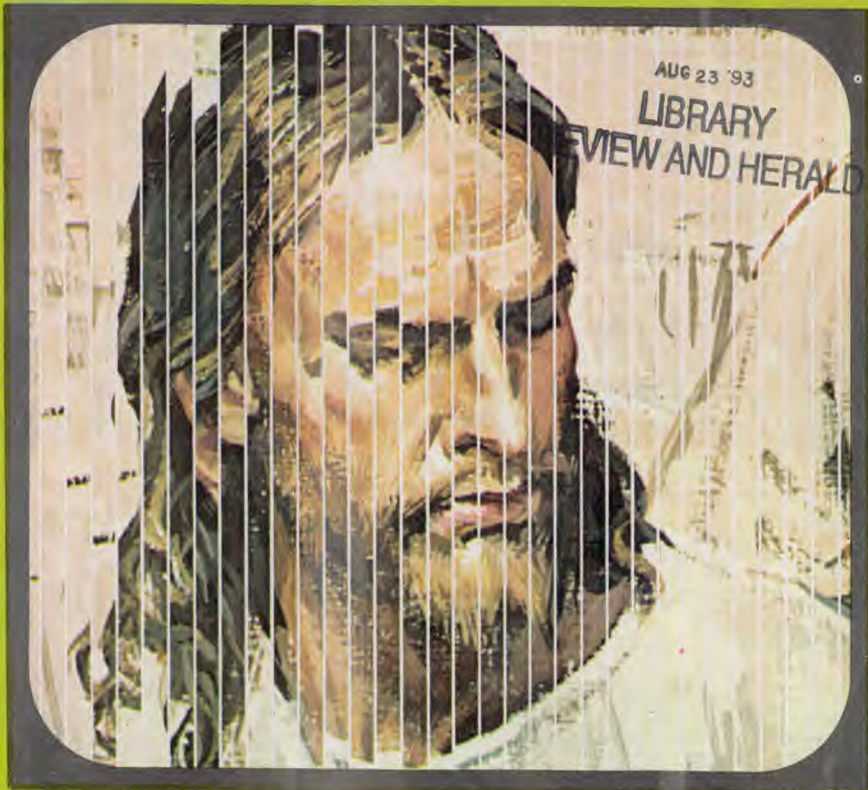


January/February 1993

Our Times

ISSN 0971-1325



What I Like About Jesus

Vol. 37 No 1-2
January/February
1993

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One Year subscription
Rs. 35.00

Printed and
published by P H Lall
at and for the owners,
Oriental Watchman
Publishing House,
Salisbury Park, Pune
411 001, India

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A New Challenge For A New Year

During a bombing raid a civilian was hit with a piece of shrapnel which cut his throat and seriously damaged his voice box. In his case the accident was especially disastrous, for by profession he was a public lecturer. Lying in the hospital, he began to worry about what he would do to earn his living. The future appeared dark and hopeless.

His doctor, sensing his anxiety, encouraged him to believe that he could learn to talk again. It would be difficult, but with persistent practice it could be accomplished.

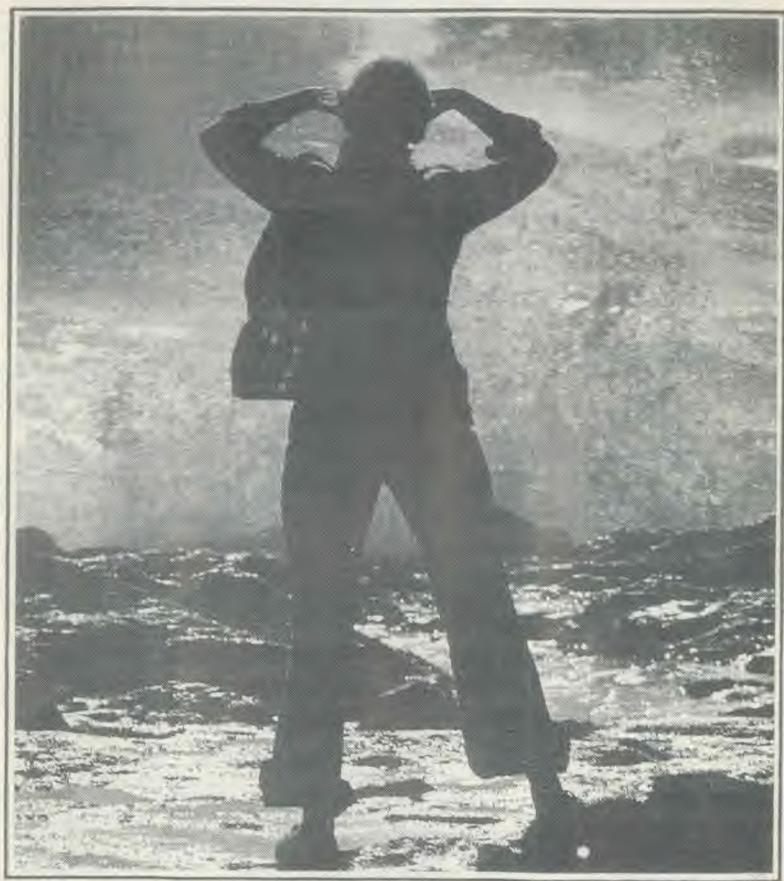
If anyone else had held out such hope, he would have found it hard to accept. But a doctor, he figured, must have some scientific basis for what he said. So he dared to hope.

At home after his discharge he began to try. But all he could do was to emit guttural sounds. His neighbours heard them and wondered what was going on. They asked his wife facetiously if she was trying to strangle her husband. It was no joke to them, especially of the desperate husband. They decided to move away for the

summer to the beach where they could be alone and where he could practise and not be heard. But even there he made no progress. Finally, he became very despondent. One day, he concluded that, the best way

out of his dilemma would be to let her collect his life insurance.

It was a rainy day, and his spirits were as damp as the weather. He left home intent upon taking his life. But he wasn't sure just how to do it.



Walking along the seashore, he got an idea from the swelling breakers driven shoreward by high winds. He would jump into the water and let the waves beat his body against the rocks. But upon further thought he decided against this plan; it would be too gruesome.

Just then he heard a noise behind him. Turning round he saw a little dog with a piece of water-soaked wood in his mouth. He dropped it at the man's feet with the suggestion that he wanted to play. On the impulse of the moment without thinking, the man threw it and the mongrel retrieved it. Again and again he threw it, the little dog becoming more excited each time.

Finally, he threw the object against a rock and it bounced off into a six-foot depth of water. The dog tried to dive for it but it was too heavy for him to bring up. After several attempts, he apparently gave up and came and sat dejectedly at the feet of his new-found

friend. He looked just as the man felt. Looking down at the little dog, the man was reminded of his morbid intention again. But now he decided to go back to the cabin and have one more meal with his wife.

As they were sitting there eating, he heard a noise at the door. Opening it, what should he see but that little dog triumphantly wagging his stub of a tail with the piece of wood beside him!

Seeing that, the man took courage. He vowed that if that little dog with no more to challenge him than a piece of wood, could persevere, he could too. How much more he had to live for! Sure, the odds were against him, but so had they been against the dog. And he had persisted until he won. Forthwith he abandoned his grisly intention and began afresh to work on his problem. Today, he is on the public platform again successfully pursuing his chosen profession. □



The secret of happiness is to learn to accept the impossible, to do without the indispensable and to bear the intolerable.

What I Like About Jesus

by John Willmott

There is a widespread interest in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth today. Science and sociology, the church and the world, the young and the old generations alike have all made their contributions to describe the type of a Person Jesus was. Artists and architects were no exception to this. All have added their own dimensions to the study and understanding of the personality of Jesus Christ.

What was Jesus really like? What was it that I would have liked about Him had I been privileged to live at the time He lived? More than the Divinity

of Jesus Christ, is there anything that he possessed which would attract me to His Person? In His contact with people, what do we see? Was He a man with human, loving, kind, understandable characteristics? Without being hampered by theological intricacies, let me give few simple reasons why Jesus appeals to me as a Person.

In the first place, Jesus was friendly and approachable. In the gospel narrative we find the dramatic experience of John the Baptist proclaiming Him to be "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Among those who

watched the drama we read about two men who followed Him. Suddenly Jesus turned and asked, "What seek ye?" With certain reticence they replied, "Master where dwelleth thou?" Jesus answered and said, "Come and see." And, we are told, "they

went and dwelt with Him that day."

John and Andrew emerged, from this experience to proclaim to the world, the discovery they had made, succinctly stated in the words, "We have found the Messiah".



The events that followed indicate that it wasn't difficult for men like Philip, Peter or Nathaniel to come under the impact and the influence of Jesus' friendly appeal. He possessed a magic and a magnetic personality, which was characterized by friendliness that attracted anyone.

Jesus was outgoing and cordial in His relationship. He did not wait for others to come to Him and introduce themselves to Him. He stopped and greeted people. He offered to become their guest. Once Zacchaeus was looking down from the branches of a sycamore tree, anxious to see Jesus personally. Jesus looked up and asked him to come down. He stayed in the despised publican's home, and brought hope, and joy, and salvation to this man who earnestly sought Him.

Also, in Jesus I find this wonderful Spirit of caring and concern for others. It is true that Jesus rebuked Peter certain times and praised him at other times. It is also true that He watched with troubled concern

the rich young ruler toss aside his eternal destiny in favour of worldly riches. As a classic portrayal of His care and concern for people we see Him in Bethany at the home of Mary and Martha. Jesus broke down and wept for their dead brother, Lazarus. See the warmth in His reaction and the illogical and unexplainable emotion that made Him to identify Himself with the family. To me Jesus is such a lovely friend that His words of sympathy, and acts of love and compassion will remain as a cherished memory.

Jesus had time for anyone who wanted to be with Him. His life was not detached from association with others. He did not live in splendid isolation or utter seclusion. He loved to be with people. He accepted them into His presence. The little children found delight remaining in His loving arms. Even the touch of His gentle hand brought happiness and healing to many people.


Another outstanding thing about Jesus is His teaching in the twentieth century, it would have delighted me much more if I had lived in His day. Unlike,

the teaching of the contemporary religious leaders, the teaching of Jesus was characterized by simplicity and straight forwardness. They were fresh and noble. They were new and revolutionary. How simply did He put forth a grandiose spiritual principle in these words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!" He carefully selected His words, stories, parables and illustrations. Had I lived during His day I wouldn't want to miss any chance to listen to Him. It is fascinating to watch Him attack the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and at the same time effectually champion the cause of the unfortunate. No wonder the Father of India, Mahatma Gandhi, became so successful in his mission to the masses of this country, because he had great admiration for Jesus and His teachings.

Life had been hard and disappointing for Peter, one of Christ's followers. After his denial of Christ and subsequent to the experiences of the crucifixion of Jesus, Peter had given up everything

in despair to go back to his fishing business. The experiences of that dark, bitter night when he returned to the shore from the sea with only an empty boat seemed to reinforce his sense of failure. But hope was found when he saw Jesus there—waiting for him. The Master reiterated His call to discipleship by granting a miraculous catch of fish as a token of accepting him back. Peter regained his self-respect. He accepted Christ's gracious offer of the second chance and proved to be a faithful disciple till the end.

It is very satisfying to see in Jesus the noble quality of forgiveness, acceptance and love. Jesus was always meeting the humble, distressed, ashamed and hypocrite people with compassion and understanding. On one occasion when few persons brought a guilty woman to Him, He said, "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more." Time and time again He offered forgiveness to all who came to Him.

How can I refrain from liking Him, no, loving Him? 

"Jesus"

by Billy Sunday

To many, Jesus Christ is only a grand subject for a painting, a heroic theme for a pen, a beautiful form for a statue, and a thought for a song; but to those who have heard His voice, who have felt His pardon, who have received His benediction, He is music, warmth, light, joy, hope and salvation, a Friend who never forsakes, who lifts us when others try to push us down. We cannot wear Him out; we pile on Him all our griefs and troubles. He is always ready to lift us; He addresses us with the same love; He beams upon with the same love; He pities us with the same compassion.

There is no name like His. It is more inspiring than Caesar's, more musical than Beethoven's, more patient than Lincoln's. The name of Jesus throbs with all life, weeps with all pathos, groans with all

pains, stoops with all love. Its breath is laden with fragrance.

Who like Jesus can pity a homeless orphan? Who like Jesus can welcome a prodigal back home? Who like Jesus can make a drunkard sober? Who like Jesus can illuminate a cemetery plowed with graves? Who like Jesus can make a queen unto God out of a lost woman of the street? Who like Jesus can catch the tears of human sorrow in His bowl?

I struggle for a metaphor with which to express Jesus. He is not like the bursting forth of an orchestra; that is too loud, and it may be out of tune. He is not like the sea when lashed into a rage by a storm; that is too boisterous. He is not like a mountain wreathed in lightning, canopied with snow; that is too solitary and remote.

He is the Lily of the Valley, the Rose of Sharon, a gale of spices from Heaven. □



MAKING MARRIAGES LAST

*Excerpts of an interview with Squadron Leader George Judah
by Nola Swansi*

Whether we look at marriage from a Christian or non-Christian viewpoint, the institution of marriage is in serious trouble. The real problem, of course, lies not so much with the institution of marriage, but with the individuals who live within it. In the twentieth century it is not so much a matter of marriage having been tried and found wanting but marriage is largely untried. The tendency with couples today who hit troubles in their marriage is to ball out and seek refuge in separation or divorce.

How can we make a Marriage last?

To answer this question, we interviewed Squadron Leader George Judah, the Director of Symbiosis Institute of Business Management (SIBM), Pune, and wife, Irene, a doctor at the

Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC), Pune.

Dr Judah over the past 16 years, has counselled more than 300 married couples, 5000 students, and a host of NCC cadets and NDA students. Surprisingly, his counselling are free of charge, the only payment being "a tremendous feeling of satisfaction and achievement" to see a couple united together.

Ferdinand Lunberg in his book "The Coming World Transformation" predicts that the "Family is near the point of extinction." How true is this of an Indian society?

Family is going to stay for a long time in India. We still give value system to children and togetherness. It's the root that keeps you bound and grounded. Religion is also a focal point in Indian homes. The prayers, and staying together is a uniting bond. The female plays a good role here. The femininity is still maintained while abroad the lady is becoming more masculine—I mean in the competitive sense. She wants to stand up. Here they are still OK. It's going to

take a long time to catch up in India though with Star TV it might be soon. I think we're not OK., but I think we're going to stay here.

What prompted you to start counselling? How did it get all started?

It started on by itself. I used to counsel the NDA cadets in the air force. Whatever problem they had, they found they could relate to me. I was more receptive to them. I felt I was gifted. Later on, I felt inadequate. I had to grow and improve. I was not good enough. I was not listening. I was cutting in between. So in 1978, I started my training in De Nobili seminary under the chief priests.

What kind of marital problems do you encounter? Can you categorize?

I think one of the main problem is ingratitude—ungratefulness. Whatever the wife does, she gets no gratitude. For example, she makes breakfast for me, and I don't say thank you. She keeps the home tidy, and I don't

notice it. Whatever she does there's no appreciation.

Also, the couples having family problems fall in three categories:

First, couples face problems in their early marriage between three to five years. This is the period when the true colours are revealed of each partner and adjustments have to be made.

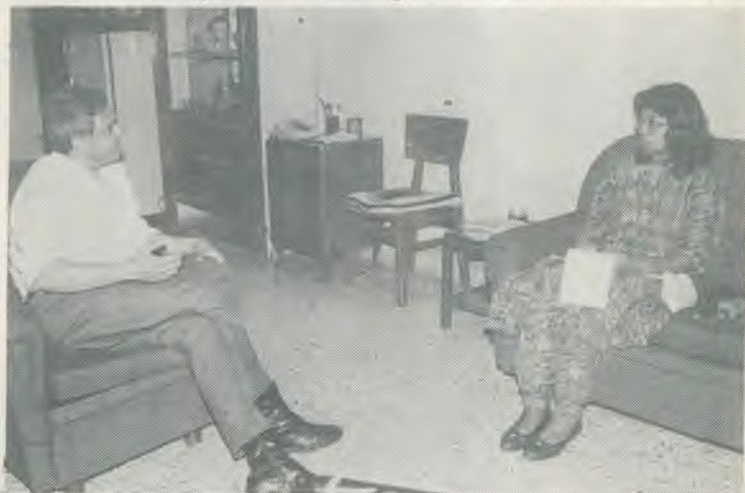
Second, couples face problems in their middle age—in their 40s. This is the period when the man especially feels inadequate. He feels frustrated because he has not reached his goals and so he has to reset his goals.

Third, couples face

problems in their later marriage. These are the retired couples. They need to plan how to spend their leisure time. Another marital problem is "poor listening". We are not listening to each other. Either we are aggressive or non-assertive. We need to change from aggressive to assertive and vice versa.

Can you elaborate on your technique or approach to counselling?

I don't use a standard approach. Basically, it's more listening and responding. I stay client-oriented as well as problem-oriented. I don't



manipulate or advise. I don't give any answers. I just let them give their answers.

It's by good questioning. I don't give any answers to a couple who comes for counselling. If they are fighting, I ask them, "How do you feel when he says that? How do you feel when she behaves this way?" Many times it comes across "You never told me that before." And the man would reply, "I told you, but probably you were not listening." It really shakes you up.

The best counsellor is a person who gets himself out of the way. Not that I'm charging. I'm not charging a paisa. I've not charged anybody so far. A good counsellor is a person who works himself away. There is no leaning. There is no dependency. The best counsellor is a person who talks the least.

When do you suggest a couple should seek counselling?

What are some of the suggestions that indicate a couple requires counselling?

A couple should seek counselling when they are not

reaching out to their partner. It should not get to the stage where you cannot talk things over. Let me put it this way. Suppose you are functioning at 65-60 per cent of your performance, you should seek help. Don't wait till 35 per cent of your performance fail before seeking help. That's too much.

This is the point where you are not listening. You are really defending, you are aggressive, and you are throwing off your garbage or catharsis. So seek help when you are at 60-65 per cent of your performance, and things are not moving well. It should not get too toxic, and then you reach out.

As soon as it gets repetitive, and the same thing is happening again and again, I think you need to reach out. Counselling is not when you are having problems; counselling is even talking things over.

In the Indian context there is a lot of inhibition also. You don't like to accept that you have a problem, and you don't want to face the truth. You are not willing to believe that it is happening to you. Married couples in

India reach out very late. They don't want any one else to know about it. They want to hide it as long as they can. Thus things get really bad. People should be made aware of this.

What are some of the major reasons couples divorce or separate?

I think man is not recognizing the woman. The recognition is not there. I'm pro women. I feel women are better than men. We are not soft or gentle. Indian men generally do not share the burden or housework. They share the economic burden, but not the housework.

Most of the husbands control the finances. When the wife is working, he doesn't want the wife to have a free hand. He wants to control the finance. He expects her to give her pay in his hand. In one instance, a lady recalled that detailed accounts on how the money was spent, but also asked for the change! He feels threatened when she earns more. He wants her to behave like his mother. When he comes

home, she must press his legs. Why can't she be better than him. He must be in charge and in control.

What is the best obstacle to a happy and successful married life?

Not listening.

What is the best feature of a relationship?

Good communication. Mental interactions. It is understanding. It is letting the other person finish. Understanding gives space for the other person. Even when you fight, fight clean. Be specific in stating your problem, "When you do this, it hurts."

How do you handle situations that end in conflict?

Repeat each other's accusation. First I will understand. Then I will be understood.

How do you advise couples to cope with extra marital affairs?

I call them and talk to them together for 10-15 minutes. He

blames her, "She's this, she's that...". She blames him, "He's this, he's that...". I just listen quietly. Once the scores are settled, only then can you begin to solve the problem. I don't give solutions. I only suggest questions, and let them give the solutions. "So what are you going to do about it?"

The women are most honest. They talk more. The reason is because she wants to keep her family together. The men, even if he's having an affair with another woman wouldn't accept it.

Are pre-marital counselling sessions essential before marriage to avoid problems or at least know how to handle problem effectively?

Certainly. Infact, I had conducted a three day programme for fourteen couples preparing for marriage. It is the most successful thing I have done. They are not having problems. They are not defensive and let the other person finish. Thus while preparing for marriage, it is essential to leave the garbage

out. It is the process of catharsis or purging.

Is religion an important factor which binds a family together?

Religion has cemented our togetherness. Religion is definitely a binding factor in the home. Both of us come from very orthodox families. In those days religion took the form of service. Service is a rent you pay to be alive on God's beautiful earth.

Today, however, the attitude of service is changing. The abundance of mentality present in the earlier generation is vanishing. Today there is a scarcity of mentality.

What are your future plans?

I have four or five people. They follow me wherever I go. I ask the couples though, "I hope you don't mind. I'm coaching them." Since we, my wife and I are both earning and are financially secure, we don't charge fees. It just gives us great pleasure when we see couples united together. It is a tremendous feeling of satisfaction and achievement. I feel I'm on top of the world. □

HOW TO SURR YOURSELF TO

by Ellen G White

God does not require us to give up anything that is for our best interest to retain. In all that He does, He has the well-being of His children in view. Would that all who have not chosen Christ might realize that He has something vastly better to offer them than they are seeking for themselves.

Man is doing the greatest injury and injustice to his own soul when he thinks and acts contrary to the will of God. No real joy can be found in the path forbidden by Him who knows what is best, and who plans for the good of His creatures. The

path of transgression is the path of misery and destruction.

It is a mistake to entertain the thought that God is pleased to see His children suffer. All heaven is interested in the happiness of man. Our heavenly Father does not close the avenues of joy to any of His creatures. The divine requirements call upon us to shun those indulgences that would close to us the door of happiness and heaven.

The world's Redeemer accepts men as they are, with all their wants, imperfections, and weaknesses; and He will not

SURRENDER

TO GOD

only cleanse us from our sin and grant redemption through His blood, but will satisfy the heart longing of all who consent to wear His yoke, to bear His burden. It is His purpose to impart peace and rest to all who come to Him for the bread of life. He requires us to perform only those duties that will lead our steps to heights of bliss to which the disobedient can never attain. The true, joyous life of the soul is to have Christ formed within, the hope of glory.

Many are inquiring, "How am I to make the surrender of

myself to God?" You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections.

The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair.

What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise.

You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under

the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him; your thoughts will be in harmony with Him.

Desires for goodness and holiness are right as far as they go; but if you stop here, they will avail nothing. Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians. They do not come to the point of yielding the will to God. They do not now choose to be Christians.

Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life. By yielding up your will to Christ, you ally yourself with the power that is above all principalities and powers. You will have strength from above to hold you steadfast, and thus through constant surrender to God you will be enabled to live the new life, even the life of faith.

Four Simple Steps

- First, acknowledge your desire for something better than you have (John 4:7-15).
- Second, acknowledge your need of Jesus in your life (John 4:16-20; Romans 3:23).

Third, make a definite decision to invite Jesus into your life, and give yourself to Him (John 4:21-26).

Finally, act on that decision. Go to Jesus in prayer, asking Him to come into your heart and surrendering yourself to Him (John 4:28-30, 39-42; Ephesians 2:8).

Your prayer might be something like this: "Lord, I realize my need for a close relationship with You. I accept the great gift of salvation You have made possible for me. I confess my sins and leave them behind, through Your Power. I invite You to be the Lord of my life, and I surrender myself to You.

"Thank You for this gift. Amen."

Once you've prayed this prayer, your relationship with Jesus will grow as you spend time with Him each day in prayer, studying His Word, and sharing with others what you are learning about Him. Also, you will find it enormously helpful to fellowship with other believers.

How To Deal With Life's Brevity

by Kenneth J Holland

We all look for a condition of existence that is impervious to change, for friendships that time cannot impair, and for a home where death cannot invade. The reality is that God has already made provision for these desires, and He has done it in ways so magnificent and so overwhelming that we can

only stand in awe of the Majesty of heaven. I will dwell on these gifts of God a bit later.

How unfortunate, how totally unnecessary, on the other hand, that the multitudes of earth see only life's brevity, its shortness. From all corners of earth comes this agonizing cry for permanence.

For the nation and the world, the past few years have

been disastrous. Floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, droughts, and hurricanes—plus an inordinate number of airplane crashes, worldwide economic crisis, and wars—led one TV newsman to ask, "Is God punishing us?" Others ask, "Is there any permanence or stability in life anymore?" Has the Lord indeed prepared a place of refuge for us? If so, what kind of place is it? When do we occupy it? And is everyone part of the promise?

The passing of the years awakens in the hearts of us all a cry for permanence. Happily the Bible offers some significant insights on permanence that we do well to heed. The temporary nature of our present world has been well delineated by the writers of the New Testament epistles.

Bible translator J B Phillips puts it like this: "To the writers of these letters this present life was only an incident. It was to be lived with a due sense of responsibility, as a preface to sharing the timeless life of God Himself. To these men this world was only a part,

and because of the cumulative result of human sin a highly infected and infectious part, of God's vast created universe, seen and unseen.

This present world indeed is temporary. This is not the real world. Everything here comes to an end. God is telling us that this world is only a short moment carved out of eternity. Mankind, however, in ignoring the Bible, has tried without success to deal with the problem of impermanence—with the brevity of life.

As legend has it, *Ponce de Leon*, the renowned Spanish explorer and colonizer of the new world, led an expedition from Puerto Rico in 1513, in search of the reported miraculous "fountain of youth." He failed, of course.

The whole matter of permanence—or lack of it—causes a great deal of resentment at times. Comedian Woody Allen was once asked by an interviewer, "Aren't you happy that you will have gained immortality through your achievements?"

Allen glumly replied, "Who cares about achieving immortality through achievements? I am interested in achieving immortality through not dying".

John Baille, in his book *"And the Life Everlasting,"* says, "It is not really the shortness of life that offends us, it is its temporality—not that it ends so soon, but that it ends at all: and still more deeply the fact that, even while it lasts, it is made up of nothing but endings, of meetings and partings, of memories and longings, and one thing after another."

Mark Twain became extremely caustic about the brevity of life and vented his wrath against the "monster god of eternal damnation, a god who could make good children as easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones; who could have made every one of them happy, but had never made a single happy one; who made them prize their bitter life, yet stingily cut it short; who created man without invitation then tries to shuffle responsibility of man's acts upon man, instead of

honourably placing it where it belongs, upon Himself; and finally, with altogether divine obtuseness, invites this poor abused slave to worship Him!"

Some place their hopes for permanence on the continuing search for "man-made" immortality through scientific breakthroughs. Many scientists feel that the secret is learning how to reverse the aging process by genetic manipulation. If this goal is realized, it will theoretically be possible for people to live nearly a thousand years. In the eyes of science, human will then perhaps be able to achieve immortality.

The Old Testament pictures a stable, joyous kingdom to come, when "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." A time when "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped." A time when "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Isaiah 35:1, 5, 10. The prophet Daniel predicts a time when "the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever." Daniel 7:18.

Before considering further the land that God is preparing, we do well to ask, who shall be the occupants of His Kingdom—the permanence of which He guarantees? According to Scriptures, the only way to qualify for entrance is to develop a heart appreciation for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was willing to give up His hold on eternal life for one wretched, rebellious sinner.

Appreciation for such a sacrifice constrains the sinner to commit his life fully to God. The words of Scriptures, the principles of the Bible, become his way of life. Someone has said, "If we wish to enjoy heavenly society in the coming kingdom, we must be governed by heavenly principles here." Happily, power to live for God comes from God Himself. "For by grace are ye saved; . . . it is the gift of God." Ephesians 2:8.

The unfortunate part of this scenario is that comparatively few take God at His word and accept His offer of Salvation. The greatest sin a person can commit is unbelief, or failure to take God at His Word.

Man's search for something to overcome the brevity of life has often led to fanciful views of the afterlife. Having failed to attain permanence in this life, he has tried to project it to an afterlife by means of a devastating error called the "immortality of the soul."

Perhaps between 50 and 75 per cent of the human family, finding no hope for permanence in this life, have embraced this error of the soul's immortality. Thus they cling to a vague, uncertain hope that someday, somehow (they know not how) all will be well with them, or with their souls, in the afterlife.

In stark contrast with the teachings of reincarnation and the immortality of the soul is God's provision for permanence. According to Scriptures, God's comforting answer contains two parts: the believer has spiritual life in

Christ now in this life and immortal life at the Second coming of Christ. Texts affirming that the Christian has spiritual (born-again) life now include: 1 John 3:2: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." Ephesians 2:4-6: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love where with he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us (made us alive) together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." According to Ephesians 1:19,20, believers have resurrection power in their lives now!

God's ultimate solution to the problem of life's brevity, however, lies in the preparations He is making for a new heaven and a new earth at the return of Christ.

Jesus said: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in

God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:1-3.

"I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Revelation 21:1, 2.

"We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." 2 Peter 3:13.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Matthew 5:5.

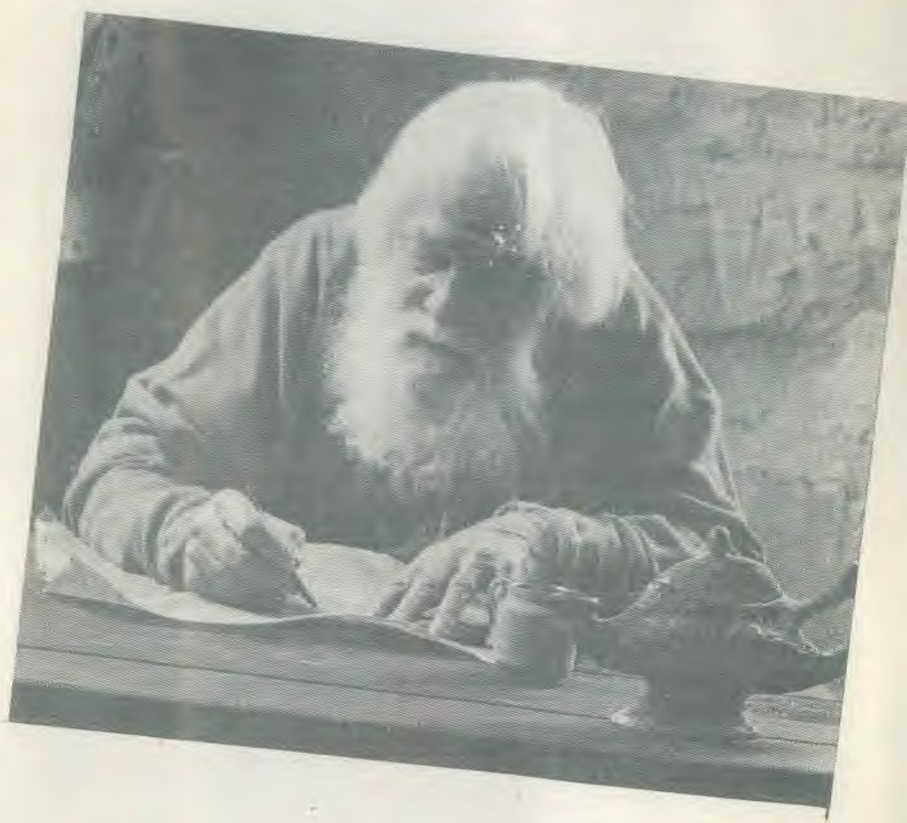
God's new heaven and new earth will be like that—permanently. □



I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

—Jesus Christ

Messianic



Prophecies Of Prophet Isaiah

by M E Cherian

THE PROPHET AND HIS TIMES

One of the greatest prophets of the children of Israel was Isaiah, son of Amoz belonging to the Jewish royal line. He lived in the eighth century BC, covering his long period of over 60 years of prophetic office during the reigns of Jewish kings Uzziah, Jothan, Ahaz and Hezekiah. King Hezekiah was a very godly monarch and, under

the guidance of Isaiah, brought about a great religious reformation in the kingdom of Judah. But his son Manasseh, who became king in 686 BC, turned to wicked ways and Isaiah was one of the first godly leaders to be massacred by him. His prophetic ministry began about 745 BC and lasted till 686 BC.

Most of Isaiah's activities were centred around Jerusalem, the capital of the kingdom of Judah and there he

had become a national leader of high standing. He was the court preacher and advised the king in both political as well as religious matters. Under king Hezekiah a number of reforms were brought about.

There is much information available on the Near Eastern history during the period of Isaiah. Assyria was the major power of the region in the days of Isaiah and at the height of its power and glory. The Assyrian kings of the period were: Tiglath-pileser II (745-727), Shalmaneser V (727-722), Sargon II (722-705), Sennacherib (705-681), and Esarhaddon (681-669).

Shalmaneser V carried out a major military campaign against the nation of Israel from 725 to 723 BC resulting in the fall of Samaria, its capital, and leading to the end of Israel as a nation. Sennacherib V, who began his reign in 705 BC, led a campaign against Judah and its capital Jerusalem in 701 BC, but was not successful. He made one more attempt to capture Jerusalem but failed again.

It is quite evident that both Israel and Judah faced serious problems during the period Isaiah exercised his prophetic office. It was a time of apostasy and spiritual decline. Along with Isaiah the other prophets of the time, Micah, Amos and Hosea warned, reproved and attempted to bring about a reformation. In this Isaiah led the way. "He counselled against the folly of relying upon worldly alliances for strength. He stressed the fact that the counsel of men would come to nought, and that only those who

placed their reliance upon God would ultimately prevail"— *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol 4, p 90.

ISAIAH'S CONCEPT OF GOD

Prophet Isaiah constantly refers to God as the Holy One. "Being holy, He required that His people likewise be holy, and being righteous, He could not tolerate iniquity. Isaiah looked forward to a new heaven and a new earth, to a new Jerusalem, which would be 'the city of righteousness' (Isaiah 1:26). For Isaiah, holiness involved more than a scrupulous observance of the ceremonies and ordinances of religion. These, in fact, were offensive to Jehovah unless they were accompanied by a reformation of character and a holy, blameless life"—*Ibid.*

The Book of Isaiah has 66 chapters and the second part of the book, chapters 40 to 66, "sets forth one of the most striking pictures of Israel and Israel's God found anywhere in the Bible" *Ibid.* Chapter 53 contains a most poignant description of the Messiah as the vicariously suffering one. "Here is one of the Bible's most revealing pictures of the infinite greatness and goodness of God. Here also is set forth the great mission of the church"— *Ibid.* Isaiah saw the Messiah as a "light" to the whole human race and predicted that His message of deliverance from sin and of salvation would spread to the whole world.

WORK OF THE MESSIAH

Isaiah is seen as the prophet who got a clearer vision of the person and

mission of the Messiah than any other Old Testament prophet. Therefore, he is rightly called the Messianic prophet.

The Messiah will restore the earth to its original sinless state. In the second chapter of the Book of Isaiah is a prophecy regarding the work of the Messiah. he shall restore God's kingdom on this earth. He shall bring peace and righteousness and God's name shall be exalted and glorified.

Isaiah says, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on top of the mountains . . . For out of zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:2-4).

MESSIAH, THE INCARNATED GOD

In his prophetic vision Isaiah saw the dawn of an era of peace and tranquility based on justice and righteousness. He saw the Messiah as the way to this glorious age. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

Commenting on this verse one Bible Commentary says: "There is, patently, but one Person in the

universe to whom the description here given can fully and adequately apply, and that is Christ. Nowhere else in the Bible do we find the loftiness of thought, the beauty of expression, the intensity of feeling, found here in the description of the world's Saviour and coming king"— *Ibid*, p 146.

It is very significant that the Prophet Isaiah predicts that this "son" that is to be born is "The Mighty God." It is a pointed reference to the incarnation of God Himself in the human form. This child is identified with "The everlasting Father." Again, an unmistakable pointer to His Divinity.

MESSIAH TO INHERIT DAVID'S THRONE

Isaiah continues his prophetic description of the divine child to be born. "Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever (Isaiah 9:7).

An account of an encounter Mary, the mother of Jesus, had with an angel before the birth of Christ is given to us in the gospel of St Luke. "And the angel came in unto her, and said . . . thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David . . . and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:28, 30-33).

Isaiah predicted that the Messiah's kingdom shall be forever and that He shall occupy the throne of David. About 300 years before Isaiah, God had indicated the same truth to king David himself. Speaking about and to David, God said, "... and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever" (II Samuel 7:13). Again, "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever" (verse 16).

MESSIAH TO COME FROM GALILEE

In the ninth chapter of Isaiah there is one more prophecy concerning the coming Messiah. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" (verse 2). This prophecy was written over 700 years before the birth of Christ. It refers to the spiritual darkness in which people lived and the spiritual enlightenment and light brought by the Messiah upon the people. Isaiah identified the area of darkness to which the Messiah was to bring light. The area included "the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali" and "beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations" (Isaiah 9:1).

This was fulfilled in the life of Christ just as it was predicted. Speaking about Christ we read in the Gospel of St Matthew, "And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Naphtalim" (St Matthew 4:13). After referring to this historical fact, the gospel writer reminds us of the fulfilment of this prophecy made by

Isaiah. "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias (Isaiah) the prophet".

Just as Isaiah under divine inspiration had predicted, Jesus dwelt in the region of Galilee and to those who lived in spiritual darkness, His life and teachings provided spiritual light and life.

PREDICTION REGARDING THE MESSIAH'S LINEAGE

A few years later, possibly fifteen or more, after predicting the prophecies referred to above, Isaiah gave a series of prophetic utterances regarding the coming Messiah and those are recorded in the eleventh chapter of his book.

Here the prophet gives further and more precise information to identify the coming Messiah. "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isaiah 11:1). The Messiah was to come out of the family of Jesse.

Who was Jesse? Over 300 years before Isaiah, in the eleventh century before Christ, in Palestine in Bethlehem, in the days when Saul was the king, and Samuel was the prophet and spiritual leader for the children of Israel, there lived a man by the name of Jesse. Let us read the story as given in the sacred Scriptures. "And the Lord said unto Samuel . . . fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons . . . And Samuel did that which the Lord spake, and came to Bethlehem.

And he said. . . sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice. And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, surely the Lord's anointed is before him. But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.

Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The Lord hath not chosen these.

And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.

"And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward" (1 Samuel 16:1, 4-13).

So Jesse was the father of King David. The Prophet Isaiah foretold that a "rod" shall come forth out of the stem of Jesse. Chapter one of the gospel according to St Matthew gives a complete genealogy of Christ. The very first verse says, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of

David, the son of Abraham." The fifth and sixth verses say, ". . . and Obed begat Jesse; and Jesse begat David the king." Verse 17: "So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations." So Christ rose from the "stem" of Jesse and in the family of David.

PERSONALITY OF THE MESSIAH

Isaiah continues his predictions about the Messiah. "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge in the fear of the Lord: And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins" (Isaiah 11:2-5).

St Luke bears witness of Jesus Christ thus. "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). After Christ began His ministry once he came to his home village of Nazareth. St Matthew speaks of it, "And when he was come into his own

country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?" (Matthew 13:54-56).

The prophet said, the Messiah "shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears." It is an indication of his insight into the nature of each man and as to what is in his heart. Apostle John, who had an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ as a close disciple of His, wrote: "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men. And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man" (John 2:24, 25).

WORLDWIDE MISSION OF THE MESSIAH

The universal impact of the life and mission of the Messiah is given in the same chapter. "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious" (Isaiah 11:10). If the Messiah is to be the Saviour of man from sin, suffering and death, then His message and mission will of necessity be worldwide. "In every part of earth the Messiah will be held up before men and women as the means of salvation from sin. Messengers of Christ will stand before men and women as His representatives, pointing to Him as the

ensign to guide the people of the earth in the way of light and blessing"— *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol 4, p 159.

When the Lord Jesus Christ was on this earth, He said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (St John 12:32). His commission to His disciples was, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . ." (Matthew 28:19).

The rest the Messiah offers has no parallel. When He was on earth His invitation was, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest . . . I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:28, 29). This rest is spiritual rest which is the result of one's sins forgiven and due to the assurance of eternal life. When peace comes to us, there is rest. Notice the promise of the Lord: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (St John 14:27).

The purpose of incarnation was to save man and to bring him into harmony with God. "Those who find Christ find peace and rest, a peace that the world cannot give and that the wicked can never know. The most blessed experience possible for man is to enjoy the "rest" which Christ offers, rest from the cares and burdens of sin. . . . Thus man may find in this world a brief and happy foretaste of the glorious rest and peace of the eternal world"— *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol 4, p 159. □

Here's A New Year Promise For You

by W A Townend

This New Year let us start our promise talks together with a promise inherent in the best-known psalm in the world; right there at the beginning of it, actually. "*The Lord is my shepherd.*" Psalm 23:1.

There are, as you may have heard, some twelve different Hebrew names of God prominent in the Bible. "Jehovah" is perhaps the best known of these, being used some 6,823 times in the Old Testament. "Elohim" is another well-known name for Deity (which, like Jehovah, includes Jesus Christ). Elohim is there 2,569 times after it

is used in Genesis 1:1, where we read, "In the beginning God" (the best of all beginnings).

But you have to read on and on until you get into almost the middle of the Bible—Psalms 23:1—before you find, in the Hebrew, the original language, **Jehovah-rohi**. The word "rohi" or "ro'eh" occurs frequently, but it is first used about God in our 1993 New Year promise, "*The Lord is my Shepherd.*"

Lord-Jehovah-rohi. What does this mean? A number of things, but chiefly "to feed, or to lead to pasture, as a shepherd does his flock".

King David's background was among sheep and their shepherds. He knew them both very well. And he also knew his Hebrew very well. He was a man of letters. He also knew the Scriptures of his time very well. He was a man of God's Word.

In that Word, in those Scriptures written before the shepherd-king-poet-theologian penned his Psalm we all love so much, was this intriguing expression, "rohi," or "ro'eh."

Away back in the days of Joseph we see him "feeding *the flock* with his brethren" (Genesis 37:2).

Yes, the Hebrew used "our" word, David's word of Psalm 23:1. This word was also spoken figuratively when the tribes of Israel reminded David of God's commission to him; "*Thou shalt feed My people Israel*" (2 Samuel 5:2).

You get the picture, don't you? It is one of tender, wise, ever-present care, both physical and spiritual. This is God's promise to us today at the start of 1993.

David knew it. He wrote of it for God. He personally

claimed the promise. The Lord *was* his Shepherd, physically and spiritually.

One man who thought long and hard about this name Jehovah-rohi, Nathan J Stone, himself a biblical Hebrew scholar, came to the conclusion that "No other name of Jehovah has the tender intimate touch of this name".

There are names of God which reveal Him as Creator and Sovereign of the universe, mighty Ruler, eternal and self-existent, the provider of the Lamb of redemption, the Healer of sickness and sorrow, the standard of victory, the Sanctifier of His people for service, the God of peace and the One who is Righteousness itself. All so true of our God. And necessary, too.

But He is also Jehovah-rohi, and will continue to be every day of this New Year. We can trust Him just as the Palestinian sheep of old trusted its good and faithful Shepherd.

Resolve: *Today* we will follow our Good Shepherd's leading.

We are away to a good start, this year of 1993. Let's keep it up! □

"HE LEADETH ME"



The eventful 1992 has become a part of history and of eternity and 1993 is here and stretches out before us with an unknown and untried path.

Hence it is but natural that we pause at this point in time to reflect as well as to resolve.

We reflect upon the year that has just passed: What has it meant to us individually and collectively?

We discover that it has been a year of mixed fortunes, both good as well as bad. We recollect our accomplishments and our failures, our progress and setbacks, growth and retrogradation, opportunities grasped and lost, service rendered and withheld, duty performed and shirked. There were times of joy and sorrow, of pleasure and pain. There were times when our spiritual life brightened but also there were times when we failed our God, when spiritually we remained stagnant and our souls came under the burden of guilt. So we resolve to do better and to live better in the new year.

In and through all the vicissitudes of life we want to grow spiritually and find a meaningful and rewarding relationship with our God and fellowmen.

A saint once said, "The sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables us to go on the heights" (Habakkuk 3:19, NIV). The best

guarantee for a relevant and blessed 1993 is God our Heavenly Father. It is the confidence and assurance that comes from our trust and faith in God that is needed to make 1993 a successful one. David, the king of Israel, who was forced into a very difficult and crisis-ridden life confessed the implications of a God-centered life in the beautiful words as found in the 23rd Psalm.

King Solomon once said, "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed" (Proverbs 16:3, NIV).

Therefore as you enter into this year, we commend to you our Father in heaven as your guide, your strength, and above all your God. He will take you through the year in a way that will be rewarding as well as refreshing. With God there is no defeat. With God all will be well. Give God a chance in your life in 1993. You will not regret. The Lord Jesus clearly said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). That is a God centered life, a life of blessing.

We hope *Our Times* this year will help you to find life worth living, to see God's plan for your life, to seek God's strength to carry out that plan, and to realise your spiritual potential. It is with this hope that we are introducing a new format for *Our Times*. It will be more handy and convenient and even more attractive. But above all more responsive to your spiritual yearnings, hopes and aspirations.

—Dr M E Cherian, President
Southern Asia Division of SDA

A Happy New Year!

*Consecrate yourself each morn,
The Master's will to heed;
Feast upon the Bread of Life,
To satisfy your need;
For Living Waters ever thirst,
Give loyal service--Jesus first!
'Twill mean for you--a Happy
New Year!*

*Cultivate a friendship true
With Him who loves you best,
Seek His presence, find His joy,
Contentment, peace, and rest;
Ne'er lonely be along the way,
Commune with Jesus night and day,
And you will have--a Happy
New Year!*

*Clasp the Hand outstretched to aid,
Prove every promise true;
Follow where He leads the way,
And claim His victory, too;
Though strife and sin be all around,
God's grace for you doth more abound,
My wish for you--a Happy
New Year!*

by Mrs M H Cooper