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1132 ON REPENTANCE
AND THE
REMISSION OF SINS.
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ON IMPUTATION.
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OF REPENTANCE

AND

THE REMISSION OF SINS.

HE who would be saved must confess his sins, and do the work of repentance.

To confess sins, is to know evils, to see them in one's-self, to acknowledge them, to make one's-self guilty, and to condemn one's-self on account of them; when this is done before God, it constitutes the confession of sins.

To do the work of repentance, is to desist from sins after a man has thus confessed them, and from an humble heart has made supplication for remission; and to live a new life according to the precepts of charity and faith.

He who only acknowledges generally that he is a sinner, and makes himself guilty of all evils, and yet does not explore himself, that is, see his own evils, makes confession indeed, but not the confession of repentance; he, forasmuch as he does not know his own evils, lives afterwards as he did before.

He who lives the life of charity and faith does the work of repentance daily; he reflects upon the evils which are within him, he acknowledges them, he guards against them, he supplicates the Lord for help: for man of himself continually lapses towards evil, but he is continually raised by the Lord and led to good. Such is the state of those who are in good; but they who are in evil lapse continually, and are also continually elevated by the Lord, but are only withdrawn from falling into the most grievous evils, to which of themselves they tend with all their might.

The man who explores himself in order to do the work of repentance, must explore his thoughts and the intentions of his will, and must there examine what he would do if it were permitted him ; that is, if he were not afraid of the laws, and of the loss of reputation, honour, and gain ; for the evils of man reside in his thoughts and intentions, and the evils which he does in the body are all from thence : they who do not explore the evils of their thought and will, cannot do the work of repentance, for they think and will afterwards as they did before ; and yet to will evils is to do them. This is self-examination.

Repentance of the mouth and not of the life is not repentance ; and sins are not remitted by means of repentance of the mouth, but by repentance of the life. Sins are indeed continually remitted to man by the Lord, for He is mercy Itself, but still they adhere to man, however he may suppose that they are remitted, nor are they removed from him but by a life according to the precepts of true faith ; so far as he lives according to those precepts, so far sins are removed, and so far as they are removed, so far they are remitted.

It is supposed that sins are wiped away, or are washed off, as filth is by water, when they are remitted ; but sins are not wiped away, but they are removed, that is, man is withheld from them when he is kept in good by the Lord ; and when he is kept in good, it appears as if he were without them, thus as if they were wiped away ; and so far as man is reformed, so far he is capable of being kept in good : how man is reformed is shewn in the Tract on regeneration. He who supposes that sins are remitted in any other way, is much deceived.

The signs that sins are remitted, that is, removed, are these which follow :—They whose sins are remitted, perceive a delight in worshiping God for the sake of God, and in serving their neighbour for the sake of their neighbour, thus in doing good for the sake of good, and in speaking truth for the sake of truth ; they are unwilling to claim merit by anything of charity and faith ; they shun and are averse to evils, as enmities, hatred, revenges,