

(2.5) Knowing Oneself

Be careful on all your paths¹ and be not overconfident in your understanding since it can be flawed in difficult circumstances. Oftentimes we are not aware of how little we may see, hear, and understand in a particular situation; we miss the mark and make light of it too quickly as we point to minor things in others but excuse ourselves for bigger faults. Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye?²

Our passions can be easily mistaken for zeal causing us to compound a problem by justifying ourselves. We are quick to perceive small things in others and how they impact us but give little thought to what our actions may cause for them. It would be well and fitting for us to ponder our own actions and perhaps then our judgment of others would be more forgiving. *Think of the commandments, of the Most High's covenant, and overlook faults.*³

The spiritual man carefully looks at himself and his motives; *he is discreet and carefully weighs his words;*⁴ he will pass over in silence other men's concerns that really do not affect him and in this way the chaos outside himself will pass him by. *In matters that are beyond him he does not meddle, when shown more than he can understand.*⁵



True peace and perfect union requires casting aside earthly concerns while concentrating on the inner life. This is the way to make progress and detach from temporal anxieties as *favors and gifts blind the eyes.*⁶ Otherwise such concerns will cause you to slip away slowly but surely.

Let there be nothing as wondrous and astonishing to you as God Himself, or what comes from God. Think it all vanity, whatever consolation you may receive from any other living being. The soul that loves God spurns all things that are not of God.

God only, the eternal, the timeless, and the infinite, who fills all things, is the soul's consolation and the true delight of the heart.

This article is based on Book 2, Chapter 5 of Thomas of Kempis' writing, "Imitation of Christ." It is not a translation, and there are many of those, but a personal reflection on his writing; if any of it helps give credit to Thomas of Kempis; if any of it fails the responsibility is mine. (rfm)

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¹ Sirach 32:22

² Matthew 7:3

³ Sirach 28:7

⁴ Proverbs 21:25

⁵ Sirach 3:23

⁶ Sirach 20:29