

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 27

Healing the Ancient Dream

Section III

Leaving Correction to Him

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary.

Overview of Section III

You will find in this section that the focus has shifted entirely from healing to forgiveness. That is because, as we have seen, forgiveness is how healing happens. “Who forgives *is* healed” (II.3:7). ““To forgive is to heal” (M-22.1:9).

The core lesson of the section, which aligns with the teaching that forgiveness is our function, is revealed in the title: “Leaving Correction to Him,” “Him” being the Holy Spirit.

Paragraph 1

Correction is *not* your function. ²It belongs to One Who knows of fairness, not of guilt.¹ ³If you assume correction’s role, you lose the function of forgiveness. ⁴No one can forgive until he learns correction is *but* to forgive, and never to accuse. ⁵Alone you cannot see they are the same, and therefore is correction not of you. ⁶Identity and function are the same, and by your function do you know yourself. ⁷And thus, if you confuse your function with the function of Another, you must be confused about yourself and who you are. ⁸What is the separation but a wish to take God’s function from Him, and deny that it is His? ⁹Yet if it is not His it is not *yours*, for you must lose what you would take away.

When we judge someone, we are putting ourselves in a superior position. We know better than they do. We know what they should have done or said, or at least what they should *not* have done or said, and we are more than willing to tell them about it — to correct them.

¹ The split in your mind here is between yourself and your brother. In its native state, your mind includes both of you as one.

However, correcting them isn't our job (1:1)! That is the job of the Holy Spirit, Who is the only One capable of judging fairly and impartially. What's more, He knows nothing at all about guilt (1:2). He will never try to use guilt as a correction tool. He corrects without condemning.

Look at how Jesus treated the woman caught in the act of adultery. The legalistic Jews knew she'd committed a grave sin and wanted to stone her. But, after Jesus shamed them by saying that "he who is without sin" should cast the first stone, so that they all slunk away, he asked the woman if anyone condemned her. She said No. And Jesus told her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." If you read through the gospels you'll see that Jesus *never* accused anyone of sin! He consistently met everyone with acceptance and forgiveness. That's what we are being called to do. Correcting people isn't our function.

When we assume that we are being called to correct someone we are abdicating our role as forgivers (1:3). In actuality *forgiveness* is the only way we can correct anyone. Accusing them of wrong-doing, which is what we do when we offer "correction," just reinforces their guilt; only forgiveness can relieve it (1:4). That belief in their own guilt is the only thing that needs to be corrected.

When we act unilaterally, without the Holy Spirit, recognizing the identity of correction and forgiveness just isn't possible. Because we believe we are separated beings as opposed to being One in and with the Holy Spirit, we will always think differences are truly possible: He or she can be wrong or confused, while I am not, so I can offer them correction. When we recognize the Oneness we will realize correction isn't our function (1:5).

Jesus says that knowing what our function is enables us to know who we are: "by your function do you know yourself" (1:6). We are not "correcting beings," but rather "forgiving beings." Forgiveness is what we do, what we are here for. If we are confused about our function, thinking our function is that of correction, which belongs to the Holy Spirit, we are confused about ourselves and what we are (1:7). That confusion is actually the epitome of separation (1:8)! We are attempting to "take God's function from Him." We should ask ourselves, when we're tempted to correct someone, "Who made *you* God?"

Any attempt to co-opt the Holy Spirit's function is doomed to failure, because of the law of giving and receiving, or taking and loss. "You must lose what you would take away" (1:9). As we've read over and over, what we do to another we are doing to ourselves. Trying to take His function, we lose our own.

Paragraph 2

2 In a split mind,¹ identity must seem to be divided. ²Nor can anyone perceive a function unified which has conflicting purposes and different ends. ³Correction, to a mind so split, must be a way to punish sins you think are yours in someone else. ⁴And thus does he become your victim, not your brother, different from you in that he is more guilty, thus in need of your correction as the one more innocent than he. ⁵This splits his function off from yours, and gives you both a different role. ⁶And so you cannot be perceived as one, and with a single function that would mean a shared identity with but one aim.

When your mind is split, your identity seems split as well (2:1). Recall what was said in W-196.10:2, which we quoted in discussion Section I.5: “When you realize, once and for all, that it is you you fear, the mind perceives itself as split.” When we begin to take responsibility for what we perceive, we realize that even though we think we are loving and forgiving, there is a part of us that is murderous. We recognize that our mind is split, and it really *is*. Part of it has been given over to become the ego. So it *seems* as if our identity is somehow split; there is “good me” and “bad ego,” yet somehow the ego is also me. “A murderer perceived within you, eager for your death” (W-196.11:1). We need to learn that the ego is false; it is nothing evil.

In T-11.IV.4–5 (CE & FIP), The Course described this same crucial moment when we realize we are the only ones depriving ourselves, and see a murderer within.

4This is a crucial step in the reawakening. The beginning phases of this reversal are often quite painful, for as blame is withdrawn from without, there is a strong tendency to harbor it within. It is difficult at first to realize that this is exactly the same thing, for there is no distinction between within and without. If your brothers are part of you and you blame them for your deprivation, you are blaming yourself. And you cannot blame yourself without blaming them.

5 That is why blame must be undone, not reallocated. Lay it to yourself and you cannot know yourself, for only the ego blames at all. Self-blame is therefore ego-identification, and as strong an ego defense as blaming others. (T-11.IV.4:4-5:3 (CE))

This makes it very clear that we must not transfer the guilt from our brother to ourselves: “Blame must be undone, not reallocated.” The Course calls us instead to, “...turn you to the stately calm within, where in holy stillness dwells the living God you never left, and Who never left you.” (T-18.I.8:1–9 (CE)) Our identity is not split; it exists in perfection, within us.

As long as we think we are internally, permanently conflicted, with conflicting purposes in different aspects of ourselves, we can never perceive our function as unified within us and unified with the function of our brother or sister (2:2). Our egos believe that correction means punishment, punishing “sins you think are yours in someone *else*” (2:3). It’s a means of projection, dumping our sin on another and then punishing them for it. The ego’s style of correction makes the other person our victim instead of an equal brother or sister. They are seen as different from ourselves because they are more guilty than we are, someone who needs our

magnanimous correction (2:4). In this picture we end up with completely different functions and roles (2:5). We are seen as separate and different. It becomes impossible for me to see that I and my brother are one, with a single function, a shared identity, and the same purpose (2:6).

Paragraph 3

3 Correction *you* would do must separate, because that is the function given it *by* you. ²When you perceive correction is the same as pardon, then you also know the Holy Spirit's Mind and yours are one, and so your own identity is found. ³Yet must He work with what is given Him, and you allow Him only *half* your mind. ⁴And thus He represents the *other* half,² and seems to have a different purpose from the one you cherish and you think is yours. ⁵Thus does your function seem divided, with a half in *opposition* to a half. ⁶And these two halves appear to represent a split within a self perceived as two.

If we buy in to the ego's view of correction as something *we* do, we put ourselves in a position superior to others. We are the innocent ones, the better people, who know what it is our brother or sister must do if they hope to be as innocent as we are. We are turning correction into a mechanism of separation (3:1).

The Holy Spirit's view of correction is completely different. Correction is pardon, forgiveness. It does not see the other as guilty, needing to change to become innocent. Rather, it sees their present innocence and affirms it. When we align with this view of correction, we are aligning our mind with that of the Holy Spirit, and in so doing discover our true identity (3:2). But we need to give Him our *entire* mind, not just half of it. We insanely try to keep our ego identity, so we *seem* to hold conflicting goals. One part of our mind wants to punish; the other part wants to pardon. Thus we *appear* to have a self that is split into two opposing parts (3:3–6).

This may sound very abstract and psychologically technical, but I think it represents a very common experience. This split identity is what's going on when we find ourselves saying or thinking, "I know I should forgive her, but I just can't seem to do it." There's a part of us that wants to pardon, but it is inhibited by another part that wants to punish. We may not realize it, but we are perceiving *ourselves* with a split identity. This has far-reaching effects!

² The "other half" is your brother's mind. As is said two paragraphs later: "This is your brother:...the other half, which is denied."

Paragraph 4

4 Consider how this self-perception must extend, and do not overlook the fact that *every* thought extends because that is its purpose, being what it really is.
2From an idea of self as two, there comes a necessary view of function split *between* the two. 3And what you would correct is only half the error, which you think is all of it. 4Your *brother's* sins become the central target for correction, lest your errors and his own be seen as one. 5Yours are mistakes, but his are sins and not the same as yours. 6His merit punishment, while yours, in fairness, should be overlooked.

The purpose of every thought is to extend, to increase and multiply. So this self-perception of a split identity does just that. Thoughts extend; that is what a thought *is* (4:1). Perceiving our self as split in two, we inevitably will see our *function* split between the two halves (4:2). We think we are correcting, healing the sin in our brother or sister, but meanwhile we are ignoring our own need for healing. We fail to see that we are making the same mistake he or she is making (4:3-4). We see our errors as mere mistakes; our brothers errors are worse, they are sins, not like ours (4:5). His errors deserve to be punished; ours, “in fairness, should be overlooked” (4:6).

The notion of split identity seems to me to be applied in two ways: We each perceive our own selves as split between punishment and pardon, but we also see our brother as split off from us, with a different sins and a different function (to suffer punishment and get his act together). We don't see our own unified identity, and neither do we see that we and our brother enjoy a single *shared* identity.

Paragraph 5

5 In this interpretation of correction, your own mistakes you will not even see.
2The focus of correction has been placed outside yourself, on one who cannot be a part of you while this perception lasts. 3What is condemned can never be returned to its accuser, who has hated it and hates it still. 4This is your brother: focus of your hate, unworthy to be part of you, and thus outside your self; the other half, which is denied. 5And only what is left without his presence is perceived as all of you. 6To this remaining half the Holy Spirit must represent the other half, until you recognize it *is* the other half. 7And this He does by giving both of you a function that is one, not different.

When we see the errors in others as totally different from our own, we end up not even seeing our own errors (5:1). We become entirely focused on the errors that need correction *outside of* ourselves. As long as we see our brothers in this way we cannot recognize that they are part of us (5:2). To condemn is to hate. When I condemn someone I am pushing them away; I want no part of them (5:3). This way does *not* lie unity! When I condemn or accuse, I drive a wedge between myself and the one I condemn. He or she is “unworthy to be part of you, and thus outside yourself” (5:4).

Ultimately, when this happens on a wider scale, we end up dehumanizing the person or persons we are condemning. It culminates in racial discrimination, in things like white supremacy, and even genocide.

Your brother or sister is really a part of yourself that you have denied (5:4). You are left with a partial self from which they are absent, a diminished self you think is all of you (5:5). You are the “remaining half” in this picture. The Holy Spirit becomes the advocate for “the other half” (your brother or sister), functioning on their behalf until the day you finally recognize they *are* the other half of yourself (5:6). The Holy Spirit represents your other half by giving you both the same one function: forgiveness (5:6).

Paragraph 6

6 Correction is the function given both, but neither one alone. ²And when it is fulfilled as shared, it must correct mistakes in both of you. ³It cannot leave mistakes in one unhealed and make the other free. ⁴*That is divided purpose, which cannot be shared, and so it cannot be the function which the Holy Spirit sees as His.* ⁵And you can rest assured that He will not fulfill a function that He cannot understand and recognize as His, for only thus can He keep *yours* preserved intact, despite your separated view of what your function is. ⁶If He upheld divided function, you were lost indeed. ⁷His inability to see His goal divided and distinct for each of you preserves your Self from being made aware of any function other than Its Own.

The shared function the Holy Spirit gives to us and to those with whom we are in relationship, those we think need correction, is *true* correction, which is identical with pardon or forgiveness. And it must be given to both parties in the relationship, not just to one of them (as in the ego's version of correction) (6:1). It is a shared function, and it corrects mistakes in both of you (6:2).

I like to remind myself frequently that the real function of any relationship is mutual forgiveness. It brings a whole new way of looking at relationships and at the things that bug us in one another! Of course he or she rubs you the wrong way a lot of the time, because the whole purpose of being together is so that you can forgive one another!

There are a lot of “it”s in sentences 2 and 3. Let me edit them so as to replace the pronoun with the nouns I think they refer to:

“And when the function of correction as forgiveness given both is fulfilled as shared, that function must correct mistakes in both of you. The shared function — forgiveness — cannot leave mistakes in one unhealed and make the other [person] free.”

In a few words, when two people realize they share the common function of correction or forgiveness, both will experience the healing of their mistakes. If only one of the two persons were to be healed that would be “divided purpose,” differing purposes which clearly are not *shared*. That halfway forgiveness can't be the function of the Holy Spirit (6:4). He won't participate in that kind of misguided activity. He can't even understand it, and whatever it is, it isn't correction as He knows it (6:5). We may think we are forgiving someone with no need of forgiveness ourselves, but it will be ineffectual in the end because it lacks the touch of the Divine.

This isn't because the Holy Spirit is stand-offish, insisting we have to do things His way. He withholds Himself from participation in one-sided forgiveness so as to preserve your true function of *mutual* forgiveness. He deliberately refrains from reinforcing "your separated view of what your function is" (6:5). If He took part and empowered your one-sided forgiveness, you would never escape from that "separated view"; you'd never embrace and fulfill your true function (6:6). He literally *cannot* understand or recognize what you think forgiveness is. This "preserves your Self from being made aware of any function other than Its [your Self's] Own" (6:7).

This may explain why so many of us sometimes think, "Forgiveness doesn't work. I forgave her, but nothing happened, nothing changed." Perhaps your forgiveness was one-sided. And that kind of forgiveness really doesn't work! It isn't a failure of forgiveness, it's a Divine protection of your true function of shared, mutual forgiveness.

Paragraph 7

7 And thus is healing given *both* of you. ²Correction must be left to One Who knows correction and forgiveness are the same. ³With half a mind this is not understood. ⁴Leave, then, correction to the Mind that is united, functioning as one because It is not split in purpose, and conceives a single function as Its only one. ⁵Here is the function given It conceived to be Its Own, and not apart from that its Giver keeps *because* it has been shared.³ ⁶In His acceptance of this function lies the means whereby your mind is unified. ⁷His single purpose unifies the halves of you that you perceive as separate. ⁸And each forgives the other, that he may accept his other half as part of him.

By His inability to take part in pseudo-forgiveness, He can bring healing to *both* of you (7:1). The Holy Spirit is really the only One Who knows with total assurance that only unadulterated, unconditional, radical forgiveness is true correction, which is why we need to learn to leave it to Him (7:2). We, with our split minds, only half of which are open to the truth, cannot really understand the identity of forgiveness and correction. There is always a part of our minds that doesn't get it, that thinks forgiveness without some kind of retribution or payment isn't complete forgiveness (7:3).

Therefore, we *must* leave correction to the Holy Spirit. His Mind is "united, functioning as one," with no competing purpose fighting against radical forgiveness. His Mind has but one single purpose, and He sees it as His only one (7:4).

What does it mean to leave correction to Him? It would be worthwhile to spend time with other Course students discussing this question. One thing I believe can be said with assurance: *Never try to correct anyone else. Never judge. Never condemn or accuse.*

³ Pronoun clarification: "Here is the function given It [the Mind that is united] conceived to be Its [that Mind's] Own, and not apart from that its [the function's] Giver [God] keeps *because* it [the function] has been shared." This seems to mean that the Holy Spirit sees the function that God has given Him to be His Own, and to be one with the function that God has kept because God has *shared* that function with Him.

I suggest everyone re-read Chapter 9, Section III, which is titled, "The Correction of Error." You'll find a lot of specific, practical advice there. For instance:

You cannot correct yourself. Is it possible, then, for you to correct another? But you can see him truly, because it is possible for you to see yourself truly. It is not up to you to change him, but merely to accept him as he is. His errors do not come from the truth that is in him, and only this truth is yours. His errors cannot change this, and can have no effect at all on the truth in you.

7 To perceive errors in anyone and react to them as if they were real is to make them real to you. (T-9.III.5:1-7:1 (CE))

Legend:

Light underscoring indicates emphasis that appears in the Urtext or shorthand notes.

The Text is taken from the Circle of Atonement's Complete and Annotated Edition (which I refer to as the "CE" for "Complete Edition" or "Circle Edition"). Please be aware that, even when the wording is identical to the FIP version, the division into paragraphs is often entirely different in the CE, which restores the paragraph breaks found in the original notes. This results in different reference numbering as well. I will indicate for each paragraph the corresponding sentences in the FIP edition. You should be able to locate specific sentences in that edition if you need to, with a minimum of visual clutter in the commentary. Passages that lie outside the current section will continue to have footnoted references. References to quotations are from the CE unless another version is being quoted, in which case that version is indicated.

Footnotes by the commentary author are shown in this font and size. Other footnotes come from the Complete Edition itself.