



*12 I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions. 13 The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate. 14 Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength. 15 By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. 16 By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth. 17 I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. 18 Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. 19 My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. 20 ***I lead in the way of righteousness***, in the midst of the paths of judgment: 21 That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures. (Prov 8:12-21)*

I am not sure if I have written on this hymn previously or not; however, if so, I am writing again. It is a favorite of mine. There should be no similarity between any previous writing and this except for historical detail. The hymn was composed by John H. Newman in 1833 (before the debilitating effects of the Oxford Movement in England). Perhaps, if I did not write before on it, it was owing to the contempt I feel for Newman for betraying his vows to the Reformation and joining with Rome. But the hymn is beautiful and touches the soul. He wrote these words regarding its composition: *Before starting from my inn, I sat down on my bed and began to sob bitterly. My servant, who had acted as my nurse, asked what ailed me. I could only answer, I have a work to do in England. I was aching to get home, yet for want of a vessel I was kept at Palermo for three weeks. I began to visit the churches, and they calmed my impatience, though I did not attend any services. At last I got off in an orange boat, bound for Marseilles. We were becalmed for whole week in the Straits of Bonifacio, and it was there that I wrote the lines, Lead, Kindly Light, which have since become so well known. There are two wonderful tunes to which the hymn is sung – SANDON by Charles Purdy (1857) and LUX BENIGNA by John B. Dykes (1865). Though both are great tunes, I prefer the latter (Lux Benigna).*

Lead, Kindly Light

Lead, kindly Light, amid th'encircling gloom, lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home; lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path; but now lead Thou me on!
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will. Remember not past years!

So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still will lead me on.
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till the night is gone,
And with the morn those angel faces smile, which I
Have loved long since, and lost awhile!

Meantime, along the narrow rugged path, Thyself hast trod,
Lead, Savior, lead me home in childlike faith, home to my God.
To rest forever after earthly strife
In the calm light of everlasting life.

Lead, kindly Light, amid th'encircling gloom, lead Thou me on! The night is dark, and I am far from home; lead Thou me on! Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see The distant scene; one step enough for me. There have been a remarkable number of accounts of near death experiences in which the parties expressed a vision of a great light which drew them ever nearer into a blissful state. Whether these are genuine experiences of the Divine Presence, I will leave to others to decide, and to God. But God is our Light in a dark place that both beckons and leads us. His every Word is a Beacon of the Light of Truth: *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.* Psalms 119:105 All the commentary that the world offers are naught but doom and gloom; but the Word of our Lord is a Bright and Shining Light. In fact, Christ is the Light of the World. During the sunny noonday, few turn their eyes to Heaven; but in the dark and bleak hours of the cold and bitter night, folded hands are lifted in prayer. It may be that when the gloomy darkness is encircling our souls, it is a benefit of Heaven in bringing us to remember our Maker. *1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; 2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain.* (Ecc 12:1-2) Our every step is ordered by the Lord so that His child neither stumbles nor departs from the paths of righteousness. *10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. 11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. 12 They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.* (Psalm 91:10-12) The Good Shepherd has His eye on the horizon to lead us while we follow on with nearsighted blindness.'

In this world, the Christian is both far from home physically, and at home spiritually with the Lord who trod the Emmaus Road with two unsuspecting disciples.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou shouldst lead me on; I loved to choose and see my path; but now lead Thou me on! I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears, Pride ruled my will. Remember not past years! Many good, moral people (and some lifelong Christians, too) have never been brought to the steps of death or grave illness before suddenly confronting it at a late age. It can be disarming even for the faithful. Perhaps we have enjoyed perfect health as we see others suffering from all kinds of egregious diseases and health issues. We are not prepared for we have always been very independent of illness. So in our latter days, we face the dilemma of faith cause by depressing illness that is new to us. Now we may suddenly be bed-ridden and helpless. We must depend upon family and other caretakers to see to our needs. We had previously danced in the sunlight, but now we find ourselves struggling in the grips of merciless pain and personal incapacities. Without knowing of it, we may have been proud in our past lives, but now we are humbled to know the pain that we had only

seen at a distance in others. Our faith is the last resource of the Christian available to him under the sun. Pride is past, and faith is taken up like never before.

So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still will lead me on. O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till the night is gone, And with the morn those angel faces smile, which I Have loved long since, and lost awhile! We often pray for, and receive, blessings from God that are not efficacious. I have a Tom Cat named Benjamin whom I love. He begs for food at all hours of the day. Hating to say 'NO! I allow him to eat more than he should and he is growing fat. Perhaps we plead too much for blessings which the Lord is not inclined to give until we are overly persistent. He loves us and grants them often. But our opulence of blessings has made us soft and overweight spiritually. Travelling through this old world is a journey through very rough and threatening country. The swamps, floods, and underbrush of the world retard our progress, and the night dims our vision. We have no hope in any resource but that Light of God which beams ahead. It is the Great Search Light casting its beams across the billows and tumult of the sea from which the lost seaman gathers hope and courage. We know, as surely as we know our names, that the night is not eternal – the Sunrise of Morning follows hard on the heels of night and we look forward to that Sunrise with hope and joy. We cling to the promise of God: *weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.* (Psalm 30:5) The bright angels stand in the Risen Sun to do His bidding on our part.

Meantime, along the narrow rugged path, Thyself hast trod, Lead, Savior, lead me home in childlike faith, home to my God. To rest forever after earthly strife In the calm light of everlasting life. We wonder that God would allow us to suffer the thorns and thistles of life, but forget that His dear Son suffered the whip, the nails and the wound in His side on our behalf. Following Him, we must expect our crosses to bring offenses. He leads us along the path that He trod – but without the shame and horror. We are weak, frail and blind; we therefor need someone to lead us. If that Someone is Christ, we shall be led to safe havens; but if another, we shall fall into the same ditch as our leader. Following Christ is fraught with imagined perils, but in the end, it is the only safe way:

I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year, 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.' And he replied, 'Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be better than light, and safer than a known way. From a speech by King George VI of England delivered at Christmas, 1939, as Great Britain faced the uncertain perils of World War II.