the rapid evolution of morality in society.

We can sum up the relationship between morality and religion as not related, contradictory and mutually supplemented. The first two will be discussed in the following.

**Not related**

Religions develop and inherit many ethical rules based on their own world views. Some religious people think that religion itself has a higher moral standard than the secular society, and that conversion to religion becomes the basis for following these moral values. Therefore, religion should emphasize its own morality, ignore secular morality, and should even prevent itself from being influenced by secular morality.

On the other hand, some people stand in a non-religious position, insisting that secular morality does not require religious blessing. People can think, judge and devote themselves to their own ideals. They can also give meanings to their own life, including leading a moral life. While religion can encourage people to be good, religious morality are not recognized by all members of the society. Therefore, the secular society can judge morals according to reason without individual religious support.

In most cases, secular society and religious groups are at peace with each other in moral living. However, unrelated positions can hardly be completely realized in the society. Unless religious believers live in solitude and stay away from mainstream society, religious groups are hardly immune to secular social values. Conversely, religious believers are members of the society, they all live in the society, and their morality is also part of social morality. Therefore, unrelated positions can only be realized to a limited extent. For example, a religion can oppose divorce, but in public discussions it cannot justify its opposition only by religious doctrines. If secular society allows divorce, religion has no choice but to practice within its own group a moral position that does not favour divorce.

**Contradictory**

Some religious people think that secular society is in a lower position on some moral issues and that religious believers have a responsibility to lead the society back to the right path. In this way, religion contradicts secular morality. For example, some religious people may think that homosexuality is an abhorrence of God and an immoral act. However, some people in secular society may gradually accept homosexuality on the basis of individual rights, and this contradicts religious teachings. Religious people may think it is their duty to defend the traditional morality and they must actively prevent the society from going too far in the direction of marriage equality.

Some non-religious people think that religious morality is indeed a traditional product which depends on tradition and authority instead of rationality and facts. Therefore, some religious teachings may seem outdated, incompatible with modernity and may even threaten social security. In modern society, the fundamental rights and freedom of every member must be guaranteed. Religions oppose them with unscientific standpoints. Take the issue of homosexuality as an example, some secular people think that scientific discoveries have shown that homosexuality is inborn. However, some religions oppose it according to their own traditions. It is important to point out that religious people who oppose homosexuality by religious tradition hold the moral norms of religion. Although they also seek support from scientific discoveries to show that homosexual tendencies are acquired after birth, religious teachings remain their main pillar. Some secular societies even criticize some religious norms, such as religious dress and symbols, lead to social conflicts and must be banned.

In the above example, religion stands by the side of traditional morality. There are, however, also religious oppositions to traditional social norms. Some religious leaders and groups speak out when they see existing social customs or laws violating their fundamental moral principles. For example, when Christian missionaries came to China in the 19th century, they found that the status of women was low. Some customs such as foot-binding and maid-slavery exploited and oppressed women which are contrary to the moral principle of equality between men and women and non-restriction of other’s freedom. The missionaries then initiated the opposition movements. In these cases, people benefited by traditional practices and law were likely to stand in the traditional position to resist the social reform out of religious initiatives.

Note:

1. To put it simply, secular society refers to a society that does not advocate a single religion. Historically, some countries adopted a single religion as a statutory religion or state religion. State religion enjoys a dominant or even monopoly status such as the Anglican Church in the United Kingdom, the Lutheran Church in the Nordic countries and the Catholic Church in Southern Europe. Even today, some countries still hold a single religion as a state religion and the laws of some countries in the Middle East have religious elements that will suppress other religions and even other branches of the same religion. On the other hand, secular society gives equal status to all religions, and the government does not use religious teachings as a basis for formulating policies and laws. Hong Kong is a secular society. Some secular nations, like France, have also established laws in recent years to restrict nationals from wearing visible religious symbols in order to avoid conflicts among nationals due to religion.

**Case Study (2): Buddhism and consumerism**

In a capitalist society, "consumption" is considered as the most important driving force for economic development: consumption, purchasing of products, re-investment of capital into enterprises, and development of more advanced products. Therefore, economic growth and consumption are equated. “Boosting up people's desire for consumption” has become the motto of some governments and business organizations. Modern values corresponding to this economic model also emerge, such as, seizing every opportunity, enjoy life, the freedom of choice of individuals. These values are considered related to consumer culture. On the other hand, many traditional religious teachings remind us of the harms of "desire" and promote values opposite to consumerism. In the following, we will reflect on consumerism from a Buddhist perspective.

What is the suffering of becoming bad? From the perspective of Buddhist wisdom, the happiness we claimed is not real happiness but instead, in nature, a kind of suffering. For example, we want to eat when we are hungry and feel happy when we are full. Yet, will we feel happy if we continue to eat? When we are dirty, we feel happy after taking a bath. Yet will we still feel happy after staying in water for a long time? When we are bored, we feel happy by watching television. Yet will we feel happy if we have to watch it endlessly? From this we can see that our so-called happiness arises when we have certain desire and, by means of external stimulation, we get a temporary psychological balance. This makes us feel happy. Yet, the nature of eating is not happiness. Should this be the case, we should be happy no matter how much we eat. However, this is not true. When we have a strong desire to eat steamed buns, we feel happy when eating the first, second and third ones. Yet after the fourth and fifth ones, the original happiness turned into suffering. Eating is like this and so are all kinds of happiness obtained by fulfilling certain desires. As this kind of happy feeling can become bad, it is called the suffering of becoming bad.

“Article from Xuefo.net”

If human beings want to be happy, they must preclude their inner expectation of material desire. Human cravings for material things are very strong. Most people want to eat well, wear well, make money, and have career development. However, such material expectations are endless. Even billionaires are hoping to earn more money. Thus, cravings for material things cannot be satisfied. In order to have real happiness, the first thing to do is to prevent the proliferation of materialistic cravings and limit our materialistic cravings. This depends on our cultural quality and cultural cultivation. If you can try to live a simple life, just like Master Sheng-Yen is satisfied by living a simple life, then your heart will be full of happiness. Such happiness comes from your own self-cultivation.

“Master Sheng-Yen in Dialogue with Humanity”

Questions discuss:

1. Some people support the view that "consumption" can contribute to economic growth. What reasons may these people hold?
2. Do you think your current consumption experience is in line with the comments of the article?
3. Buddhism holds that “consumerism” is immoral. How does the above article support this view?
4. Do you think we can strike a balance between the values of modern consumerism and the values of Buddhism?

Students may give answers containing the following key points (other reasonable answers are also acceptable):

* We may try to let students to understand that mainstream social values are not necessarily correct. Traditional religious ideas and values can sometimes be the resources that help us think about and even criticize the existing values.
* There are often conflicts between mainstream social values and religion in moral issues. The above conflicts are related to personal or daily life habits. The above discussion may help students reflect on their daily living and quest for their ideal lives.

Reference:

Master Sheng-Yen, “Master Sheng-Yen in Dialogue with Humanity”, 2001.

Xuefo.net: <http://big5.xuefo.net/nr/article0/3463.html>

Note:

“Desire” in Buddhism generally refers to the “five desires” in five realms: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. They imply (1) desire for sight: meaning the appearances of men and women and the treasures in wonderful colours (such as black, yellow, red and purple) will lead living beings to seek insatiably for pleasure; (2) desire for sound: meaning the sound of musical instruments and ornaments and the singing voices of men and women will lead living beings to seek insatiably for pleasure; (3) desire for smell: meaning the fragrance of human body and any fragrance in the world will lead living beings to seek insatiably for pleasure; (4) desire for taste: meaning all kind of delicious tastes will lead living beings to seek insatiably for pleasure; (5) desire for touch: meaning the soft and fine touches of human body, the feeling of warmth in the body when cold and the feeling of coolness in the body when hot, and the fine touch of clothes etc. will lead living beings to seek insatiably for pleasure.

Desire also refers to desires for money, sight, food, fame and sleep. They are (1) desire for money: as people take money and treasures as resources for living, so they chase after them and are reluctant to give it up; (2) desire for sight: sight refers to seeing the colours (blue, yellow, red, white etc.) of the world and the appearances of men and women. As people think these sights are comfortable and pleasurable, so they chase after them and cannot leave Trailokya; (3) desire for food: this refers to the cuisines and tastes in the world. As people thinks they need food to nourish their bodies and keep their lives, so they insatiably chase after and cling to them; (4) desire for fame: fame refers to all reputations on earth. People think that fames can honour their parents and themselves, so they insatiably chase after them and do not know they have to stop; (5) desire for sleep: it means people have lost their sense of time, becoming lazy and indulgent, and cling to sleep insatiably.

(*Fo Guang Dictionary* [《佛光大辭典》] , p. 1149)

**Case Study (3): Christianity and Consumerism**

In a capitalist society, "consumption" is considered as the most important driving force for economic development: consumption, purchasing of products, re-investment of capital into enterprises, and development of more advanced products. Therefore, economic growth and consumption are equated. “Boosting up people's desire for consumption” has become the motto of some governments and business organizations. Modern values corresponding to this economic model also emerge, such as, seizing every opportunity, enjoy life, the freedom of choice of individuals. These values are considered related to consumer culture. On the other hand, many traditional religious teachings remind us of the harms of "desire" and promote values opposite to consumerism. In the following, we will reflect on consumerism from a Christian perspective.

Christian ethics does not require us to abstain from all desires and consumptions or to practice the pagan way of sanctification by means of asceticism. Rather, regarding the problem of production and consumption, it targets at the style of consumption exhibited in affluent societies.

First, the Christian world view is about the creation of God, emphasizing that human beings should be good stewards and managers in the image of God. Therefore, overproduction and overconsumption will destroy the earth's environment, harm the next generation as well as other species and destroy the creation of God. If we love God, we need to respect God's creation and follow the laws of protecting the nature.

Second, the final commandment of the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament is that we “shall not covet”, which just points out the ethical problems caused by consumerism. It is because consumerism (or its root, hedonism) itself advocates that people should continue to own or consume more material things and enjoy more services. Greed is not only an issue of self-centeredness. The consequence is even more that. It affects the interests of others and goes against the commandment of God that teaches us to love our neighbours. For example, from a global perspective, the high spending habits of affluent societies are robbing resources from the poor and future generations.

Finally, when we place consumption into the centre of our lives, all relationships are based on consumption. All the problems rely on consumption to provide solutions. Thus we treat "consumption" as the idol for our service and worship. In this way, we lose our true freedom. This pattern of life runs counter to the first commandment of the Ten Commandments. Moreover, once we replace God with "consumption," we will lose the moral foundation for our relationship with other people. Imagine, under the flag of full commercialization, can we justify pornography business as an ordinary way of individual pursuit of happiness through consumption, and simplifying cloning of human beings as a strategy of reducing pain and avoiding death through consumption?

Toby Yip, “Reflection on Consumerism from the Perspective of Christian Ethics”

(葉智仁：〈從基督教倫理的觀點思考消費主義〉)

Questions for discussion:

1. Some people support the view that "consumption" can contribute to economic growth. What reasons may these people hold?
2. Do you think your current consumption experience is in line with the comments of the article?
3. Christianity holds that “consumerism” is immoral. How does the above article support this view?
4. Do you think we can strike a balance between the values of modern consumerism and the values of Christianity?

Students may give answers containing the following key points (other reasonable answers are also acceptable):

* We may try to let students to understand that mainstream social values are not necessarily correct. Traditional religious ideas and values can sometimes be the resources that help us think about and even criticize the existing values.
* There are often conflicts between mainstream social values and religion in moral issues. The above conflicts are related to personal or daily life habits. The above discussion may help students reflect on their daily living and quest for their ideal lives.

**Case Study (4): Peace begins with mindfulness:**

**Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh**

Born in central Vietnam, Thich Nhat Hanh is a famous Buddhist monk who advocates mindfulness. Mindfulness means being aware and awakened in the present moment and having a clear consciousness and mind. He has devoted his life to promote an engaging Buddhism and social peace. He thinks that peace begins with the mindfulness of everyone:

“Peace is present right here and now, in ourselves and in everything we do and see. Every breath we take, every step we take, can be filled with peace, joy, and serenity. The question is whether or not we are in touch with it. We need only to be awake, alive in the present moment.”

“The roots of war are in the way we live our daily lives —the way we develop our industries, build up our society, and consume goods.”

“When you begin to see that your enemy is suffering, that is the beginning of insight.”

During the Vietnam War, he campaigned relentlessly for peace:

In 1955, the Vietnam War broke out and Thich Nhat Hanh established the School of Youth for Social Services (SYSS) in 1956 to help rebuild and set up medical facilities in affected areas. Despite the difficulties, such as lack of funds and internal division, SYSS still operated for many years without resting in order to help the villagers affected by war. After 1964, the war gradually escalated, he went to the United States, presided many lectures, to promote a peaceful way to solve the problem. He even sent a letter to Martin Luther King Jr., urging him to strongly condemn the US intervention in the Vietnam War. Thich Nhat Hanh finally succeeded in making Martin Luther King to condemn the US government in a speech. Martin Luther King also nominated Thich Nhat Hanh for the Nobel Peace Prize. On the other hand, Thich Nhat Hanh, being suspected by the Vietnamese government, was banned from returning to the country because of his trip to the United States.

Ten years later, the Vietnam War ended, but Thich Nhat Hanh was allowed to return to his home country only in 2005. During these years, he did not stop for a while to show his concern for those affected by the War. He held meditation workshops for the retired U.S. and Vietnamese soldiers for healing the trauma caused by the war. “The pure land is now or never.” The workshops he run for the originally hostile American and Vietnamese soldiers are the Pure Land they jointly created for the present moment by efforts of mindfulness.

Questions for discussion:

1. What is the relationship between the beliefs and practices of Buddhist mindfulness advocated by Thich Nhat Hanh and the universal values of peace?
2. Do you agree with Thich Nhat Hanh’s mindfulness-based peace movement? Why?
3. In your opinion, what is the relationship between religion and morality that is illustrated by the peace movement led by Thich Nhat Hanh?

Students may give answers containing the following key points (other reasonable answers are also acceptable):

* Thich Nhat Hanh advocated that only by connecting themselves through the practice of mindfulness can people reach inner peace and understand that everyone is suffering. Only when people are no longer separated from each other can the conflicts between them be removed and real peace be attained on earth. Therefore, personal peace is the foundation of world peace.
* Thich Nhat Hanh’s meditation workshops started with retired soldiers so as to attain peace of a greater scope.
* Religions can provide beliefs, practices and exemplars for promoting ethical principles.

Reference:

Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life. New York.* N.Y. : Bantam Books, 1991.

Quán Như, "Nhat Hanh’s Peace Activities", <https://goo.gl/iNUPff>.

單德興：〈說故事．創新生：析論湯亭亭的《第五和平書》 〉，載中央研究院歐美研究所編，《生命書寫》。臺北，中華民國政府出版品，2010。

麥思齊，《梅村「Wake Up」女孩: 十載修行分享》。香港，三聯書店﹙香港﹚有限公司，2013。

**Case Study (5): Pope’s Encyclical on**

**Workers’ Rights and Interests**

The Pope is the highest leader of the Roman Catholic Church. When the Pope issues an encyclical to the believers, its message may become a driving force for improving the world. In this process, the legal and moral rules may be changed.

Information A:

Workers' economic, social and cultural rights

Reasonable wages

But wealthy owners and all masters of labor should be mindful of this - that to exercise pressure upon the indigent and the destitute for the sake of gain, and to gather one's profit out of the need of another, is condemned by all laws, human and divine. To defraud any one of wages that are his due is a great crime which cries to the avenging anger of Heaven. (*Renum Novarum*, #20, 1891)

In determining the amount of the wage, the condition of a business and of the one carrying it on must also be taken into account; for it would be unjust to demand excessive wages which a business cannot stand without its ruin and consequent calamity to the workers. If, however, a business makes too little money, because of lack of energy or lack of initiative or because of indifference to technical and economic progress, that must not be regarded a just reason for reducing the compensation of the workers. (*Quadragesimo Anno*, #72, 1931)

We therefore consider it our duty to reaffirm that the remuneration of work is not something that can be left to the laws of the marketplace; nor should it be a decision left to the will of the more powerful. It must be determined in accordance with justice and means; which means that workers must be paid a wage which allows them to live a truly human life and to fulfill their family obligations in a worthy manner. (*Mater et Magistra*, #71, 1961)

In every case a just wage is the concrete means of verifying the justice of the whole socioeconomic system and, in any case, of checking that it is functioning justly. It is not the only means of checking, but it is a particularly important one and in a sense the key means. (*Laborem Exercens*, #19, 1981)

https://www.cctwincities.org/education-advocacy/catholic-social-teaching/notable-quotations/wages/

Information B:

**Views on the statutory minimum wage rate submitted to the Legislative Council**

In the past, the Hong Kong Catholic Commission for Labour Affairs has been paying attention to the minimum wage legislation and its implementation. It emphasizes that the minimum wage level must enable employees to meet their basic personal and family needs.

The views of this Commission on the second statutory minimum wage level:

1. This Commission welcomes the fact that the Minimum Wage Commission, on the basis of the "basket of indicators" that the Provisional Minimum Wage Committee refers to when recommending the first Statutory Minimum Wage, further supplements and appends reference indicators and data to the following areas: (a) the overall economic situation; (b) the labour market (c) competitiveness; and (d) social inclusion.
2. This Commission recommends that concise methods and guidelines for the minimum wage level to be established and formulated with public consultation.
3. This Commission recommends that the Minimum Wage Commission be required to include “basic household needs” in the “basket of indicators” as a primary consideration in formulating the minimum wage level.

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/chinese/panels/mp/papers/mp0529cb2-2302-1-c.pdf>

Questions for discussion:

1. As shown in information A, what difficulties had workers encountered in their striving for reasonable wages over the past hundred years? How did some countries see workers’ right as reflected from these difficulties?
2. What are the moral principles raised in the Popes’ encyclicals? How had these moral principles promoted the change of moral rules in the society and finally improved the treatment of workers? Based on information A, information B and your knowledge, discuss the above with your classmates.

Students may give answers containing the following key points (other reasonable answers are also acceptable):

* From the content of the encyclicals, we can infer that in the past, in the process of industrialization, the dignity of workers, the standard of living, the security of family life, the ability to negotiate wages were neglected.
* As the Popes have issued a number of encyclicals on this issue, it can be seen that the problem of neglecting the workers' rights is serious. Before the establishment of the minimum wage, the idea of the survival of the fittest was generally accepted. The Popes’ encyclicals prompted the religious groups to set up organizations for the concern of the rights and interests of workers, by advocating views through various channels and upholding moral principles such as fairness and justice. With the efforts of different parties, the laws that safeguards the workers' rights have been established and continuously improved.

**Knowledge Content of the Subject (2): Morality and Religion: Mutually Supplementary**

Religion, under certain conditions, contributes to the moral development of the society. For example, at the beginning of this chapter, we encountered the well-known question of moral practice: “If I’m sly enough, I can break moral rules when they benefit me but never get caught and thus avoid being punished. What motivation is there for me to act morally at all?” Religion answers this question in several major ways, giving the believers and society an impetus do good and practicing morality.

Retribution and guilt

In some religions, there is often the power of an ultimate reality for maintaining morality. This ultimate reality can be God or the Tao or the Law of the universe. God or the Law of the universe will uphold morality by rewarding the good and punishing the evil. For example, in response to the moral practice mentioned above, Buddhism's response may be: "Because everything has a cause and effect, bad things can have a bad result even if wrongdoers are not immediately caught." Christianity can answer in this way, “The Lord knows whatever a person does. No one can escape from the Final Judgement.” Religious believers feel guilty or unclean when they do something wrong. This can be the driving force for avoiding misdeeds.

Moral precepts

Religion, in a form of precepts, regulates the behaviour of believers. Whether it is Buddhist “five precepts” or “Ten Commandments” observed by Christians and Jews, they all provide some clear and applicable moral rules for the believers. We will see in the following cases that some religious precepts have universal significance. Therefore, some groups summarize and rewrite these precepts, hoping to make them into common ethical codes for the global humanity.

Religious beliefs

Some religious believers are inspired by religious beliefs and insist on practicing the ethical principles of caring for and respecting people. Sometimes religious leaders can illustrate the relationship between religious beliefs and the current social needs and put these ideas into action, together with the institutional power of religions. All this can often create enormous appeal and impetus for believers and the general public, encouraging them to drop their egos and help others.

However, the moral rules of religion often have long history and may not be able to deal with the problems of contemporary social life. They need the help of secular moral principles and reasoning in dealing with ethical issues in areas such as animal cloning, the media and social actions. Religion can only, at most, bases on tradition to put forward some basic principles (not direct moral rules). These modern moral issues call for detailed rational reasoning and discussion based on moral principles. This can in turn enrich the moral norms and practices of religion itself.

**Case Study (6): The Beliefs in Hell**

The world's major religions all hold some belief in hell. Buddhism's hell is the most painful of the six realms of reincarnations. Sentient beings may have to suffer in hell because of the wrongdoings they made. On the other hand, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam all believe that there will be an end in world history, when all humanity will receive the final judgment of God Most High. Christianity holds that Christ will come to earth once again on the last day, and the dead will rise again to receive judgement. Those who do good may go to heaven with God, and the evil ones will receive eternal punishment, be thrown to hell and separated from God forever.

Although Buddhism advocates reincarnation while Christianity believes that there will be an end in history, there are also some common elements in the two sets of belief in hell. First, both think that after the end of human life on earth, people will go to another realm. Second, that other realm people go after death can be the heaven of joy and freedom, or the hell of suffering and restraints. Heaven is beyond the description of words and hell is full of unspeakable horror. Thirdly, the realm that people will go depends on what they did during their lifetime: good deeds lead to heaven and evil to hell.



Buddhist Hell

<https://fthmb.tqn.com/LqRBAZiOhKDsTW0Di_5V2MwdKlU=/768x0/filters:no_upscale()/about/A6hellrealm-56a0c4145f9b58eba4b3a153.jpg>



The Last Judgment by [Michelangelo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michelangelo) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_Judgment#/media/File:Michelangelo_Buonarroti_-_Jugement_dernier.jpg>

Questions for discussion:

1. Do you believe in “hell”? Why?
2. Do you think that “people who believe in hell” will do more good and less evil than those who do not? Why?

**Do People of the Modern Time Still Believe in Hell?**

According to Gallup Polls, most Americans believe in the existence of hell. In 1997 and 2001, 56% and 71% of Americans said they believe in hell. In 2004, 70% said they believe in hell, while 12% were not sure and 17% did not believe in it.

In addition, there are psychological studies supporting that belief in hell is associated with reduced crime rate. Azim F. Shariff, professor of psychologist at the University of Oregon, conducted two related studies. He investigated and compared the crime rates and religious beliefs of different countries. He concluded that:

“A nation's rate of belief in hell predicts lower crime rates, but the nation's rate of belief in heaven predicts higher crime rates.”

“Supernatural punishment across nations seems to predict lower crime rates.”

He also conducted a study on the behaviour of college students. He found that those who believe in a forgiving God are more likely to cheat in tests than those who believe in a punishing God.

Questions for discussion:

1. In light of the above information, what impact do you think the belief in hell has on people’s morality? Why?
2. What do you think is the relationship between religion and morality? Why?

Students may give answers containing the following key points (other reasonable answers are also acceptable):

* Students may put forward the possible relations between belief in hell and morality.
* The focus of learning here is on the possible relations and the reasons for these guesses. Students may also recognize that these reasons may have methodological, geographical and cultural limitations.

Reference:

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/11770/eternal-destinations-americans-believe-heaven-hell.aspx>

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/06/120619093217.htm>

<https://spiritualityhealth.com/blogs/spirituality-health/2011/07/21/rabbi-rami-shapiro-bad-gods-make-good-people>

**Case Study (7): Observing religious precepts**

Religion not only encourages people to do good, but also persuades people to avoid doing evil. Perhaps for most religious believers, avoiding doing evil has even a higher priority than doing good. Being able to refrain from doing evil keeps oneself away from uncleanness, shame, and guilt. Interestingly, to persuade people from doing evil, all religions have their own list of precepts. The following are examples of Buddhism and Christianity:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| “Five Precepts” of Buddhism   1. Do not kill. 2. Do not steal. 3. Do not engage in improper sexual conduct. 4. Do not make false statements. 5. Do not drink alcohol. | “Ten Commandments” of Protestantism   1. You shall have no other gods before me. 2. You shall not make for yourself an idol. 3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. 4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 5. Honor your father and your mother. 6. You shall not murder. 7. You shall not commit adultery. 8. You shall not steal. 9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 10. You shall not covet. | “Ten Commandments” of Catholicism   1. I am the LORD your God. You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve. 2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. 3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day 4. Honour your father and your mother. 5. You shall not kill. 6. You shall not commit adultery. 7. You shall not steal. 8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. 9. You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife. 10. You shall not covet your neighbour’s goods. |

Questions for discussion:

1. What are the differences between the five precepts of Buddhism and the Protestant / Catholic "Ten Commandments"?
2. In your opinion, why do these religions have similar basic precepts?
3. Do you think these similar basic precepts are still meaningful to life of modern people? Why?

Students may give answers containing the following key points (other reasonable answers are also acceptable):

* Students may point out the similarities and differences between the Buddhist Five Precepts and the Protestant / Catholic Ten Commandments, but it is also possible that they will analyze the order of precepts.
* Students can explain the social operation and ethical dimension for similar basic precepts.
* Students may give explanation on the precepts from the perspectives of the functions of ethics in society.
* On the relation between the similar basic precepts and modern life, students may point out that the principles behind the precepts and the basic issues for interpersonal relationship do not change over time. Yet, cultural and social environmental changes have an impact on some precepts, such as drinking.

**Global Ethics**

In 1993, over 6,000 delegates from religions in various parts of the world came to Chicago, the United States, to attend a meeting of the Parliament of the World's Religions and jointly signed the Declaration Towards a Global Ethic (the "Declaration"). The Declaration proposes to promote a set of ethical guidelines around the world that will provide "a minimal fundamental consensus concerning binding values, irrevocable standards, and fundamental moral attitudes."

The Declaration recognizes that there are disagreements between different religions of what is right and wrong. However, the participants agreed that behind the differences there were still certain fundamental principles upheld by all religions. For example, everyone agrees that “reject every form of egoism, and reject every form of selfishness”, so that different religions will accept basic principles such as “do not do to others what you would not want them to do to you” or “do to others as you would have them do to you.”

Under these supreme principles, the Declaration proposes four more specific ethical principles:

1. Commitment to a Culture of Non-violence and Respect for Life

* Respect for life, refrain from violence against anybody and refrain from using violence to resolve conflicts;
* Protect, love and take care of the lives of animals and plants on earth without exploiting them.

1. Commitment to a Culture of Solidarity and a Just Economic Order

* No one has the right to steal or possess property or public property of others
* Do not try to govern one’s own property at the expense of the needs of society and the planet
* A more just world economic structure must be established so that hundreds of millions of people living in extreme poverty can be brought out of their predicament.

1. Commitment to a Culture of Tolerance and a Life of Truthfulness

* No person, institution, state, church or religious group has the right to lie to others
* The mass media have the right to expose the truth and cover the facts, but they have no right to intrude into individuals’ private spheres, to manipulate public opinion, or to distort reality.
* No politicians and political parties should lie and distort the truth before their own people
* No representatives of religion should stir up prejudice, hatred, and enmity towards those of different belief

1. Commitment to a Culture of Equal Rights and Partnership Between Men and Women

* No one has the right to degrade others to mere sex objects, to lead them into or hold them in sexual dependency.
* We have the duty to resist wherever the domination of one sex over the other is preached; wherever sexual exploitation is tolerated, wherever prostitution is fostered or children are misused.
* The relationship between women and men should be characterized not by patronizing behaviour or exploitation, but by love, partnership, and trustworthiness.
* The social institution of marriage is characterized by love, loyalty, and permanence.

Reference:

<https://parliamentofreligions.org/pwr_resources/_includes/FCKcontent/File/TowardsAGlobalEthic.pdf>

<http://www.iscs.org.hk/Common/Reader/News/ShowNews.jsp?Nid=723&Pid=9&Version=0&Cid=205&Charset=big5_hkscs>

Questions for discussion:

1. Which of the four ethical principles of the Declaration are similar to those of the Buddhist Five Precepts and Christian Ten Commandments?
2. Do you think the Declaration's interpretation of the four moral principles is better than the traditional religious precepts in some ways? Why?
3. Do you agree that human beings worldwide should establish " a minimal fundamental consensus" of moral attitude? Why?

Students may give answers containing the following key points (other reasonable answers are also acceptable):

* The Declaration Toward a Global Ethic was intiated by the Swiss Catholic theologian Hans Küng. While its four moral principles came from the Ten Commandments, it is also in line with the Five Precepts
* Commitment to a Culture of Non-violence and Respect for Life: “You shall not murder” in “Ten Commandments” and “Do not kill” in “Five Precepts”
* Commitment to a Culture of Solidarity and a Just Economic Order: close to “You shall not steal” in “Ten Commandments” and “Do not steal” in “Five Precepts”
* Commitment to a Culture of Tolerance and a Life of Truthfulness: close to “You shall not bear false witness” in “Ten Commandments” and “Do not make false statements” in “Five Precepts”
* Commitment to a Culture of Equal Rights and Partnership Between Men and Women: close to “You shall not commit adultery” in “Ten Commandments” and “Do not engage in improper sexual conduct” in “Five Precepts”
* However, the Declaration is not confined to personal moral behavior and has more social orientation. For example, a just economic order has become a manifestation of no stealing. If an unjust system causes individuals to steal for a living, then the evil of the system is greater than that of individuals. As another example, the Declaration extends the precepts of “do not commit adultery” and “no prostitution” to the equal partnership between men and women. Moreover, it also criticizes the exploitation in sexual relationships, which is no longer limited to traditional personal conducts related to sexuality.

Reference:

<http://bit.ly/2t46L80>

<http://bit.ly/2u1CZBd>

**Case Study (8): Five Precepts of Buddhism**

The Five Precepts of Buddhism have existed since the early days of Buddhism and have long been regarded by Buddhists as the basic precepts of Buddhists. The Five Precepts are as follows: do not kill, do not steal, do not engage in improper sexual conduct, do not make false statements, do not drink alcohol. The specific applications and interpretations of the precepts can be found in the collection of “vinaya” scriptures. The following text is excerpted from Master Hsing Yun of Taiwan Fo Guang Shan and is a commentary on the Five Precepts and their significance.

The Meaning of Precepts

The fundamental spirit of precepts is non-infringement. Not to infringe but to respect for others will lead to freedom. For example, the precept of “do not kill” in the Five Precepts means not infringing on the lives of others. “Do not steal” means not infringing on the property of others. “Do not engage in improper sexual conduct” means not infringing on the reputation of others. “Do not make false statements” means not infringing on the fame of others. “Do not drink alcohol” means not hurt one’s sanity. Ordinary people often think that the receiving the precepts is to add more bondage to life. In fact, the reason for the prisoners’ loss of freedom is their violation of the Five Precepts. For example: killing, hurting, and disfiguring are violations of the precept of “don not kill” ... ... Therefore, the true meaning of precepts is freedom, not bondage.

Is drug abuse a violation of Buddhist precepts?

Anything that disturbs the nervous system, such as amphetamines, opium, marijuana, heroin, alcohol and tobacco are drugs that stimulate us. Not only will taking drug destroy one’s health, life, reputation, relationship, and future, but will also harm one’s family and life. There are numerous cases of ruining the well-being of life because of that, so drugs must be completely banned.

Although the Buddha did not develop a precept prohibiting drug abuse. In the Five Precepts, "Do not drink alcohol" is a rejection of drugs that stimulate us and confuses our minds. From the angle of modern interpretation, “do not drink” means “do not take drugs”. Taking drugs is a violation of the “do not drink alcohol” precept, which is one of the Buddhist fundamental precepts.

Master Hsing Yun, Chapter 5: Precepts, in *Textbook of Fo Guang Shan,* vol. 9. (in Chinese)

Questions for discussion:

1. For Master Hsing Yun, what are the core spirit of precepts? How do the Buddhist Five Precepts embody this spirit?
2. In your opinion, are Hsing Yun Master’s comments on the precepts in line with modern values?
3. What are the regulations of Hong Kong laws and social moral norms concerning drug abuse?
4. How does Master Hsing Yun’s explanation strengthen the moral judgements of “drug abuse is wrong”?
5. Will the religious precepts established in ancient times become outdated in the modern times and lose their meanings? Why?

Note:

“Precept” in Buddhism is *sila* in Pali, which means behaviour, habit, character, morality, piety and has the effect of preventing evil.

Students may give answers containing the following key points (other reasonable answers are also acceptable):

* Master Hsing Yun re-interprets the Buddhist Five Precepts with the standards of modern universal values and shows the harmony of the two. Master Hsing Yun highlights the modern universal value of “freedom” as the core spirit of the precetps and thus affirms that “observance of the precepts” is no different from respecting and not infringing others. From this, we see his emphasis on the “non-aggression principle” of liberalism. (Questions 1, 2)
* The moral judgments of drug abuse in Hong Kong are generally as follows: Drug abuse is immoral because drug users do not take care of their bodies and minds (as drugs destroy the nervous system). In Hong Kong, drug abuse also violates the laws of Hong Kong (question 3).
* Ancient precepts in proper interpretation, under the circumstance of not violating the original intention, can get new modern significance, such as Hsing Yun Master's interpretation of drug abuse. Other examples are: in modern interpretation, “avoid sexual misconduct” can include pornographic behavior in the digital world. (Question 4,5)
* With proper interpretation, the ancient precepts can acquire new modern meanings without serious violation of the original intent, such as the interpretation of drug abuse by Master Hsing Yun. Other examples are: with modern interpretation, the precept of “do not engage in improper sexual conduct” can include various forms of pornographic behavior in the digital world. (Question 4, 5, 6)

Reference:

Master Hsing Yun, Chapter 5: Precepts, in *Textbook of Fo Guang Shan*, vol. 9. (in Chinese)

[星雲法師《佛光教科書》第九冊-佛教問題探討-第五課: 戒律] http://www.masterhsingyun.org/article/article.jsp?index=171&item=257&bookid=2c907d4944dd5ce70144e285bec50005&ch=10&se=5&f=1

**Case Study (9): Conscience of Taiwan: Master Cheng Yen**

Master Cheng Yen is a bhikshuni from Taiwan. She has initiated charity works in a number of social sectors, which has a positive impact to the society. In 2011, Time Magazine selected her as one of the 100 most influential people in the world. Master Cheng Yen advocates that Buddhists should "learn from the Buddha" rather than "seek for from the Buddha". That is to say, they should study the compassionate spirit of the Buddha as cultivate the willingness to do good, rather than being superstitious and worshipping blind. Here are some of the episodes showing how she established “Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation”:

In 1966, Master Cheng Yen visited a follower who had a surgery at a private hospital in the town of Fenglin Town, Hualien. After seeing blood on the floor, she was told that a Taiwanese aboriginal woman from Fengbin who had [miscarriage](http://tw.dictionary.yahoo.com/search?ei=UTF-8&p=%E5%B0%8F%E7%94%A2) was refused an operation because she could not afford a deposit of NTD8,000. The woman was then forced to be taken back to her tribe. Later, Master Cheng Yen met three Catholic nuns who said to her, “There are so many Buddhist followers and they have such a great power. If they do social services together, their influence would be even greater.” She was deeply shocked after hearing this.

In the same year, she was supposed to follow the instruction of her teacher, Master Yin Shun, to go to Chiayi County to take charge of a Buddhist centre. After her followers’ endeavours of persuasion, she thought that if she could realize her wish of “poverty alleviation” in Hualien, she would stay. At first, she and five resident followers make an extra pair of baby shoes to sell each day. The other thirty female followers sparing fifty cents a day from their grocery money, and a charity fund accumulated regularly to 1,000 dollars each month was established. The charity aimed at providing relief and assistance to the poor. “Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation” (hereafter “Tzu Chi”) was established in 1966 and started its work on poverty alleviation. In 1986, she founded the “Buddhist Tzu Chi General Hospital”, the first hospital in Taiwan where no deposit fee is required.

In the spirit of "Respect for Life," Tzu Chi offers humanitarian care and assistance to suffering people from all walks of life regardless of race, religion or life background. Tzu Chi demands that the followers should listen to the voices of the suffering people, help and serve of those who are in needs. Only then can they realize that only by being a "palm down" helper can they become genuinely happy. Master Cheng Yen said: "We are committed to the way of Bodhisattva. We do not ask Bodhisattva to respond to our needs, but rather that we respond to the sufferings of all living beings and to give as much as we can without expecting the rewards.”

Master Cheng Yen did not make empty promises. She founded Tzu Chi Merits Society, Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, Tzu Chi College of Technology, and Tzu Chi University. She is also enthusiastic about humanitarian aid. She has offered help during domestic floods and typhoon in Taiwan by providing volunteers and solving problems in materials, shelter and hygiene. In 2003, Tzu Chi went to provide disaster relief work to Bam, an ancient city in Southern Iran, which had just been destroyed by an earthquake.

Reference:

學愚，〈人間佛教的社會角色及社會承擔〉。香港，中華書局(香港)出版有限公司，2012。

<https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E9%87%8B%E8%AD%89%E5%9A%B4>

<http://www.unjinkr.url.tw/t_2.htm>

<http://eshare.stust.edu.tw/EshareFile/2010_5/2010_5_0d9e05e3.pdf>

Questions for discussion:

1. What are the religious beliefs and moral principles that Master Cheng Yen takes as the basis for her work of relieving poverty and saving the world?
2. What are the difference between Master Cheng Yen’s relief work and the moral rules of the society at that time?
3. Why did her relief work succeed?
4. What kind of relationship between religion and morality is illustrated by the relief work of Master Cheng Yen?

Students may give answers containing the following key points (other reasonable answers are also acceptable):

* Master Cheng Yen’s religious beliefs: bringing the spirit of Buddhism to daily life; Buddhism aims to relieving poverty and saving the world; people who offer help will be genuinely happy
* Master Cheng Yen’s moral principles: respect for human life; help for the needy
* Moral rules of the society at that time: full payment is the prerequisite of receiving medical service; to do charity is to donate money
* Master Cheng Yen’s beliefs have given her support to put her moral principles into practice.

**Case Study (10): Angel of Calcutta: Mother Teresa**

One day, on her way to Bataan Hospital for the discussion of her work, Mother Teresa found an old lady who seemed to be already dead, lying on the plaza beside the bus stop. She then squatted down and looked closely at the lady. Her legs were wrapped in rags and swarmed with ants; her head seemed to be bitten by rats, staining with blood and the wound was full of flies and maggots. Without hesitation, she checked the old lady’s breath and pulse and found that she seemed to be alive. Mother Teresa drove the flies and ants away. Then she wiped off the blood stain and maggots for the old lady.

Teresa knew for certain that she would die if she was left lying there by herself. Under the influence of the spirits of Christianity, Mother Teresa held firmly the belief that everyone is God’s child and is worthy of love and respect. She decided to temporarily defer her original plan to Bataan and brought the old lady to a nearby hospital for treatment. At first, the doctor paid no attention to this old lady who had no family. After Mother Teresa’s persevering effort to implore the doctor, he finally agreed to offer her treatment. He told Mother Teresa, “She must be hospitalised at the moment until her condition is stabilized. She will then need to rest in a quiet place.” Mother Teresa then went to the municipal health care department in the hope of finding a suitable venue for patients in poverty to rest and recuperate after illness. The head of the health care department is a man of compassion. He brought Mother Teresa to a famous Hindu temple in Calcutta after listening to her sincere pleadings. He promised to allot the place of worship at the back of the temple for her use to accommodate the patients.

At first, the suggestion encountered fierce opposition from Hindu monks, the reason being Mother Teresa was not an Indian and could not use the temple. In face of the resistance, she continued to save lives that were on the verge of death and offered them places for rest and treatment. Some of these people were even Hindu monks. Many Indians were deeply moved by her selfless acts, and the opposition gradually subsided with time.

In less than a day since the founding of this foothold, more than thirty poor and suffering people settled down. One of the elderly, on the evening he moved in, was out of breath. Before he died, he took Mother Teresa’s hands and whispered in Bengali: "I have lived like a dog for my whole life and I die like a human. Thank you."

It is impossible to rescue all the dying people in Calcutta only by the work of her and other nuns. However, she has her a unique view that human misfortune is not poverty, illness or hunger. The real misfortune is that those who are sick or poor do not receive a helping hand and nobody cares them. Even if patients cannot be cured and died, at least they could have a home before death. This is how she spread the love of Lord to the dying ones.

Reference:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mother_Teresa>

<http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/ns_lit_doc_20031019_madre-teresa_en.html>

<http://www.taiwanartist.tw/idea/06.html>

<https://goo.gl/shKZBU>

Questions for discussion:

1. What are the religious beliefs and moral principles that Mother Teresa takes as the basis for her work of saving the patients?
2. What are the difference between Mother Teresa’s relief work and the moral rules of the society at that time?
3. Why did her relief work succeed?
4. What kind of relationship between religion and morality is illustrated by the relief work of Mother Teresa?

Students may give answers containing the following key points (other reasonable answers are also acceptable):

* Mother Teresa’s religious beliefs: everyone is God’s child and is worthy of love and respect.
* Mother Teresa’s moral principal: respect for human life; people have dignity both in their lives and in their deaths
* Moral rules of the society at that time: non-Indians could not use Indian temples
* Mother Teresa’s religious beliefs have given her support to put her moral principles into practice.

Other references for writing this session:

MacKinnon, Fiala, and Fiala, Andrew. “Religion and Global Ethics”, *Ethics: Theory and contemporary issues* (8th ed.) Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2017. 20-45pp.

Pojman, Louis P. “Religion and Ethics,” *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*. 7th ed. Cengage Advantage Books. Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 2012. 187-205pp.