

Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.”

This enquiry is being pursued with unprecedented vigour today. Wisdom and understanding! Who can point out the way leading to that fountain where we may drink of these qualities and be filled? Are we who live in these closing days of the world's greatest century to be satisfied with that conclusion given thousands of years ago to enquiring men? These questions and such as these confront the young man as he looks out across the future, crowded with the prospects which his imagination and ambitions supply. He listens to the voices that come to him from out the stress and strain of life's conflict; or perhaps he descends for a time into the surging, jostling, struggling stream of humanity. On the one hand he hears philosopher, scientist, teacher, journalist, judge, hailed as men exceeding wise. Or on the other hand he sees his fellow men eager to do homage to the understanding of a shrewd man of business, a cunning diplomat, a crafty politician. And his enquiry takes on a new meaning. What after all is the truth about those qualities of wisdom and understanding? This experience of his has only plunged him into deeper confusion. He cannot fail to see a possible undercurrent in the lives of all these men which his fellow men are not taking into account, but which must ultimately be reckoned with. That consciousness of the necessity of knowing the *motive* of a life before a final classification of it can be made will be borne in upon him, showing that the intellectual apprehension or sophistry which has called forth the world's applause, may in no way comprehend that essential state of heart which gives to true wisdom its distinctiveness. It becomes quite clear therefore that these great qualities are not to be measured by popular standards and that we must have some other basis from which to carry on our inquiry. That basis is to be found in the definition I have chosen from that sublime poem, the XXVIII Chapter of the Book of Job. The essential elements of these qualities are stated there and their source is discovered to us. From these words as a basis we can trace the development of the profound truth which they indicate. We must not be surprised if we find that to an amazing extent, partly as the inevitable result of the development of the greater truth, but largely as the result of an erroneous conception of religion one of the great elemental truths of these chosen words has been allowed to pass into silence.

We shall allow the opening phrase to claim, at the outset, our close attention. That phrase “The fear of the Lord,” is so familiar to us, in the literature of the Old Testament, that we easily fancy ourselves acquainted with its full import. And yet how much of the history of the faithful Israelite it comprehends. It calls up to our minds those mighty theophanies, given from time to time to the chosen people, and calculated to fill their hearts with a sense of the awful majesty of God.