



Lesson Overview

1. True or False?

Decide whether statements agree with New Church teachings or not.

2. Watch a Video

Watch parts of *Is the Devil Real?* Online at bit.ly/IsDevilReal (2min 31sec).

3. Discuss

New Church Concept Origin of Evil

The origin of evil is in the abuse of...rationality and freedom. Rationality is the ability to discern what is true or false, and to discern what is good and evil. Freedom is the ability freely to think, intend, and do such things. Good and evil people enjoy these abilities. Evil people misuse them to validate things that are evil and false, while good people use them to validate things that are good and true. The evil and false things we have validated stay with us, becoming part of our love and life. Things that have become part of our love and life are passed on to our offspring. Evil characteristics, whether inherited or acquired, live in the earthly mind. See *Divine Love and Wisdom* 264-265

True or false?

Which of the following agree with New Church teachings?

1. Everything God created was good. God did not create evil.
2. Adam introduced sin by eating the apple in the Garden of Eden. We are all sinners because of this.
3. There are two powers in the world: God and Satan. Satan was once an angel leader in heaven named Lucifer (light). He loved himself and wanted others to worship him.
4. Satan rebelled against God and fell from heaven with a third of the angels. He is a dark prince with power over people on earth.
5. God created both good and evil out of nothing.
6. Evil is separation from God. It came about when human beings used their God-given freedom of choice to turn away from God.

Discuss your answers with your group.

Read

People have many ideas about how evil came into being. The ideas above are all ways in which people think evil came into being. The New Church teaches that God did not create evil. He created all things from His Divine love, by means of His Divine wisdom. Since He is goodness Itself, everything He made is good. God created all things to be separate from Him so that everything can receive His life and His love. People are the only created beings capable of returning the Lord's love to Him. In order to do this people must learn the truth about God's love and then they can return His love by living in the light of His truth.

Evil begins in us when we know something of God and the order of His creation. We know He can lead us, and yet we choose to turn away. When we do this we are choosing to believe that *we are the source of everything good*. We believe that we can have goodness (happiness) ourselves—apart from God.

People are able to turn away from God because He gives people a will and an understanding, which give people the capacity to understand truth (and falsity) and to love good (and evil). Evil comes from abusing these faculties—from turning away from the Lord and towards ourselves.

Watch a Video Segment

Watch part of *Is the Devil Real?* Online at bit.ly/IsDevilReal (1hr 16min 37sec). Start watching at 11min 21sec and end at 13min 44sec (2min 31sec). (Enter link in web browser search bar at the top of your screen.)

The Origin of Evil

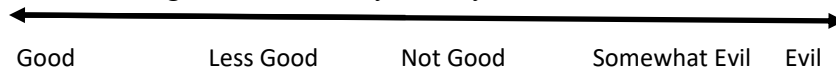
Everyone is created to go to heaven. The reason not everyone gets to heaven, though, is that people immerse themselves in pleasures of hell that are contrary to the blessedness of heaven. People who do not enjoy heaven's bliss cannot enter heaven because they cannot stand the place. The reason it is different for so many people in the world is that they love that first level of life called "earthly." They do not want to let go of it and become spiritual—left to itself, this earthly level of life has no love for anything but ourselves and the world. It stays glued to our physical senses, which take center stage in this world. In contrast, the spiritual level of life has an inherent love for the Lord and heaven and also for ourselves and the world. God and heaven come first, though, as primary and definitive, while ourselves and the world come second, as tools or servants. See *Divine Providence* 324

Moreover, I have been told from heaven, and it has been proved to me by much experience, that these two loves, namely, the love of self and the love of the world, rule in the hells and also make the hells; as love to the Lord and love towards the neighbor rule in the heavens and also make the heavens; also that the two loves that are the loves of hell and the two loves that are the loves of heaven are diametrically opposite to each other. *Heaven and Hell* 554

Discuss

Choose questions for discussion.

1. Does this diagram work? Why or why not?



2. Did hell as well as heaven exist from the creation of the world?
3. Where does evil come from?
4. Why does God allow evil? Wouldn't it have been better for Him to make the world good? Wouldn't we be happier that way?
5. Is evil the *absence* of good—i.e. nothing? Or is it something different from good—a force with power that is the opposite of good?
6. Why do plants and animals receive the Lord's life in different ways? Are some created good (broccoli) and others evil (poison ivy)?
7. Brainstorm ways to diagram the relationship between good and evil.
8. Is the love of self evil?
9. Does evil start when a person makes loving themselves more important than loving God?

The Origin of Evil

Two angels asked [Swedenborg], "How could evil come into existence when nothing but good existed from creation? Good could not be the origin of evil, because evil is nothing good because evil is the negation and destruction of good. But still, because evil exists and is experienced, it is not nothing, but something. How did evil, after having no existence, come into existence?"

[Swedenborg] replied, "This secret cannot be explained unless it is known that no one is good but God alone, and that nothing is good that is good unless it is from God. Consequently the person who looks to God and wills to be led by God is motivated by good but the person who turns away from God and wills to be led by himself is not motivated by good. The good he does is either for the sake of himself or for the sake of the world. It is either merit-seeking, feigned, or hypocritical. From this it is apparent that human beings themselves are the origin of evil—not that that origin was infused into people from creation, but that by turning from God to self they infused it into themselves. This origin of evil did not exist in Adam and his wife until the serpent said, '...in the day you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...you will be like God'. Since they turned away from God, and turned to themselves as though to a god, they created in themselves the origin of evil. Eating of that tree symbolized their believing that a person knows good and evil and is wise on his own, and not from God." Then the angels asked, "How could people turn away from God and turn to themselves when people can will nothing, think nothing, and so do nothing except from God. Why did God permit it?"

[Swedenborg] replied, "People were so created that everything they will, think and do appears to them as being in and from them. Without this appearance people would not be human beings, for they would be unable to receive anything of good and truth or of love and wisdom, retain it, and seemingly adopt it as their own. Consequently it follows that without this living appearance, people would not have any conjunction with God, and so neither eternal life. But if as a result of this appearance people persuade themselves that they wills, think, and do good of themselves and not from the Lord (even though to all appearance as though of themselves), they turn good into evil in themselves, and so create in themselves the origin of evil. This was Adam's sin. See *Conjugal Love* 444