

Editorial: Special collection of Verbum et Ecclesia: 'Morality in history'

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In the second half of 2022, the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Pretoria hosted a series of three seminars on the theme 'The emergence and conceptualisation of morality in history'. The first seminar focused on 'The emergence of morality', the second on 'The conceptualisation of morality in religions' and the third on 'The conceptualisation of morality in philosophy'.

The seminars addressed an unsettling anomaly we are faced with today. On the one hand, there is widespread acknowledgement that morality is indispensable in tackling the serious global problems of our time. On the other hand, we do not agree on what the defining criteria of morality are and we increasingly disagree on the moral values we should base our actions on. We obviously need more clarity and consensus on what a contextually appropriate conception of morality is. A prerequisite for the endeavour to design such a conception of morality is, however, to first take stock of how morality was conceptualised through the ages. No conception of morality could be developed completely *de novo*. Any project to develop a contextually appropriate conception of morality forms part of a longstanding and ongoing discourse and should acknowledge this by giving due attention to insights regarding morality gained in the past. To not take note of conceptualisations of morality in the past and incorporate those insights that stood the test of time in a contemporary conception of morality would be both arrogant and unwise.

Participants in the seminar were requested to undertake the preliminary task of historically investigating conceptualisations of morality, paving the way for the task of designing a contextually appropriate conception of morality. A wide-ranging historical exploration of such conceptualisations of morality in the past was undertaken. Starting with an investigation of the emergence of morality and proceeding with the historical investigation of conceptualisations of morality in religion and philosophy the main objective was to gain insights regarding the nature of morality, which could be of value in our search for a contextually appropriate conception of morality. A more specific objective was to determine whether morality in history manifested both variation and continuity or, more precisely, whether, in spite of undeniable adaptation and change, some core ingredients of morality could be detected that might be regarded as constitutive of morality.

Participants in the seminars were invited to submit articles, based on their papers, for publication in the special collection of *Verbum et Ecclesia*: 'Morality in history'. The objectives of this special edition are the same as the seminars on 'The emergence and conceptualisation of morality in history'. Some of the articles deal with the emergence of morality, while others deal with conceptions of morality in specific religions and philosophies. In one of the articles, however, some general conclusions regarding the core ingredients of morality are drawn.

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