

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM Text, Chapter 3, Section VII

Creating versus the Self-Image

Overview of the Section

Notice that the subject of the authority problem is carried over from the previous section (2:1). This section speaks about the false self-image we made (the ego) in our attempt to become our own author, contrasts the ego with the true Self that God created, and tries to persuade us to relinquish that false self. This general theme will be carried over into the next chapter.

Paragraph 1

1. [Ur: It is *essential* that this whole authority problem be voluntarily dismissed at once and for all before Bill's course {a course on abnormal psychology that he was scheduled—and didn't want—to teach}. Neither of you understands how important this is for your sanity. You are both quite insane on this point. (This is not a judgment. It is merely a fact. (No, Helen, you *should* use the word "fact". This is just as much a fact as God is. A fact is literally a "making" or a starting point. You *do* start from this point, and your thinking is inverted because of it.))] ¹Every system of thought must have a starting point. ²It begins with either a making or a creating, a difference we have already discussed. ³Their resemblance lies in their power as foundations. ⁴Their difference lies in what rests upon them. ⁵Both are cornerstones for systems of belief by which one lives. ⁶It is a mistake to believe that a thought system based on lies is weak. ⁷Nothing made by a child of God is without power. ⁸It is essential to realize this, because otherwise [Ur: you will not understand why you have so much trouble with this course, and] you will be unable to escape from the prison you have made [Ur: you have (made) created for yourselves. (The use of creative here was an error. You should have said made for yourself.)].

• Study Question •

1. Paragraph 1 discusses the foundations of two systems of thought: the thought systems of the ego and of God. The ego's thought system is based on a lie that we made, rather than the Truth, which God created. Does being founded on a lie make the ego's thought system weak? Explain your answer.



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The ego's thought system began with a making in our mind, just as God's thought system began with His creative thought (1:1–2). The contrast made in Section V between what is created and what is made may have left us feeling that *made* things are puny and insignificant. After all, we have been told quite clearly that what we make is real only in our own sight, but not in the mind of God (T-2.VIII.1:5). Only what God creates in His Own Thought and of like quality (T-3.V.7:3), or what we create in union with God, has real existence (T-3.II.3:6). Therefore, what we have made without God—which includes the ego thought system—must be without any power, having no real existence. Right?

Wrong! The ego thought system is as powerful as the mind that made it, even though it is based on lies (1:3–7). Your mind is powerful because God created it. A thought system made by the mind of a child of God cannot be without power (1:7).

Unless we realize that the ego's thought system is, indeed, quite powerful, we won't be able to escape from its imprisoning hold on our minds (1:8). To me, this is a very important point. Far too many students of the Course, once they get hold of the idea that the ego is not their real Self, think they can just write the ego off. They imagine that the ego thought system is weak and easily thrown off. Nothing could be further from the truth! The ego is subtle and powerful. Its influence over us is not only *not* easy to throw off, its influence is far deeper and more extensive than we realize. In Chapter 4, Jesus will say it again: "You cannot dismiss [the ego] lightly, and must realize how much of your thinking is ego-directed" (T-4.VI.1:4).

The omitted Urtext material here gives us a good example of Helen doing exactly what Jesus was talking about! She was trying, even as she took these notes, to minimize the effect of the ego thought system on her own mind. Jesus tells her that both she and Bill are "quite insane on this point," and don't realize how important it is to face its presence in our minds, and the way so much of our thinking is based on its foundations. A key point comes in the opening line, which makes it clear that the authority problem—our rejection of God's authority to determine what we are and what reality is—is the starting point of the ego thought system. Dealing with this issue is "*essential*" (emphasis in the Urtext).

If we falsely believe the thought system of the ego is weak, we will not be appropriately vigilant against it, and our ego will continue to control us. It may go underground, slip into our subconscious or take on a disguise, but it will still imprison us (1:8). This, I think, goes a long way toward explaining why some spiritual leaders and gurus, despite having obviously deep spiritual experience and insight, manifest blatantly unreformed egos. At some point in their development they dismissed the ego too lightly and failed to recognize or acknowledge its hold on their minds. Therefore, the process of healing their ego stalled at that stage, although such things as psychic abilities may have continued to develop. It can happen to any of us.

Paragraph 2

2. [Ur: You have both made the error of the psychotherapist we

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described in some detail before [see T-2.VI.9, and compare to T-9.V.1:6 and T-9.V.4:1–6], and it is particularly serious at this time.] ¹You cannot resolve the authority problem by depreciating the power of your mind. [Ur: This {power?} *can hurt you if you misuse it, because you know its strength.*] ²To do so is to deceive yourself, and this will hurt you because you really understand the strength of the mind. ³You also realize that you cannot weaken it, any more than you can weaken God. ⁴The “devil” is a frightening concept [Ur: *only*] because he seems to be [Ur: *is thought of as*] extremely powerful and extremely active. ⁵He is perceived as a force in combat with God, battling Him for possession of His creations [Ur: *of Souls*]. ⁶The devil deceives by lies, and builds kingdoms [Ur: *of his own,*] in which everything is in direct opposition to God. ⁷Yet he attracts men rather than repels them, and they are [Ur: *perceived as*] willing to “sell” him their souls in return for gifts [Ur: *they know are*] of no real worth. ⁸This makes absolutely no sense. [Ur: *The whole picture is one in which man acts in a way he himself realizes is self destructive, but which he does not will to correct, and therefore perceives the cause as beyond his control.*]

• Study Question •

2. *What, according to this paragraph (including the final sentence from the Urtext) gives rise to the notion of a devil as a power external to ourselves that takes us over?*

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In the preceding chapter, we read words similar to the opening sentence of this paragraph:

You prefer to believe that your thoughts cannot exert real influence because you are actually afraid of them. This may allay awareness of the guilt, but at the cost of perceiving the mind as impotent. If you believe that what you think is ineffectual you may cease to be afraid of it, but you are hardly likely to respect it.

(T2.VI.9:10–12)

To suppose that the ego's thought system is weak is to depreciate the power of our own minds (2:1). This is one of the tricks the ego uses to protect itself. “The ingeniousness of the ego to preserve itself is enormous, but it stems from the very power of the mind the ego denies” (T-7.VI.3:1). Because the mind's power is what can save us, the ego wants us to believe our minds are weak. The ego builds on our irrational fear of our own minds. We believe our mind has destroyed God's creation, so we fear its power. Rather than acknowledge that fear and that belief, we prefer to depreciate the mind's power. Because we believe that what we think has no effect, we don't pay attention to it. As we will see in the next chapter, paying attention to what we think can liberate us.

We may think that the way to resolve the authority problem is to tell ourselves that our minds are weak and ineffectual, and God is all-powerful. Make Him the Big Boss and

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make ourselves nothing. But that isn't how it works, and *we know it*. We really understand the strength of the mind and know we cannot weaken it any more than we can weaken God (2:2–3). We try to kid ourselves that the mind is weak, and that kind of self-deception will hurt us (2:2), much in the same way that playing with fire can hurt a child because they do not realize how powerful fire can be.

Why will it hurt? Well, the next sentence, with its seemingly random jump to talk about the “devil,” appears to ignore that question. But I think it answers it, as we can see if we add in a connecting link. First, if we read sentences 4 through 7, we see that they are a straightforward description of the traditional concept of the devil. There is not anything complicated here; not anything requiring much explanation. The Bible says, “Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (I Peter 5:8, NIV). That is how the devil is traditionally seen: “extremely powerful and extremely active” (2:4) and “in combat with God” (2:5). Everything the devil does is in opposition to God, and he drags his followers off to hell, yet for some inexplicable reason, “he attracts men rather than repels them” (2:7). Of course, this really “makes absolutely no sense” (2:8).

Where did that notion come from? Is there such an evil being, God's archenemy?

A few paragraphs later, the Course makes it all clear. It says:

The mind can make the belief in separation very real and very fearful, and this belief *is* the “devil.” It is powerful, active, destructive and clearly in opposition to God, because it literally denies His Fatherhood. (T-3.VII.5:1–2)

What is the devil? Nothing but a projection of our own belief in separation and of our responsibility for separation and its effects! We deny our mind's power and deny the chaos our mind has made of our lives, but the chaos is still there. We can't admit that our minds made it, so we need something to blame it on. We invent a “devil” to explain it. Jesus is telling us, “It wasn't the devil; it was *you*. Your own mind.” Denying our mind's power thus hurts us because it places the problem outside of us, in an all-powerful “adversary” that we cannot possibly overcome. It distracts us from the true source of our problem and its true solution. We are in prison with no way out. Only if we recognize that the power and the problem are in our own mind, and nowhere else, can we begin to find a way to heal it.

If you will recognize that all the attack you perceive is in your own mind and nowhere else, you will at last have placed its source, and where it begins it must end. For in this same place also lies salvation. (T-12.III.1:1–2)

Paragraph 3

3. ¹We have discussed the fall or separation before, but its meaning must be clearly understood [Ur: without symbols. The Separation is *not* symbolic.]
²The separation is [Ur: an order of reality, or] a system of thought real enough [Ur: that is *perfectly* real] in time, though not in eternity. ³All beliefs are real to the believer. ⁴The fruit of only one tree was “forbidden” in the symbolic garden.

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⁵But God could not have forbidden it, or it could not have *been* eaten. ⁶If God knows His children, and I assure you that He does, would He have put them in a position where their own destruction was possible? ⁷The “forbidden tree” was named the “tree of knowledge.” ⁸Yet God created knowledge and gave it freely to His creations. ⁹The symbolism here has been given many interpretations, but you may be sure that any interpretation that sees either God or His creations as capable of destroying Their Own purpose is in error [Ur: is wrong].

• Study Question •

3. *According to this paragraph, is the separation real or not? Explain your answer. (See 3:1–3; 3:9; also 5:1 and 5:7.)*

From the devil we move to the Garden of Eden and the “fall.” Again, this adds something to an earlier discussion (see T1.VI.1:6; T-2.I, the whole section but especially paragraph 3; and T3.I.3:9), because the author wants to be certain that we are clear about the meaning that he is giving to the fall or separation (3:1).

The first thing he points out is that *in time* the separation is no mere symbol or metaphor; it is quite real, “*perfectly* real” according to the Urtext, although it is not real *in eternity* (3:2). Jesus even uses the phrase, “an order of reality,” which leads me to say that the Course seems to recognize two levels of reality: *absolute* reality and *relative* reality. Absolute reality is eternal, timeless, and utterly One; relative reality is in time, and fragmented into many parts. Separation’s reality in time comes from the fact that “all beliefs are real to the believer” (3:3). This echoes the earlier statement:

What you believe is true for you. In this sense the separation *has* occurred, and to deny it is merely to use denial inappropriately. (T-2.VII.5:5–6)

When significant ideas are repeated like this we need to pay attention. We should try to understand why they are being emphasized. I believe this idea indicates one of the major themes of these early chapters. They are presenting the idea that we must choose between two thought systems. Acknowledging the extent to which the ego thought system dominates our minds is crucial to the correction process. Jesus is attempting to defuse our ingrained denial. He wants to expose all the raw ugliness of the ego to the light because only the light can dispel its ugliness.

The separation seems perfectly real to each of us. We experience ourselves as existing in separate bodies; we experience conflicts with others every day; we believe in space and time. Every time we pick up the telephone to call someone, we are witnessing to our belief that physical separation prevents communication. Nearly everything we do is based on the premise of separateness. We need to be honest about all of this, and not try to hide it.

Spoken in the context of not depreciating the power of our minds, these words tell us not to *pretend* that belief in separation no longer controls us. In time, the separation *does* seem real; don’t pretend it does not. Your mind has done a masterful job of illusion

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making, and it has totally convinced you (or itself) that the separation is real. It is okay, therefore, to deal with one another as if we were separate individuals. It is okay to behave as if the separation were real because, while we are in time and believe in separation, it *is* real *to us*. In fact, it is not only *okay* to behave as if the separation were real, it is an essential part of the process of giving it up. Paradoxically, the way to escape from separation is not to act as though it does not exist for us, but to clearly recognize every way in which it *does* exist for us. Only when we look directly at our illusions, *realizing that they are our own illusions*, can we begin to choose to let them go (T-11.V.2:2). We have to see what illusions our minds are making in order to put an end to the illusions, exercising our minds' power of choice to do so.

The symbolic story of the Garden of Eden, as Jesus sees it, is telling the same story about separation. Traditionally we are taught that God put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden with two trees: the Tree of Life, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He forbade them to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, but the devil (the serpent) tempted Eve to do so, and she in turn convinced Adam to eat it. As a result, so the story goes, God punished them by banishing them from the garden, enforcing the pain of childbirth on women and the necessity of hard labor on men, and condemning them both to suffer and die. The long-term result is that the entire human race has been suffering these punishments ever since. Or so the traditional interpretation goes.

Jesus questions this in a number of ways. First, he points out that if God had forbidden eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, "it could not have *been* eaten" (3:5). Do we really think that God's Will is so easily crossed? Do we really believe God's Will can be opposed *at all*?

Second, he asks if God, knowing His children perfectly, would have placed them in a position where they could destroy themselves (3:6). They had not eaten from that tree; consequently, they did not know right from wrong, so the Bible implies (Genesis 2:22). Would God *really* have put such naïve beings in the Garden with a tree that could so easily result in eternal punishment for the whole human race? Put them there and then *left them alone with the devil*? You wouldn't be that stupid, would you? It would be like putting your young children in the living room with a can of gasoline and matches and then leaving them there, on their own, with a known pyromaniac. Do you think *God* would do something like that?

Third, he challenges the whole idea that knowledge was forbidden to God's creations. Instead, he affirms that "God created knowledge and gave it freely to His creations" (3:8). The whole story of man's obtaining forbidden knowledge thus becomes suspect.

In effect, Jesus is saying that the traditional picture of the fall or separation, symbolized in this familiar biblical story, is very far from the truth. Tradition sees it as a pivotal event, a monumental, tragic disaster that polluted the entire human race for all time. Not so, says Jesus. Nothing was forbidden. Nothing was lost. Nothing disastrous really happened at all. There may be other interpretations of the Bible story that are closer

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to the truth, but as Jesus summarizes in the last sentence: "Any interpretation that sees either God or His creations as capable of destroying Their Own purpose is in error" (3:9).

Note: The way the Course treats the Bible is worth noting. It flatly declares the biblical creation story to be incorrect in three points: 1) If God had forbidden the fruit, no one could have eaten it. 2) God would never have put his children in such a potentially harmful position. 3) God did not forbid knowledge, but rather gave it freely to His creations. So, the author of the Course assumes an authority *above that of the Bible*. He dares to contradict and correct the Bible. Yet, in giving so much attention to its teaching, he also acknowledges its importance. He respects the teaching of the Bible, but recognizes that it does contain errors and has been misinterpreted in the past.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹Eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge is a symbolic expression for usurping [Ur: for incorporating into the self] the ability for self-creating. ²This is the only sense in which God and His creations are not co-creators. ³The belief that they are is implicit in the "self-concept," [Ur: a concept now made acceptable by its *weakness*, and explained by a tendency of the self to create an *image* of itself] or the tendency of the self to make an image of itself. [Ur: Its fear aspect {the fear in it} is usually ascribed to the "father figure," a particularly interesting idea, in view of the fact that nobody means the physical father by the term {a father figure can be anyone we see as filling a fatherly role}. It refers to an *image* of a father in relation to an *image* of the self. Once again,] ⁴Images are perceived, not known. ⁵Knowledge cannot deceive, but perception can. ⁶You can perceive yourself as self-creating, but you cannot do more than believe it. ⁷You cannot make it true. ⁸And, as I said before, when you finally perceive correctly you can only be glad that you cannot. ⁹Until then, however, the belief that you can is the foundation stone in your thought system, and all your defenses are used to attack ideas that might bring it to light. ¹⁰You still believe you are an image of your own making. ¹¹Your mind is split with the Holy Spirit [Ur: with your own Souls] on this point, and there is no resolution while you believe the one thing that is literally inconceivable. ¹²That is why you cannot create and are filled with fear about what you make [Ur: and are afraid to make or produce.]

• Study Question •

4. *What is the central idea upon which the whole ego thought system is built? Can you identify any earlier references that indicate the same general idea?*

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Jesus now gives his own interpretation of the Garden of Eden myth. The story turns on the key moment when Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit. Jesus says this symbolizes “usurping the ability for self-creating” (4:1). In other words it depicts the origin of the authority problem. Adam and Eve (the symbols of mankind and womankind) ate, or incorporated into themselves, the fruit, which symbolizes the ability to create us, to be “as gods.” This interpretation is actually hinted at in the Bible, which (in the serpent’s temptation) says that Adam and Eve could become as gods, knowing good and evil if they ate (Genesis 3:5). They took the fruit out of a desire to be like God; to be in charge of their own destiny and no longer dependent on Him. In other words, they wished to become their own creator.

This interpretation eliminates the three problems with the traditional interpretation that Jesus highlighted in the preceding paragraph. 1) God did not withhold knowledge from His Son. 2) God’s Will cannot be overruled; you may deceive yourself into thinking you have created yourself, but you cannot make it real. 3) We do not actually damn ourselves or do any harm; we only *appear* to do so.

Creating us, however, is the one act of creation that we cannot share with God (4:2).

Yet in creation you are not in a reciprocal relation to God, since He created you but you did not create Him. (T-7.I.1:4).

What is the Word of God? “My Son is pure and holy as Myself.” And thus did God become the Father of the Son He loves, for thus was he created. This the Word His Son did not create with Him, because in this His Son was born. (W-pII. 276.1:1-4)

When I make an image of myself (i.e. a self-concept), however, I am believing that I *can* create myself (4:3). This brings the exotic idea of self-creation down to earth, because everyone constantly forms and re-forms their self-image. I do it all the time, so this notion that I believe I can create myself isn’t all that far-fetched. I *must* believe it, or why would I bother messing with my self-image? I must somehow believe that my self is a malleable substance that I can shape and form any way I want.

The problem with any self-image is that it is *an image*, and as such, is “perceived, not known” (4:4). Jesus pointed this out before (T-3.V.4:6)—another repeated concept, calling us to pay attention and take note. Unlike knowledge, perception can trick you; it can show you something that isn’t real (4:5). So although it is possible to *perceive* yourself as self-creating, you cannot actually *become* self-creating (4:6–7). In the end, that is a good thing, something that will become clear to us when we finally perceive correctly (4:8). When we see with true perception we will be very glad that we could not change what God created. This, too, has been said earlier:

You can never make your misperceptions true, and your creation is beyond your own error (T-3.IV.3:10).

“Until then” (4:9) means “until we attain true perception,” which is the goal of the Course. What follows is thus addressed to everyone studying the Course, because true perception is the goal of the Course; if we had attained it, we would not need the Course.

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So, when Jesus says, “the belief that you can [make yourself truly self-creating] is the foundation stone in your thought system” (4:9), *he means you*, and he means me. He means anyone who is still living in the world of perception and seeing it as real.

I think we need to really look at our own thought system, our habitual way of thinking, and let ourselves realize that we truly do believe we can be self-creating. Think about it just a little. All of us probably accept, intellectually at least, that God is “the Creator.” So, He created me. Yet, I also believe that I am imperfect. At least, I certainly *behave* as if I believe that I am imperfect: I experience guilt. I feel unworthy, or unlovable, at times. I strongly suspect that some part of me is seriously defective or warped, particularly when I find myself expressing anger toward someone that I love. I find myself sympathizing with St. Paul when he wrote, “For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing... What a wretched man I am!” (Romans 7:19, 24 NIV).

If God created me, wouldn't He have made me good and perfect? How, then, can this picture of myself as a flawed or even depraved person possibly be the truth? If it is the truth, I must believe that *I have made myself into this flawed and imperfect person*. I must believe that I can alter and corrupt God's creation, and that I have actually done so; that I am “an image of [my] own making” (4:10). Do you recall what we were told back in the beginning of Chapter 2? “You believe that you can distort the creations of God, including yourself” (T-2.I.1:11). That is exactly the point Jesus is trying to get across. When we form these images of ourselves as flawed human beings, we are making the incredible presumption that we are self-creating!

Our presumption is not only incredible, it is “literally inconceivable” (4:11). We, however, still believe it; our minds are “split with the Holy Spirit on this point” (4:11). The word “split” implies that the idea of separation is implicit in the idea of self-creation. (The two ideas are virtually equated in the next paragraph (5:1).) It also seems to imply that there is a part of our mind that agrees with the Holy Spirit (i.e., God created us), and a part that believes this inconceivable idea of self-creation. Those two positions cannot be resolved or reconciled; to unify our minds again we are going to have to choose one or the other. Since one (self-creation) is inconceivable and impossible, the ultimate choice is inevitable. Meanwhile, however, the dichotomy in our minds cripples our ability to create and fills us with fear about everything that we make (4:12). Part of us *knows* that our entire making is based on a bald-faced lie!

Paragraph 5

5. ¹The mind can make the belief in separation very real and very fearful, and this belief *is* the “devil.” ²It is powerful, active, destructive and clearly in opposition to God, because it literally denies His Fatherhood. [Ur: **Never underestimate power of this denial.**] ³Look at your life and see what the devil has made. ⁴But realize [Ur: *know*] that this making will surely dissolve in the light of truth, because its foundation is a lie. ⁵Your creation by God is the

only foundation that cannot be shaken, because the light is in it. ⁶Your starting point is truth, and you must return to your [Ur: this] Beginning. ⁷Much has been seen [Ur: perceived] since then, but nothing [Ur: else] has really happened. ⁸[Ur: That is why] Your Self is still in peace, even though your mind is in conflict. ⁹You have not yet gone back far enough, and that is why you become so fearful. ¹⁰As you approach the Beginning, you feel the fear of the destruction of your thought system upon you as if it were the fear of death. ¹¹There is no death, but there *is* a belief in death.

• Study Question •

5. *T-3.VII.5:3–4 can be considered a summary description of the process of mental healing prescribed by the Course. What are the two steps involved in this process? Try to express them in your own words rather than in the exact words used here.*

As we've already seen, the “devil” is no more than a projection of our belief in separation, which is included in our denial of God's Fatherhood (5:1–2). So when Jesus tells us to “see what the devil has made” (5:3), he is telling us to recognize the effects of our denial of God's Fatherhood. He is urging us, as he has been doing through the last few sections, not to downplay the strength of the ego thought system, not to depreciate the power of our mind, not to push things out of our mind by judging against them, but to recognize the things we have *made* instead of *created*—in a nutshell, to be honest about our own egos.

His advice does not stop with honest assessment of our egos, however. He asks us to realize that all “this making” will dissipate when it is brought to “the light of truth, because its foundation is a lie” (5:4). Look at it; be honest about it; and then realize that none of it really matters because all of it can be corrected. All the mistakes can be undone. The foundational lie is that we can create ourselves. Taking that lie as gospel truth, much seems to have come from it. But if the foundation is a lie, everything based on it is a lie as well. We *cannot* create ourselves; therefore, any effects that seem to grow out of our imagined separation and independence from God *cannot have happened*.

You are as God created you, not what you made of yourself. Whatever evil you may think you did, you are as God created you. (W-pI.93.7:1–2)

Our real Foundation is our creation by God, and that Foundation is unshakable (5:5). That's where we have to start; we have to return to that Beginning to know the truth about ourselves (5:6). We may have seen (perceived) many things since then, “but nothing has really happened” (5:7). That is the Course's astounding message about the fall and separation and sin: “Nothing has really happened,” even though we have seen it. Seeing is *not* believing; perception can deceive (4:5).

Look at your whole life. How much of it, and what you know about it, is based on the premise of separation, or of your being an image of your own making? Pretty much all of

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it, right? If that premise is a lie, then *everything about your life that you see*—if it is based on that premise—*is also a lie*. It never really happened! Your mind may be in conflict, but “your Self is still in peace” (5:8). I love to remind myself of this often. It forms the basis of every meditation period I participate in. I make it a point to sink below the perceived conflict in my mind to find the Self which is “still in peace.”

“Nothing has really happened” may seem to be a frightening concept, but only if you linger at the stage of “This isn’t real!” or “Nothing is stable; it is all an illusion!” and fail to continue back to the Beginning: the rock-solid Foundation of your creation by God (5:9–10). When we confront only the dissolution of our illusions and the destruction of our thought system, it seems like we are dying. What we *thought* we were *is* dying, but it was only an illusion to begin with. Therefore, although it may seem like it, nothing is *really* dying (5:10–11). The dissolution of our illusions, instead of bringing fear, ought to bring rejoicing!

Paragraph 6

6. ¹[Ur: The Bible says that] The branch that bears no fruit will be cut off and will wither away. ²Be glad! ³The light will shine from the true Foundation of life, and your own thought system will stand corrected. ⁴It cannot stand otherwise. ⁵You who fear salvation are choosing [Ur: willing] death. ⁶Life and death, light and darkness, knowledge and perception, are irreconcilable. ⁷To believe that they can be reconciled is to believe that God and His Son can *not*. ⁸Only the oneness of knowledge is free of conflict. ⁹Your kingdom is not of this world because it was given you from beyond this world. ¹⁰Only in [Ur: in] this world is the idea of an authority problem meaningful. ¹¹The world is not left by death but by truth, and truth can be known by all those for whom the Kingdom was created, and for whom it waits.

• Study Question •

6. *Can you think of one or two ways in which you “fear salvation” or continue to hold on to the notion of making your own self-image?*



Note: The phrase about “the branch that bears no fruit” (6:1) is a reference to Chapter 15 of John’s Gospel, where Jesus tells a parable of the vine and the branches:

He [the Father] cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit...he [who separates from me] is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. (John 15:2,6b, NIV)

Yes, something is being cut off and withering away. Instead of being terrified, “Be glad!” (6:1–2). The demise of the ego is not cause for mourning or grief; it is cause for rejoicing! Traditionally the Bible passage is interpreted to mean that those who are

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separated from the divine life will burn in hell. Jesus again inverts the meaning; he applies it to the miscreations of the ego or the ego itself. What he is saying is, “The ego is like a branch with no fruit, or no effects. It will be cut off and just wither away.” That is good news!

The reality of our “true Foundation of life,” namely our creation by God, will shine its light into our minds and correct our flawed thought system, which has been based on the incredible lie (6:3). Our “thought system will stand corrected. It cannot stand otherwise” (6:3–4). I like the little play on the word “stand” here. The ego thought system cannot stand at all except to “stand corrected,” which means it cannot stand—period.

Being afraid of the correction process (“fear salvation” (6:5)) is foolish. When we refuse to bring the ego’s darkness into the light, we think we are preserving our life, but we are really clinging to death (6:5). Life, light and knowledge go together as do death, darkness and perception. We cannot hold on to the world of perception without holding on to death (6:6). There is no way to reconcile knowledge with death and darkness, and to think there is, is to believe that there is *no* way to reconcile God and His Son (6:7). Why? Holding on to the world of perception is holding on to that which separates us from God and sees us as damned, because it is based on *the lie*. You can’t hold on to the root lie without reaping the fruit.

Our Kingdom is not of this world; what we truly *have* was given us in God’s creation (6:9), and is not anything of our own making. “This world” *is* of our own making. This world is the only place where “an authority problem,” or questioning God’s Authorship, seems to make sense (6:10). So to return to knowledge we must leave this world; we must abandon perception. How do we do that? By dying, or leaving our bodies? We might think so, but Jesus says not: “The world is not left by death but by truth” (6:11). The world came into apparent being based on an erroneous thought system, and it will be left behind by allowing the truth to correct that thought system. That truth—“I am as God created me”—is accessible to us all, “for whom the Kingdom was created, and for whom it waits” (6:11). If we allow that alternate thought, on which the Holy Spirit’s thought system is based, to replace the false foundation of self-creation, on which the ego’s thought system is based, the *entire ego thought system*, along with all that has derived from it, will be replaced as well.

Answer Key

1. No. "Nothing made by a child of God is without power" (1:7), including the ego's thought system. Our mind is very powerful because God created it. The ego thought system is powerful because our powerful mind made it.
2. The devil is a projection of our unwillingness to correct our own self-destructive behavior. In order to avoid responsibility for our actions, we project the blame on an imaginary arch-demon who deceives us, tempts us, and attracts us into "sinful" behavior. Yet even those who believe in the devil often sense that a person who claims that "the devil made me do it" is only trying to avoid taking responsibility for their behavior.
3. The separation is real in time, but not in eternity. It is real *to us* because we believe in it. The mind can make the belief very real. We appear to see separation, "but nothing has really happened." (See also T-28.II.4:1, T-25.I.5:4 and W-pI.198.2:5-7.)
4. The "foundation stone" of the ego thought system is the idea that you can actually become "self-creating." Earlier references to this thought can be found in T-2.I.1:12, T2.I.4:1, and in the previous section (T-3.VI), where the authority problem, called the root of all evil, is defined as the belief that you are your own author.
5. *Step One*: Look at my life and see what the devil, i.e., the belief in separation or self-creation, has made; that is, look at my error clearly and evaluate its results, and what it costs me. *Step Two*: Realize that the darkness I am seeing is a lie, and will dissolve in the light of truth, with no real effects; that is, bring my darkness to the light and let it be healed. (Compare with T-1.IV.1.)
6. Individual answers will vary. For me, I still tend to see myself as vulnerable and imperfect, which is not the way God created me.