

PASTOR'S COLUMN

“The Two Streams of Soul – Thoughts at the Beginning of a New Year”

“Thus there are these two streams, one from the past and one from the future, which come together in the soul – will anyone who observes himself deny that?”

Anyone who looks deeply into the life of the soul will see that these two streams, one from the past and one from the future, are continually meeting there. The fact that we are influenced by the past is obvious: Who could deny that our energy or idleness of yesterday has some effect on us today? But we ought not to deny the reality of the future, either, for we can observe in the soul the intrusion of future events, although they have not yet happened. After all, there is such a thing as fear of something likely to happen tomorrow, or anxiety about it. Is that not a sort of feeling or perception concerned with the future? Whenever the soul experiences fear or anxiety, it shows by the reality of its feelings that it is reckoning not only with the past but in a very lively manner with something hastening towards it from the future. These, of course, are single examples, but they will suffice to suggest that anyone who surveys the soul will find numerous others to contradict the abstract logic which says that since the future does not yet exist, it can have no present influence.

Thus there are these two streams, one from the past and one from the future, which come together in the soul- will anyone who observes himself deny that? – and produce a kind of whirlpool, comparable to the confluence of two rivers. Closer observation shows that the impressions left on us by past experiences, and in which we have dealt with them, have made the soul what it is. We bear within ourselves the legacy of our doing, feeling, and thinking in the past. If we look back over these past experiences, especially those in which we played an active part, we shall very often be impelled to an assessment of ourselves...

We need only to remember the feelings of fear and anxiety that gnaw at our soul-life in face of the unknown future. Is there anything that can give the soul a sense of security in this situation? Yes, there is. It is what we may call a feeling of humbleness towards anything that may come towards the soul out of the darkness of the future. But this feeling will be effective only if it has the character of prayer. Let us avoid misunderstanding. We are not extolling something that might be called humbleness in one sense or another, we are describing a definite form of it – humbleness to whatever the future may bring. Anyone who looks anxiously and fearfully towards the future hinders his development, hampers the free unfolding of his soul-forces. Nothing, indeed, obstructs this development more than fear and anxiety in face of the unknown future. But the results of submitting to the future can be judged only by experience. What does this humbleness mean?

Ideally, it would mean saying to oneself: Whatever the next hour or day may bring, I cannot change it by fear or anxiety, for it is not yet known. I will therefore wait for it with complete inward restfulness, perfect tranquility of mind. Anyone who can meet the future in this calm, relaxed way, without impairing his active strength and energy, will be able to develop the powers of his soul freely and intensively. It is as if hindrance after hindrance fall away, as the soul comes to be more and more pervaded by this feeling of humbleness towards approaching events.”

—from *“Metamorphoses of the Soul, vol. 2”*
Rudolf Steiner, German anthropologist, 1861-1925

As we end this year of 2003, may we kneel before this new year of 2004 in humbleness!

F. Mike