

## HEART CIRCUMCISION.

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N the Old Testament Scriptures we meet with precepts and promises of a two-fold kind :—those which were addressed to the Jews, *as Jews*, and those which were addressed to them as representing the universal Church of God. That the latter belong to all Christians is manifest ; for when Christ came he not only abolished what was ceremonial and typical in the Jewish economy, but he abolished the distinction between Jew and Gentile, so that the Gentiles became “fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel.” Thus the “middle wall of partition” was “broken down,” and the glorious franchise proclaimed to the world,—“If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs *according to the promise.*”

This is an important fact. It greatly extends the horizon of the believer’s privileges. It is a kind of spiritual telescope, bringing into the field of vision many a bright star of promise, “unseen by reason’s glimmering ray.” One of these—a star of the first magnitude—we discover in Deut. xxx. 6 : “The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.” These are strong words. What do they imply ?

The result sought by this “circumcision” is to enable us to love the Lord with all our heart. By nature we do not love God at all ; hence it is evident a great change is contemplated, and this change implies, in the first place, deliverance from guilt. Where there is guilt there will be fear—tormenting fear—as “he that feareth is not made perfect in love.” Therefore, as a preliminary step to the enjoyment of perfect love—as the first step in the process of heart circumcision—there must be a conscious deliverance from guilt. Circumcision signifies the putting away of the filth of the flesh ; so here, first of all, there must be the putting away of the sins that are past. Let this be understood : the forgiveness of sins, clearly ascertained by the witness of the Spirit, is indispensable as a starting point for the higher Christian life.

It also implies the regeneration of our moral powers. Why ? Because “the carnal mind is enmity against God,” and enmity and love are opposites ; they never can harmonize. Never can we feel one solitary emotion of love towards God until His love is “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us.” Our moral powers are depraved, and, so far as any holy effort is concerned, utterly paralyzed. And if, by extraneous influences, they are sometimes incited to momentary action, it is, after all, only like the motions of a galvanized corpse,—a hideous *mimicry* of life. To restore the true life of the soul requires a new creation, and this can be accomplished only by Divine power. Many can train or modify, God alone can create. 1