

THE WAY AND THE WORD:

AN ADDRESS TO THE STUDENTS OF THE EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY, 1ST MARCH, 1862.

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"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word."—PSALM cxix. 9.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

So far as I know my own heart, I have but one object in coming here to day, and it is to try and do you good. For a good many years I lived myself in total forgetfulness of God, doing that which I had best have let alone, and thinking of nothing else but the gratification of my own notions of pleasure. But it pleased God, not quite eight years ago, in the month of November 1854, one night when I was sitting playing at cards, to awaken me to concern about my soul. The instrument used was a sensation of sudden illness, which led me to think that I was going to die. I went up to my room and threw myself on the bed. My first thought then was—Now, what will my forty-four years of following the devices of my own heart profit me? In a few minutes I shall be in hell, and what good will those things do me for which I have sold my soul? At that moment I felt constrained to pray, but it was merely the prayer of the coward—a cry for mercy. I was not sorry for what I had done, but I was afraid of the punishment of my sin. And yet with all my fear there was one thing that nearly prevented me from putting myself on my knees and calling for mercy, and that was the presence of my maid-servant in the room fighting my fire. Though I did not believe, at that time, that I had ten minutes to live, and knew that there was no possible hope for me but in the mercy of God, and that if I did not seek that mercy I could not expect to have it; yet such was the nature of my heart and the spirit within me, that it was a balance with me—a thing to turn this way or that—a desperate struggle—whether I should wait till that woman left the room, or whether I should spring to my knees, and cry for mercy in her presence. By the grace of God I did put myself on my knees before the girl; and I believe it was the turning-point with me. I believe if I had at that time resisted the Holy Ghost—of course, I cannot say, for who shall limit the

Holy Ghost?—but my belief is, that it would have been **THE ONCE TOO OFTEN!** By God's grace I yielded to God's Spirit, I did pray, and though I am not what I should be, yet I am this day what I am, which at least is not what I was; for my desire is to serve God and do good in my day and generation, according to the light and wisdom given me.

I mention this because I believe that every man has, in his life, his turning-point. I believe that the sin against the Holy Ghost is grieving the Spirit **ONCE TOO OFTEN**. No man who has a good thought in his heart—the least desire to go to God—let him be a hundred years of age, and his sins what they may, has committed the unpardonable sin. The very fact of a man having the desire to go to God, shows that God has not left him, because neither the flesh, nor the world, nor the devil, will ever give a man a thought about going to God. But though I say that a man eighty or a hundred years of age may turn to God, yet I believe there are people walking on this earth—and who shall say how young the youngest of them may be—against whom God has sworn in His wrath that they shall never enter into His rest—they have resisted God, **ONCE TOO OFTEN**. I do not believe there is one of you in this church who has not, at some time or other, had good thoughts about your souls, and about God. And it is perfectly sure, that whenever you had these thoughts, God was thinking about you, for no man living ever thought about God about whom God was not thinking. But I think it also extremely likely that many of you have put away these thoughts—that your goodness has been like the morning cloud, and the early dew—and who can promise himself that he will ever have a good thought again? 'THE HOLY GHOST SAITH'—and I think, in a book like the Bible, written entirely by the Holy Ghost, it is a solemn beginning to a sentence, as if God would call particular attention to it—The Holy Ghost saith,