Judge Not Others

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See of St. Mark

JUDGE NOT OTHERS

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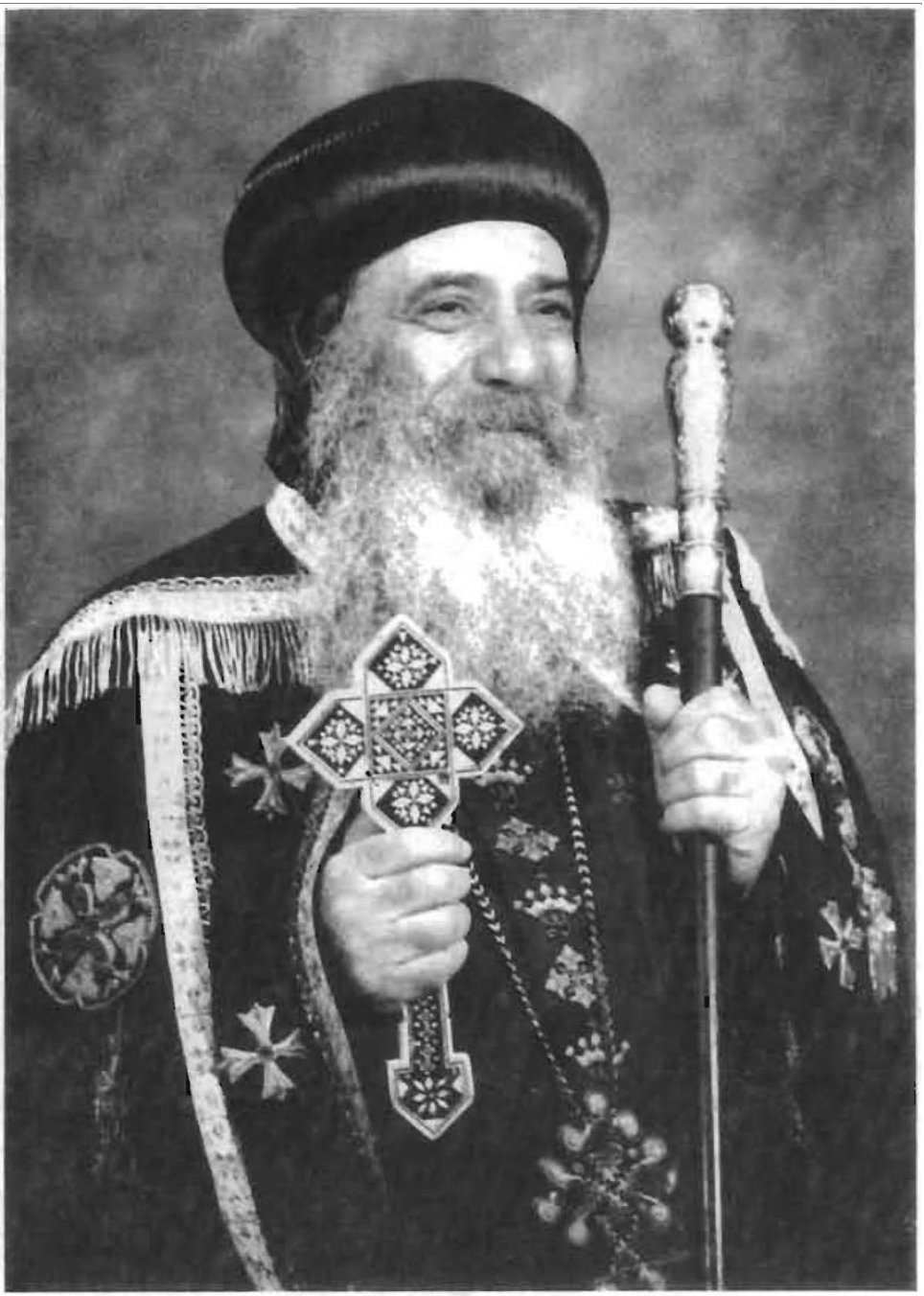
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H. H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope and Patriarch Alexandria and the See of St. Mark



THE STORY OF THIS BOOK

This book is the fruit of two lectures delivered by us in 1965 in Anba Rueis in Cairo, on judging others. Sayings of the Fathers were included on the same topic.

We dealt with the same subject in two other lectures delivered in St. Mark Cathedral in Cairo on March 21, 1969 and March 28, 1969.

We approached the same topic again in 1987 in our Explanation and commentary on the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 7: 1-5). Two other lectures were delivered by us on judging others in the great church of St. Mark in Alexandria in June 1987.

From all this came out this book in your hands. It is the Fourth Part of the Series on Spiritual Wars; The third part being on "Anger".

Till we meet in other parts of the Series - God willing - we shall deal with the above topic in some detail.

PREFACE

The Lord Jesus Christ said, "*Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged*" (Mt. 7: 1)

St. Paul the Apostle also said, "*Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall...*" (Rom. 14: 4)

Almost the same question was repeated by St. James the Apostle; for he said, "*Who, then, are you to judge your neighbor?*" (Jas. 4: 12). He said also, "*Do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters. Whoever speaks evil against another or judges another, speaks evil against the law and judges the law*..." (Jas. 4: 11)

To what extent and in what sense should we then understand the commandment of not judging others?

Is it a commandment to be taken in its exclusive sense so as not to mention an evil word about any person under any circumstances even though that person be faulty?

Is "judging others" wrong in all cases, or in certain cases it is possible or even a must?

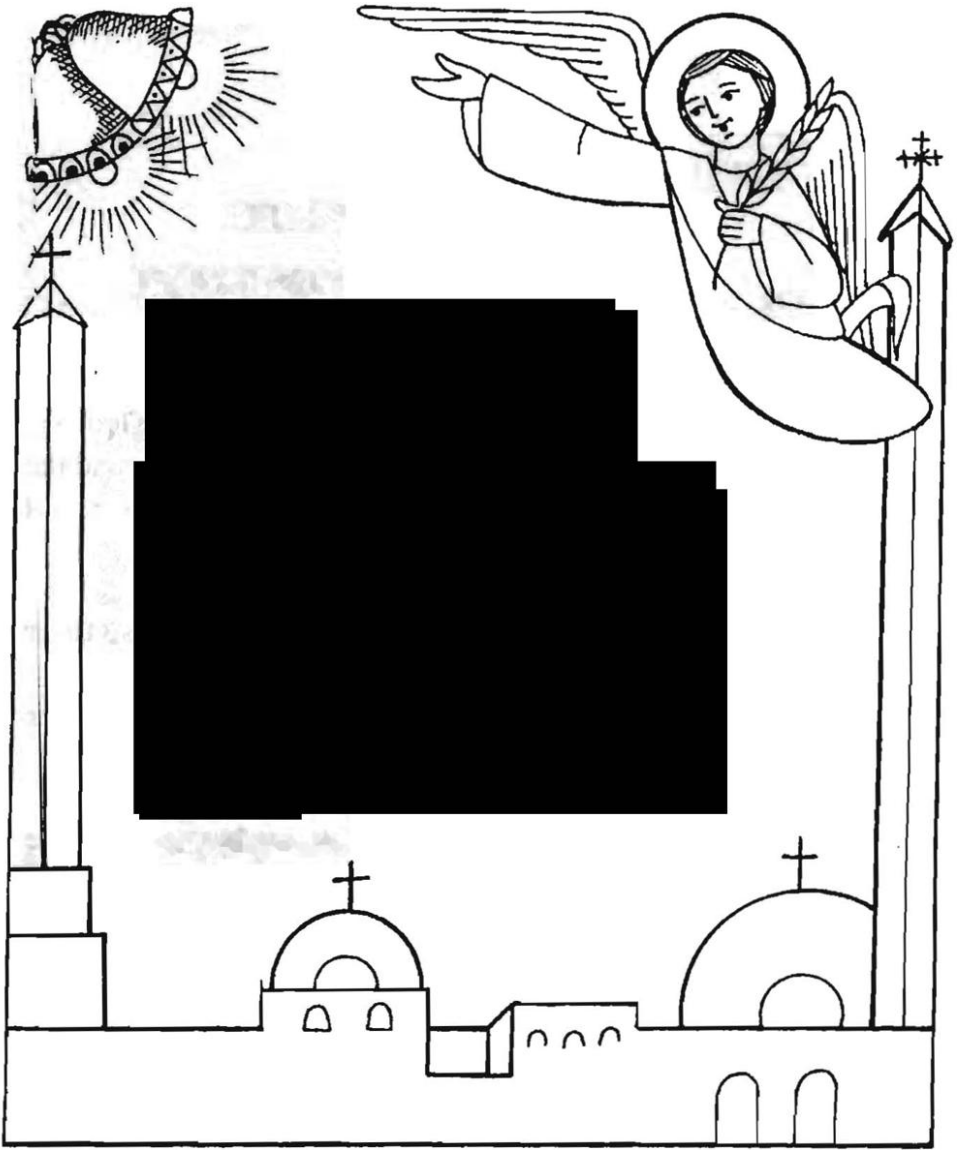
If so, when is judging others possible? And against whom?
And when is judging others a must?
Also when shall we be wrong if we judge others?

Now, we shall reply to these questions...

CHAPTER I: PERMISSIBLE JUDGMENT

1. Responsibility & Pastoral Work.
2. Natural Distinction.
3. The Significance of Some Biblical Commandments.
4. Judging Heresies & Heterodoxies.
5. Advice, Guidance & Reproach.
6. Criticism.
7. Self-Condemnation.
    1. Who Justifies the Wicked.

2. Conditions of Unsinful Judgment.
3. Judge not before the time.
4. Just Judgment.



In many instances, judgment is not wrong. Among these instances are the following:

1. Responsibility & Pastoral Work:

Passing judgment is permissible if it comes from someone under responsibility or having authority.

Some people are given authority over others by God. So, they can judge those who are subject to their power and the verse "*Do not judge so that you may not be judged*" does not apply to them.

They not only have the right to judge, but it is also their duty... They will be at fault if they do not judge those under their power.

Some of those are the fathers and mothers. They are entrusted by God to bring up their children. They are entitled to rebuke them for their faults. They have to say to their child, 'You are doing wrong and you should stop it'. If the child does not stop the wrongdoing, they ought to punish him.

Certainly, this is a case of judgment but not a sinful one.

That is because it comes from a person given the authority or rather the command from God to judge, as part of his responsibility to bring up his child. Moreover, a father who fails to bring up his child well and does not give care to bring him up and instruct him, judging and reprimanding him for any wrongdoing, such a father will be punished by God.

There is the example of Eli the Priest who was punished by God.

Eli heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel. He judged them but not firmly. He just said to them, "*Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all these people. No, my sons; it is not a good report that I hear...", "But they would not listen to the voice of their father*" (1 Sam. 2: 22-25).

The Lord was angry because Eli slackened in judging his children and said, "*See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house... . For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them*" (1 Sam. 3: 11-14) .

Therefore, judgment in this case is an obligatory act, whoever fails to pass it will be subject to punishment.

A father must, not only judge his children in case they are at fault, but also restrain them *i.e.* to prevent them - with his power - from committing the wrongdoing or persevering in it...

Many commandments are given by God to the parents to discipline their children and to the children to obey their parents in the Lord "*for this is right*" (Eph. 6: 1).

All that is said about the natural father apply also to the spiritual father and to pastors in general...

That is why God gave the father priests, pastors , and prophets a duty to warn and condemn sinners. He said, "*Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, you shall give them warning from Me. When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die', and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to leave his*

life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand." (Ezek. 3: 17,18) .

So, fathers and pastors are not only entitled to warn, rebuke, curb, condemn sinners and their wicked way, but it is also their duty to do so and if they fail to do it they shall be condemned. But they will be saved from such condemnation if they condemn those sinners and warn them against the consequence of their evil doings. Thus the Lord's commandment is fulfilled "*But if you warn the wicked, and they do not turn from their wickedness, or from their wicked way, they shall die for their iniquity; but you will have saved your life*" (Ezek. 3: 19).

The same may be said with regard to teachers and their pupils, supervisors and their workers, as well as judges and those who are accused.

All those have the right to judge those under their power but within the scope of their authority, the limits of their functions, and the scope of their work and responsibility provided further that they follow right and justice.

Any of those will not be breaking the commandment "*Do not judge so that you may not be judged*" if he is doing his work as when a teacher tells his pupil that he is careless in doing his school duties, or when the boss tells one of his subordinates that he is not honest in his work, or when the judge decides that the accused is guilty.

If any of such persons faces the words of the apostle, "*who, then, are you to judge your neighbor?*" (Jas. 4: 12), he will answer, 'I am responsible for him and for his work'.

Such persons judge, with authority, but in doing so there is no sin of judging others as it is their right and their duty to do so. If any of

those fails in judging those within his power, the work will be confused, corruption will prevail, and indifference will overwhelm.

When physicians hold a consultation concerning a patient, they may differ in opinion regarding the nature of the disease he suffers from. Their intent is to cure the patient not to cause him injury or slander.

This is similar to the view of St. Basil as stated in his ascetic sayings.

St. Basil the Great was once asked about judging others. He said:
If those responsible for the monks examined the case of one of the monks and discussed his faults to find out how he would be corrected and how to protect others from the consequences of such faults, they would not be under the sin of judging others so long as they do it in God's fear.

The Lord gave the church the right to judge:

The Lord gave the church the right to loose and the right to bind (Mt. 18: 18). He gave the church the right to give decision in litigation and whoever refuses to listen to its judgment, '*he will be like the heathen or the publican'* (Mt. 18: 17).

When the church judges someone as sinner, it is not considered falling in the sin of judging others because it will have judged him according to its right and authority.

John the Baptist condemned and rebuked the sinners (Mt. 3: 7), and St. Paul rebuked the foolish Galatians (Gal. 3: 1) among many others. He commanded St. Timothy the Bishop his disciple to convince, rebuke, and encourage (2 Tim. 4: 2) and said to him also, "*As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all,*

so that the rest also may stand in fear" (1 Tim 5: 20).

St. Paul the Apostle condemned the Corinthian sinner (1 Cor. 5: 5), and rebuked the Corinthians for not driving out the wicked from among them (1 Cor. 5: 13). St. Peter the Apostle also condemned Ananias and Sapphira. He declared that they were liars and that they agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test (Acts 5: 3-9).

You would say 'I am neither an apostle nor a prophet'. You are right, but act within the scope of the authority given you by God, if any.

Act within the limits of your responsibility even though this might be very limited and be sure this be in a spiritual way as we will explain:

2. Natural Distinction:

Condemnation might sometimes be a natural thing; mere distinction of wrong and evil.

If you hear, for example, someone uttering insults you cannot prevent yourself from discerning that this is insulting, and the same if you see someone raging and has lost control over his nerves, or if you see a woman in gaudy dress and adornment.

If I hear someone swearing strong oaths, or someone singing worldly songs or saying corrupt jokes, how can I prevent myself from judging what I hear? There is judgment passed spontaneously out of one's conscience.

Spiritual matters should be understood in a proper way far from suspicions.

Not to judge others does not mean to lose natural discernment.
God has endowed man with a conscience which distinguishes between good and evil, and it is not in man's interest to lose discernment.

It is a natural light by which one can judge one's own as well as others' works, with a small difference which we shall mention afterwards. If one loses such discernment, values and principles will shake before him and he cannot know what should be and what not...
That is why the Lord said twice in the Sermon on the Mount, **"*You will know them by their fruits*" (Mt. 7: 16,20).**

To explain this He said, "*Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.... Thus you will know them by their fruits.*" (Mt. 7 : 16-20).

So, if we saw thorns and could know that they are thorns, or saw bad fruit and could discern that it is bad fruit, shall then we be falling in condemnation? Certainly not.

St. Augustine, commenting on the Verse (Mt. 7: 7), says,

Some trees yield bad fruit, and some yield good fruit. No one should deceive himself and say about the bad it is good or about the good it is bad. Undoubtedly, some matters are so obvious that we cannot deceive ourselves with regard to them.

Probably for this reason Saint Paul the Apostle said,
"*The sins of some people are conspicuous and precede them to judgment*" (1 Tim. 5: 24).

It is not your fault if you observe these obvious sins. Naturally, you may feel that there is some sins that need to be judged. In this, you are not faulty. However, we should take into consideration that:

There is a difference between judging some matter and condemning someone.

If you find someone drunken and reeling to and fro, you will not be able to prevent yourself from discerning that this behavior is wrong. But you should not condemn the person himself unless you know all about him. He might be deceived by someone who made him drink much or might have drunk without knowing or something alike! Who knows!

So, judging is something different from condemning.

When I hear an insult and judge that it is an insult, this is discerning. But if I hear an insult and condemn the person who uttered it - even in my mind - describing him as so and so and judging that he deserves such and such, in this case, I am condemning because I left discerning the behavior and the first judgment of the conscience and fell into condemning the person himself.

I may perhaps recount the story of that person to others, in this case, it is not mere discerning or judgment of the conscience but it will be more than condemnation, it is slander. And both are sins.

As for obvious sins, some matters may seem obvious while they are not in fact.

If you saw someone drinking milk in the fast and you thought him greedy and breaking fast thus under condemnation and his sin is obvious, you may be wrong in this judgment. That person is perhaps sick or has ulcer and needs milk as a medicine for his

disease. He might have obeyed the physician against his will, just for the sake of his health. Thus he cannot be judged as greedy and breaking fast.

As the holy people say, all kinds of food should be taken with good will, without lust or discerning. We remember here the words of St. Paul the Apostle,

"*Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them*" (Rom. 14: 3).

"*Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand*" (Rom. 14: 4), St. Paul continues.

No one has the right to judge such matters; they are not obvious sins that lead to judgment. Obvious sins include for example adultery, theft, aggression, and filthiness.

Matters that depend on intent and will cannot be judged by us. God alone knows the intent of people.

God alone examines the hearts and knows the intent and motives. He alone can judge whether some act is good or evil, a thing which we cannot know.

3. The Significance of Some Biblical Commandments

Commandments and verses implying judgment:

There is a commandment in Prov. 22: 24 which says,

"Make no friends with those given to anger, and do not associate with hotheads"

How can we carry out this commandment and keep away from such persons unless we are aware that such a person is given to anger! Can this be a sin of judging others? No. It is a kind of discerning, the same as when you discern a pit so that you may not fall in it.

It is written also, "*Bad company ruins good morals*" (1 Cor. 15: 33). How can you keep away from such bad company unless you are fully aware that it is bad? Can this awareness be a sin of judging others? Of course not.

With the same reasoning we speak about the commandment in the First Psalm, "*Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers*".

How can one keep away from the wicked, the sinners and the scoffers unless one knows their nature! Can such knowledge be a sin of judging others?

Certainly not since the matter is mere knowledge and keeping away. Even if one advises one's friends, acquaintances, relatives, or pupils to be careful and keep away as well, this will not be a sin.

Or would you leave those whom you care for to fall in a pit and say 'Oh, I don't want to judge the pit!'.

The apostle says, "*But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother that walks disorderly and not after the tradition that he received from us*" (2 Thess. 3: 6).
How can you avoid such a brother unless you quietly know that he

is walking disorderly. Does this knowledge constitute a sin of judging others? No, because the sins of some people are conspicuous.

Likewise, the commandments on keeping away from stumbling-blocks:

A spiritual person should keep away from stumbling blocks. This requires that he becomes aware that they are so. This is not a sin of judging others. The Lord Christ Himself said, "*If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away*" (Mt. 5: 29).

Joseph the Righteous faced one of these stumbling blocks, and he said, **"*How then could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God*" (Gen. 39: 9)**.

Joseph here condemned the behavior and described it as great wickedness and sin against God. However, he did not condemn the woman or describe her with hurting words.

We have the right to judge a matter; it is a kind of natural discerning which is not wrong. But we should not condemn persons.

Not all commandments on avoiding stumbling blocks after judging them are concerned with behavior; there are blocks concerning faith, doctrine, and dogma.

This leads us to an important point:

4. Judging Heresies and Heterodoxies:

St. John the apostle, who was known for love, said, "*Do not receive into the house or welcome anyone who comes to you and does not*

bring this teaching; for to welcome is to participate in the evil deeds of such a person" (2 Jn. 10, 11).

Can we say then that a person who rejects heretics, does not accept or greet them, is committing a sin of judging others? Certainly not. He would be sinning rather if he does greet them.

The Lord Christ Himself says, "*Do not give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and tum and maul you*" (Mt. 7: 6). How can we do that if we do not know they are so. Such knowledge is not a sin because without it the commandment could not be obeyed.

The Lord says also, **"*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves*" (Mt. 7: 15).**

Awareness of the false - though implies judging them and their falsehood - is not a sin of judging others, because a spiritual person ought to be on his guard, discerning spirits according to the apostles' commandment in 1Jn. 4: 1. Awareness of the wicked is not a sin, and recognizing that they come in sheep's clothing whereas they are ravenous wolves is not wrong, but rather wisdom.

To be spiritual does not mean that you walk with closed eyes so that you may not see and recognize the deceit of the ravenous wolves!

The scriptures say, "*The wise have eyes in their head, but fools walk in darkness*" (Eccles. 2: 14). Is walking in darkness a virtue? No. But we do not want you to curse darkness, just discern it, avoid it, and walk in the light. Discerning light from darkness is easy as the Lord Christ tells us, "*You will know them by their fruits*" (Mt. 7: 16).

Another point on permissible judgment is:

5. Advice, Guidance, and Reproach:

The Apostle says, "*If anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins*" (Jas. 5: 19,20). Is it a condemnation if you recognize that someone has wandered from the truth? Of course not, since your intent is to bring him back not to defame him.

We cannot guide sinners unless we know that they are so.

Like a physician who examines the sick to know the disease and give the medicine, we examine the sins of an individual or a group or even a whole church and are not deemed sinning since the aim is to correct not to defame others. In fact there are so many verses on giving advice and guidance.

Advice and guidance may imply reproach and is not a sin of judging others. See what is written in the Holy Bible, **'*Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them*" (Eph. 5: 11).**
It is not a sin of judgment to recognize that they are works of darkness nor to expose them; it is rather a virtue as it is obedience to the commandment.
However, we shall tackle this point again afterwards to know the sound way for obeying the commandment.

Such permissible reproach includes whatever is necessary for pastorship.

St. Paul the apostle says in this regard to his disciple Bishop Timothy, "*reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine*" (2 Tim. 4: 2).

If judgment is a result of the way the advice or reproach is given, one should know how to do it:

Take for example Abigail who rebuked David the prophet and prevented him wisely from shedding blood and from avenging himself. She started with submission and praise to David, then she touched the problem in a way not hurting David's feelings. She was frank with him but in a polite and humble way (1 Sam. 25).

With every advice she addressed David as "my lord" and spoke about herself as his servant. She started the meeting with a present of the foods he required and prostrated herself apologizing for her husband's fault, saying, "*Upon me alone, my lord, be the guilt; please let your servant speak in your ears and hear the words of your servant*" (1 Sam. 25: 24).
In order not to hurt him she said about the present she offered him, "*And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord*" (1 Sam. 25: 27).

Following this praise and the humble words with which Abigail addressed David, she touched his fault introducing to it with praise also. She said to him:
" *.. my lord is fighting the battles of the Lord; and evil shall not be found in you so long as you live", "...the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living under the care of the Lord your God*".

Then she began to rebuke him for his weak point, "*When the Lord has done to my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you prince over Israel, my lord*

shall have no cause of grief, or pangs of conscience, for having shed blood without cause or for having saved himself". By this, she was warning him that he was going to avenge himself and that shedding blood would be unjustifiable. She advised him to abstain from doing this so that his conscience might not feel remorse afterwards.

David accepted this polite advice implying reproach and even thanked her for it.

David said to her, "*Blessed be your good sense, and blessed be you, who have kept me today from bloodguilt and from avenging myself by my own hands*" (1 Sam. 25: 33). He accepted her present and dismissed her with peace. He heeded her voice and granted her petition inflicting no harm on her husband.

Indeed, how nice it is to give advice politely and tactfully! Here we would like to lay some rules for giving advice and reproach:

1. You may have the right or be under obligation to advise or reproach, but let it be with politeness, humbleness, and love.

Reproach with a spirit of pride and arrogance or with disdain and disregard cannot be acceptable. If you want to advise or rebuke someone, put it this way, 'You know how I love you, and how I care for your reputation. I am not comfortable at all at your (such and such) behavior. I feel it would do you harm; your enemies may take it a chance to say so and so. Try to avoid that and correct what you did by doing so and so'.

Such words are acceptable, unlike the case when one says to another, 'How could you do that? How did your conscience accept it? Is this a reasonable behavior? Is this a behavior of a respectable person? You are so and so'. With many such hurtful words that

person feels himself before an enemy!

So, if you talked to someone for his salvation but he got angry and did not accept your words, it may be that your advice was void of love and humbleness.

The same advice may be given by another one, but in an acceptable way and he accepts it and thanks him for it. That is why the scriptures say, "*he that wins souls is wise*" (Prov. 11: 30) .

So, if we say that giving advice and guidance are deemed unsinful judgment, we mean by this the wise advice which is full of love and humbleness, not the advice as a whole, whatever the way might be.

According to the way of giving the advice, it is wrong or right.

According to the way of giving the advice, it might be deemed sinful judgment or unsinful judgment.

One can fully realize whether the person reproaching him is compassionate or is despising and scornful towards him. The spirit of the talk, the tone, the words and feelings, these are the things that have impression on one, perhaps rather than the object of reproach.

2. Reproach should be fair not unfair:

We remember here an example of unfair reproach: the behavior of Eli the priest towards Hannah the wife of Elkanah. Hannah was barren while her rival Peninnah had children and provoked her severely, so Hannah went to the Temple and wept in anguish and bitterness of soul. She made a vow if the Lord gave her a male child, she would give him to the Lord all the days of his life to serve Him. She spoke in her heart, her voice was not heard but only her

lips moved. Eli thought she was drunk and saw it was his duty to reproach her!! He said to her, "*How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!*" (1 Sam. 1: 9-14).

Eli was a priest, with authority and responsibility. He had the right to reproach and to judge, but in this case he was wrong.

He was not fair in his reproach, he was unjust in his judgment and in his condemnation, he was cruel and hurting. She answered him very politely as fit for his priesthood, but he was wrong. He wished her good, but he did not apologize for his previous words.

Before reproach there should be careful examining.

One should not reproach haphazardly without being sure of the wrongdoing! But if a person is certain that the thing he is going to reproach someone for comes under "the unfruitful works of darkness", then the commandment shall apply "*but rather expose them*".

3. Reproach should not be addressed to a bitter suffering soul.

The three friends of Job fell in this sin when they hurt him many times while his soul was bitter. They aroused him with their accusations and reproach - though oppressively - so Job said to them, "*How long will you torment my soul, and break me in pieces with words? These ten times you have reproached me; you are not ashamed that you have wronged me" "Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has struck me!*" (Job 19: 2, 3, 21) .. He said to them his impressive words, "*I also could speak as you do, if your soul were in my souls' place. I could heap up words against you*" (Job 16: 4).

A person with a bitter soul needs a comforting word, not a

word of reproach, advices and condemnation!

When you find someone with a bitter soul, even though he is mistaken, do not try to reproach him, lest your reproach appears as a kind of gloating. Say to him, rather, a kind word, a comforting word. In this state he cannot bear reproach, it is not time for it, suffice what he is facing. See what the wise Solomon says, "*To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven*" (Eccles. 3: 1).

4. Giving advice and reproach are only fit at the suitable time:

There is a nice story that comes to my mind related to this point: Once a boy went to swim in a dangerous place where the strong whirlpools pulled him. He was about to drown and cried out for help. A man was passing and saw the boy drowning, he said to him, 'You, boy! How dare you swim in the sea while you are not perfect in swimming? Are you so ignorant as to swim in such a dangerous place? How could it be?'. Here the boy said to him, 'O sir, save me now, and afterwards reproach me!'

In fact, there are times when sinners do need someone to save them, not to reproach them.

Reproach has a season, it might not be the first in order. You may begin with love, with assistance and with every means of deliverance, and postpone reproach to another time. The sinner might be in a state of strong remorse, having rebuked himself severely and needs no more reproach.

See the kind-hearted father in the story of the lost son. He said no word of reproach to him, but rather "*when the son was still a great way off, the father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. Moreover, the father ordered for him*

the best robe to put on and the fatted calf to be killed" (Lk. 15: 17-23)
It was a time of joy not a time of reproach.

Giving advice and reproach may be a kind of unsinful judging, but under the conditions aforementioned.

Without fulfilling such conditions, reproach will turn into hurting, insult, and condemnation. It may also bring adverse consequences.

5. Sometimes, it is suitable to reproach the sinner if that be "*between you and him alone*" (Mt. 18: 15).

In this case, the sinner will not feel ashamed before people, and his sins will not be revealed before them. Between you and him alone, he will be able to confess his sin and apologize for it. He can accept reproach because no one sees him and his self respect is kept before the others. This is the advice given in secret and the acceptable reproach.

If a person is reproached in front of others, he may be forced to deny, to defend himself, or to argue!

Even though you reproach a person in love and humbleness, just being revealed before the others may force him to defend his reputation by false defense and perhaps by lies. In this case you will have offended him and compelled him to do that because you exposed him publicly, disgraced and hurt him.

He may not be ashamed, but may boldly say 'Yes, I did that'.

He may behave in challenge and resistance not in heart contrition. He may insist so that he may not appear weak before the others!

As for those about whom the apostle said, "*rebuke in the presence of all. That the rest also may fear*" (1 Tim. 5: 20), their sins are apparent to all people and the matter has become prejudicing the church's safety, values, and spiritualities. The aim was "*that the rest also may fear*", as for example when some people make noise and clamor in the church, speaking improperly, indifferently. Those need to be reproached publicly, not between you and them.

6. Criticism:

A person may work as a critic in a certain magazine, whether narrative critic, literary critic, theatre critic, or sports critic.

Should such a critic leave his work as a critic because it makes him fall in judging others? And what is the difference between criticizing and judging others?

Nay, he should not leave his work, but perform it properly and in a spiritual way based on scientific bases. He should not destroy or hurt others. There is a difference between criticism and judgment.

The main difference between criticizing and judging is that criticism is objective whereas judgment often touches personal aspects.

Criticism tackles a subject and analyzes it, then makes a fair evaluation defining the good points and the weak points, and perhaps highlighting the reasons of success or failure from all aspects. Criticism may also suggest the proper way that should have been followed in case there are disadvantages.

Hence, criticism is an evaluation process, which is often required in our social and church life, and even in all our

activities.

Criticism aims at attaining the best by avoiding defects, improving chances and level of success. Therefore a person often evaluates his own works. This is known as self-criticism, and, spiritually speaking, is known as self-condemnation.

Criticism is a science having its rules, its basics, and its style. It has also its limits which should not be exceeded, otherwise it is not considered a criticism, or is considered improper criticism.

The criticism which mentions only the weak points is a kind of attack, and the person giving such criticism is not fair.

There are various kinds and levels of criticism, such as calm, serious, and honest criticism, which type is proper and acceptable. There is also sharp and hurting criticism. Each critic has his different way of criticizing and different terms used. A fair critic chooses his words as if by a very accurate scale. If you are a critic, see of what type you are ..

Be objective and fair, and do not be severe in your criticism.

Some literary or scientific critic may criticize a book and his criticism be necessary and complementary to the book. Another may criticize a book and his criticism be all praising if the book deserves it.

Criticism needs also careful study.

Criticism needs very wide knowledge of the subject criticized, and needs also knowledge of the art and rules of criticizing. Not everyone attains the level of being a critic or assumes such a name, and not every critic is respected by the community or trusted as a critic.

The criticism of a fair critic is a benefit for the readers and for the person whose work is criticized. Such criticism builds and presents science, literature, and art.

The Lord God says in the Book of Isaiah the Prophet, "*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*" (Isa. 5: 20).

If you are summoned to testify in the court, will you utter false testimony to justify the wicked?

And if you tell the truth, will you be falling in the sin of judging others? God forbids. It is by justifying the wicked that you are falling in the sin of lying.

Likewise in your personal dealings, if you cannot tell the truth, at least keep silent. This will be better than justifying the wicked and deceiving the others.

One of the most prominent kinds of non sinful judgment is:

7. Self-Condemnation:

Self-condemnation is a virtue that leads to humbleness, to repentance and purity, and to proper absorption of judgment, as St. Macarius the Great said, 'Condemn yourself, my brother, before you are condemned'.

St. Anthony said, 'If we condemn ourselves, the Judge will be satisfied with us'. Likewise, the person who condemns and reproaches himself to correct himself will not find an inner motive to condemn the others because he feels sinful as the others and

perhaps more.

Self-condemnation protects a person from condemning others

St. Moses, concerning one's involvement with his own sins to the extent that he has no time to talk about the sins of the others, said, **Who can leave his dead relative and go to cry for the dead relative of his neighbors?!**

A last notice on the subject of condemnation is:

Who Justifies the Wicked:

Sometimes, people justify everyone - even though such person is wicked - so that they may not fall in the sin of judging others. Those should listen to the words of the Scriptures, **"*He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord*" (Prov. 17: 15).**

This is because both are far from the truth, both speak falsehood. Notice that the words "*who justifies the wicked*" come first!

Do not think that if you justify the wicked, you will be compassionate and kind-hearted. The guilt is a guilt, and the sin is a sin, whether the person who commits it is aware or not of its nature, or commits it due to weakness, fear, or pressure, and thus he is not released of the accusation. You cannot justify him or claim that he did no guilt!

Sometimes, the person who justifies the wicked stimulates the listeners.

He may even force them to condemn him for defending the falsehood, and condemn more severely the accused person to

make a balance with what has been said before to justify him. In this way, justifying may bring forth the opposite purpose.

Moreover, justifying the wicked encourages indifference.

Such indifference might be on the part of the guilty, who will not feel remorse after being justified and thus continues to sin, or on the part of those who follow his steps, knowing that someone will try to justify them.

St. Basil the Great was once asked: **What is the punishment (on the Last Day) for those who defend the wicked?**

And St. Basil answered that he thought it would be very heavy, heavier than that of the person who offends the others, as mentioned in the Bible in (Mt. 5: 29,30).

The reason is that he who defends the wicked, prevents him from repenting.

In this way the wicked continues in his wicked way and teaches others his wickedness. This is actually true, because by defending and justifying the wicked, he is encouraging others to do the same since there is no condemnation.

Here, we are faced with a question that needs an answer: **Why then do the saints advise us to defend the sinners?**

To answer this question, we should know exactly what does the word "defend" here mean? It does not mean to turnover all spiritual balances and call the wrong right. Certainly not, for the Scriptures say, "*Woe to those who call evil good and good evil;.... who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*" (Isa. 5: 20).

Defense in this case should be based on the surrounding circumstances, not on the nature of the act itself.

We can say, in defense, that the war was heavy against them, and the human nature is weak, as we say in the Prayer for the Departed: [They were clothed in flesh and dwelt in this world], and [None is pure from blemish even though his life on earth is a single day] as an apology for them due to the malice; the deceit, and craftiness of the devil fighting them.

We can apologize for them that they did so in ignorance.

That is what the Lord Christ said in defense of those who crucified Him, He said, "*they do not know what they do*" (Lk. 23: 14). St. Paul the Apostle, likewise, said, "*had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*" (1 Cor. 2: 8).

We can also say that he was so aroused that he could not control himself, or that he was under temptation, offence, or pressure. But, we cannot deny the fault or claim that it is not wrong. We can just speak about the surrounding circumstances. The lawyer does not deny the accusation or the material side thereof, but speaks only about the moral side, the psychological, or the mental state of the accused.

The purpose in such a case will only be the mitigation of the fault out of mercy, not complete denial of the fault itself. We can say, 'We all are subject to fall ' , 'We all are subject to sin'. Some people, to defend some great person, said, 'It is the human nature'. See what the Holy Bible says about a great prophet like Elijah, "*Elijah was a man with a nature like ours*" (Jas. 5: 17).

This prophet prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months, and he prayed

again, and the heaven gave rain (Jas . 5: 17,18), however, he was a man with a nature like ours!

A person who flatters the great personalities falls in justifying the wicked!

Such a person tries to justify their faults however serious they were, and in a way far from truth. And due to such flattery, many great personalities fall in errors and continue in them without their conscience reproaching them. They may even take pride in falling!! Those who justify such people force them to take power in wickedness and to follow wrong policies, and thus take part in their wicked doings.

If those who keep silent before any wrong doing and do not put away the evil person from themselves are condemned as St. Paul has condemned the Corinthians, what shall we say about those who defend the wrong doing and justify it? No doubt, their judgment will be greater.

Conditions of Unsinful Judgment:

Judgment may be unsinful in the following cases:

1. If it comes from someone in responsibility:

We explained this before, but every time you judge others, you should ask yourself: "*Who made me a judge?*" (Lk. 12: 14), or: Who set me a teacher? If you found that you are actually responsible, then you may judge.

2. If the judgment is based on knowledge:

God is "*the Judge of all the earth*" (Gen. 18: 25).

It is because, besides having the divine authority, He is just in His judgment as it is based on general certain knowledge. He knows everything, He examines the hearts and reads the thoughts. He knows everything occurring in one's emotions and intentions, and knows the hidden and the manifest.

The judges of the earth build their judgments on the knowledge they get through investigations carried out by the police, the public prosecution, or the court, and through examining evidence, hearing and questioning the witnesses, and giving full opportunity to the defense to refute accusations.

What about you? What knowledge do you have that you may judge?

It may happen that one judges the others by rumors only or by suspicion without hearing the defense in most cases, and without knowledge of the circumstances, the intent or the reasons for the act.

Perhaps if one has the opportunity to know the whole fact, one would regret the judgment and apologize for it!

Therefore, you should not condemn someone for a certain behavior without examining, ascertaining, and giving him opportunity to defend himself. It is not proper to give quick judgment against someone before God judges him. True are the words of the apostle indeed:

"**Judge nothing before the time**" (1 Cor. 4: 5).

The apostle goes on, saying, "*until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts; and then each ones praise will come from God*".

Judge not before the time:

Commenting on this verse (1 Cor. 4: 5) St. Augustine said that some sins are clearly evident as the apostle said, "*Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment*" (1 Tim. 5: 24). Any judgment on these sins will not be rash. On the contrary, the unclear things will be revealed by God when He reveals the counsels of the hearts and brings to light the hidden things of darkness (1 Cor. 4: 5). Regarding such matters, it is written "*Judge nothing before the time*".

Some behavior may appear wrong, but when God reveals the counsel of the hearts we shall find it is right; and the opposite, some behavior may appear proper but when God reveals the counsels of the hearts we shall find it wrong. That is why you should not judge before the time on matters not clear and will remain hidden until revealed by God.

Judge only clearly evident matters and leave the unclear matters to God to reveal them.

3. You should not judge someone who you are like or even worse:

This is clear from the words of the Lord Christ to those who wished to stone the woman caught in adultery, in the very act. Though the sin was clearly evident, shameful, and ascertained, He said to them, "*He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first*" (Jn. 8: 7). So, they all went away and left her because all were

sinners, and as the saying goes: [Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones at others].

A humble person does not judge others.

Such a person listens with contrite heart to the words of the Lord Christ, "*And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye*" (Mt. 7: 3-5).

The humble, when compelled to judge, judges humbly.

He does not do that with haughtiness, pride, or contempt and disdain for others. He is objective, and does not hurt the feelings of the others or makes them feel ashamed, as the apostle said, "*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens*" (Gal. 6: 1,2).

4. Let not the judgment be with spite, rage, or hatred:
Even though the person judging the others has the authority and the knowledge, if his judgment is mixed with hatred and spite, it will be sinful judgment, because love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth (1 Cor. 13: 6).

Just judgment:

When St. Basil the Great was asked about the meaning of the Lord's words, "*Judge not, that you be not judged*" (Mt. 7: 1), he answered that the Lord said in another part, "*You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality... You shall follow what is*

altogether just, that you may live" (Deut. 16: 19, 20).

We should not show partiality, we should be just and righteous in our judgment. Here the saint added that God does not prevent us completely from judging, but commanded us to follow justice, to judge in the proper time, to judge a certain act not everything.

There are things which are not prohibited, but are in the power of man, such as eating and drinking. The apostle said about such things, "*But why do you judge your brother*" (Rom. 14: 10), and, "*Therefore let us not judge one another anymore*" (Rom. 14: 13).

As for the things that do not please God, those who do not condemn them are themselves condemned.

The whole community is condemned because they should have judged the sinful person. The saint reminded them of the words of the apostle, "*Put away from yourselves that wicked person*" (1 Cor. 5: 13). God's anger may abide on the whole community for the sin of a single person.

The community is responsible for cleansing itself and for putting away the wicked, lest God's anger abide on the whole for the sin of one.

The whole ship - in the story of Jonah the Prophet - was about to drown because of the sin of one person i.e. Jonah, while the other passengers were not guilty. The same happened in the days of Joshua the son of Nun, when God's anger came against the whole group because of the sin of one: Achan the son of Carmi (Josh. 7).

Therefore the whole community has the right to condemn the evil and put away the wicked person lest it should perish because of

him.

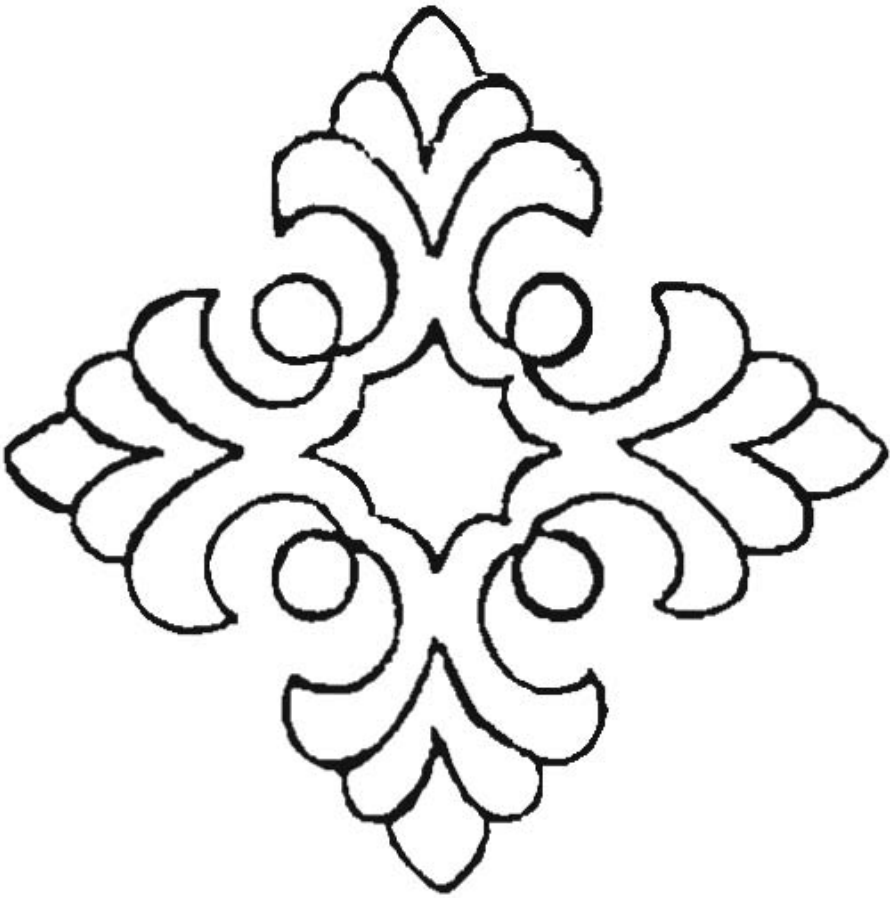
However, this needs a certain wisdom.

St. Basil said that the words of the Holy Bible apply to some matters in particular such as the zeal for God.

"*My zeal has consumed me, because my enemies have forgotten Your words*" (Ps. 119: 139).

It is holy zeal, and a person should discern whether the motive for condemning is holy zeal or personal malice, hatred or malevolence. If it be the holy zeal, judging may be acceptable.

Such zeal should also be according to knowledge (Rom. 10: 2).





CHAPTER II: TYPES OF JUDGMENT AGAINST OTHERS

Judging others does not happen in one certain way, nor is it by words or tongue only. It may begin in the mind or through hearing, or may be mere feelings in the heart that develop, and may appear on the face and in one's movements.

Judging others may happen indirectly and take different forms. It may become very serious if connected with other feelings.

We shall try to tackle all these types and levels in more detail.

Judging by the Mind:

Judging within one's mind may be the slightest type because it is confined to the person who judges and does not spread out.

However, it is dangerous as it is the starting point and the origin of all other types. Therefore, it should be overcome before developing and causing harm to others, and before extending to other levels.

However, judging within one's mind might be a mere spiritual war.

A person may overcome such a war and dismiss it from his mind before it develops into a sin. But if he lets the condemning thought within him and begins to be convinced with it, mixing it with his feelings, then the judgment or condemnation will not be just a war, since it has found acceptance within him.

A person may not be satisfied with the mere thought, but adds to it

images from within him that would increase and take a form. This happens often especially if the person does not like, or hears spite against the one whom he condemns. In this case, he will not be satisfied with the thought just existing and continuing, or with thinking of that one's sins, but invents in his mind stories that happen with that person, for example, that the condemned person will fall in other sins and be exposed in front of people, or that people might find out his shameful sins and be put to shame or presented to court.

Thus, the thoughts become a mere screen showing whatever wrong feelings and dreadful thoughts found in the heart.

One ought to stop the thought of condemnation as soon as it occurs to the mind. But, if the matter reaches that limit, it does not only need correction of the condemnation, but rather more needs remedying the causes and getting rid of the wrong feelings dwelling in the heart.

Judging by the mind exchanges places with judging by the heart.

When the mind judges someone, it carries certain feelings connected with such judgment to the heart. And if such feelings exist in the heart, the heart issues thoughts to the mind. Thus each feeds the other.

Judging by the Tongue:

Its danger lies in that judgment comes out of one's mind or tongue and pours into others' minds and feelings.

If a person who condemns by the mind repents, the matter will come

to an end. But if a person who condemns by his tongue and others hear him and are affected, even if he repents, the judgment he uttered will not end because it will continue within the mind of the others and in their knowledge. And who knows how many people heard such words!

Judging by the tongue has various kinds, among which are:

Backbiting

It is talking maliciously about someone in his absence, and perhaps not daring to say anything in his presence. Such a person who backbites may be so careful that such talk remains secret and does not reach that person. An example of backbiting is talking about prominent figures as the saying goes, 'the king in his dignity is insulted in his absence.'

Backbiting is harmful in that the person who is insulted in secret has no chance to defend himself because he does not know about the matter!

If those who hear the backbiting are of the type that believe everything said, in this case the injured person will be defamed without even knowing or having the opportunity to clarify the fact and to justify what he is accused of.

Backbiting shows that the person lacks courage and boldness.

It may even reveal hypocrisy and flattery if the person says the opposite in the presence of the one he backbites when absent.

Slander

Slander is defaming others, revealing their faults, or ascribing faults

to them. It is a disease spread among many, whenever they find nothing useful to speak about, they openly discuss other people's news especially if such news involves criticizing and analyzing situations or clarifying faults and defects.

Therefore leisure is among the reasons of slander.

A person who is always busy, finds no time to talk about people and their faults. A woman who works falls less in this sin than a housewife who has no work and just talks about the neighbors. Likewise, a student while in exams, busy with his lessons and studies, finds no time to talk with his friend and about the faults of the others. Even if he finds a chance to talk, he will find no inner motive to proceed.

Occupy yourself so that you may not fall into slander and condemnation.

Another cause for slander is the company of the slanderers.

Such people start such talk or encourage you to proceed with it. With them you feel that defaming people is a normal thing, not strange. You may even feel it is a field of amusement and perhaps find pleasure in it if it is mixed with a spirit of joy, hence you continue without having your conscience awakened or feeling ashamed.

Condemnation

Linguistically speaking, it means judging a person as if they are guilty.

There is a difference between partial condemnation and whole condemnation.

There is, for example, a difference between saying that someone is a liar in a certain situation, and saying that he is a liar generally. It means that lying is part of his character. There is also a difference between saying someone has been a coward or was afraid on a certain occasion, and saying in general that he is a coward. Cowardice in this case is part of his personality.

There is a difference still between condemning one individual and condemning a group.

One may fall in condemning someone, and another may condemn a certain group, a whole city, a whole people, or humanity in general in certain aspects.

For example, one may say this city is known for misery, or this people are characterized by coolness or rashness, thus ascribing one attribute to a whole people.

It is well known, however, that a family with two children may have one different from his brother.

Cain was different from Abel though brothers, and Jacob was different from Esau though twins. Solomon was likewise different from Absalom his brother. In any family different characters exist, so one cannot judge a person according to the attributes of his relatives.

Therefore, how can it be that a whole city or people be judged equally according to a prevailing attribute which may not be in some persons of the same city or people.

Furthermore, one may be affected by a certain event that occurred to him and judges that person in a way that involves all his life and attributes.

Any person may experience times of weakness, or lukewarmness, or be subject to certain pressures or temporal sensual disturbance. In such times, that person's actions cannot represent his true personality. Therefore, he will be unlucky if someone judges him during that period or in a certain situation like that.

Among the example of general condemnation is the condemnation of the gentiles by the Jews.

Likewise is the Jews' condemnation of the Samaritans, and whoever deals with them. That is why the Samaritan woman was amazed that the Lord Christ spoke with her, and said, "*Jews have no dealings with Samaritans*" (Jn. 4:9), referring by this to the whole people, not to a certain person. This shows how judging others developed into cutting relations, and extended beyond mere words of condemnation.

Another example is the condemnation of the tax collectors by the Pharisees.

Perhaps the prevailing attribute of the tax collectors was oppression, but not necessarily every tax-collector was an oppressor. There might have been repentant tax-collectors. The heavy condemnation of the tax collectors by the Pharisees is evident in the words of the Pharisee who condemned the tax collector even in his prayer, saying, "*God, I thank You that I am not like other men-extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector*" (Lk. 18:11).

Defaming:

It is another kind of judging others.

It means that a person makes the sins of someone else known to others.

A person who falls in this sin of defaming others does not hesitate to talk to anyone about the sins of the person he defames. He spreads such sins - or whatever he judges as sins - as far as he can without caring at all about that injured person's feelings and reputation.

The sin of defaming becomes more hateful the more it spreads and becomes known.

Defaming extends beyond those who hear it for the first time to those who later spread it as well. And who knows? Perhaps they add something new based upon their own conclusions or understanding, and the matter becomes known to an uncountable number of people.

The sinner may repent, but his bad reputation will follow him and cause him trouble.

Such bad fame may even hinder his repentance - if we do admit that he is a sinner - because it happens often that defaming is not based on truth or on facts and justice.

Sometimes defaming is based on rumors or allegations.

This might simply happen on the part of the malicious, the envious, the oppressors, or those who have some interests to serve!

King Ahab, in order to get the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, allowed Jezebel his wife to make a plot to kill Naboth. She wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sent them to the elders and the nobles in the city to proclaim a fast and seat Naboth with high honor among the people and bring false witnesses to witness against him so that

he might be stoned to death. The plot succeeded though he was innocent (1 Kgs. 21).

Perhaps something like that happened to Joseph the Righteous, that led to his imprisonment. The same happened when the scribes and Pharisees spread false words against the Lord Christ Himself that led to His crucifixion.

These previous characters proved their innocence, but there may be defaming and falsehood spread about others who cannot find an opportunity to prove their innocence.

This sin of judging by defaming is called in law "Libel". It may happen not only by tongue, but also through the press as when a severe journalistic attack happens against someone or some organization or country, and leads to an extensive defaming or international scandal. Some of these attacks have caused the impeachment of a president or a whole cabinet or the resignation of a minister. What would the effect be on someone who is not able to defend himself?

This brings us to another kind of judgment:

Judging by Printed Material and Cassette Recording:

Judging might not be by tongue, but through printed material published and distributed in thousands of copies, or through a book or a pamphlet, a press release against someone or a group of people, or even a picture taken in a certain way and published to cause harm to someone.

This applies also to letters sent by someone to others containing bad words against a certain person, condemning him with the

intention to defame him.

There is also cassette records as a kind of judging others by tongue.

Cassette records are like a tongue speaking continually, whenever we wish it to speak. This type can be spread widely, more than a mere word said by someone at a certain time and not repeated. It is a kind of maintained document that can be used at any time, and many copies can be reproduced, helping it to spread more and more.

Judging by tongue will be serious if coming out of the mouth of a priest.

This is due to the fact that people are inclined - by their nature - to believe what priests say without doubting. So, what they say is taken as a firm church judgment, and the injured person will find it difficult to defend himself and throw doubt on the words of the priest.

It is also serious because everyone expects a priest to cover their sins, not speak them publicly.

One expects to hear a word of blessing not judgment, as the Lord Christ said to the woman sinner, "*Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more*" (Jn. 8:11), and said also, **"*I did not come to judge the world but to save the world*" (Jn. 12:47).**

An exception to this rule is judgment by priests and pastors as in the case of condemning heresies and heterodoxies or those breaking church laws, for it is necessary for the peace of the church, as St. Paul said to his disciple Timothy the Bishop, **"*Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may***

***fear*"** (1 Tim. 5:20). For keeping order in the church, St. Peter the apostle condemned Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5).

Judging by Hearing:

The fathers say that the listener is a partner with the speaker as he gives him the chance to speak and say what he wants.

Therefore, the fathers recommend that we do not listen. St. Moses said in this respect, **'Do not walk with the slanderer... and do not trust any slander against anybody.'**

A person who listens to a slanderer breaks the commandment of keeping away from stumbling blocks.

Listening to slander or condemnation is in fact a stumbling block or an offense, and one should keep away from them. If one does listen to such persons, one's hearing, mind, and heart will be defiled. And if one believes what is heard without examination, one's relationship with others may change. Hearing in fact brings forth condemnation by the mind.

St. Moses said also, **'Beware not to hear about the fall of one of your brothers lest you should have condemned him in your heart'.**

This applies in case you believe what is said, but if you do not believe, at least you will condemn who said such things and in both cases you will have fallen in condemning others.

It happens sometimes that you do not accept what you heard and do not condemn, but the news and thoughts will settle in your subconscious and appear afterwards.

St. Isaiah said, 'If you hear one of the brothers condemning another, do not be ashamed to reject what he says fearing that God may be angry. You should rather say in humility: forgive me, brother, I the miserable. These things which you mention are the same in which I am falling and cannot hear about them anymore.'

Of course you are not asked to say those exact words.

Suffice that you avoid hearing by any suitable way.

You can change the course of talk, or address questions that would change the subject, or conclude with the words, 'Let us pray for him and for ourselves that God may have mercy upon us.'

You may also say, 'Such falls I hear of show that the devil is active and powerful. How amazing are the wiles of the devils!' Then you change the subject to the wiles of the devils.

St. Isaiah said also, 'Do not allow yourself to hear about the sins of your brother or condemn him.'

The same advice is found in Psalm 15

The Psalmist says, "*Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly and speaks the truth in his heart. He who does not backbite... nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend* (Ps. 15:1-3).

Such a person does not accept to hear any bad word about people; he refuses to hear. You should also not speak words of slander or condemnation against anyone, or even hear such words.

St. Evagrius said: **'Who listens to bad words is a partner with**

him who speaks the bad words. Both cooperate in destroying their own hearts.'

St. Evagrius means perhaps the person who feels pleasure in hearing gives the opportunity to the speaker to speak and add more. But one who refuses to hear even if he is present with his body, does not give ear to what is said and occupies his mind with other things. And if he hears, he does not think about it again or let what he hears settle in his heart.

St. Evagrius continues, **'Shut your ears to what people say against others lest you should have sinned like them and get used to evil purposes.'**

You have sinned like them because you agreed to sit with such company, to waste your time, and to lose the purity of your mind by listening to them. If you continue with such company, you will get used to this type of talk and may even take part in it.

St. Isaac compares judging or condemning others to fire. He says, **'Know that if fire comes out from you and burns others, God will ask you for the souls of the burnt.'**

This applies if you were the speaker who caused others to lose their simplicity and purity by the bad words you spoke about their brethren. In this case you will have offended them and God will ask you for their souls. But what if you were only a listener not a speaker? St. Isaac says,

'If you have not cast fire but agree to have it cast and were pleased with what he had done, then, you will be a partner with him in the judgment'.

To be fair, we should divide the listeners into types:

a. Listeners who feel annoyed when hearing bad talk and wish to leave but cannot because they feel shy or too polite.

b. Listeners who hear the words of condemnation and are able to escape hearing or leave the place completely.

c. Listeners who hear, listen carefully, and discuss what they heard within themselves then wisely and thoughtfully examine and accept what may be acceptable and refuse the remainder as mere news without judging anyone but waiting for a chance to examine and scrutinize.

d. Listeners who hear the words of condemnation, accept them, get affected by them, and have their mind and heart changed, but keep silent.

e. Listeners who hear the words of condemnation and show a response within, and take part outwardly. Such a type of listener sins by hearing, by talking, and by thinking.

f. A more dangerous type still comes under the title:

Words Facilitating Condemnation:

One may not utter a word of condemnation, but ask questions, or say words intently that may facilitate the condemning and judging of others. In other words:

One may not judge others with his tongue, but opens a door for judging them.

For example one might have heard that someone has fallen in a certain sin or about to be exposed, so he asks, 'Where is so and

so? What about him? I have not seen him for a long time, and wish to know if he is well.' Who can say that such words bear condemnation?

What avails, in fact, is not what you say, but what you expect to hear as a reply.

The listener in the preceding case, as soon as he hears the question, he opens the file of the injured person and tells tales, all of which are condemnation and defamation of character. Consequently, everything in the life of that person is exposed and all accusations are presented due to the posed question. Therefore, the responsibility of condemnation lies on him who asked the question.

Such a person may even appear as if defending the injured person, but in a way that deepens and expounds the accusation.

For instance he may say, 'It is impossible that this brother commits all this. I cannot believe it at all.' In this way he seems outwardly as if defending him, but in fact he opens the door for evidence to assert what is said. Finally, that brother is condemned and the condemnation is supported by evidence and occurrences. And the cause of all is the question asked by that person, which opened a door to reveal the story and more doors to details.

In this case the person has fallen in the sin of judging and condemning others and the sin involved hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy is involved because the person appears to the people as if not sinning against the injured person but as if defending him whereas his intention was not so. He may say 'Who can catch for me a fault I made or uttered against that brother?'

Add to this the sin of offending others by sinning and throwing the responsibility on the shoulders of others.

He may even say to his father of confession, 'Believe me, father, I did not utter any word of offense. The offense came from so and so. I defended him and said that these words are unbelievable!'

It is not necessary that the sin of judging others be clear and direct.

One may fall in such a sin in secret and indirectly, by encouraging others to sin or by opening the door for them to sin while staying afar watching and listening with an innocent expression on his face. One may even object to what is said in a way, which helps more and more to be said, by just asking a question!

The question might be concerning a certain matter not a person.

In this case, the talk develops and touches the person, because some matters are evidently related to certain people.

Therefore, the father saints says, **'Do not say words that facilitate blaming.'**

If you actually do not intend to judge others, then when someone opens the door to some talk that may lead to defaming any person, you should change the course of the conversation.

Other kinds of judging:

Judging others may sometimes happen through driving others into a corner and exposing them.

You may not say to a person that he is a fool but may address to him particular questions knowing in advance that he will not be able to answer them or that they are above his intellectual level. In this way, you are putting such a person in a critical situation revealing his ignorance in front of others intentionally. Thus you will have fallen in the sin of judging others without saying a word, but by having the intent and performing it through your questions.

You may also ask about certain personal matters that will make him feel ashamed and condemned!

For instance, you may ask, 'Where were you on this day? Whom did you meet? What did you say to him? What did he give to you?' All such questions seem void of any words of condemnation, which in fact lies in the answer to them or in the suspicions raised by them in the minds of the listeners. Those may say - even within their minds - that certainly there was something wrong.

Judging may come also in the form of a complaint.

Complaining always comes because of being wronged by someone. It means that there is an accusation against that person, and as far as the complaint spreads, the accused is defamed as being one who offends, oppresses, or insults the others.

Judging others can be through body language, not only by tongue.

For instance, when someone asks you about a certain person you press your lips in contempt and disdain, wave your hand or nod your head in a similar way, give a certain glance carrying the same meaning, without even uttering one word of condemnation. Your features and movements expressed clearly what you want to say without saying it.

Judging others may extend to include disgracing or taunting.

This is another kind of condemnation, connected with other sins, that goes so deep that it might be more dangerous than other kinds in regards to other people's feelings.

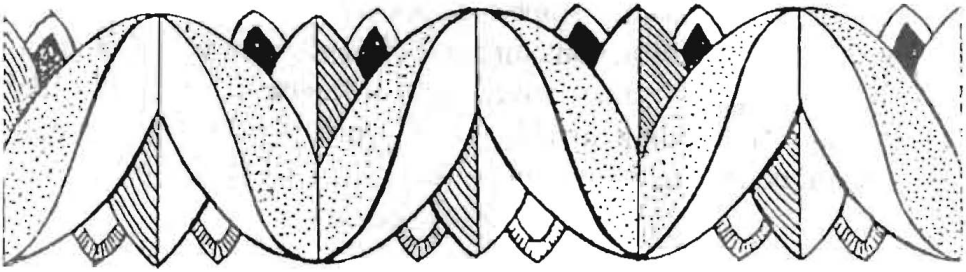
It is a kind where one insults and injures, not caring for the feelings of the condemned person!

The sin of one who contempts or disdains a person for a fall, is greater than that of one who backbites or condemns.

Know that you have the same nature of the person whom you contempt or disdain for falling into a sin or into a certain weakness, and you may also fall into the same.

Can you condemn a person whose house is robbed? You should rather have compassion on him, fearing that the same may happen to you. The sinner is in a similar situation.

See what St. Isaiah said, 'Who blames his brother, contempts him, or informs against him, is a person far from mercy.'



CHAPTER III: JUDGING OTHERS IS A

COMPOUND SIN

Having talked about anger and explained how it is a compound sin, now we say the same about the sin of judging others. It is often a series of sins collected under this title as we shall see:

An offence to many:

It involves an offence to God and to the person judging the others, and moreover to the injured person, to the listener, and to whoever is touched by such judgment, even indirectly. How can that be?

1 - An offence to God:

Judging is an act ascribed to God, because God is the Judge (Ps. 50: 6) and the Judge of all the Earth (Gn. 18: 25). He is the only One who can judge with complete justice because He tests the hearts and thoughts, knows the intentions, the hidden and the revealed things, and knows all surroundings and circumstances, certainly without any doubt.

Therefore he who judges the others is in fact giving himself God's rights and power, and acts beyond his own powers.

In this way such a person judges someone before God judges him and before the awful Day of Judgment. He judges before the time, and judges one who is under a lord that is God.

An exception of this are those granted by God the right to judge others, such as the Ruler, "*for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil*" (Rom. 13: 4).

Likewise are those set by God such as the natural parents and the spiritual fathers and whoever is in charge.

Whoever falls in the sin of judging others is breaking God's commandment "*Judge not, that you be not judged*" (Mt. 7: 1). Such a person does not obey God, and is thus sinning.

2 - An offence to him who judges the others:

The grace and divine help forsake the person who judges the others, and he falls.

In falling, one is humiliated and stops judging others, feeling that he himself is apt to fall in the same sin his brother fell in but for the support of the grace. His steadiness while the others fell is not a proof of his own power but to the work of the grace. This prevents a person from being proud or judging his brother lest the grace forsakes him and he falls.

Through judging others he falls under judgment as the Lord said, "*Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged, and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you*" (Mt. 7: 1,2) .

He who judges the others falls under judgment.

He will be measured back with the same measure, not less, and St. Mark the apostle even says, "*it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given*" (Mk. 4: 24) .

For example a person who judges the other with cruelty, will be subject to the same cruelty and even more. He might be judged here on the earth as well as there in the heaven like that servant who dealt harshly with his fellow servant who was indebted to him

as the Holy Bible says, "*Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers*" (Mt. 18: 32-34).

Some brother once asked his spiritual father, 'Why, father, does the devil fight me harshly with adultery, and I fall?'. The father said to him, 'It is because you judge your brother. Therefore the grace has forsaken you that you may feel the violence of the war and fall'. One might wonder for the first while what relation there is between judging others and adultery! In fact, there is no direct relation but the result is that the grace forsakes the person who judges others.

Do not judge the others then, not merely out of compassion for them, but out of compassion for yourself.

Out of compassion for yourself avoid the consequences of judging others. You may be subject to be forsaken by the grace, to be condemned on the Day of Judgment, or to suffer falling in the same sin for which you judged your brothers as in the story of some old father who condemned hardly a youth who fell in sin, making him fall in doubt and finally leave the monastery to the world. God permitted that the old father suffer in his old age the sin he never experienced in his youth.

Moreover, one who judges others may be treated in the same way by people.

As the saying goes, 'Who sifts people, will be bolted by them'. One who always finds faults with the others is often treated the same, and as he reveals the weaknesses of the others, his own weaknesses are revealed by them. All are under the same weakness, he who condemns, and he who is condemned.

So, when you judge the others, you expose yourself to have your weaknesses revealed.

You will have your weakness revealed by him whom you judged, by that person's friends, his beloved ones, and those defending him, or even be revealed for any reason whatsoever by God's permission, so that you may not sit yourself a judge to condemn others as if you were without blame. See what the Lord said to those who condemned the woman who was caught in adultery, He said to them, "*He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first*" (Jn. 8: 7).

The apostle described how the Lord treated those hardhearted persons who condemned the woman, saying, "*Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger*". In commentary on these words, it was said that the Lord was writing each one's sin. That is why it is written after that, "*Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last*" (Jn. 8: 8, 9).

This happened when they heard the Lord's words, "*He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first*". As if He said to them: **Instead of looking at the woman's sin, look at your own sins.**

Although the woman was actually sinful, and was not oppressed by them or falsely accused, because she was "caught in adultery", the Lord Christ wanted her accusers to look at their own sins not to the sins of the others.

God alone is the Judge, because He alone also is the Holy (Rev. 15: 4).

All humans deserve to have this saying applied to them, 'Those who

live in glass houses should not throw stones'. Would that you remember this saying that your house might not be destroyed!

Be merciful so long as you need mercy and cover the sins of others so long as you need to have your sins covered.

Use the measure which you like to be measured back to you. If you want to cover your sins and hide them from the sight of others, do the same and let not anyone know about the sins of the others.

3 - A sin against the offended:

Judging another person involves defaming him and making his reputation on the mouth of everyone and chewed by everyone. It is a dishonor to him though we are required to give preference to one another in honor (Rom. 12: 10).

In judging another person we talk about his sins without giving him opportunity to defend himself.

We do not give him the opportunity to explain his situation or the reasons that led him to act in such a way. Moreover, the whole matter might be mere rumors without any basis.

Suppose that such a person has actually sinned, why do you not cover his sin?

St. Macarius the Great became as an angel on the earth because he used to cover the sins of the others and not let them be exposed. If you cannot cover the sin of the others and hide their shameful deeds, at least do not be the cause of their being exposed on a wider scale by talking about them or discussing them.

By spreading the sins of others, you hinder the way of their

repentance.

A person whose sins are not known to others can repent if he wants, but the person whose bad reputation and sins follow him wherever he goes may find difficulty in changing his conduct and in becoming a new person!

Talking about one's sins may make one lose people's trust.

This may make it difficult for such a person to restore his dignity in his community, or to have good relations with the honorable people. Any dealing with him becomes doubtful because of the idea spread about him.

St. John Chysostom said, **'If you cannot shut the mouth that talks about his brother malignantly, at least do not talk yourself In judging others, you do not only offend God, offend yourself, offend another person, but you offend also those who hear you.**

4 - An offence to the hearers:

What is the guilt of the hearer to be offended?

You certainly know what the Lord said about those who offend others, "*Woe to him through whom they (the offenses) do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones*" (Lk. 17:1,2).

What is the guilt of the hearer? That he loses his simplicity and has bad thoughts because of you!

Because of you, the image of the others may change in his mind

and may remain so, affecting his relationship and his dealings with them without the other person knowing the cause of all this!! Why all this destruction?

Therefore, the fathers said that a person who talks wickedly against others, destroys the souls of the hearers and his own as well.

There might perhaps be another offense involved in your judgment of the others, which is

5 - Offence to people not known to you:

The words of condemnation uttered by you may extend not only to the hearers but also be carried from one person to another and spread among many people who you do not know. These also will be offended, will lose their simplicity, and their relations with the offended will change, and the circle will enlarge more and more.

The word of condemnation uttered by you is not barren; it may bring forth offspring that will also spread in many places and will give other offspring of conclusions, gossip, additions, and misunderstanding.

The word of condemnation may further give forth feelings and controversies.

If you want to know how far your sin extended or how many are those offended by you, you will not be able. It has extended too far, and the names are too many, some of them known to you and some unknown.

In judging others, you will cause some people to judge you.

They will explain how you speak about others in such a way! Why

you condemn or criticize this and that person! What motive is there behind all this! Are the words said true or false? Do you speak about them in the same way? Will they escape your tongue or will their turn come? In this way you will turn from an offender to an offended person.

Some of those who hear your words will believe you and others will not.

Those who believe you will think badly of the person you talk about, while those who do not believe you will think badly of you. In both cases, the loss will be yours and theirs.

Judging others is a compound sin:

Judging others is not always fair and innocent from a person having the authority to judge. It may become a sin when it is just gossip or offense. It may also be connected with other sins and have reasons and motives.

The reasons leading to judging others may be far more dreadful sins than the judgment itself.

Judging others does not arise from nothing, there must be motives or assisting factors which we should know, observe, and deal with. We should also find out what sins are connected with the sin of judging others. Some of these may have no relation with the sin of judging others, but are connected with some occasion or someone, or with another occasion or person! What are these sins?

Lack of love:

It is written in the Holy Bible "*Love will cover a multitude of*

***sins*" (1 Pet. 4:8).**

Perhaps this verse is quoted by St. Peter from the book of Proverbs "*Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins*" (Prov. 10:12). There is also a widespread saying with the same meaning which says, 'Your friend swallows the pebbles you throw, and your enemy wishes that you do something wrong'.

When you love someone you will not judge him, but rather defend him.

The psalmist says about the righteous person that he does no evil to his neighbor (Ps. 15:3). Much more rather such a person would do for his beloved ones, his friends and his relatives.

Usually, a person judges either a person he does not know, or a person to whom he feels neither love nor hatred and cares not for his fame in any way. Of course, this is against the principle of loving all people, because one should hold dear the fame of others whoever they might be for they are humans and brothers. Even if we do not know them, we should be mindful for them.

On the other hand, the sin of judging others may be accompanied by the sin of malice and hatred toward a person whom one hates.

Malice, rage, or hatred are serious sins which one should clean one's heart of. St. John the Beloved asserts this, saying, "*Whoever **hates** his brother is a murderer*" (1 Jn. 3:15), "*But he who **hates** his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes*" (1 Jn. 2:11)!

Hatred may be the mother of judging others, and is more

evil than its daughter.

Hatred gives birth to judging others, feeds it with its wickedness and goes with it all the way. By hatred the sin of judging others becomes a compound sin, or unmindfulness of the feelings of others giving rise to the sin of judging others. But love is far from all this.

How rather more if hatred developed into rage and malice!

Here the matter is more complex; the hatred gave forth rage and malice, and these gave rise to judging others while hatred continued to feed the three!

Judging others caused by hatred comes out of a poisoned and disturbed heart. Even the voice and words uttered when judging the others reflect the malice of the heart.

This reminds us of another sin accompanying judging others:

Hardness:

Sometimes judging others is not accompanied by hardness as when it is only gossip about others as ordinary talk or with mockery and sarcasm for amusement as they think!!

Some cases of judging others are accompanied by hard judgment or hard words.

An example of this is the scribes and Pharisees who brought the sinner woman after exposing her in front of the people. Not being satisfied with the disgrace they caused to her, they wanted to stone her according to the Law (Jn. 8:5).

Another example is the hardness of those who condemned the

Lord Christ to death.

Those insisted, crying out, "*Let Him be crucified"*, "*His blood be on us and on our children*" (Mt. 27: 23,25) (Mk. 15: 13,14). This condemnation was also accompanied by scourging, striking, spitting, and other forms of scorn coming out of hard hearts.

The hardness may be in the use of hurting words.

It may be in the form of ascribing very bad attributes to the condemned person or uttering such accusations that prejudice his honor, his character, or his mentality. For example the words "y*ou fool"* are hurting words which should be punished by the hell fire as the Lord said (Mt. 5:22). How many, actually, are the words and expressions used by people bearing the same meaning of "y*ou fool*".

Hardness may be in the harsh and severe way used by some people in judging others.

Such a person may be in strong anger, obvious nervousness, and rage while judging someone, and showing resentment, describing the behavior of that brother by the most violent words reflecting strong hard-heartedness.

The hardness may be in not giving excuse to the one judged.

It may be in not considering one's sensual, physical, or social attitude, or the surroundings and causes giving rise to the act. Notwithstanding all this the person gives his judgment conclusively, saying 'Whatever the reasons may be'.

The hardness may be in the hard punishment inflicted on the person subject to the judgment.

Such punishment may be executed by the same person if he has the power, or suggested by him if he has no power. He may say harshly 'This person deserves to be subject to such and such punishment. If I were the person in charge, I would do so and so..!'

Another sin connected with judging others is:

Oppression:

Not all judgments are fair, there might be oppressive judgments as in the case when:

A person judges someone on the basis of what he heard about him or by rumors.

What is heard may be untrue, and the rumors may be biased or issued by some malicious person intended for defaming. What is said may be mere fabrications which spread through gossip, and not everything spread is true and fit to be a basis for judgment.

The oppression may be a result of uncertainty and not making sure.

An accused person is supposed to be innocent until his crime is established. It is also supposed that we do not believe whatever is said by anyone without examining the matter and giving the accused the opportunity to defend himself.

Joseph the Righteous was condemned for a crime which he had not committed, and was accused falsely by his master's wife. However, he was imprisoned and was subject to his master's anger who did not make sure whether the accusation was true or not. The whole region perhaps was filled with the ill repute of Joseph because of what the evil wife of Potiphar said. And perhaps he was surrounded

all the years of his imprisonment by the false judgment and ill repute.

The oppression may be due to ignorance of the fact as in the case of Potiphar and Joseph, or knowingly and intently as Potiphar's wife did against innocent Joseph.

Whether the oppression is unknowingly or intently, it condemns an innocent person, and this leads us to another sin connected with the sin of judging others, that is:

Lying:

Lying may be a full lie or exaggeration

A full lie means that a person fabricates a talk against someone to defame him, knowing certainly that such talk is mere slander. Of course he does so out of hatred within him or as a kind of revenge or envy, in which case judging that person is a compound sin involving many other sins.

Judging others may be accompanied by partial lying in the form of exaggeration in an offensive way.

One may fall in a religious fault for lack of understanding, but someone may present this fault to others as being a heresy, a shameful act, or a disgrace, enlarging the fault as if it were a blasphemy.
This may be done either out of a desire to offend that person, or because he is by nature exaggerating in whatever he says.

The lie may be the fabrication of the person who judges the others, or conveyed from others.

In both the foregoing cases the offended person is subject to oppression though innocent. The one who conveys a lie should examine the matter carefully before accepting it and conveying it to others. He may even have no right to convey it.

Another sin connected with judging others is:

Pride:

One who judges others is usually forgetful of his own sins.

If a person remembers his own sins, he will not think of his brother's sins, talk of them, or blame him of them! The scribes and Pharisees were forgetful of their own sins when they condemned the woman caught in adultery, therefore the Lord reminded them of their sins. Feeling remorse, they stopped condemning the woman and went away (Jn. 8:9-11).

Pride makes one feel better than the others and judge them.

The arrogant Pharisee judged the tax collector in the Temple when he saw himself unlike other men: extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even unlike that tax collector, when he remembered his righteousness, his fasting and tithes (Lk. 18:11,12). On the other hand, the tax collector was involved in condemning himself before God and did not judge another person.

Judging others increases through arrogance when a person compares himself to someone of a lower level.

The arrogant judges the person of a lower level than himself as the Pharisee did against the tax collector, whereas the humble seeing himself the lowest does not judge anyone. The arrogant thinks it impossible for him to fall in the same sin which the judged one fell,

whereas the humble does not consider himself beyond any sin, but remembers that sin "*has cast down many wounded, and all who were slain by her were strong men*" (Prov. 7:26) . This makes him not judge others.

Arrogance makes one judge those greater than himself.

Miriam and Aaron fell in judging their brother Moses the great prophet because of the Ethiopian woman he had married. God rebuked them and explained to them how they were much lower than Moses so that they might restore their humbleness and know the worth of that great person whom they judge . And God struck Miriam with leprosy and shut out of the camp seven days as unclean to learn humbleness and not judge one greater than her (Num. 12:15).

The reason behind the fall of Miriam and Aaron was pride as they said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" So, the Lord reproached them to know their worth and be humbled.

Another sin comes with judging others:

Offending others:

This happens as a result of judging others by the tongue not only within oneself or one's mind.

When judging by tongue, the hearer is offended and falls with the speaker in the same sin.

In this way the speaker who judged someone has caused his brother to fall and will be charged by God for such an offence. And the more people offended, the greater the sin of the speaker

becomes.

One more sin connected with judging others is:

Insult and disdain:

In judging others, the judged is undoubtedly disgraced.

In judging someone, his defects or weak points, and his sins or faults are revealed. Sometimes the judgment is so severe that it involves insult and despise, or involves abuse and contempt. The judging person may look disdainfully to the one judged making him feel worthless, or reprimand him in contempt, or even make others disregard him or lose respect for him.

The matter may develop to hurting the judged person by revealing his secrets and private matters before people.

He may further tell disgraceful things about the person he judges, and may even make the hearers believe that said person is useless and cannot be corrected, as if judging him as lost!

Another point related to this point is:

Impropriety:

A person who judges someone else may mention his defects before his enemies making them gloat against him.

The enemies may take the opportunity and increase their attacks against such a person having then a new material to fight him with. This, of course, causes that person many troubles and problems.

The person may be judged before his subordinates, his children, or

those younger or lower in rank than him, this is apt of making that person lose his dignity or even his position.

All such matters and the like are improper and added to the sin of judging others making it bigger and more chargeable.

All this may mix with lack of wisdom, or lack of consideration of others' feelings.

Another sin that sometimes happens is:

Judging others' intents:

A person may even judge one's intents and purposes, and say that so and so has an evil intent or ill will!

The intents and purposes are solely God's concern.

Going far in judging others makes one fall in judging intents and may say that this is due to one's experience in that field or due to making conclusions. In fact neither of these excuses is certain and most probably the conclusions are all wrong and oppressive out of a claim of a knowledge which is nothing but thinking more highly than one ought to think (Rom. 12:3).

Judging the intents - even though true - is a spiritual fault.

Rather more faulty is judging the inner feelings and the thoughts of people, since such feelings and thoughts can only be known through suspicions which are not always true.

A person may judge the whole life, nature, or character of someone, and even judge his destiny.

Some old father said in the Paradise of Monks: [If only the spirit of the man knows the things of a man (1 Cor. 2:11), and we know that many have repented without us knowing of their repentance, and since anyone can repent at that last moment of his life and be accepted by God as the thief who was on the Lord's right hand, therefore, we should not judge anyone. God is the only Judge, how dare we then interfere in God's rights].

One last sin connected with the sin of judging others is:

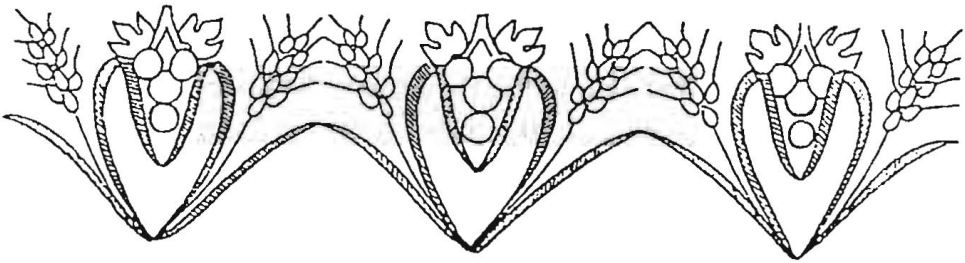
Hypocrisy

A person who judges another for some fault which he himself does or even worse, is described by the Lord Christ as hypocrite.

The Lord Christ says to such a person, "*And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?... Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye*" (Mt. 7:3-5).

It is a kind of hypocrisy if we judge people for things we fall in secretly.

We perhaps fall In other things which may be even more sinful.



CHAPTER IV: THE SAYINGS OF THE FATHERS ON JUDGING OTHERS

St. Dorotheus said:

'Judging God's creation is proper for God Himself rather than for us'

'He (God) alone knows everyone's secret and hidden matters, and He alone has the power to judge everything and everyone'.

'God alone has the right to justify or condemn because He knows the nature and power of everyone'.

God knows also everyone's inclinations, talents, physical properties, and capabilities. Therefore, when He judges, He judges with justice. That is why St. Paul said when addressing whoever dares to assume this authority only God has, "Who are you to judge another 's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand" (Rom. 14:4).

St. Dorotheus also said,

'The poison of judgement sometimes originates from someone and pours into the others'.

Here St. Doretheus describes judging others as a poison which causes the death of the person it reaches, as if the person judging others were a serpent spitting out its venom...

And St. Evagrius said,

'Do not differentiate between those who fell into sin and those who have not. Let not proud thoughts convince you to be a judge'.

Here the saint connects judging others to pride.

St. Isaiah also said,

'If you find that someone has sinned, do not scorn or despise him lest you should fall in the hands of your enemies'.

Indeed, what is your purpose from judging someone? Do you want people to hate him or do you want that God destroys him and punishes him according to his wicked deeds?

There is a story in the "Paradise of Monks" that sheds light on this matter:

This story says: There was a monk who neglected his worship and slacked until the day when he was about to die and the monks gathered around him to see how he would receive death. They found him joyful!! An elder father asked him: 'Be strong, brother, in the name of Christ, and tell us why are you so joyful?'

That brother replied: I saw some people coming to take my soul, and I saw the deeds caused by my sins. They said, 'here are your sins', and I said I know and do not deny them. But since I became a monk, I have not judged anyone, and I want the verse that says "*Judge not that you be not judged*" to be applied to me. **Since I have not judged anyone how can I be judged? Upon uttering these words, these sinful deeds were erased.**

This monk did not live a life of sin, but he neglected his worshipping duties. He was kind-hearted, harbored no malice against anyone,

judged no one, spoke no evil against anyone, and was humble. **Thanks to his humility and not judging others, that monk was saved.**

Through careful compliance with the commandment he was able to escape the judgment that would have otherwise been inflicted on him because of his slackness.

St. Irayes said,

'It is good for one to eat meat and drink wine rather than eat the flesh of the brothers and drink their blood through slander.'

St. Irayes also said,

'As the serpent - by talking to Eve - caused her to be dismissed from Paradise, so also the person who backbites his neighbor. Such a person causes the perdition of the souls that listen to him, and his own soul will not escape as the serpent could not escape the curse'.

Such a person destroys himself and the others as well.

St. Misra said:

'Self-control, which is better than abstaining from food and towards which you should force yourself, comprises not eating one's flesh or drink his blood by slander'.

These are the same words of St. Irayes. St. Isaac, the Bishop of Nineveh, reiterated the same:

St Isaac said:

"The fasting of one who abstains from food and drink but continues to eat the flesh of other people through slander is in vain."

St. Isaac considers the person who judges others a sensual person and not a spiritual one. He judges all people because his heart contains the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, by which he examines the acts of people and labels them as good or bad. St Isaac says,

'A sensual person is a judge of the righteous and the sinner, a judge of the alive and the dead, in whose heart there is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil from which the head of our kind, Adam, was prohibited to eat, but the sensual person always obtains his knowledge from it'.

A sensual person is fond of judging whoever he meets - not only living people, but also the dead - he weighs on the scale of the knowledge of good and evil.

Indeed, very often our judgment is not limited to living people but extends also to the dead who may have repented before their death and God blotted away their sins and does not remember them anymore according to His promise, "*For I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more*" (Jer. 31:34).

God will not remember the sins of the people, yet we remember them!

What an amazing matter! One's memory sometimes troubles him and the others. One's tongue also sometimes troubles him and the others. Man sets himself an observer of the acts of all people using a critical eye, a relentless mind, and a tongue that may hurt. But the saints prohibited judging others whatever the reasons may be.

St. Anthony said:

'Do not reproach anyone whatever reasons you may have, and do not slander your brother even if you see him unable to complete his canon.'

St. Bachum said:

'Do not despise anyone or judge him even though you see him falling in the sin'.

The teaching of the Holy Bible asserts this rule in t**he story of the woman caught in adultery:**

She was brought by those who caught her to the Lord to sentence her to be stoned. They were not falsely accusing her or ascribing to her something she had not done, because she was really sinful. Yet the Lord prevented them from judging her, and turned their thoughts to their own sins when He said to them, "*He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first*" (Jn. 8:7).

The Lord, thus, gave us a lesson not to judge anyone even though we see him falling into sin.

We also fall into many sins. A sick person cannot reproach another sick person for his sickness because both are suffering from the same ailment. It is better to cover the shortfalls of others than to expose them because we also have our own.

St. John Chrysostom said:

'If you cannot cover your brother, take his sin, ascribe it to yourself, and die on his behalf, then at least do not judge him!'

'If you cannot stop the mouth which talks evil against your brother, at least do not, yourself, open your mouth with evil against him'.

Therefore, the most ideal thing is to prevent people from tarnishing your brother's reputation. If you cannot do that, at least do not take part in judging him and, more importantly, do not start a talk of judgment.

St. Paul of Sinai said:

'Sigh in sorrow for your neighbor when he sins as you sigh for yourself, because we all are subject to fall'.

This way, you would be treating him with compassionate love, not with cruel judgment. He is your brother and neighbor even though he falls. The heavenly Father, when the prodigal son returned, said, "*for this My son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found*" (Lk. 15:24). The Father called him "son" though he was dead and lost, how the more you should likewise treat your brother. Furthermore, we notice something important in this story:

The heavenly Father forgave the prodigal son, but his brother did not!!

His brother even refused to come in and share in the joy for his return. He judged his brother as well as his father, saying, "*... this son of yours..., who has devoured your livelihood with harlots*" (Lk. 15:30) .

Our Lord is truly amazing in His love and kindness. He forgives though He has all the right not to while we, who have no right whatsoever, judge!

St. Anastasius said:

'Do not be a judge to your brother so that you may deserve forgiveness, because the Lord says, "Judge not that you be not judged".'

The measure of forgiveness and mercy which we use with the others, will be returned to us on Judgement Day.

Avoiding judging others helps us gain forgiveness ourselves, provided we have faith and repentance.

St Isaac said also:

'Beware of having evil thoughts against your brother; this will demolish the foundation of the tower of virtue within your heart, even if you have attained perfection'.

St. Isaac justifies this view, saying, 'It is because dwelling on bad thoughts hardens the heart.'

St Isaac adds: 'Cover the sin of your brother and strengthen him without feeling disgusted so that you may be borne by the mercy of the Lord God'.

It means that the mercy with which we treat sinners makes us worthy of receiving God's mercy as the Lord said, "*With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given*" (Mk. 4:24).

Other sayings by St Isaac include:

'Support the weak, the lowly, and meek-spirited with a word and you

will be supported by the right hand that bears all people... Share with those who suffer with your serious prayers and sighs of the heart... that your request gets responded to by the Fountain of mercy' .

'Do not hate a sinner because we are all sinners and transgressors. If you are moved by his case, weep for him and pray for his soul'.

Hence the fathers put mercy in the place of judgment and command us to pray for the sinner instead of defaming him. This not only benefits the sinner, but also ourselves so that we may not be judged for judging him, but receive mercy from God for our mercy towards him.

The sayings of the fathers agree on this point:

St. Anthony said:

'Judge not others lest you fall in the hands of your enemies'... lest you return to the old sins you abandoned.

If God found you to be cruel in your judgments, He may allow you to experience the same fierce wars these sinners suffer from at the hands of the devils. When you yourself fall, then you will have compassion towards others and stop judging them.

St. Anthony also said: 'Beware that you do not reproach anyone lest God should reject your prayer'.

Indeed, how serious are these two consequences of judging others according to the teaching of our father St. Anthony?

a. To be delivered to the hands of one's enemies and return to abandoned sins; and

b. To have one's prayers rejected by God.

God rejects such prayers because they are not coming from a loving heart.

St. Isaiah the Hermit teaches the same.

St. Dorotheus said:

'Whoever judges someone in his heart and opens his mouth against him will fall in the same sin for which he judged his brother as the divine help will forsake him.'

St. Macarious the Great said:

'Hold your tongue and do not say evil about your brothers because who says evil about his brother will anger God who dwells within him'.

'Whatever one commits against his companion is considered done against God'.

A story from the "Paradise of Monks":

Once, father Isaac the Theban joined an assembly and judged one of the brothers for some act. When that father returned to his cell in the wilderness, the angel of the Lord appeared at the door of the cell, and said to him, 'God sent me to ask you: **where would you like us to throw that brother's soul?'**

So, father Isaac knew that he sinned by doing this because he did not mean of course that that brother's soul perishes. Immediately, he repented and said to the angel, 'I have sinned, may the Lord God forgive me through your prayers!'. And the angel said to him 'God has already forgiven you, but guard yourself and do not judge anyone before God judges him.'

St. Bimen said:

'There might be a person who seems silent while he is judging others in his mind. Whoever does this is indeed 'talking'.

The saint means that judging others may take place within the mind as well, not only verbally. Holding one's tongue from judging others does not mean that the mind does not judge.

However, judging in one's mind deserves less condemnation than judging aloud.

The reason for this is that this slip of the mind does not influence listeners. Furthermore, for such a fall one does not defame another person. Judging in one's mind is confined to oneself, and has no external results unless it progresses and spills out to the tongue.

One of the fathers said:

'If you see someone sinning today, do not judge him tomorrow because how can you know if he repented that night from his sins and God has forgiven him?!'

St. Macarius the Great also said:

'Do not put in your mind or accept in your heart that someone is evil

because St. Peter the Apostle said, "*God has shown me that I should not call anyone common or unclean*" (Acts 10:28).

St. Ephraim said:

'Feeling pleased with the faults of others shows that we are filled with malice.'

'Who gloats over the fall of his brother will have the same fall as him.'

'Do not disdain your brother within you because how do you know what will happen the next day! Perhaps he will repent and you will fall!'

'Who insults his companion is known for backbiting and malice. Such a person has no compassion or mercifulness.'

'Do not set yourself a judge towards others because everyone will be charged for his own deeds; you will not be charged for what others have done'.

St. Simeon the Amoudi said:

'If you find that one of your brothers deviated a little, do not lose hope because the Holy Bible says, "*Comfort one another*" (1 Thess. 4:18)'. 'You are expected to raise the falling person not to destroy him'.

'If you judge your brother, what will you say about yourself?'

St. Bimen said:

'If we judge ourselves, there will be no time left for us to judge others' .

St. Isaac said:

'Judge not the others lest you should suffer the same.'

He means lest one should fall in the same spiritual warfare the others endure, thus exposing oneself to temptations.

'Remember that you are created from the earth and that you share with others the human body and the burden of the human nature'.

'Only the person who neglects the remembrance of God speaks evil of his brother'.

It means that when one is busy praying and contemplating, reading the Holy Bible, and remembering God continually within his heart, he will have no time to remember the sins of people. On the other hand, the person who slacks in worshipping will have spare time and an opportunity to judge others.

St. John the Short said:

'Be sorrowful for those who perished, and be merciful towards those who fell'.

These words resemble the words of St. Paul the Apostle in his epistle to the Hebrews, "*Remember the prisoners as if chained with them - those who are mistreated - since you yourselves are in the body also*" (Heb. 13:3).

Indeed, we should not judge those who fall, but rather raise them up.

The Holy Bible says, "*Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees*" (Isa. 35:3), and the apostle says, "*Comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all*" (1 Thess. 5:14).

He says "*uphold the weak*" - not judge, despise, or defame them before other people.

St. Isaac also said:

'One who examines the plank in his own eye will not find time to observe the speck in his brother's eye'.

'One who corrects the weak areas he sees in others has found a spiritual mirror within himself'.

It means that when we see a fault done by others, we ought to examine ourselves. Perhaps we have the same fault and need to correct in ourselves what the others have been condemned for.

St. Evagrius said words bearing this same meaning.

St. Evagrius said:

'One who examines the defects of others has not yet carefully examined his own deeds. Had he examined himself well, he would have found deep inside the same defect the others have.'

St. Melus said something along the same lines:

'If we mind our own issues, we will not judge others because we

have the same faults for which we blame them' .

One of the fathers said:

God is the Judge and has committed all judgment to the Son (Jn. 5:22). However, this judgment is postponed to the Last Day on which He will come to judge the living and the dead. Why then do you speed judgment and start to judge now?

St. Macarius the Great said:

'Keep yourselves from slander and backbiting so that your hearts may be pure because the ear that hears slander cannot keep the purity of the heart undefiled'.

Keep your ear clean so that your heart may become clean since the ear is connected to the heart.

Now if the person who hears is in danger, the person who speaks is in much greater danger, and more so is the one who conveys evil talk.

What can we say also about the person who damages the relations between people by the talk he conveys? Certainly he is far from God because the Holy Bible says, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God*" (Mt. 5:9). The person who does not make peace but incites strife is not a son of God.

St. John of Assiut was once asked:

Isn't the person who judges evil actually hates it?

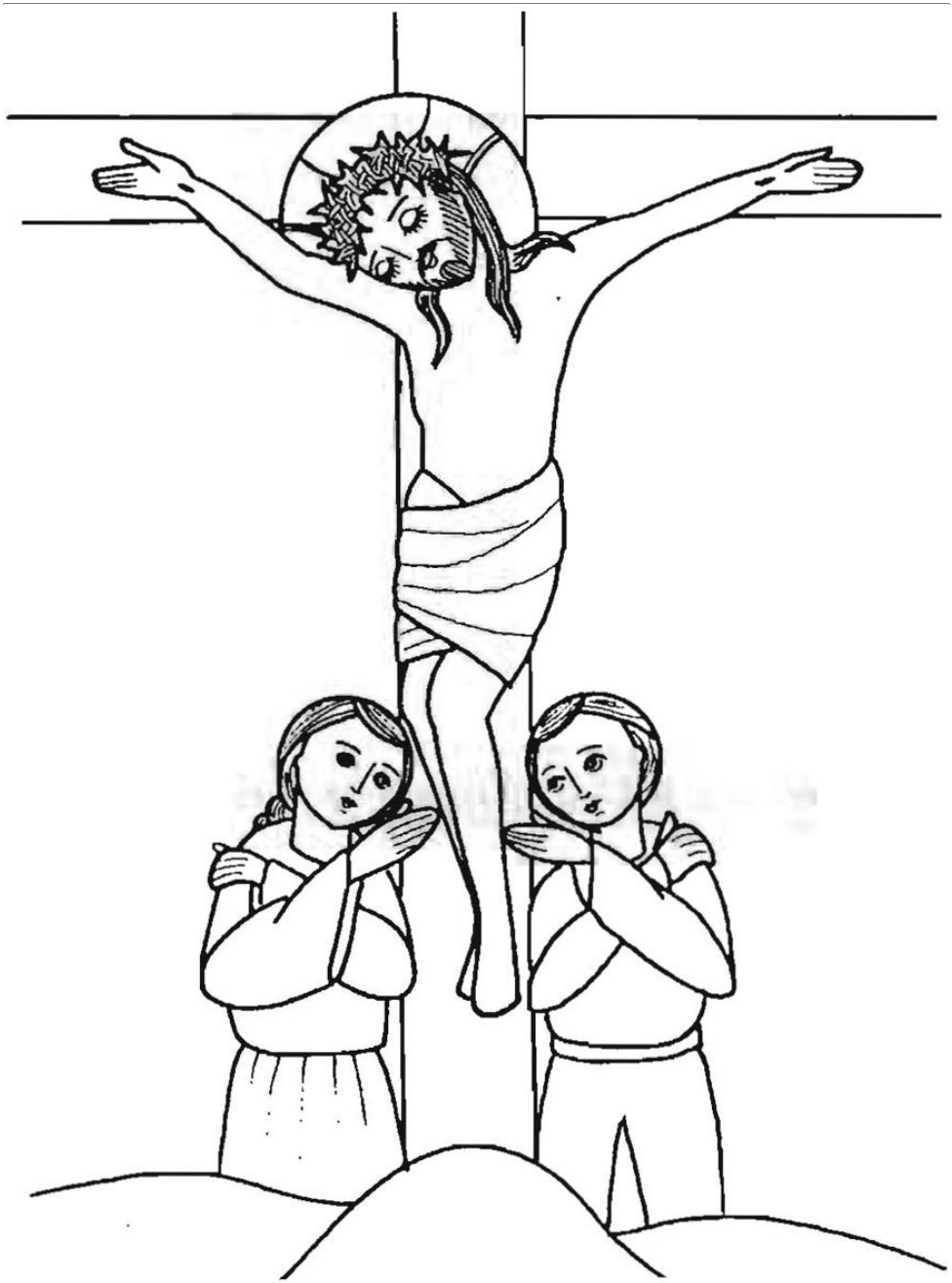
The saint answered, 'No, because all the people claim that they

hate evil, but it is your actions that really prove you hate evil'.

St. Augustine said:

'Man who was able to tame beasts could not tame his tongue (James 3:8)'.

'Who does not fear the words of the Lord, "*Whoever says (to his brother) 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hellfire*" (Mt. 5:22)'.



CHAPTER V: REMEDIES FOR JUDGING OTHERS

- Train yourself to respect others.
- Find a solution for leisure.
- Avoid listening to judgments.
- Correcting others is not an excuse.
- The example of the tares and wheat.
- Humility and self-reproach.
- Remedial exercises to avoid judging others.

Train yourself to respect others:

If we know the reasons behind judging others, we will be able to find remedies for it. The first reason is that a person permits himself to defame others and hurt them.

Therefore, train yourself to honor and love people in their presence as well as in their absence.

Train yourself not to offend anyone whether in talking with him or against him with somebody else.

If you have a good word to say, say it. Otherwise, keep silent. Train yourself not to hurt anyone or speak badly against them. Criticize not anyone, nor analyze anyone; for in this case you will not judge anyone.

One used to respecting others, never judges them.

Such a person is called by people "a decent person"; for he speaks properly to everyone, with respect and decorum, and never utters bad words. His tongue is not used to hurting anyone or talking badly

against anybody, and consequently does not judge anybody.

See what St. James the apostle says on this point when talking about the tongue and its faults:

"**With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God**" (James 3:9).

Hence, the sin of judging others is a curse against the people, who were created in God's image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27). The apostle says further about blaming people, "*Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing! My brethren, these things ought not to be so*" (James 3:10).

God says, "*Bless those who curse you*" (Mt. 5:44), is it proper then that we curse our brothers?

The apostle says, "*bless and do not curse*" (Rom. 12:14). So, let your mouth be clean, and your tongue pure and decent, out of it comes words of blessing not words of judgment, insult, curse, or hurting.

Train yourself to speak only about the virtues of others as much as possible.

Concentrate on the good points in the lives of others and neglect their weak points. Try to forget them. As for those whose image has become so gloomy in your mind as Alexander the coppersmith with St. Paul the Apostle (2 Tim. 4:14), do not mention their names on your mouth as much as you can until God corrects them, if this is possible. In this case, their image will change in your mind.

Excluded from this rule are the enemies of the church and enemies of the faith.

The church must be on its guard against these enemies and explain their theological faults so that none may fall in the same. The Lord Christ has warned against such people, saying, "*Beware of false prophets*" (Mt. 7:15), and also, "*Beware of men*..." (Mt. 10:17) .

Find a solution for leisure:

When people find nothing to talk about, they often talk about others and about their faults, disgraceful acts, and falls.

Hence the conduct of people might become the main subject of conversation in houses, parks, or coffeeshops and wherever people gather. It is not because they want to judge others, but merely because they find nothing to talk about except that.

Such people may also judge the presidents of some countries just because they read something against them in the newspapers without being sure that such things are true!

They may judge someone who the newspapers mention was arrested for a certain accusation, and the newspapers mention after some months that he was acquitted by the court. But that accused person will have been defamed through these months, especially if some people have read the story of his being arrested and not read about his acquittance.

I would that people find substantial and useful subjects to occupy their leisure.

In this case, they will certainly find no place for talking about people's conduct. See how the students in universities or schools are busy during the exams, studying and getting ready. They have no time to tell tales, to imitate and make fun of their teachers, or to

talk about their colleagues and about their faults and shameful conduct. Certainly they have no time for such matters; they are busy with their exams.

A working woman has not enough time to sit and talk with her neighbors about the others.

Of course there may be some talks about the faults of others and judging them if there is time for that, but of course much less than in the case of non-working women who have a lot of time for leisure they do not know how to spend. In this case, the possibility of falling in conversations about the conduct of the other exists.

However, we say that leisure is half the fact, and the other half is the way that leisure is spent.

Some may make use of the leisure time in useful reading which he and others may benefit from. Others may make use of the leisure time in handwork, in training in a certain skill or craft, or in serving others like visiting the sick, comforting the mournful, or helping the needy.

When meeting with some people, everyone needs a useful subject to discuss.

This is possible, if one of them sees to it and is able to direct the conversation towards a useful subject which he has studied well and is able to talk about and to answer any questions on it, taking the lead tactfully before another person presents a point attracting all of them to judging others.

This may even happen within the family.

One can simply and spontaneously present some scientific or

religious subject, some story or news, some useful discovery, summary of a chapter of a book of culture or history, a new interesting matter, or some amusements, quizzes on the Holy Bible, or stories of saints, provided this be done in such a way that no one feels he is before a teacher or a lecturer.

A family gathering needs preparation, the same as the gathering of friends.

Aimless gatherings may lead to judging others, to idle chatter that is a waste of time, or to controversies ending with shouting and fighting since there is no useful subject to talk about or one who leads the conversation wisely.

Is not this idleness of mind not mere leisure?

This is then the answer to the question; why are houses, parks, and gatherings filled with conversations about people's conduct?

Because they are idle and have no other subject to talk about.

Avoid listening to judgments:

Try, as much as you can, to not hear what is said about the faults of others.

Keep away from the gatherings which you know will touch such subjects. And if you are forced to stay, do not concentrate your thoughts on what you hear but try to busy yourself with something else or change the subject.

Do not believe all that is said about the others' faults.

Perhaps the person who tells you about the faults of someone is not accurate or heard about them from some person who in turn heard it from another and so on, thus the information has changed from the actual facts. Moreover, the offended person may have an excuse for what is said about him. We cannot judge a matter from one side only. Say to yourself,

'Even though what is said is true, how is it my business?

Always repeat these words 'I have nothing to do with that, let me see to my own affairs. People's news are not my business, I am not responsible for them before God or people. I will not pay attention to what I heard as if I heard nothing.'

Such words will make you think no more of any judgments you hear.

Thinking of the judgment you hear will implant it in your mind and may develop. So, let what you hear pass without giving it any place within you or talking about it with others or conveying it to others so that it may not increase.

Try further to pray for the judged person that God may cover his sins.

Pray God to forgive him and ask mercy for him and that God may correct him. But never despise or judge him.

St. Moses the Strong once said, 'Never listen to any talk about the fall of one of your brothers lest you should have judged him within yourself.'

Correcting others is not an excuse: If you ever think that you are judging others in order to correct them, out of holy zeal, say then to

yourself:

I will not lose myself for the sake of correcting others!

Say also: Do I correct the others of my own accord? Or am I in charge of that before God and my conscience will reproach me if I do not do so? And have I yet attained a level that I can correct others?

If you are actually entrusted with stewardship (1 Cor. 9:17), put before you this important spiritual rule:

Whoever wants to correct others should correct them virtuously.

This can be through love, humility, decent calm words, and without hurting the person you want to correct or revealing his weak points before others.

You cannot correct anyone by reproach or defaming.

See what beautiful words the Lord says in this concern, "*tell him his fault between you and him alone*" (Mt. 18:15). Commenting on this verse, St. John Chrysostom says, 'Hear what the Lord Christ says .. "*between you and him*." He did not say between you and the whole city or all the people. It should be in secret so that correction may be easy.'

God Himself does the same with you, in secret also.

When God wants to rebuke you for some sin and lead you to repentance, He does this through one of the Church Sacraments, between you and His priest in secret not in a public confession.

In defending the truth and correcting others, remember the words of St. Paul the Apostle, "*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted*" (Gal. 6:1). Remember also the words of St. James the Apostle, "*Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above*" (James 3:13-15).

Another point is that you have to examine yourself well.

Do you really judge the others with the purpose of correcting them?

Are you motivated merely by pure holy zeal without any other motives? Or is the real motive lack of love for that person, inner malice, gloating, or an attempt to appear more knowledgeable, better than the others and a teacher or leader? Examine yourself well.

If - in your zeal - you claim that you are acquiring God's rights from people, ask yourself, **Have you given God His rights from within you?**

Have you started with correcting yourself before correcting others? Do you see clearly now to remove the speck from your brother's eye (Mt. 7:5) without causing him harm?

Regarding correcting others, we should put before us:

The example of the tares and wheat:

The servants came to the Lord asking if He wanted them to gather up the tares from the field, and the Lord answered, "*No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest*" (Mt. 13:28-30).

God does not want us to waste our effort in gathering up the tares but rather to grow as wheat.

He wants us to grow as wheat so that when the day of harvest comes, it may find the ears full with thirty, sixty, and one hundred grains, and our granaries be filled with wheat.

Many are those who engaged themselves in gathering up tares in the name of holy zeal and correction, and thus were filled with anger, anxiety and shouting, and spread judgments, blaming and rebuking others. They used to speak about the faults of the church, the associations, the ministers, and the priests with harsh words void of respect and decency.

But people saw in those reformers and in their anger and hurtful conduct the pictures of the tares exactly.

Indeed, I fear that while gathering up tares, you yourself become tares!

You may lose your meekness and humility and get used to insulting, hurting, defaming, and haughtiness. Your judgments will become cruel, and you may feel hatred and hostility towards others, and become furious! How strange! Is it for the Lord that you fall in all these sins?

Beware lest while gathering up the tares from others you uproot the wheat that is in you also! Beware lest you uproot your calmness, the peace of heart and decency, and with them the fruit of the Spirit

within you, "*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness. goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*" (Gal. 5: 22).

Though you lose all this, you will find that you have corrected no one!

You will find that you have gained nothing, neither the heaven nor the earth, neither leading people to the Kingdom nor gaining your peace and good relations with people. You have gained neither the people nor yourself, because correcting people cannot be done through judging and defaming.

St. Augustine said:

If we get angry with the wicked, we are but human. We have to listen to the words of the apostle, "*let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*" (1 Cor. 10:12).

Let us be wheat and waste not our time in gathering up tares, and, if we do, let it be our own tares. Let us uproot the sin within us and remove it away lest in trying to correct others we forget to correct ourselves.

How strange that everyone sets himself in charge of others!

How strange that one thinks of others and of their deeds and the judgments he should utter against them, and the last thing he thinks about is himself.

Believe me, it is a war from the devil by which he wants to attract our attention from ourselves to thinking about people's sins, and from repentance to thinking about people's deeds.

On the Last Day, God will charge you for your own sins, not for the sins of others.

Humility and self-reproach:

The sin of judging others can be remedied by judging oneself. These are against one another as some saints said:

*** St. Evagrius explains: 'If we judge and condemn ourselves as wicked, we shall see the others chaste and angels. But if we judge and condemn the others as wicked, we shall see ourselves angels and saints.'**

* Once some brothers praised someone before **St. Bimen** saying that he hates evil. The saint asked them what did they mean by 'hates evil', and when they were confused the saint explained, 'To hate evil is to hate the evil things we do, not the things which the others do.'

*** St. Bachum said, 'Judging others is a result of one's haughtiness, but the humble considers all people better than himself.'**

Keep away any thought that leads you to consider yourself righteous and despise your brother because very blessed is the one who honors others and despises himself.'

Therefore, whenever you are fought by a thought to judge someone, remember your sins and say: That person is more righteous than me because I have done such and such things. He could not have fallen in the same things I fell in.

If you do not think of your weak points, you will fall in the

weaknesses of others.

*** St. Isaiah said in this respect: Unless you concentrate on your sins and keep thinking of them, you will fall in the sins of others.**

* Once a brother asked an elderly father monk, 'Why do I always judge the brothers?' The father answered, 'It is because if you care for yourself, you will have no time to care about others. One who is aware of the plank in his eye and tries to get it out, will have no time to remove the speck from his brother's eye.'

So, if you think of judging someone, say to yourself, 'I also am a sinner.' 'Let me examine myself well, and if I find myself without sin, I will throw a stone at him.'

* One day the monks dismissed a brother, and when St. Serapion asked about the reason they told him because of the sin in which he fell. Upon hearing this, St. Serapion left their company, saying 'I also am a sinner.'

* There is also the famous story of **St. Moses the Strong** who was called to judge a brother who sinned. The saint came carrying on his back a sack full of sand with a hole in it, and when he was asked why he did so he said, 'Here are my sins running behind me and I am here to judge my brother for his sin!!'

* Once a brother asked **St. Bimen**, 'How can I manage not to backbite others?' The saint replied, 'When one blames himself, his brother will be more honorable and greater in his eyes than himself. But if one admires himself, he will find his brother wrong and condemned.'

*** St. Isaac also said, 'Blessed is the person who honors his brother and condemns himself, and blessed is the person who sees in the weak points of others his own falls.'**

It means that whenever one finds a fault in others, he has to examine himself and he will find the fault within himself and will blame himself instead of judging others. And if one sees others rebuking someone for a certain fault, he will say to himself 'This blow is directed to your face.'

Remedial exercises to avoid judging others:

1. Train yourself to cure yourself from sins of the tongue as a whole:

In this way you will get rid indirectly of the sin of judging others. Attempt some exercises in silence or in not interfering with what is not your concern. No doubt the sin of judging others will come under the preceding title.

Such an exercise will help you resist judging by the tongue, and will be a step towards resisting judging by the mind as it will implant within you avoidance of judging others.

2. Remember the words of the Lord, "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent' (Rev. 2:5).

This comes by sitting with yourself and trying to find out who the persons often judged by you are, what subjects lead you to judging others, and what gatherings or characters are stumbling blocks to you. Then, be on your guard against these sources of judging others.

3. Try to overcome judging others by love:

If you have lost love for some people or lost part of your love for them, try as much as you can to restore what you have lost because the Holy Bible says about love that it "does not behave rudely... thinks not evil; does not rejoice in iniquity" (1 Cor. 13:5-6) and thereupon does not judge.

Be sure that judging others makes relations worse. Instead of restoring the old love, the gap will become deeper between the judged person and you, especially if there are some people who convey the talk and add to it. Even without those, your conscience and heart will not be easy.

4. Remember that judging others causes harm to you as well:

The saints say that if one judges others, he will be forsaken by the divine grace and support, thus become exposed to falling. And the Lord said, "With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you, and... more will be given" (Mk. 4:24). Besides, you will fall in other sins related to judging others.

St. Bephnotius said:

Never say a bad word against your brother lest God should deprive you from the promised land and from eating of its fruit... as He did with the people of Israel when He deprived their father Moses, and their brothers Joshua and Caleb from coming to the promised land.

An elderly father monk once said:

'The sin of backbiting or slander does not allow who falls in it to stand in God's presence because it is written, "*Whoever secretly*

slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy" (Ps. 102:5).

Keep away from judging others for fear of falling, and of being punished.

You can put in your mind some verses of the Holy Bible on judging others; learn them by heart, repeat them, and contemplate on them every now and then.

5. Train yourself not to think evil of people, or judge rashly.

In thinking evil of people, you may be oppressive and the same when judging rashly. Do not judge anyone without examining the matter. Train yourself to judge slowly and deliberately whether you have a right or not.

Beware putting on a black eyeglasses through which you see the people.

6. Train yourself to judge people with compassion:

Be on the merciful side not the cruel one. Think within you of an excuse that may make the judgment lighter. In your compassion, pray for the guilty; for prayers arouse more the feelings of compassion, and compassion urges you to pray.

7. Do not judge according to the visible:

You may find a person standing in front of a church crying for money because he finds no food for his children, but no one gives him. You may say in your heart, 'How cruel are those people who have no mercy for a hungry man!!' But if you do ask, you will know that he receives much, perhaps much more than he needs, and is not satisfied. He does this act, crying for help to press on people to

have more without deserving!

8. Train yourself to tolerate those who offend you:

Sometimes, lack of tolerance makes you feel annoyed and complain against them, speaking of their faults before everyone and judging them according to your annoyance.

Know that we are not in an ideal world. There must be faults, and if we rise against every fault and express our rage by our tongues judging and talking of the faults before people, threatening and punishing, no doubt we will feel comfortable but no one will be in comfort.

Many of the people's faults require us to disregard and face with patience and tolerance as if they have not happened, without judging those who committed them.

9. Never judge a person for a quality in which he has no hand:

Do not make such a person exposed to mockery, or contempt because of his defect whether be it in his form, mind, or being too short or too fat or the like. It is not fair to judge someone because of something beyond his control.

10. Be very careful when you judge through blaming:

Though God allowed blaming (Mt. 18:15), but not everyone bears blaming. Often blaming brings very bad results, therefore, the Holy Bible says, "*He who reproves a scoffer gets shame for himself, and he who rebukes a wicked man gets himself a blemish. Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you. Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you*" (Prov. 9:7-8).

In conclusion, do not let judging others be a nature in you:

There is a difference between passing judgment and judgment that becomes a style or a nature in a person, wherever he goes he judges, condemns, criticizes, and analyzes people's conduct with or without reason!!



BOOKS BY HIS HOLINESS POPE SHENOUDA III TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

From among 140 books written by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III in Arabic Language, 62 have been translated into English, namely:

1. Words of Spiritual Benefit 1
2. Lord, how (Ps 3)
3. Diabolic Wars
4. Calmness
5. Holy Zeal
6. Discipleship
7. Being with God
8. The Release of the Spirit
9. Spiritual Warfare
10. Return to God
11. The Spirituality of Fasting
12. Words of Spiritual Benefit 2
13. Experiences in Life
14. Contemplations on Resurrection
15. Priesthood
16. Salvation in the Orthodox Concept
17. Characteristics of the Spiritual Path
18. The Seven Words of the Lord
19. So Many Years... III
20. The Sermon on the Mount
21. The Nature of Christ
22. The Heresy of Salvation in a moment
23. Words of Spiritual Benefit III
24. Thine is the Power & the G lory
25. Life of Faith
26. The Holy Spirit & His Work in us

27. So Many Years... IV
28. Contemplations on the 6th Commandment
29. Contemplations - Last 4 Commandments
30. So Many Years - Part IV
31. Jonah the Prophet
32. The Holy Chrism & Galilawen
33. Moses & Pharaoh
34. Contemplations - 5th Commandment
35. Contemplations - First four
36. Divinity of Christ
37. Ten Concepts
38. Quizzes on the Holy Bible
39. So Many Years - Part II
40. Comparative Theology
41. What is man?
42. Contemplations on the Matins Prayer
43. Judge not others
44. Words of Spiritual Benefit I V
45. The Creed
46. Life of Hope
47. Contemplations on the Ascension
48. God & Man
49. Inspirations from the Nativity
50. Contemplations on the 12th hour prayer
51. Life of Repentance & Purity
52. Jehovah Witnesses
53. So Many Years - Spiritual Questions
54. The Fruit of the Spirit
55. Fear of God
56. Spiritual ministry & Spiritual minister
57. Man's deification
58. Some Characters of the Holy Bible
59. Jehovah Witnesses & their heresies
60. Contemplations on the Revelation

61. Contemplations on the Song
62. Contemplations on the Book of Job

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