

## A CONTRITE HEART.

A contrite heart—*contrite* is from the Latin *contritus* [from *con* (completely) and *tero* (to break up), that is, to break up fine, to reduce thoroughly], which means, as applied to soil, to which it naturally refers, completely mellowed, that is, with all hardness and infertility removed—is a heart in which every element alien to truth, or in any manner uncongenial with the power of truth, is reduced, so that the soil tenderly takes, genially germinates, and faithfully fructifies every seed dropped by the Word or the Spirit.

We have, in the library where we are writing this, a few plants very dear to us from their association with the dead. Their fragrance is to us as a souvenir dropped out of heaven. One of them drooped a little while ago. Although we poured water upon the cup at its foot, the earth on the top was dry. It did not connect, somehow, with the capillaries below. We poured water upon the top, but it ran off from the baked surface, as the summer shower splashes off from the dry bricks. We took it in hand, and, with a sharp knife-blade, ploughed up the surface to the depth of an inch. It was like cutting the dried clay of the streets. But after we had ploughed and cross-ploughed it, and harrowed it, and picked off all the pebbles that worked to the top, and made all smooth and soft, we poured water upon it again, and lo! the little mouths of the earth atoms drank it up so greedily that it was gone out of sight in an instant. Then the connection was re-established with the lower stratum, and the drops from above went down, and the drops from beneath went up, and mingling, moistened, and sweetened, and blessed every rootlet and errant fibre, until the drooping leaves looked up again, and the wilting flowers freshened, and the whole plant looked as if it had entered into peace.

What an emblem, thought we, of many and many a Christian heart! A heart that has got so dry under the hot sun of worldliness that it cannot draw up the waters of the sanctuary for its nutriment; and when even the baptism of the Spirit descends upon it, the gracious drops glance off from the arid surface.

What it needs is to become a *contrite* heart. It needs to be ploughed by faithful and deep meditation, and cross-ploughed by honest self-accusation, and harrowed by conviction, and broken up fine by penitence, and cleansed by confession, and then—softened and made meet for the great Husbandman's use—it is ready once more to profit by the baptism of the Spirit, and to be nurtured by the waters of the sanctuary, and to throw out from its revived and fresh-blooming graces an aroma of piety that shall make glad the Master's heart, and that shall constrain all whose senses take it in with delight to say how good and how pleasant it is to learn of Jesus and be filled with His Spirit!

Such a Christian, so returned to his first love, has not merely a new joy which passeth knowledge, and a new flavour of usefulness exhaling from his every look and word, but he has brought himself into precisely that state of mind which is most favourable for influencing the impenitent to come to the cross.

He feels for them now more tenderly than he did or could before, for his heart is now sweetly sensitive to all the ten thousand times ten thousand motives of the gospel, so that he is more impelled to pity and alarm, and then help them, than ever he was before. He appreciates the difficulties which need to be removed out of their path as he never did before. He has felt the same. And specially is he now prepared for personal labour with them as never before, because he will go so gently, with such pathos in his tones, such lustre in his eyes, such *friendliness* in all his aspect; with such *tenderness of spirit* as will make way for him to the secret place of their hearts.—*Congregationalist*.

CAUTION.—If there be not mines of precious truths hid in the heart, no wonder if our thoughts coin nothing but dross, frothy, vain thoughts; for better materials, which should feed the mind, are wanting.—*Goodwin*.