

What It Means to Be a Teacher of God

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Part XXIII

The Correction of Error (T-9.III)

Let us turn to the text now and look at the section, "The Correction of Error" (T-9.III), which basically addresses the same issue we have been looking at in the manual.

(1:1) The alertness of the ego to the errors of other egos is not the kind of vigilance the Holy Spirit would have you maintain.

Obviously this is not what we usually believe. Let me comment about this kind of vigilance. My basic fear is that I am the one who has made the error, I am the one who is wrong. My ego tells me that I am the sinner because I separated from God. The ego then tells me that that thought of responsibility is overwhelming, and if I really get in touch with it then I am getting in touch with the horror of my guilt and my terror of God's punishment. So therefore I want to deny that I am responsible. And I ensure that I never get in touch with that part of my mind that is responsible for the separation by projecting it out and saying somebody else is responsible. My ego then must always be very vigilant to seize upon somebody else's errors, so I can say: "Ah, here is the guilty culprit."

Basically this passage is talking about how hyper-vigilant we all are to find errors or mistakes in others, to find where others are wrong. And the moment that we find someone who has done something wrong, we seize upon it and go running back to the Holy Spirit in our minds and say: "You see, I told you I am innocent. Here is the guilty one."

It is helpful to be vigilant with our own minds to recognize how vigilant we are about finding others' errors, about finding faults in others. And it is very easy to find fault. In a world of billions of people, we usually do not have to go very far from where we are living or working to find people who are wrong. Everybody makes mistakes. So we want to be aware of the part of our minds that wants others to make mistakes, so we can grab their sin and hold it up to the Holy Spirit and say: "You see, I am not sinful; this person is."

This is not to say that people do not make mistakes. Obviously, everybody makes mistakes. But we have to be vigilant for the part of us that *wants* people to make mistakes and is watchful to find their mistakes, so we can attack them. Not that we find a mistake, recognize it as a call for love, and then allow the love to extend through us. Rather we want to find a mistake, grab it, and call it a sin. That is what this is talking about.

(1:2-3) Egos are critical in terms of the kind of "sense" they stand for. They understand this kind of sense, because it is sensible to them.

This is one of those awful puns that you find throughout the whole book. Then Jesus makes it worse.

(1:4) To the Holy Spirit it makes no sense at all.

The ego's sense, in terms of what it perceives, is to be extremely sensitive to others' mistakes or sins. It makes good sense to the ego that there should be mistakes or sins all around me, except within myself. To the Holy Spirit, however, "it makes no sense at all" because the Holy Spirit does not see sins. He sees mistakes, but to Him all mistakes are the same mistake. And His view is simply that each mistake is a call for love and for His correction. So the ego senses mistakes all around it. And to the ego it makes good sense because the whole thought system of the ego is a mistake—except that it tries to shift responsibility for the mistake onto somebody else.

(2:1) To the ego it is kind and right and good to point out errors and "correct" them.

Of course, the ego attempts to do this in the name of love, honesty, and being helpful. But in reality, it is only trying to say: "I am right and you are wrong." And, of course, we always like to find allies who will agree with us. So I not only go running back to the Holy Spirit and say: "Look what this person did. It's so stupid," but I say: "There are a hundred or a thousand or a million people who agree with me." Remember, the ego always measures things in terms of quantity.

(2:2) This makes perfect sense to the ego, which is unaware of what errors are and what correction is.

The ego does not see errors; it sees sins. And sins are not to be corrected or forgiven or undone, but to be punished.

(2:3) Errors are of the ego, and correction of errors lies in the relinquishment of the ego.

The ego is an error, a basic mistake. The true way of correcting errors is to let go of the ego and not to establish it as real. In other words, when we correct errors, our egos are doing it. The ego establishes error as real and sinful and then says: "This is how we correct the problem. We punish the evil people."

(2:4) When you correct a brother, you are telling him he is wrong.

This implies that we are correcting a brother on our own.

(2:5-7) He may be making no sense at the time, and it is certain that, if he is speaking from the ego, he will not be making sense. But your task is still to tell him he is right. You do not tell him this verbally, if he is speaking foolishly.

If you say that two and two equals five, I do not say: yes, two and two equals five. This is talking about the content, not the form. Jesus is not saying that people do not make mistakes. And he is not saying that I should tell you that you are right when you make a mistake. We might do that on occasion, but Jesus is not saying that I should necessarily agree with you on the level of form. So he says, "You do not tell him this verbally, if he is speaking foolishly."

(2:8) He needs correction at another level, because his error is at another level.

The other level Jesus is talking about is the level of content, not form. The level at which you are mistaken is the same level at which we are all mistaken: the level of believing in the ego rather than the Holy Spirit, believing that the separation from God is real.

(2:9-10) He is still right, because he is a Son of God. His ego is always wrong, no matter what it says or does.

We want to correct the error on the content level. I want to tell you that you are right because you are a Son of God. The ego says that you are wrong because you have betrayed the fact that you are a Son of God and you are now a son of the ego. That is the mistake that we want to heal. As we were discussing earlier, the basic error we all share is the belief that separation is real. And so I correct the error on the level of content by joining with you. And in that joining, in that love, in that defenselessness, I teach you that you are right.

You made a mistake in choosing the ego's voice, but you are right because God's Love is present within you. And so the love with which I correct your error, on the level of form, is saying to you that the love within me is extending through my mind. And since our minds are joined, the love is also within you. And so I become a reminder of the truth, the rightness, and the love that is within you as well.

And this has absolutely nothing to do with the form. So I tell you: "No, two and two is not five; two and two is four." And I can say that without hatred or condemnation, and I can do it with love. I can even do it firmly. The words are not important. The lack of attack is what is important.

This also means that if I say to you: "No, two and two is four," and you say: "No, two and two is five," I do not feel that I have to correct you again. I do not have to hit you over the head to make you change your mind. If I say: "No, two and two is four," and you insist that two and two is five, then for you two and two is five. What difference does it make? It has no effect on the Sonship or the Kingdom. If it becomes important for me to convince you that two and two is four, then, as we have seen, that is my problem. I believe the form is what matters.

(3:1) If you point out the errors of your brother's ego you must be seeing through yours, because the Holy Spirit does not perceive his errors.

Again, this is not talking about form. It is referring to the part of me that wants to point out your errors, that wants to make you wrong so I can be right. Very often we find ourselves in situations, whether at work or with family or friends, in which it seems very important to us that what we say be accepted, because we know how something ought to be done. Regardless of what it is, we think we know better. But then I become insistent that you do what I say, and I become annoyed if you do not. So then I talk about you behind your back, or I plot against you. I do all that I can to make certain that the situation is handled correctly. And this is all on the level of form, which of course makes me as insane as everybody else in the situation. And I may be right according to the world's rules, but I am wrong if I care about it.

If I have an investment in something being done right or perfectly, then I am as insane and as wrong as the one who I feel is wrong, because I am judging according to form. And I have forgotten what is truly important. What is truly important is not the task to be done: not the house to be built, nor the recipe to

be followed, nor the plans for traveling, or whatever I believe I am right about. That is not what is important; it has no effect on eternity.

What is important is that I not see separation as real. And that means that I always have to pay attention to the content and not to the form, even though I may be correct on the level of form. Again, this does not mean that I do not say what I believe is correct, but I say it without an investment in the outcome, without an investment in other people agreeing with me. I simply say what I feel, consistent with the role I am in, but without any investment in being right and proving you wrong. So, in contrast, by pointing out the errors of my brother's ego, my interest is not simply in having the project completed properly, but rather it is in proving that I am right and you are wrong. Ultimately, I really want to prove that I am right and God is wrong. I am just using the specific situation as a means to prove it. And that is why I am wrong.

So I must then be seeing your errors through my own because the Holy Spirit does not perceive your errors. He sees mistakes or errors as simply a fragile veil that is an attempt to hide the light, but He still sees the light. As we said earlier, the Holy Spirit does not look to or judge the effects. He looks to the cause and that is what He judges. And the cause is the thought of being separate, which He says is simply silly.

Thus I want to ally myself with that gentle judgment and not try to prove that I am right and you are wrong. It is very easy to find people's mistakes. That is not difficult. It is more difficult to realize that everyone is right as a Son of God and that the errors and the mistakes are inconsequential. That can only happen if I recognize what is truly important, and do not throw it away. If I get upset by something in the world and insist that I am right and that becomes important to me, it is because I do not value the truth. The truth is that everyone is wrong in this world. But I do not value that, and instead I value the thought that some people are right and I am among them. What is true is the fact that the Holy Spirit and the ego see things entirely differently. The ego sees errors and the Holy Spirit does not.

(3:2) This *must* be true, since there is no communication between the ego and the Holy Spirit.

They are mutually exclusive states, mutually exclusive thoughts.

(3:3) The ego makes no sense, and the Holy Spirit does not attempt to understand anything that arises from it.

The ego is always trying to understand what arises from itself. As the Course says later: "You are still convinced that your understanding is a powerful contribution to the truth, and makes it what it is" (T-18.IV.7:5). We all think that. We all feel that it is important to understand what goes on. The only thing that is important to understand is that nothing goes on and therefore there is nothing that has to be understood.

There is a wonderful line a few pages later that is Jesus' not-so-subtle swipe at psychotherapists. One of the preoccupations of psychotherapists has been to try to explain what happens in psychotherapy. And Jesus says, "Such evident inconsistencies [reducing the power of the mind, yet attempting to build ego strength] account for why no one has really explained what happens in psychotherapy. Nothing really does" (T-9.V.5:2-3).

The same thing can be said about the world: nothing happens in the world. All we have to understand is that nothing here is understandable because nothing is here. The ego has made up a very complicated and intricate world. And we spend eons of time trying to explain and understand something that does not exist in the first place. So the Holy Spirit does not attempt to understand anything that arises from the ego.

(3:4) Since He does not understand it, He does not judge it, knowing that nothing the ego makes means anything.

That is what the Course means when it says that the Holy Spirit does not judge effects. He judges the cause. And the cause is the original thought of separation. And His judgment is that this thought is simply silly—not evil or sinful or serious—but silly.

(4:1) When you react at all to errors, you are not listening to the Holy Spirit.

This does not mean that on the level of the world we do not perceive errors or mistakes. Two and two in the world is not five; it is four. This statement is referring to my reaction of anger at your magically believing and insisting that salvation for you consists in the fact that two and two equals five. When I react to you and make your error real, it obviously means that I am not listening to the Holy Spirit. In fact, I am reacting to you because I do not want to listen to the Holy Spirit. So I use the ego's magic to obscure the Holy Spirit's Voice, because that is what I am afraid of.

(4:2) He [the Holy Spirit] has merely disregarded them [the errors], and if you attend to them you are not hearing Him.

I am paying attention to what is out there. So if you are sick, I may on one level understand why you are sick, in terms of the world's laws of health and sickness. But that is not really why you are sick, so I am understanding nothing. I only have to understand that you have chosen sickness because you are afraid of God's Love—that is all. If I am making your sickness real to me, I have chosen to see you as sick because I am afraid of God's Love. That is all I have to understand. I do not have to understand in the world's terms why you got sick, or the likely progression of the illness, or what the remedy will be.

If I am listening to the Holy Spirit, my attention will be withdrawn from your sick body or from whatever the external problem is. And I will go back to where the problem really is, in my mind, where the Holy Spirit also is. And I will ask for the Holy Spirit's help if I find myself getting caught in the seeming reality of your problem.

(4:3-4) If you do not hear Him [the Holy Spirit], you are listening to your ego [it has to be one or the other] and making as little sense as the brother whose errors you perceive. This cannot be correction.

Obviously, I now am as wrong as I am accusing you of being. It always comes back to the same basic point—every problem is simply my choice to disregard the Holy Spirit and listen to the ego. And the solution to that problem is not outside me. The solution is to return my mind to that choice point and make a different choice.

(4:5-6) Yet it is more than merely a lack of correction for him. It is the giving up of correction in yourself.

Not only am I no longer able to correct your errors by giving you the message that God is only Love, but I am also attacking myself and depriving myself of that same correction. What I do for you is what I do for myself.