

the otherwise listless sons of men! The very obscurity of its intimation is perhaps the more startling, and the more impressive: when it comes with a thousand tongues, a thousand voices, a thousand dark enunciations, oh! how does it impress the listening crowd! And then, Death! Death "the great teacher:"—Death! with his shroud, and his pall, and his coffin, and the bones about the grave! Death! who comes with stealthy approaches, or with awful suddenness: Death! with the dark room, and the white drapery, and the funeral, and the weeping friends! Destruction and death say, we have heard the fame thereof with our ears!

But we have now to consider where wisdom is, in what it consists. "God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof." The reasons are given why God may be said to understand the way, and to know the place, of wisdom: For "he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven" &c. "Then," we read, "did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out. And unto man he said, "Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." We have, then, God's own word on the subject.—We have his express statement—"The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom—and to depart from evil is understanding."

The fear of God here cannot be a slavish fear of him, like the fear of a tyrant, of a hard task-master—or a superstitious fear, like that excited in the poor devotee of a false worship, who thinks he sees in the clouds, or in the vacant air, the shape of an angry God, or some spirit all-powerful for mischief, and who would fain appease him with any bribe, or with any bodily penance—or a selfish fear which always apprehends evil to ourselves. Such cannot be the fear of God which is wisdom. That would be the reverse of wisdom; for that would lead us to hate God; it would drive us away from Him; whom it is the greatest wisdom to seek, and love, and obey; that would fill us with distrust, suspicion, and dread; and cannot therefore be the fear of the text which is wisdom. This fear is an awe, or reverence, arising from a proper apprehension of God's greatness, a salutary impression of his majesty, the thought of his power, and righteousness, and holiness, and the sense of his Omnipresence: it is a fear excited by these attributes and qualities, united with these

of a more amiable character, as goodness, and mercy, and love, condescension, forbearance, benevolence. It is a fear consistent, or, existing along with love: it is a fear which will lead us to avoid sin, to eschew evil, but not such as to drive us from confidence: That is wisdom. Let us take an example of what we mean from every day experience, or actual life. It were wisdom to fear a parent in the sense of standing in awe of his authority, having a high sense of his superior wisdom and power, and a salutary dread of his threats, and his known determination to punish disobedience, and any kind of improper and unworthy behaviour; but it were not wisdom to fear him so as to hate him, and to dread and shun his presence: This were not a proper fear of a child to a father, and it were the reverse of wisdom; and so with God. But how can fear be consistent with love and confidence? One would think the two were incompatible. But they are not so. How are they consistent in the case supposed, the case of a child and a parent? It is true that we have offended God; and are therefore in the position of a child who has incurred the displeasure of his father, and who while under that displeasure must so far be afraid of him. But then God has been pleased of His own undeserved mercy to be reconciled unto us, and to wait for our return to him; and to hold out invitations to reconciliation on our part. The way is now clear to us so far as God is concerned, to come to Him, and, confessing our faults, to obtain pardon, and to enjoy once more the smiles of his countenance. A father is not more gracious to an erring but repentant child than God is to the repenting sinner. He regards him with the same feelings, looks upon him with the same favour, extends to him the same compassion and love. And thus though we have sinned against him, we may yet, by repentance and faith in Christ, be partakers of his love; and confidence is thus restored—a confidence which may be more or less broken in upon by the old feeling of jealousy and slavish fear on the part of the sinner, but for which there is the amplest ground, even for the most unbounded exercise of it. But while there is thus ground for the exercise of this confidence, there is room also, or reason, for the exercise of fear, not fear in the sense of dread, not a slavish, superstitious, selfish fear, but reverence, awe, veneration, and fear to offend God, and, to a certain extent, of