

HASTY AND SEVERE JUDGES of the sins of their neighbour fall into this passion because they have not yet attained to a thorough and constant remembrance and concern for their own sins. For if anyone could see his own vices accurately without the veil of self-love, he would worry about no one else in this life, considering that he would not have time enough for mourning for himself, even though he were to live a hundred years, and even though he were to see a whole River Jordan of tears streaming from his eyes. I have observed such mourning, and I did not find in it even a trace of calumny or criticism.

The Ladder of Divine Ascent, St. John Climacus, Step 10:10

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ABROTHER ASKED ABBA POEMEN A QUESTION and said unto him, “What shall I do? for my thoughts disturb me, and they say unto me, ‘Thy sins have been forgiven thee,’ and they make me to pry into the shortcomings of the brethren.” Then Abba Poemen spake to him about Abba Isidore, who dwelt in a cell and wept over his soul, and his disciple used to dwell in another cell; and the disciple came to the old man, and finding him weeping, said unto him, “My father, why weepst thou?” And the old man said unto him, “I am weeping for my sins.” Then the disciple said unto him, “And hast thou any sins, Father?” And the old man said unto him, “Indeed I have, my son, and if I were permitted to see my sins, not three or even four men would suffice to weep with me for them.” Then Abba Poemen added, “Thus it is with the man who knoweth himself.”

The Paradise of the Holy Fathers, Vol. I, p. 33, #149

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