

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

– Proverbs 3: 5, 6 (KJV) –

THESE TWIN EXHORTATIONS, from the book of Proverbs, originally addressed to the faithful Jew and, now, by extension, to the follower of Christ, constitutes a guide for living and thinking.

For the Christian, the chief agent of Jehovah – to whom *only* the block letter *LORD* (Tetragrammaton) applies (v. 5) – is Jesus Christ, our Saviour. In this sense the passage in Proverbs switches subtly from Jews under the Law to the viewpoint of the Christian, and He becomes wisdom for us.

Being directed to trust *in* the Lord, we are, in the negative, to *not* trust in oneself. This has nothing to do with personal confidence. Daily life would be intolerable were we to be timid or overly fearful. Conversely, bombast or hubris may not get us very far, these latter abrasive personality traits alienating us from pleasant society.

To trust in the Lord is to rely on His headship over our lives; the implication is that He knows better what is good for us than we do. This is where humility comes in, a quality often in short supply. Most of us are prone to pride in some degree, and don't like being told what to.

Trusting, Understanding, Leaning

By typical use of parallelism, we are exhorted to 'trust' and not 'lean' on our own understanding. This transcends mere *knowledge* or *perception*. We need not become paralysed in thought, unable to make a decision in the ordinary ventures of life. Nor is this a matter of mathematics, for example, or what route to take on the motorway. Such understanding is of a relatively trivial nature in the spiritual life. Rather v. 6 directs us to 'lean' [into] the Divine will; to lay aside our predilections and preferences in favour of the Lord's analysis and instruction.

Acknowledge Him. Divesting oneself of personal opinion, our relationship with Christ will be reflected in our attitudes and sympathies, not running ahead, but following as the Master leads.