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III. Shadows of the Past

T-17.III.1. To forgive is merely to remember only the loving thoughts you gave in the past, and those that were given you. 2 All the rest must be forgotten. 3 Forgiveness is a selective remembering, based not on your selection. 4 For the shadow figures you would make immortal are "enemies" of reality. 5 Be willing to forgive the Son of God for what he did not do. 6 The shadow figures are the witnesses you bring with you to demonstrate he did what he did not. 7 Because you bring them, you will hear them. 8 And you who keep them by your own selection do not understand how they came into your mind, and what their purpose is. 9 They represent the evil that you think was done to you. 10 You bring them with you only that you may return evil for evil, hoping that their witness will enable you to think guiltily of another and not harm yourself. 11 They speak so clearly for the separation that no one not obsessed with keeping separation could hear them. 12

They offer you the "reasons" why you should enter into unholy alliances to support the ego's goals, and make your relationships the witness to its power.

T-17.III.2. It is these shadow figures that would make the ego holy in your sight, and teach you what you do to keep it safe is really love. 2 The shadow figures always speak for vengeance, and all relationships into which they enter are totally insane. 3 Without exception, these relationships have as their purpose the exclusion of the truth about the other, and of yourself. 4 This is why you see in both what is not there, and make of both the slaves of vengeance. 5 And why whatever reminds you of your past grievances attracts you, and seems to go by the name of love, no matter how distorted the associations by which you arrive at the connection may be. 6 And finally, why all such relationships become attempts at union through the body, for only bodies can be seen as means for vengeance. 7 That bodies are central to all unholy relationships is evident. 8 Your own experience has taught you this. 9 But what you may not realize are all the reasons that go to make the relationship unholy. 10 For unholiness seeks to reinforce itself, as holiness does, by gathering to itself what it perceives as like itself.

T-17.III.3. In the unholy relationship, it is not the body of the other with which union is attempted, but the bodies of those who are not there. 2 For even the body of the other, already a severely limited perception of him, is not the central focus as it is, or in entirety. 3 What can be used for fantasies of vengeance, and what can be most readily associated with those on whom vengeance is really sought, is centered on and separated off as being the only parts of value. 4 Every step taken in the making, the maintaining and the breaking off of the unholy relationship is a move toward further fragmentation and unreality. 5 The shadow figures enter more and more, and the one in whom they seem to be decreases in importance.

T-17.III.4. Time is indeed unkind to the unholy relationship. 2 For time *is* cruel in the ego's hands, as it is kind when used for gentleness. 3 The attraction of the unholy relationship begins to fade and to be questioned almost at once. 4 Once it is formed, doubt must enter in, because its purpose is impossible. 5 The "ideal" of the unholy relationship thus becomes one in which the reality of the other does not enter at all to "spoil" the dream. 6 And the less the other really brings to the relationship, the "better" it becomes. 7 Thus, the attempt at union becomes a way of excluding even the one with whom the union was sought. 8 For it was formed to get him out of it, and join with fantasies in uninterrupted "bliss."

T-17.III.5. How can the Holy Spirit bring His interpretation of the body as a means of communication into relationships whose only purpose is separation from reality? 2 What forgiveness *is* enables Him to do so. 3 If all but loving thoughts have been forgotten, what remains is eternal. 4 And the transformed past is made like the present. 5 No longer does the past conflict with *now*. 6 This continuity extends the present by increasing its reality and its value in your perception of it. 7 In these loving thoughts is the spark of beauty hidden in the ugliness of the unholy relationship where hatred is remembered; yet there to come alive as the relationship is given to Him Who gives it life and beauty. 8 That is why Atonement centers on the past, which is the source of separation, and where it must be undone. 9 For separation must be corrected where it was made.

T-17.III.6. The ego seeks to "resolve" its problems, not at their source, but where they were not made. 2 And thus it seeks to guarantee there will be no solution. 3 The Holy Spirit wants only to make His resolutions complete and perfect, and so He seeks and finds the source of problems where it is, and there undoes it. 4 And with each step in His undoing is the separation more and more undone, and union brought closer. 5 He is not at all confused by any "reasons" for separation. 6 All He perceives in separation is that it must be undone. 7 Let Him uncover the hidden spark of beauty in your relationships, and show it to you. 8 Its loveliness will so attract you that you will be unwilling ever to lose the sight of it again. 9 And you will let this spark transform the relationship so you can see it more and more. 10 For you will want it more and more, and become increasingly unwilling to let it be hidden from you. 11 And you will learn to seek for and establish the conditions in which this beauty can be seen.

T-17.III.7. All this you will do gladly, if you but let Him hold the spark before you, to light your way and make it clear to you. 2 God's Son is One. 3 Whom God has joined as one, the ego cannot put asunder. 4 The spark of holiness must be safe, however hidden it may be, in every relationship. 5 For the Creator of the one relationship has left no part of it without Himself. 6 This is the only part of the relationship the Holy Spirit sees, because He knows that only this is true. 7 You have made the relationship unreal, and therefore unholy, by seeing it where it is not and as it is not. 8 Give the past to Him Who can change your mind about it for you. 9 But first, be sure you fully realize what you have made the past to represent, and why.

T-17.III.8. The past becomes the justification for entering into a continuing, unholy alliance with the ego against the present. 2 For the present *is* forgiveness. 3 Therefore, the relationships the unholy alliance dictates are not perceived nor felt as *now*. 4 Yet the frame of reference to which the present is referred for meaning is an *illusion* of the past, in which those elements that fit the purpose of the unholy alliance are retained, and all the rest let go. 5 And what is thus let go is all the truth the past could ever offer to the present as witnesses for its reality. 6 What is kept but witnesses to the reality of dreams.

T-17.III.9. It is still up to you to choose to join with truth or with illusion. 2 But remember that to choose one is to let the other go. 3 Which one you choose you will endow with beauty and reality, because the choice depends on which you value more. 4 The spark of beauty or the veil of ugliness, the real world or the world of guilt and fear, truth or illusion, freedom or slavery'd0it is all the same. 5 For you can never choose except between God and the ego. 6 Thought systems are but true or false, and all their attributes come simply from what they are. 7 Only the Thoughts of God are true. 8 And all that follows from them comes from what they are, and is as true as is the holy Source from which they came.

T-17.III.10. My holy brother, I would enter into all your relationships, and step between you and your fantasies. 2 Let my relationship to you be real to you, and let me bring reality to your perception of your brothers. 3 They were not created to enable you to hurt yourself through them. 4 They were created to create with you. 5 This is the truth that I would interpose between you and your goal of madness. 6 Be not separate from me, and let not the holy purpose of Atonement be lost to you in dreams of vengeance. 7

Relationships in which such dreams are cherished have excluded me. 8 Let me enter in the Name of God and bring you peace, that you may offer peace to me.

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