

ASCETICALLY SPEAKING, pp. 13-14

13

A CHRISTIAN'S 'BUSINESS'

St. Irenaeus of Lyons

The business of the Christian is nothing else than to be ever preparing for death.

DENIAL

St. Irenaeus of Lyons

...the first thing is to deny one's self and to follow Christ; and those who do this are borne onward to perfection, having fulfilled all their Teacher's will, becoming sons of God by spiritual regeneration, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven; those who seek which first shall not be forsaken.

IMPACT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Constantine Callinicos

...the results of the Holy Spirit depend upon the attitude and acceptance of the person whom the Holy Spirit seeks to aid.

THE TOLLHOUSES

St. Theognostes, a Father of the Philokalia

Unutterable and unspeakable is the sweetness of the soul that departs from the body and is informed of its salvation.... Accompanied by the angel (sent for it), it goes without hindrance through the aerial spaces, not in the least disturbed by the evil spirits; joyfully and boldly it ascends to exclamations of thanksgiving to God, and comes finally to worship its Creator.

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO REPENT AND THUS, BELIEVE

St. Ambrose of Milan

He then who has faith has life, and he who has life is certainly not shut out from pardon; 'that every one,' it is said, 'that believeth on Him should not perish.' Since it is said, Every one, no one is shut out, no one is excepted, for He does not except him who has lapsed, if only afterwards he believes effectually.

IT IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE TO SIN

St. Ambrose of Milan

And the Lord indeed came to a sinner, though indeed He had no sin, and desired to be baptised, having no need of cleansing; who, then, can tolerate you, who think there is no need to be cleansed by penance, because you say you are cleansed by grace, as though it were now impossible for you to sin?

UNJUST DESIRE FOR FORGIVENESS

St. Ambrose of Milan

...are you so pure who are so unrighteous as to have no tenderness, as to see the mote in your brother's eye, but not to consider the beam which is in your own eye? For with God no one who is unjust is pure. And what is more unjust than to desire to have *your* (emphasis supplied) sins forgiven you, and yet yourself to think that he who entreats you ought not to be forgiven? What is worse than to justify yourself in that wherein you condemn another, whilst you yourself are committing worse offences?

IT IS POSSIBLE TO DENY GOD IN WORD BUT WORSHIP HIM IN HEART

St. Ambrose of Milan

... Let us now consider the meaning. 'Every one,' He says, 'who shall confess Me,' that is to say, of whatever age, of whatever condition he may be, who shall confess Me, he shall have Me as the Rewarder of his confession. Whereas the expression is, 'every one,' no one who shall confess is excluded from the reward. But it is not said in like manner, 'Every one who shall deny shall be denied,' for it is possible that a man overcome by torture may deny God in word, and yet worship Him in his heart.

FINDING YOUR WAY TO LIFE

St. Maximos the Confessor

If you wish to find the way that leads to life, look for it in the Way who says, 'I am the way, the door, the truth and the life' (John 10:7; 14:6), and there you will find it. Only let your search be diligent and painstaking, for 'few there are that find it' (Matt. 7:14) and if you are not among the few you will find yourself with the many.