

Is Evil Necessary?

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Religion exists to bring about goodness, and yet most religions teach that evil is inevitable and some teach that it is a good thing. Christianity teaches that the human fall was good because it created the need for Jesus. Many follow the position of second century patriarch Irenaeus, who taught that for us to become good, evil has to exist so that we can reject it, or the fourth century patriarch Augustine, who taught that evil is the inevitable price of a greater good, freedom.



The problem is that this leads to the acceptance of evil, an ultimate resignation expressed in common phrases such as “it’s human nature,” “that’s just the way things are,” and “what can you do?” I have two reasons to refute this—and in this essay I will address Irenaeus’ view. One, I believe that a completely good world is possible. Two, I’d like to help Christians appreciate the Divine Principle.

Let’s begin by defining evil. The Divine Principle does not say that selfishness is necessarily evil. Rev. Moon even said that God has an element of selfishness: “All of our human traits originate in God. We recognize that there is some human tendency for selfishness. This is natural because at one time God Himself was self-centered. This fact may surprise you, but you must understand that before God created man and the universe, He was all alone, with no one to care for except Himself. However the very instant that God initiated creation, His full concept of life emerged. God now lives for His counterpart, not for Himself. ...He exists to love, He exists to give. God is the totally unselfish existence. ...When God poured all of His love, life, and ideal into His second self, He had to, in a sense, realize a profit. God knew that when He invested all He had—100 percent—His object would mature and return to Him many, many times over the fruits of love, life, and His ideal.”

The principled way to fulfill selfish desire, called in the Divine Principle “self-purpose,” is through unselfishness behavior, called “whole purpose.” The important point is that self-purpose gives way to the whole purpose. Goodness means to fulfill selfish desire through unselfish behavior—to put the whole purpose first. This is “principled behavior.” Evil means to fulfill selfish desire through selfish behavior—to put the self-purpose first. This is “unprincipled behavior.” Here, by “behavior” I include both intention and action.

So is evil, that is, unprincipled behavior, necessary so that we can reject it? The answer is, no. The principle is that the subject partner gives to the object partner, which responds to fulfill the purpose of creation. There is no necessity that either partner discontinues the proper behavior or withdraws from the relationship in order for it to succeed. Let’s look at some examples in our everyday experience.

Perfection in spousal love, in Rev. Moon's words, means to "pour all one's love, life and ideal" into one's spouse. Premarital sex, marital infidelity, or even viewing pornography, violate this principled behavior. Studies show that unprincipled behavior decreases the likelihood of successful marriage.

Perfection at mathematics means the ability to solve all math problems. If one does so, one will ace all math tests in a principled way. One can also ace math tests in an unprincipled way, by cheating. To create perfect mathematicians, it is not necessary to plant cheaters in the class.

Perfect farming does not require saving your crop from poison. Freedom does not require the existence of slavery for the sake of its rejection. Perfect parenting does not require stopping senseless beating of one's child.

Then what is our formula for how people become good? The question becomes, how does principled behavior make whole purpose living natural? As Rev. Moon defines it above, principled behavior means to invest all one has while one's partner matures and responds. God believed that "His object would mature and return to Him many, many times over the fruits of love, life, and His ideal." But who is this object partner in which a person cannot but escape from investing everything? By Rev. Moon's teachings, it is our family. We can avoid all other relationships if they become difficult, but not our relationships with our kin.

Rev. Moon said, "...as we make our way in the world, we find that inevitably many connections and relationships influence our lives. Most of these connections come about as a result of the choices we make in the context of the environment or conditions in which we find ourselves. These connections are human-based relationships that can be changed or erased whenever we like through human effort. On the other hand, heavenly relationships, bequeathed to us from the moment of birth by God, lie outside the realm of choice. These relationships are formed by connections of blood. Even though you may dislike your parents or siblings, for example, you cannot change them by choice or vote them out of office. This is because they are connected to you through ties of blood."

Rev. Moon is pragmatic here. Even in the ideal world, social, economic and political relations are not designed to engender perfect goodness, because we can "change them by choice or vote them out of office." We need relationships that we must resolve even if seemingly impossible. It is by facing these people and loving them with all our heart, mind and body that we become perfect in goodness. So just as God did not present options for Adam, He does not present the "heavenly relationships" of living for one's family as an option. You become good by learning to love those whom "you may dislike." To achieve perfect goodness, evil is not necessary. In fact, evil is a deterrent. Love for God and family is necessary and sufficient.

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