

Fear of YHWH

- related to our concept of God (see 'Anger')

- Fear from YHWH

‘The fear of YHWH is hatred of evil’(Proverbs 8:13).

‘The fear of YHWH is the beginning of wisdom;
knowledge of the Holy One is insight’(Proverbs 9:10).

‘The fear of YHWH is a fountain of life’(Proverbs 14:27).

- Isaiah speaks of the fear of YHWH as one of the gifts of the Spirit (Isaiah 11:3).

‘The fear of YHWH is Zion’s treasure’(Isaiah 33:6).

Fear of (from) YHWH

Over and above a sense of awe in God's presence and a profound humility before God, 'fear of the Lord' includes a hatred of sin and a real fear of one's capacity to turn from grace and lose one's way.

'The Bridegroom intends to inspire the fear that purifies, that by this purification the soul may be made ready for the vision she longs for. It is a vision reserved for the pure in heart.' (Bernard, Sermon 38:3)

Fear of YHWH

A Carthusian Monk The Hermitage within

‘The point of departure for great mystical ascents is always the intense activity of the gift of fear.

People like insisting on the 'filial' character of this fear, but this presupposes a perfectly clear view of everything, which by definition keeps us in an abyss of nothingness below our heavenly Father.

Harmless, artificial insults to your self-esteem are not going to make you humble.

Fear of YHWH

‘Humiliation has its compensations in religion: an 'edifying' acceptance of it raises our prestige and ministers to our vanity. But the Holy Spirit will deprive you of self-esteem from inside, by contrasting God's grandeur and your baseness by its light: to the point perhaps of making you cry for mercy in horror of your abjectness: “Alas for me, I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips” (Isaiah 6:5).’

Julian of Norwich

‘Reverent fear makes us hastily to flee from everything that is not good, and to fall into our Lord’s breast, as the child into the mother’s bosom, with all our intention and with all our mind, knowing our feebleness and our great need, knowing his everlasting goodness and his blessed love, seeking for salvation only in him, cleaving to him with faithful trust.

The fear which leads us in this direction is gentle and gracious and good and true ... For the natural attribute of fear which we have in this life by the grace-giving operation of the Holy Spirit will be the same in heaven before God, gentle, courteous, most sweet; and thus in love we shall be familiar and close to God, and in fear we shall be gentle and courteous to God’(Showings ch 74).

Julian of Norwich

‘Reverent fear softens and strengthens and pleases and gives rest. False fear (from doubt = lack of trust) belabours and assails and perturbs. Recognise them both, and reject false fear, for God wants us always to be strong in our love, and peaceful and restful as he is towards us; and he wants us to be, for ourselves and for our fellow Christians, what he is for us. Amen’(The final words of Showings chapter 25^s).