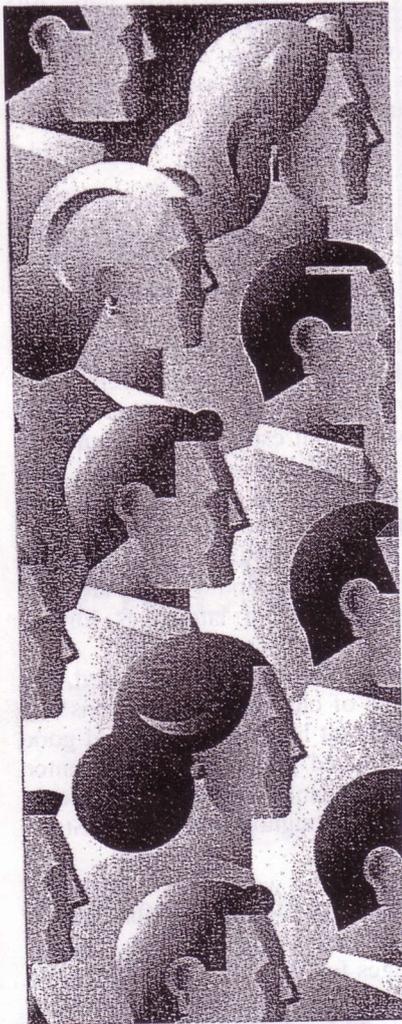


Following Jesus into a New Year



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BY

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of one's goals for the New Year. Faced with the blank slate and the fresh start that a new year represents, we have the best of intentions, yet why do we so often fall short of those resolutions and goals we have set?

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It seems that the single common denominator to all of these goals is their root in the self. It is the desire to look slim and attractive, to have more money, and other inflated self-aggrandizing goals. Often these types of goals are set because people are looking at the culture to tell them who and what they should be and who and what they should desire. They are not rooted in compassion for the self so when imposed on the self, the resolution or goal often falls in upon the one who has set it because the way has not been prepared. Sadly, these goals are not authentic goals, but goals dictated by the culture and tyrannically imposed by the human ego.

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In the last few decades, many of us have fallen into the trap of secularism in regard to turning over a new leaf for a new year. I have learned some significant spiritual lessons in years gone by in my own attempts to chart a new course for a new year and then fail. Year upon year of failure in setting the same goal and failing to achieve it set me to some hard thinking about falling short personally and about the nature of starting over in general. I came to realize that if one has to start over then the real issue is not failing to achieve a particular goal, but about how one is already living.

ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR TOPICS OF conversation around the Christmas and New Year holidays is the making of resolutions for the upcoming year. The magazines on the newsstand even offer countless tips to readers geared to the topic. Often fuelled by overindulgence in food, drink, and spending, we set about to start the New Year by going on diets, joining gyms, putting ourselves on a budget to pay down debt, stop smoking, and other bad habits or addictions.

In addition to these perennial favourites, we often set ambitious, and perhaps, unrealistic goals for the year. Almost as popular a topic as making resolutions is the topic of breaking or falling short