

Rudolf Steiner

The Mission of the Archangel Michael

The Anthroposophic Press: Spring Valley – New York

Contents

ONE

Rudolf Steiner's Early Accounts of the Michael Event of 1879

- I The Archangel Known as Michael and the Hosts of Mammon (Berlin, November 3, 1905)
- II The Year 1879 (Berlin, October 9, 1907)
- III Michael, the Radiating Sun (Munich December 5, 1907)

TWO

The Integration of Humanity into the Ranks of the Hierarchies

- I Angels, Archangels, and Archai – Guardian Angels, Folk Spirits, and Time Spirits
(Düsseldorf, April 15, 1909)
- II Archangels and Archai: Folk Spirits and Time Spirits (Oslo, June 7, 1910)
- III Time Spirits: The Spirits of the Age (Oslo, June 8, 1910)

THREE

Michael, the Messenger of Christ (London, May 2, 1913)

FOUR

The Archangel Michael: The Time Spirit (Stuttgart, May 18, 1913)

FIVE

Michael and the Buddha (Stuttgart, May 20, 1913)

SIX

Behind the Scenes of External Happenings:

The Fall of the Spirits of Darkness

- I (Zurich, November 6, 1917)
- II (Zurich, November 13, 1917)

SEVEN

Signs of the Times: Michael's War in Heaven & its Reflection on the Earth

(Munich, February 17, 1918)

A note on the Pronunciation of MI-CHA-EL

In a matter of language, I once knew Rudolf Steiner to be really angry; seeing me crestfallen, he quickly added: I do not mean you personally. I do mean you personally. In the accustomed English pronunciation of *Michael* – unlike the names of the other Archangels – we practically swallow the last two syllables. (It is a shock to admit it, but we pronounce the name in effect as though we should say "raffle" instead of Raphael.) Toward the end of his life, Steiner was often speaking of the present historic time – beginning with the year A.D. 1879 – as the "Age of Michael." So, too, he did in his Lectures at Torquay,¹ in interpreting which I naturally pronounced the name as we always do; it did not occur to me to do otherwise. When I visited him at his hotel that evening, he was indignant. The ending *-el*, he said, is the name of God; how can you slur it over in that way? Pronounce the vowels by all means in the accustomed English way, but do not slur them. In German, too, we have the Christian name "Michel" (which, in effect, is pronounced "Michl"), but when referring to the Divine Being you should articulate the full three syllables, *Mi-cha-el*. Then, being evidently under the impression that I might think this impossible in English, he went on: You put a stop to spiritual progress if you will insist that your mother tongue can only be spoken according to present day conventions....²

1. Among others, this volume pp. 267-82
2. From: George Adams, "Rudolf Steiner in England", in *A Man Before Others: Rudolf Steiner Remembered*.

ONE

Rudolf Steiner's Early Accounts of the Michael Event of 1879

I

The Archangel Known as Michael and the Hosts of Mammon

(From: Rudolf Steiner, *Foundations of Esotericism*, Lecture XXIX, pp. 234-5.)

Berlin, November 3, 1905

All the European esoteric schools say that the bacterial illnesses of modern times – those caused by bacilli – have a similar origin which can be traced back to the spiritual world. This is an esoteric tradition among Rosicrucians and in other esoteric schools where such things are taught. A fundamental teaching exists in small circles of esoteric schools, which states that in the seventies [of the last century] quite definite battles took place in the astral world which caused-things to take a better turn [Gap in text]. These events are called the battle between the hosts of the Archangel known to Christian esotericism as Michael and the hosts of the god Mammon. Mammon is the god of hindrances, who places destructive, hindering things in the path of progress. Furthermore, this god Mammon is seen as the creator of quite definite forms which work disturbingly in human life precisely in the sphere of infectious diseases. Certain infectious diseases, unknown in earlier times, are brought about by the god Mammon.²

2. Cf. C. G. Harrison, *The Transcendental Universe*: "I have said that all great movements in the external world have their origin in the spiritual world, and that the conflict of ideas which marks the

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

transition from one historical epoch and another is, as it were, a copy of a battle already fought and won in the spiritual region. On such a transition period we have just entered the year 1879 marked the close of an epoch in the intellectual life of Europe and America. In that year, the hosts of light, under S. Michael the Archangel, obtained a decisive victory over the hosts of darkness, led by Beelzebub and Mammon, in a series of battle extending over a period of thirty or forty years....

II

The Year 1879

(From: Rudolf Steiner, *Guidance in Esoteric Training*, p. 84.)

Berlin, October 9, 1907

The year 1879 marks an epoch of the greatest significance in the evolution of humanity because of an event that took place on the plane. Since that event, our civilization has taken a different direction.

A certain spiritual stream began to flow in the year 1250 and reached its height in 1459, when Christian Rosenkreutz was raised to the rank of Knight of the Rose-Cross. In 1510, the age known in occultism as *the Age of Gabriel* began. *The Age of Michael* began in 1879. After that comes *the Age of Oraphiel*, when great conflicts will rage among human beings. Therefore a tiny handful of human beings is now being prepared to keep the torch of spiritual knowledge alight in that sombre epoch.

III

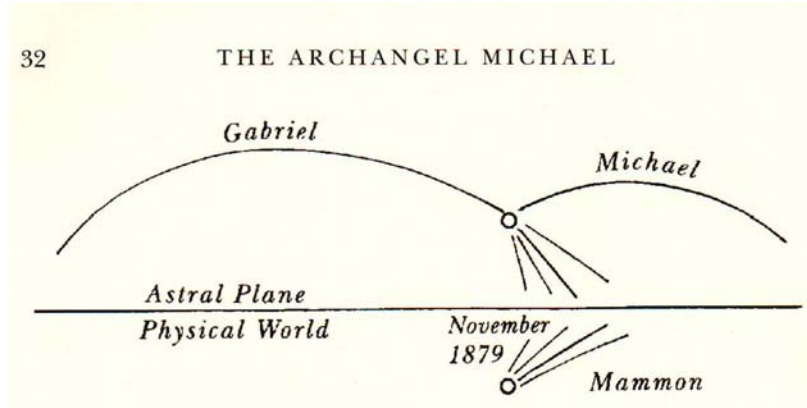
Michael, the Radiating Sun

(From handwritten notes by Anna Weissmann in *Beiträge zur Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe*, Nr. 67/68.)

Munich December 5, 1907

All culture originates in the spiritual world. That is where the planets are formed, and they in turn determine the course of our lives on the physical plane. Here, on the earth, we merely witness the way in which one event follows the other according to physical laws, while the great spiritual causes remain hidden from us. But the events that occur on the higher planes of our being are the real cause of physical events. To make this clear, let us look at one example.

An especially important event took place on the astral plane in the year 1879, in November.



Beginning at that moment, esoteric life completely changed course and became quite different from what it had been previously. The esoteric stream that had been living in

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

humanity since the fourteenth century was replaced by another stream. Between the fourteenth century and the year 1879, occult life took place in the greatest silence and secrecy. Under the guidance of 'a high spiritual being, the Archangel Gabriel, it was ripening towards the year 1879.

Gabriel means announcement, annunciation, foretelling. That is why the Archangel Gabriel plays the role of the messenger in the Gospels. Under Gabriel's guidance, spiritual life was ripening in complete stillness, well protected and surrounded like a child in its mother's womb. Then, in November 1879, on the astral plane, something quite similar to a birth occurred. What had been maturing since the fourteenth century could now be carried out into the world, even if only before a small minority of human beings, for the reign of Gabriel had been replaced by that of another Archangel, under whose guidance we now operate: the Archangel Michael. Michael is the radiating sun, through whom esoteric wisdom illuminates a small human band. Under Gabriel's guidance, esoteric wisdom remained hidden, while on the physical plane, materialism was developing. But let us not view materialism as something evil, for materialism too is part of the divine creative plan and has a goal and purpose in the cosmic whole. Now, however, the dark forces of materialism have taken the upper hand, and therefore the time has come for the esoteric sun to shine forth once more under Michael's radiant guidance.

Michael's radiant rule will be replaced in turn by a dark, terrifying age, which will begin around the year 2400. Even now, coincident with Michael, a dark God has proclaimed his power: Mammon.

For occultists, Mammon is not only the god of money. Mammon is the leader of all the lower, dark forces. His troops attack not just the human soul, but the physical bodies of humans as well, devouring and destroying them. People speak so much of bacilli nowadays not just because we know so much more about them than we used to, but also because the bacilli have actually taken a completely new form. And in the future, they will acquire even more frightening power.

When this Dark Age approaches, there will be raging quarrels between brothers, and wars between brothers. Poor human bodies will waste away; prey to dread illnesses and scourges. The seal of sin will be imprinted most visibly onto the human body. Then another Archangel will appear: Oraphiel. He is the one who must come to shake humankind, to jolt it through terrifying suffering, awakening it to its true vocation. For this to happen in the right way, however, there must be, starting now, a small handful of human beings capable of spreading esoteric life during the next four to six hundred years.

Anyone who feels an urge to participate in spiritual life under Michael's guidance is called to serve Michael and learn from him. This is the preparation for service under Oraphiel's terrifying rule. Sacrifice will be required of those who want to consecrate themselves to the spiritual life. The willingness to put oneself at the service of humanity is the necessary prerequisite from anyone who seeks to receive the spiritual life.

In four to six hundred years the handful of human beings who are now preparing themselves will be put in the service of Oraphiel, so that humanity can be saved. If the people who assume the leadership then have not prepared for it by holding their own against the troops of Mammon, they will not be able to play the role assigned them under Oraphiel. Then humanity will not be raised from its misery. Therefore, we must set to work now with the utmost seriousness.

But it is when the darkest forces are at their most violent that the brightest light also shines. Oraphiel has assumed the leadership in the past. The last time was when Christ appeared upon the earth, a period when the worst rottenness and decadence reigned all over the earth. It took terrible sufferings then for the human race to be jolted forward. Oraphiel has been called the Archangel of Anger, who purifies humanity with a strong hand.

The story of Christ's cracking his whip at the money-changers in the Temple has deep meaning in it. At this darkest of times in human history, Christ appeared to save humanity. Oraphiel's reign ended 104 years later and was replaced by Anael's. Then came Zachariel,

then Raphael. Raphael reigned at the time of the Renaissance; Gabriel from the sixteenth century to 1879. Then Michael assumed the leadership. Around 2400, it will be Oraphiel's turn again. And, just as the last time, the spiritual light will shine radiantly in the darkness. Christ will appear again on earth, but in a different form. Our vocation is to receive Him, to serve Him.

TWO

The Integration of Humanity into the Ranks of the Hierarchies

I

Angels, Archangels, and Archai – Guardian Angels, Folk Spirits, and Time Spirits)

(From: Rudolf Steiner, *The Spiritual Hierarchies & Their Reflection in the Physical World*, pp. 67-69)

Düsseldorf, April 15, 1909

The Beings who, as we ascend, are closest to human beings are known in Christian esotericism as Angels, Archangels, and Prime Powers or Prime Beginners – *Angeloi*, *Archangeloi*, and *Archai*. In anthroposophical terminology, Archangels are also called Fire Spirits, and the Prime Beginners (or *Achai*) are also known as Spirits of Personality ...

Let us first consider the Angels or *Angeloi*. These reached their human stage of development during the Old Moon period and are at present only as far evolved as humanity will be during its Jupiter phase of evolution. (For the evolutionary stages of (Old) Saturn, (Old) Sun, (Old) Moon, Earth, Jupiter, Venus, and Vulcan, see for instance Rudolf Steiner, *An Outline of Occult Science and The Apocalypse of St. John*.) Hence, Angels are one stage above humans. What is the task of these Beings? To deal with this question, we shall have to consider the evolution of humanity on the earth. ...

Every individual is endowed with a Being who, because it stands one stage above humanity, guides that individual from one incarnation to another. We should bear in mind that these are not the beings who order karma, whom we shall refer to later. They are simply Guardian Spirits, who preserve the memory of each incarnation until the next, because human beings cannot do so of their own accord. These are Angels or *Angeloi*. A human being is an individuality in each incarnation, and is watched over by a Being who carries from incarnation to incarnation the consciousness of what occurred in each life. This explains why, at certain lower stages of initiation, people may be able to ask their Angels about their former incarnations. This is within the bounds of possibility. The task of the Angels, therefore, is to stand watch over all the threads that human beings weave from one incarnation to the next.

Now let us consider the next group of Beings, known as Archangel, *Archangeloi*, or Fire Spirits. These are not concerned with single individuals. Their task is more encompassing. They bring about harmonizing influences among larger groups of humans, among peoples, races, etc. They have the task in earthly evolution of bringing individual souls into contact with the various Folk- and Race-Souls. For one who is able to penetrate cognitively and spiritually into the reality of things, Folk-Souls and Race-Souls are quite different from what one generally understands by these terms today, especially modern, abstracts scientists. A number of people live in a particular area – say, in Germany, France or Italy. And because our physical eyes can perceive a number of human beings only as so many outer physical forms, modern thinkers conceive of a Folk-Spirit or Folk-Soul as merely the abstract sum of

so many people.

Only the individual human being is real for such modern thinkers, not the Folk-Soul or Folk-Spirit. But for one who is able to look into the true workings of the spiritual world, a Folk-Soul or a Folk-Spirit is a reality. A Fire Spirit or Archangel manifests itself in a Folk-Soul. It governs the relationship between individual human beings and the whole of a people or a race.

But if we rise a stage higher, we come to the Beings known as the Spirits of Personality, Primal Beginnings, Primal Powers, or *Archai*. These are still loftier Beings who have an even more exalted task in the total structure of human affairs. Essentially, they govern all the interrelationships of the whole of the human species on earth. They live in waves of time; they change their configuration from age to age, and are able to take on a different spiritual body at the appointed moment. You are all familiar with what is known abstractly today by the ugly expression "Zeitgeist" (Spirit of the Times, Time Spirit). These *Archai* beings, who are real to spiritual observation, are concerned with the significance and mission of a particular age of humanity. They encompass what goes beyond a single people or race – for example, the mission and significance of the first millennium following the Atlantean catastrophe. The Spirit of an Age does not restrict itself to a particular people; its influence goes beyond the frontiers of a country.

Such a true Time Spirit, or Spirit of an Age, is the Spirit-Body of an *Archai*, Primal Beginning, or Spirit of Personality. The Spirits of Personality, for example, are responsible for the fact that certain human individualities appear on the earthly scene at the appointed time. You will readily understand that what must be done on earth must be done largely by earthly individualities. Certain epoch-making personalities have to appear at certain particular times. Utter confusion would reign in evolution if this were left to chance, if, for instance, a Luther or a Charlemagne were to appear quite arbitrarily in one era or another. We must realize the significance of this in regard to the whole of human evolution; the right souls must appear at a particular moment in the overall pattern of earthly evolution, as it were. This is regulated by the Spirits of personality or *Archai*. ...

//

Archangels and Archai: Folk Spirits and Time Spirits

(From: Rudolf Steiner, *The Mission of the Individual Folk Souls*, pp. 31-36.)

Oslo, June 7, 1910

In addition to the evolution of peoples and all that is associated with their evolution, a progressive evolution of humanity as a whole also takes place. Whether we consider a particular civilization to be superior to another is unimportant. To express a preference for the old Indian culture is a matter of personal opinion. A person who is not swayed by personal opinions will be indifferent to such value judgments. Human progress follows ineluctably upon the necessary course of events, though some may later regard this course as a decline. If we compare various periods – 5000 B.C., 3000 B.C. and 1000 A.D., for instance – we are aware of the existence of something that transcends the Folk Spirits, something in which several Folk Spirits participate. You can observe this at the present time. How is it that so many people can sit together in this hall, people who have come here from many different countries and who understand each other or try to understand each other when they touch upon vital questions that have brought them together? They come from the spheres of activity of very different Folk Spirits, and yet they have some common ground of understanding. In the same way, different people were able to understand one another in Atlantean times. In every age there is something that is more or less universally understood, something that transcends the Folk Souls and can bring them together. This is the Zeitgeist or Time Spirit, the Spirit of the Age, to use an unfortunate term which is in common usage. Each epoch has its own particular *Zeitgeist*; the *Zeitgeist* of the Greek epoch is different to

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

ours. Those who understand the Spirit today are drawn towards Spiritual Science. It is this Spirit which, reflecting the Spirit of the Age, transcends individual Folk Souls. When Christ Jesus appeared on earth, the forerunner, John the Baptist, characterized the Spirit which might be described as the *Zeitgeist* of that epoch in these words: "Repent, change your mental attitude, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Thus, for every epoch, we can discover the Spirit of the Age. The Spirit of the Age is something that permeates the activity of the Folk Spirits, which we have already described as the activity of the Archangels. To today's materialists the Spirit of the Age is an abstraction, devoid of reality. Still less would they be prepared to accept the Spirit of the Age as an authentic entity. Nevertheless, the term "*Spirit of the Age*" conceals the existence of a real Being, who is three stages above humanity. It conceals the identity of the Beings, the *Archai*, who underwent their human stage on Old Saturn and who are now working on the transformation of the earth from its spiritual aura-in other words, they are undergoing the last stage in the transformation of their physical bodies into the Spirit Body or Atma. Here we are dealing with exalted Beings and the contemplation of their attributes might well overwhelm us. These are the Beings who might be described as the inspirers or – if we choose to use the technical expression of occultism – the "intuitors" of the Spirit or Spirits of the Age. They work in such a way that they take over from one another and mutually support each other. From epoch to epoch, they pass on their mission to their successor. The Spirit of the Age who was active in the Greek epoch handed on his mission to his successor, and so on. As we have already observed, there are a number of such Time Spirits or Spirits of Personality who work as Spirits of the Age. These Spirits of Personality, these inspirers of the Spirit of the Age, are of a higher order than the Folk Spirits. In every epoch one of these Spirits of Personality is predominant and, sets his seal upon the whole epoch, assigning to the Folk Spirits their specific tasks, so that the whole spirit of the epoch is determined by the special or individual characteristics of the Folk Spirit. Then, in the following epoch, another Spirit of Personality, another of the *Archai*, takes over.

After a certain number of epochs have elapsed, a Spirit of the Age has evolved further. We must picture this in the following way: when we die, having completed our present stage of evolution, our personality transmits the achievements of this earth-life to the next earth-life. The same holds good for the Spirits of the Age. In each Age we have one such Spirit of the Age, and at the end of an epoch this Spirit hands over to another, who, in turn, hands over to yet another, and so on. The earlier Spirits, meanwhile, continue their own development. Then, in a later epoch, while the other Spirits are proceeding with their own evolution, the original Spirit takes over again, infusing intuitively into humankind for the sake of a more evolved humanity what has been acquired for the higher mission. We look up to these Spirits of Personality, to these Beings who may be characterized by the somewhat colorless term "*Spirit of the Age*." We human beings pass from incarnation to incarnation; but we know for certain that, while we ourselves progress from epoch to epoch, when we look into the future, we see ever different Spirits of the Age determining events on earth. But our Spirit of the Age will return too and we shall meet once again. Because a characteristic feature of these Spirits of Personality is to perform cyclic revolutions and return to their starting-point, they are also called "Spirits of Cyclic Periods." (See also Rudolf Steiner, *Spiritual Beings in the Heavenly Bodies and in the Kingdoms of Nature*, Lecture 2 ff.)

These higher Spiritual Beings, then, who issue their commands to the Folk Spirits are also called Spirits of Cyclic Periods. We are here referring to those cyclic periods which humanity itself must go through when, from epoch to epoch, it returns to earlier conditions and repeats them in a higher form. This repetition of the characteristics of earlier forms may surprise you. But if you examine carefully the stages of human evolution on the earth in the light of Spiritual Science, you will find that these occurrences recur in many different forms. Thus the seven consecutive epochs following the Atlantean catastrophe which we call the post-Atlantean culture-epochs, repeat themselves. (See also Rudolf Steiner, *The Spiritual Guidance of the Individual and Humanity*, Lecture 3 and *An Outline of Occult Science*, Chapter 4, pp. 217 ff.) The Greco-Latin epoch, however, marks the turning point in our cycle and will not therefore be repeated. This stage is followed by a repetition of the Egypto-Chaldean epoch in our own

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

age. This will be followed by a repetition of the Persian epoch, but in a somewhat different form. Then will follow the seventh epoch, which will be a repetition of the ancient Indian civilization, the epoch of the Holy Rishis, so that in this coming epoch certain aptitudes which were implanted in ancient India will reappear in a new form. The direction of these occurrences devolves upon the Spirits of the Age.

In order that, distributed among the various peoples of the earth, the progressive development of successive epochs may be realized, in order that the widely differing ethnic types may be moulded by a particular geographical area or community of language, in order that a particular form-language, architecture, art or science may flourish and their various metamorphoses receive all that the Spirit of the Age can pour into humankind-for this we need the Folk Spirits, who, in the hierarchy of higher Beings, belong to the Archangels.

But we require yet another intermediary agent between the higher missions of the Folk Spirits and those beings here on earth who are to be inspired by them. You will readily perceive, at least theoretically at first, that the mediator between the two different kinds of Spirits is the Hierarchy of the Angels. They are the intermediaries between the single human being and the Archangel of the folk. In order that the individual may receive into himself or herself that which the Folk Spirit has to pour into the whole people, this intermediary agent between the human being and the Archangel of his people is indispensable....

Thus we see how humanity is integrated into the ranks of the Hierarchies, how, from age to age, from epoch to epoch, Beings whom we already know from another aspect, cooperate in its evolution. And we have seen how opportunities are provided for these beings to express themselves in a variety of ways peculiar to themselves and that what they have to offer can be imparted to humanity.

The guiding principles of the several epochs are determined by the Time Spirits (*Zeitgeister*). The single folk-individualities are responsible for disseminating the Spirit of the Age over the whole earth. While the Time Spirits inspire the Folk Spirits, the Angels act as mediators between the Folk Spirit and the single human beings, so that these individuals may fulfill the mission of the Folk Spirits. ...



Time Spirits: The Spirits of the Age

(From: Rudolf Steiner, *The Mission of the Individual Folk Souls*, pp. 45-46.)

Oslo, June 8, 1910

... I pointed out yesterday that [besides Angels and Archangels] other forces also are active – namely, the Primal Beginnings, the *Archai* or Spirits of Personality who, during earthly existence represent what is called the *Zeitgeist*, the Spirit of the Age. These work in such a way that from their own I, from their psychic organization, they work into the physical body and thus activate the forces of the physical body. If, at a certain moment, something arises as a result of the activity of the *Zeitgeist* and manifests itself in the Spirit of an Age to further human progress, we must assume that this corresponds to the utilization of physical forces in our earthly life. *A moment's reflection will show that definite prior conditions of a physical order are necessary to provide for certain contingencies in the Spirit of the Age.* Kepler, Copernicus and Pericles could not possibly have lived in any other age or under other circumstances. Personalities are the product of the specific conditions of their time, conditions which at a definite moment are created and determined by the higher Beings working on the physical plane. Now these physical conditions must not be regarded as isolated phenomena, but as particular configurations in the physical constitution of our earth. Sometimes these configurations stand out in bold relief; at other times, when the Spirit of the Age directs his influence in a certain direction, physical objects inevitably take on a quite definite pattern. You will recall that around the time when specially polished lenses were first used, some children playing in the glass polisher's workshop assembled them in a way that

created the optical effect of a telescope, so that the inventor of the telescope, having thus discovered from observation the underlying principle, needed only to apply it to achieve practical results. This is an historical fact. Imagine the number of physical processes involved before this result could be achieved. The lenses had first of all to be invented, polished and then assembled in the appropriate manner. Chance would account for this, you might say, but only if you refuse to acknowledge the law that operates in such circumstances. This concatenation of outward circumstances is the work of the *Archai*, the Primal Forces. Their work is the consequence of focusing their activity at a particular place, an activity which otherwise, as the Spirit of the Age, is expressed in a variety of ways. Think of how many inventions would remain forever unknown if this work of the *Archai* had not taken place in their etheric bodies. It is really the work of the *Archai* which acts in this way and is directed to this end.

Now, if the activity of the *Archai* takes this form and is responsible for directing the Spirit of the Age, the question arises: how do these Spirits of the Age intuitively sense the progress of humanity? They create a situation in which a person appears to be stimulated fortuitously by external circumstances. It must not be accounted as pure fiction if this sometimes occurs. I need only remind you of the swinging lamp in the cathedral at Pisa where, by observing the regular oscillations of the lamp, Galileo discovered the law of the pendulum and how, later on, Kepler and Newton were stimulated to make their discoveries. I could quote innumerable cases of the coincidence of external events and human thought which would explain how the prevailing ideas of an age are intuitively sensed by the *Archai*, ideas which influence human development, determine human progress and subject it to law. ...

THREE

Michael, the Messenger of Christ

(From: Rudolf Steiner, *Occult Science & Occult Development. Christ at the Time of the Mystery of Golgotha & Christ in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 21 ff.)

London, May 2, 1913

The Mystery of Golgotha is the most difficult of all Mysteries to understand, even for those who have already reached an advanced stage of occult knowledge. Of all the truths within the range of the human mind it is the one that can most easily be misunderstood. This is because the Mystery of Golgotha was a unique event in the whole evolution of the earth and of humanity on it, a mighty impulse that had never before been given in the same way and will never be repeated in a similar form. The human mind always looks for a standard of comparison by which things can be understood, but what is incomparable defies all comparison and because it is unique will be very difficult to comprehend. ...

The Mystery of Golgotha should not be regarded as an event quite separate from the evolution of humanity, as if it came into consideration only during its duration of three or thirty-three years. We must remember that it occurred in the fourth post-Atlantean epoch, the epoch of the Greco-Latin civilization, and that it was prepared for during the whole period of the development of the ancient Hebrew people. What happened in humanity during the fourth post-Atlantean epoch was of the utmost importance for the Mystery of Golgotha; so too was the worship of Jahve which was practiced among the ancient Hebrews. It is therefore essential to consider the nature of the Being who revealed himself in those times under the name of Jahve or Jehovah. ...

Above all, the factor of *evolution* must not be left out of account when thinking of the name of Jahve or Jehovah, especially in connection with the name of Christ. Even in the New Testament you will find – and in my books I have often referred to it – that in Jehovah the

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

Christ revealed Himself, to the extent that it was possible to do so before the Mystery of Golgotha.

If we want to make a comparison between Jehovah and Christ we would do well to take sunlight and moonlight as an illustration. What is sunlight, what is moonlight? They are one and the same, and yet very different. Sunlight streams out from the sun, but in moonlight it is reflected back by the moon. In the same way, Christ and Jehovah are one and the same. Christ is like the sunlight, Jehovah is like the reflected Christ-light, insofar as the Christ-light could reveal itself to the earth under the name of Jehovah, before the Mystery of Golgotha had come to pass. When contemplating a Being as sublime as Jehovah-Christ we must seek His true significance in the very heights of the supersensible world. In reality, it is presumption to approach such a Being with everyday concepts.

The ancient Hebrews sought to find a way out of this difficulty. Despite its inadequacy, human thinking made efforts to form an idea of this sublime Being. Attention was not turned directly to Jehovah (a name that in itself was held to be inexpressible), but to the Being whom our Western literature refers to by the name of *Michael*. Naturally, a great deal of misunderstanding can arise from this statement, but that is unavoidable. One person may say, "*This will evoke the prejudices of Christians*"; another will have nothing to do with such matters. Nevertheless, the Being whom we may call Michael, who belongs to the Hierarchy of the Archangels – whatever name we may give him – this Being does exist. There are many Beings of the same hierarchical rank, but this particular Being, who is known esoterically by the name of Michael, is as superior to his companions as the sun is to the planets Venus, Jupiter, Mercury, Saturn, and so on.

Michael is the most eminent, the most significant Being in the Hierarchy of the Archangels. The ancients called him the "*Countenance of God*." As human beings reveal themselves by their gestures and the expressions of their countenances, so in ancient mythology Jehovah was understood to reveal himself through Michael.

Jehovah made himself known to the Hebrew Initiates in such a way that they realized something they had never, with their ordinary powers of comprehension, previously been able to grasp, namely, that Michael was truly the countenance of Jehovah. Hence the ancient Hebrews spoke of Jehovah-Michael: Jehovah was unapproachable, unattainable by human beings, just as a person's thoughts, sorrows, and cares, lie hidden behind his or her outward physiognomy; Michael was the outer manifestation of Jahve or Jehovah, just as the manifestation of the I in a human being may be recognized in the brow and countenance.

We can therefore say that Jehovah revealed himself through Michael, one of the Archangels. Knowledge of the Being described above as Jahve was not confined to the ancient Hebrews, but was far more widespread. Indeed, if we investigate the last five hundred years before the Christian era, we find that throughout this whole period revelation was given through Michael. This revelation can be discovered in another form in Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, in Greek philosophy, even in the ancient Greek tragedies, during the five centuries before the event of Golgotha. (See this volume pp. 145-47.)

When with the help of occult knowledge we try to shed light upon what actually took place, we can say that Christ-Jehovah is the Being who has accompanied humankind throughout the whole course of evolution. And during the successive epochs Christ Jehovah always reveals Himself through different Beings of the same rank as Michael. But at different times he chooses a different countenance, as it were, to turn toward humankind. And according to which Being from the Hierarchy of the Archangels is chosen to be the mediator between Christ-Jehovah and humanity, widely different ideas and conceptions, impulses of feeling, impulses of will, are revealed to human beings. In a sense, the whole period surrounding the Mystery of Golgotha may be described as the Age of Michael, and Michael may be regarded as the messenger of Jehovah.

During the period which preceded the Mystery of Golgotha by almost five hundred years and continued for several decades afterwards, the leading form of culture bore the stamp of Michael. Through his power he poured into humanity what was destined to be imparted at that time. Then came other Beings who were equally Inspirers of humankind from the

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

spiritual worlds – other Beings from the rank of the Archangels. Yet, as has been said, Michael was the greatest, the mightiest, among these. Therefore an Age of Michael is always the most significant, or one of the most significant, that can occur in human evolution. For the Ages of the different Archangels are repeated; and it is a fact of supreme importance that every such Archangel gives to the Age its fundamental character. These Archangels are leaders of different nations and peoples, but because they become leaders of particular epochs, and because they were also such leaders in bygone times, they become in a certain sense also leaders of humanity as a whole. (See Rudolf Steiner, *Karmic Relationships: Esoteric Studies*, vol. III, lecture VII, "The New Age of Michael.")

As regards Michael, a change has now taken place. Michael himself has attained a further stage of development. This is of enormous importance for, according to occult knowledge, in the last few decades we have entered a new epoch inspired by the same Being who inspired the Age during which the Mystery of Golgotha took place. Since the end of the nineteenth century, then, Michael may again be regarded as the leader of the epoch.

To understand this we must consider the Mystery of Golgotha from another point of view and ask ourselves: What, in this Mystery, is of chief importance? The fact of supreme importance is that the Being who bears the name of Christ passed through the Mystery of Golgotha and through the gate of death at that time. Never, throughout the evolution of the earth, will one be able to speak of the Mystery of Golgotha without considering the fact that the Christ passed through death—that is the very core of the Mystery. ...

There is no death for any Being belonging to the higher Hierarchies, with the exception of Christ. But for a supersensible Being such as Christ to be able to pass through death, that Being must first have descended to the earth. And the fact of immeasurable significance in the Mystery of Golgotha is that a Being who, in the realm of his own will, could never have experienced death, should have descended to the earth in order to undergo an experience connected inherently with humankind. Thereby an inner bond was created between earthly humanity and Christ, in that this Christ-Being passed through death in order to share this destiny with humankind. As I have already emphasized, that death was of the greatest possible importance, above all for the present evolutionary period of the earth. A Being of unique nature, who until then was only cosmic, was united through the Mystery of Golgotha, through Christ's death, with the earth's evolution. At the time of the Mystery of Golgotha, He entered into the very process of earthly evolution. This had not been the case before that event for He then belonged to the cosmos alone; but through the Mystery of Golgotha He descended out of the cosmos and was incorporated on earth. Since then He lives on earth, is united with the earth in such a way that He lives in human souls and experiences earthly life with human beings.

Thus the whole period before the Mystery of Golgotha was only a preparatory period in earthly evolution. *The Mystery of Golgotha imparted to the earth its meaning and Purpose.*

When the Mystery of Golgotha took place the earthly body of Jesus of Nazareth was given over to the elements of the earth, and from that time onward Christ has been united with the spiritual sphere of the earth and lives within it.

As already said, it is extremely difficult to characterize the Mystery of Golgotha because there is no standard with which it can be compared. Nevertheless, we will try to approach it from still another point of view.

For three years, after the Baptism in the Jordan, Christ lived in the body of Jesus of Nazareth as a human being among earthly human beings. This may be called the earthly manifestation of Christ in a physical, human body. How, then, does Christ manifest Himself since the time when, in the Mystery of Golgotha, He laid aside his physical body?

We must naturally think of the Christ Being as a stupendously lofty Being, but although He is so sublime, He was nevertheless able, during the three years after the Baptism, to express Himself in a human body. But in what form does He reveal Himself since that time? No longer in the physical body, for that was given over to the physical earth and is now path of it. To those who have developed the power to see into these things through the study of occult science, it is revealed that the Christ-Being can now be recognized in a being

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

belonging to the Hierarchy of the Angels. Just as the Savior of the world manifested Himself during the three years after the Baptism in a *human* body – in spite of His sublimity – so, since that time, He manifests Himself directly as an Angel, as a spiritual Being belonging to the hierarchical rank immediately above that of humanity. As such, He could always be found by those who were clairvoyant, as such He has always been united with evolution. Just as truly as Christ, when incarnated in the body of Jesus of Nazareth, was more than human, so is the Christ Being more than an Angel that is His outer form only.

But the fact that a mighty, sublime Being descended from the spiritual worlds and dwelt for three years in a human body also includes the fact that during that time this Being Himself progressed a stage further in His development.

When such a Being takes on a human or an angelic form, He Himself progresses. And it is this that we have indicated in speaking of the evolution of Christ.-Jehovah. Christ has reached the stage where He reveals Himself henceforth not as a human being, not through His reflection only, not through the name of Jehovah, but directly. And the great difference in all the teachings and all the wisdom that have streamed into the evolution of the earth since the Mystery of Golgotha, is that through the coming of Michael – the Spirit Michael – to the earth, through his inspiration, human beings could gradually begin to understand all that the Christ-Impulse, all that the Mystery of Golgotha, signifies. But in that earlier time Michael was the messenger of Jehovah, the reflection of the light of Christ; Michael was not yet the messenger of Christ Himself.

Michael inspired humanity for several centuries, for almost five hundred years before the Mystery of Golgotha, as was indicated in the old Mysteries, by Plato and so forth. But soon after the Mystery of Golgotha had occurred and Christ had united Himself with the evolution of the earth, the direct impulse of Michael ceased. At the time when the old documents we possess in the form of the Gospels were written – as I have said in my book *Christianity as Mystical Fact* – Michael himself could no longer inspire humankind. Nevertheless, human beings continued to be inspired by Michael's companions among the Archangels in such a way that much soul-force was received unconsciously through inspiration.

The Writers of the Gospel themselves had no clear occult knowledge, for the inspiration of Michael came to an end shortly after the Mystery of Golgotha and the other Archangels, the companions of Michael, could not inspire humanity in such a way as to make the Mystery of Golgotha comprehensible. This accounts for the divergent inspirations of the various Christian teachings. Much in these teachings was inspired by the companions of Michael. That is, the teachings were not inspired by Michael himself but bear the same relation to his inspirations as the planets do to the mighty sun.

Only now, in our own age, is there again a Michael influence, a direct inspiration from Michael. Preparation for this direct inspiration from Michael has been going on since the sixteenth century. At that time, it was the Archangel who is closest to Michael who gave humanity the inspiration that led to the great achievements of modern natural science. This natural science is not attributable to the inspiration of Michael, but to that of one of his companions, Gabriel. The tendency of this scientific inspiration is to create a science, a world-picture, connected with the physical brain that promotes understanding of the material world alone.

Within the last few decades Michael has taken the place of the Inspirer of science. And in the next few centuries Michael will give to the world something that, in a spiritual sense, will be equally important – indeed more important, because more spiritual – immeasurably more important than the physical science which has advanced from stage to stage since the sixteenth century. Just as his companion Archangel Gabriel endowed the world with science, so Michael will endow humankind with spiritual knowledge, of which we are now only at the very beginning. Just as five hundred years before the Mystery of Golgotha Michael was sent as the messenger of Jehovah, as the reflection of Christ, to sound the keynote of that era, just as he was then still the messenger of Jehovah, so now, in our own epoch, Michael has become the messenger of Christ Himself.

Just as in ancient Hebrew times, which were a direct preparation for the Mystery of

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

Golgotha, the Initiates among the Hebrews could turn to Michael as the outer revelation of Jahve or Jehovah, so we now are able to turn to Michael – who from being the messenger of Jehovah has become the messenger of Christ – to receive from him during the next few centuries increasing spiritual revelations that will shed more and more light upon the Mystery of Golgotha. What happened two thousand years ago could be made known to the world only through the various Christian sects and its profundities can be unveiled only in the twentieth century when, instead of science, spiritual knowledge – our gift from Michael – will come into its own. This should fill our hearts with deep feelings for spiritual reality in our present time. We shall be able to realize that within the last few decades a door has opened through which understanding can enter.

Michael can give us new spiritual light which may be regarded as a transformation of the light that was given through him at the time of the Mystery of Golgotha; and people today can receive that light. If we can realize this, we can grasp the significance of the new age that is now issuing from our own; we can be aware of the dawn of a spiritual revelation that is to enter into the life of humanity on the earth within the next few centuries. Indeed, because human beings have become freer than in former times, we shall be able through our own wills, to progress to the stage where this revelation may be received.

Reference shall now be made to the event in the higher worlds that has led to this altered state of affairs-to this time of a renewal of the Mystery of Golgotha. ...

Let us remember what has been said-that in the invisible worlds there is no death. Christ Himself, because he descended to our world, passed through a death similar to that of human beings. When He again became a spiritual Being, He retained the memory of His death; but as a being of the rank of the Angels, in which He continued to manifest Himself outwardly, He could experience only a diminution of consciousness.

Through what, since the sixteenth century, was a necessity for earthly evolution – namely, the triumph of natural science at ever higher levels – something entered human evolution that was also significant for the invisible worlds. With the triumph of science, materialistic and agnostic sentiments of greater intensity than ever before arose in human nature. There had been materialistic tendencies in earlier times, but not the intense materialism that has prevailed since the sixteenth century. Increasingly, human souls who passed through the gates of death into the spiritual worlds bore with them the outcome of the materialistic ideas they had on earth. After the sixteenth century, more and more such seeds of earthly materialism were carried over – and these seeds developed in a particular way.

Christ came into the old Hebrew race and was led to His death within it. The angelic Being who, since then, has been the outer form assumed by Christ, suffered an extinction of consciousness in the course of the intervening nineteen centuries as a result of the opposing materialistic forces that had been brought into the spiritual worlds by materialistic human souls who had passed through the gate of death. This onset of unconsciousness in the spiritual worlds will lead to the resurrection of the Christ-consciousness in the souls of human- beings living on earth in the twentieth century. In a certain sense, it may be said that, beginning in the twentieth century, the consciousness lost by humanity will arise again for clairvoyant vision. At first only a few, and then an ever-increasing number of human beings in the twentieth century will be capable of perceiving the manifestation of the Etheric Christ – that is to say, Christ in the form of an Angel. (See Rudolf Steiner, *The Reappearance of Christ in the Etheric*.) It was for the sake of humanity that what may be called an extinction of consciousness occurred in the worlds immediately above our earthly world, where Christ has been visible in the period between the Mystery of Golgotha and the present day.

At the time of the Mystery of Golgotha something took place in a little-known corner of Palestine, something that was the greatest event in the whole of human evolution, but of which little notice was taken by the people of the time. If such a thing could happen, need we be astonished when we hear what conditions were like during the nineteenth century, when those who since the sixteenth century had passed through death and confronted Christ?

Thus Christ-consciousness may be united with the earthly consciousness of humanity from now on into the future; for the dying of the Christ-consciousness in the sphere of the Angels

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

in the nineteenth century signifies the resurrection of the direct consciousness of Christ – that is to say, Christ's life will be felt in human souls more and more as a direct personal experience from the twentieth century onward.

Once the few who could read the signs of the times were able to realize, contemplating the Mystery of Golgotha, that Christ had descended from the spiritual worlds to live on the earth and undergo death so that through His death the substances incorporated into Him might pass into the earth; in the same way, today, we are able to perceive that in certain worlds lying immediately behind our own a sort of spiritual death, a suspension of consciousness, took place. This was a renewal of the Mystery of Golgotha, in order to bring about an awakening of the previously hidden Christ-consciousness within human souls on earth.

Since the Mystery of Golgotha many human beings have been able to proclaim the Name of Christ, and from the twentieth century onwards an ever-increasing number will be able to make known the knowledge of the Christ that is given in Anthroposophy. Out of their own experience they will be able to proclaim Him.

Twice already Christ has been crucified: once physically, in the physical world at the beginning of our era, and a second time spiritually, in the nineteenth century, in the way described above. It could be said that humanity experienced the resurrection of His *body* in that former time and will experience the resurrection of His *consciousness* from the twentieth century onward.

The brief indications I have been able to give you will gradually make their way into human souls, and the mediator, the messenger, will be Michael, who is now the ambassador of Christ. Just as he once led human souls towards an understanding of Christ's life descending from Heaven to the earth, so he is now preparing humankind to experience the emergence of Christ-consciousness from the realm of the unknown into the realm of the known. And just as at the time of Christ's earthly life the greater number of Christ's contemporaries were incapable of believing what a stupendous event had taken place in earthly evolution, so, in our own day, the outer world is striving to increase the power of materialism, and will continue for a long time to regard what has been spoken of today as so much fantasy, dreaming, and perhaps even outright folly. This, too, will be the verdict on the truth concerning Michael, who at the present time is beginning to reveal Christ anew. Nevertheless many human beings will recognize the new dawn rising which during the coming centuries will pour its forces into human souls like a sun – for Michael can always be likened to a sun. And even if many people fail to recognize this new Michael-Revelation, it will spread through humanity nevertheless.

FOUR

The Archangel Michael: The Time Spirit

(From: Rudolf Steiner, *The Festivals and their Meaning*, pp. 359-66.)

Stuttgart, May 18, 1913

We have to distinguish quite sharply from other epochs the period which began about the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and received its character from the rise of the new natural sciences. This epoch brought natural science to the height it attained in the nineteenth century, a greatness which cannot be admired enough. When one surveys the work done by humanity as a whole in natural science in these centuries, one sees that it has been accomplished by certain peoples who were guided from the supersensible world by a Being appointed from among the Hierarchy of the Archangels, and that this Being is quite distinct from the one who from the supersensible world directs the spiritual culture of the epoch which is just beginning. If one uses the names which in the West have become customary

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

for these leaders among the Hierarchy of the Archangels, then from the Christian era onward one can point to different Beings who have guided the progress of civilization. Without wishing to lay stress on the names as such, I will list the names of Beings in the Hierarchy of the Archangels, just as one lists the names of those who have taken part in something on the physical plane. The Beings in the Hierarchy of the Archangels who have in turn controlled the progress of civilization are: Oraphiel, Anael, Zachariel, Raphael, Samael, Gabriel, and Michael.

Gabriel was the guiding Spirit in the cultural epoch which came to an end for the spiritual world with the last third of the nineteenth century. For with the last third of the nineteenth century – and this is a fact that will become more and more evident – an epoch opens into which quite different influences and impulses flow from the supersensible into the sense world. Whereas during the previous period human souls were bound to what the senses can observe and what the mind can grasp, in the coming period the human being who is not sleeping through the march of evolution will above all have to observe how supersensible wisdom and knowledge flow increasingly from the supersensible world into earthly sense-evolution.

Speaking in an external way, one might describe it as follows. In the period of evolution now passed, supersensible Beings guided the forces from the supersensible worlds, so that, as far as possible, these flowed into our earthly physical bodies. The Hierarchies had to prevent these forces from flowing into human souls. From now on, however, supersensible forces will be directed and guided from the supersensible world so that as much as possible may flow into human souls – so that a knowledge of Imagination, Inspiration, Intuition may lay hold of the human soul. (See Rudolf Steiner, *The Stages of Higher Knowledge; The Effects of Spiritual Development; and Boundaries of Natural Science*.) The truly living impulses in the civilization of the coming epoch will be as charged with Inspiration and Intuition as the preceding epoch has been lacking in all Inspiration and in all knowledge of the spiritual.

Fifty years ago, it would have been impossible to speak to people of things that through the necessary course of world evolution may be said to them to-day; because at that time it would have been impossible for people to receive these things directly out of the spiritual world. The door has only now been opened, and as the times that are past were the most favorable for the development of the intellect, so will the immediate future be the most favorable for the development of Inspiration and Intuition.

Two epochs of time meet sharply at this point: one to which all Inspiration was denied, and one in which, though mighty forces will undoubtedly use every available means to fight against it, it will nevertheless be possible to receive Inspiration and make it the determining element in the mood and character of the soul.

And if we look further into the question, we discover that the supersensible forces which did not flow directly into the soul in the past epoch were by no means inactive. What an external physiology cannot prove is nevertheless true: in the Gabriel period the supersensible world was at work in the world of the senses, influencing the human physical body. During that period delicate structures arose in the front parts of the brain, and were gradually implanted into the reproductive system. Thus the majority of human beings were born with a brain possessing other and more delicate structures than was the case, for example, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. That was the special task of the age in which human beings turned their minds to the physical plane of the senses and were shut off from Inspiration. The consequence was that the impulses of the supersensible world poured themselves into the body and developed this fine structure in the brain.

This structure will be increasingly present in those who now feel themselves capable of progressing to active thinking and to an understanding of Spiritual Science. In our epoch, in the epoch at the beginning of which we stand, supersensible forces will not be used to form structures in the brain but to work in the soul through Imagination and Inspiration, to flow directly into the human soul. This is what the Michael Rulership means.

Hence two archangelic Beings must be distinguished: one, Gabriel, who guided human beings immediately before our time, working upon the structure of the brain; and another,

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

Michael, who works upon humanity now and must let receptiveness for spiritual wisdom stream into the human soul. Thus we distinguish from one another Beings belonging to the Hierarchy of the Archangels.

In these two examples I have tried to present concrete attributes and characteristics of these Beings. We cannot remain satisfied with names alone; for even as we know nothing about someone if we merely know he or she is called "Miller", so we know very little about Gabriel if we only know the name. But we do know something about a person if we can say that they are compassionate, or have done this or that. The same is true in the case of a supersensible Being of whom we can say that this Being causes forces to flow into the human physical body, forces which can instill certain structures into the power of propagation, or of another Being of whom we can say that this Being helps stimulate the perception of intuitive truth. Michael does not work so much for the spiritual investigator, the initiate, but for those who wish to understand spiritual investigation, for those who are striving to achieve active thinking. It is for these that Michael will work, as these forces accumulate in humankind during the coming centuries.

This transition from Gabriel to Michael is an important one in another respect. Through what happened then, a race of people is being formed who, owing to the whole way in which they are organized will in future incarnations be in a position to look back on their earlier earthly lives.

Humanity, however, must first give itself this possibility. One cannot remember something one has not thought about. If at night you take off your shirt without thinking, and without thinking put away your cuff links, then you cannot find them next morning, because you did not think about them when you took them off. If you had taken care to impress upon yourself a picture of the whole surroundings where you put your cuff links down, then next morning you would go straight to the place.

If this is true as regards memory in ordinary life, we must look in the same way on the wider horizon of our different earth-lives. It is the innermost nature of the soul that we must, remember what we really wish to pass over into the being of the soul; but in order to remember, we must first understand the life of the soul. And that can only be done through occult training. If one has not taken care to have thoughts about the nature of the soul in one's earlier incarnation then of course one cannot recollect it. People will be constituted so as to remember, but they will at first experience this new constitution as illness, as a dreadful nervous condition. For they will be constituted to remember the past, yet they will have nothing that they can remember. When people have impressions which they cannot turn to account, organs that they cannot use, then they fall ill.

This is the state of things we are approaching. Human beings will be organized to remember, but only those who have something to remember will be able to do so – that is, those who through occult training have recognized the special nature of the human soul as a member of the spiritual world. In every life that follows one in which a person has recognized the soul as a spirit-being there will be remembrance of former earth-lives.

We are standing at an important turning-point. To understand Spiritual Science means fundamentally nothing else than to have a true feeling for the turning-point to which we have come in our age.

Now, all the Beings who belong to the Hierarchy of the Archangels are not of the same nature, nor of the same rank. When we speak of the Hierarchy of the Archangels we can say that they "relieve" one another in the way I have described to you in the case of Gabriel and Michael, but the highest, in rank, the chief as it were, is the one who takes over the leadership in our age – that is, Michael. Michael is one of the order of Archangels, but he is from a certain aspect the most advanced. Now there is, as you know, evolution; and evolution embraces all Beings. Beings are in an ascending evolution, and we live in the era when Michael, the chief of those of archangelic nature, passes over into the nature of the *Archai*. Michael will gradually become a Guiding Being, he will become the Spirit of the Time, the Being who leads and guides the whole of humanity. It is of the utmost importance that we should understand this. It means that something which, in all previous epochs, was not

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

available to all humanity, now can and must become a possession of all humankind. What formerly appeared among certain peoples, here and there – spiritual deepening – can now be something for the whole of humanity.

If we can point in this way to something taking place behind the world of the senses, then we can also point to something taking place in the sense-world as an imprint or reflection of that event – for instance, the promotion, as it were, of an Archangel. Hitherto human beings have been able to possess personality. In the future they will still possess personality, but in a different way. Humanity has always participated to some extent in the supersensible worlds – at least, human beings were always able to do so with their soul lives; but the *personal* note, the personal coloring which a person then showed in the sense world in his or her life did not come down from above, it rose up from below, from Lucifer. It was Lucifer who gave us personality. One could therefore say: Human beings cannot enter the supersensible world with their personalities, they cannot bring them into the spiritual world, they must blot out their personalities – otherwise they will pollute the spiritual world.

In future human beings will be required to allow their personalities to be *inspired from above*, so that they can receive what flows out of the spiritual world. A personality will receive its stamp from what it has been able to absorb of spiritual knowledge; personality will become something quite different. In a sense, formerly people were personalities through what separated them from the spiritual through what was impressed into them through the body. In future, we must become personalities through what we are able to receive from the spiritual world and work upon in ourselves.

In the past, blood and temperament determined personality, and into this personality impersonal elements streamed from the supersensible world. Less and less will we be personalities on account of our blood and temperament. In future we will be able to become a personality through the character that we acquire by our participation in the supersensible world. The Michael-Impulse – which brings an understanding of the spiritual life into the human soul – will achieve this. Those with a pronounced character and personality will, in the future, have this character and personality because of what they bring to expression out of their understanding of the spiritual worlds. The Alexanders, the Caesars, the Napoleons belong to the past. Certainly, the supersensible element flowed into them too, but they received their highly personal coloring from what came to them from below. Those who are personalities on account of the way in which they carry the spiritual world into the sensible, who carry personality into humanity *from the soul*, will take the place of the Alexanders, the Caesars, and the Napoleons. In the future, the strength of human deeds will come from the strength of the spiritual influence working into these human deeds.

All this belongs to what is important in the transition from one epoch into another. And the transition in our time from the Gabriel epoch to the Michael epoch has all the characteristics of a transition of the utmost significance.

One can, even with ordinary sound human reason, come to an understanding of what has been said today, if one is unprejudiced enough to observe our times and see how two possibilities came up against one another in the last third of the nineteenth century. The first possibility is the formation of a world conception based on natural science. Today, that is out-of-date. It has become antiquated – it is no longer in the character of the age. People still form their world conception on the basis of natural science because they simply carry forward what comes from the past. It lies in the character of our age, however, to construct a world conception from Inspirations received from the spiritual world and an understanding of them. We must receive this into our souls as a feeling, as an experience; then we shall learn what the anthroposophical world conception means for individual souls, we shall learn to perceive what evolution is for humanity. It is given to us to participate in things of great significance.

And now let me remind you of something that I mentioned in the last lectures I held here in which I spoke of the change in the function of the Buddha. (Rudolf Steiner, *Occult Research into Life Between Death and a New birth*.) This is where the tomorrow's lecture will join on to today's.

Today's lecture may therefore close with a question. This question can arise in every soul and will lead us from the important matters that have occupied us today to considerations of still greater importance. Once a promotion of Michael has been accomplished, once he has become the guiding Spirit of Western civilization, who will take his place? His place must be filled. Thus we find ourselves saying: "Then some Angel must also have been promoted, and must enter the ranks of the Archangels." Who is it?"

FIVE

Michael and the Buddha

(From: Rudolf Steiner, *The Festivals and their Meaning*, pp. 376-79.)

Stuttgart, May 20, 1913

While in the past human beings could look up to Jahve or Jehovah and know that Jahve was the Being who sent out Michael to prepare the way for the transition from the "Jahve Age" to the "Christ Age," it is now the Christ who sends us Michael.

This is the new and important fact which we must transform into a feeling. As formerly one could speak of the Jahve-Michael, the leader of the age, so now we can speak of the Christ-Michael. Michael has been exalted to a higher stage-from Folk Spirit to Time Spirit. From being the messenger of Jahve he has become the Messenger of Christ. And so when we speak of a right understanding of the Michael-Impulse in our age, we are speaking of a right understanding of the Christ-Impulse.

Abstract understanding always deals simply in names, and believes it will get somewhere if it asks: "What kind of Being is Michael?" It wants to be told that Michael comes from this or that Hierarchy, that he is an Archangel, that Archangels have such and such qualities. Then all is defined people think now they know what such a Being is. But they do not know anything if they speak of Michael in this way. If one wants to understand human evolution – the evolution of humanity – then one must understand that Michael too has evolved: one must understand that the same Being paved the way for the preparation of the Mystery of Golgotha who now in our own day paves the way for the understanding of the Mystery of Golgotha. At that time, however, he was a Folk Spirit, now he is a Time Spirit; then he was the messenger of Jahve, now he is the messenger of Christ. We speak of the Christ rightly when we speak of Michael and his mission, knowing that Michael, who was formerly the bearer of the mission of Jehovah, is now the bearer of the mission of the Christ.

My dear friends, we have been able to follow the path of Michael, a Spirit from the rank of the Archangels who has, as it were, Ascended – or rather is ascending – to the rank of the *Archai* in order to communicate a new impulse to human beings. His place will therefore be filled by another Being who succeeds him.

I have spoken here on different occasions of the evolution which Buddha passed through. The puerile objections which are now being made against us are brought also against our understanding of the Christ-Impulse in the world (A reference to the attempts made by some members of the Theosophical Society to put forward Krishnamurti as the new Bearer of the Christ for the West.) – as though we had ever been one-sided in our representation of the Christ Impulse. We turn our gaze to evolution as a whole and describe what different impulses underlie it, giving to each its due value. Again and again we have spoken of the Bodhisattva who was born as Gautama Buddha and have shown that for us it is truth that he became "Buddha." We have followed his evolution until the time when he received his mission on Mars. And of that mission we have also spoken here. (See also Rudolf Steiner, *The Spiritual Foundations of Morality; Man in the Light of Occultism, Theosophy, and Philosophy; and Esoteric Christianity and the Mission of Christian Rosenkreutz*.)

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

As long as humanity dwells on earth, human beings, however high, always have an individuality guiding them from incarnation to incarnation. The individual guidance of human beings is subject to the *Angeloi*, the Angel-Beings. When a human being who is a Bodhisattva becomes a Buddha, then the Angel of this Bodhisattva is, as it were, set free. And such Angels, after the fulfillment of their mission, ascend into the realm of the Archangels.

If we really understand how to penetrate more deeply into the supersensible evolution which lies behind our sense evolution, we are actually able to perceive at some point how an Archangel ascends to the nature of the *Archai*, and an Angel Being to an Archangel Being.

My dear friends, I have not told you all this about the spiritual background of the world in which we live and in which we wish to take our stand as Anthroposophists in order that you may merely theorize over these things, but rather that you may transform into feeling and experience what has been expressed in words and ideas. Yes, to be an Anthroposophist in our age means to know the nature of the supersensible world underlying the sense world of human evolution. It is to feel oneself in the spiritual world, just as one feels himself physically as a physical being in the atmosphere. But merely repeating, Spirit, Spirit, Spirit is in us! will not bring us to feel ourselves in the spiritual world. Just as one has to gauge in a practical, concrete way – from the formation of the clouds, from the humidity and other phenomena – the state of the earth's atmosphere, so also we must "feel" quite concretely the spiritual world into which we are submerged every night when we fall asleep. We must feel and know that what is now happening in the spiritual world is a result of the mission entrusted by Christ to Michael. That is what is happening behind our physical-sensory evolution. And if we feel ourselves to be in such happenings in the spiritual world, in the same way as we feel ourselves physically to be within the atmosphere we breathe in and out, then we have the consciousness we ought to have today in relation to the spiritual world.

Try to receive into your whole heart and soul these results of occultism which I have sought to lay before you; try to have a sensitive understanding of them, and to consider what it means now in this age to live consciously in the spiritual events that are taking place around us, to live consciously in the world wither our soul goes every night when we fall asleep and whence we come every morning when we awake. Try to lead the soul into the direct and concrete experience of what is so often abstractly called Divine Providence. It lies in the true character of our age to do this. Try now, in this present time, to know and experience as individual beings what humans in past ages could feel only in an undefined way as Providence moving through the world.

Place as a picture before your souls that the task of the previous epoch was to find natural science. At that time the laws of nature were good if they were rightly used to build up external world conceptions. But there is nothing absolutely good or bad in the external world of Maya. The laws of Nature would be bad and evil if they were still used in our day to construct a world view at a time when spiritual life is flowing into the sense world. These words are not to be taken as directed against what past ages have done; they are directed against what wants to remain as it was in earlier ages and will not put itself at the service of the new revelation.

Michael did not fight the present dragon in ages past, for then the dragon now meant was not yet a dragon. It will become a dragon only if those concepts and ideas which belong to natural science are used to construct the world conception of the coming age. For the monster who will then rear its head among human beings will be rightly seen to be the image of the Dragon that Michael, whose age begins in our own time, must vanquish.

Michael overcoming the Dragon is an important imagination. *To receive the inflow of spiritual life into the sense world: this is the service of Michael from now on.* We serve Michael by overcoming the Dragon that is trying to grow to its full height and strength in ideas, which during the past epoch produced materialism and which now threaten to live on into the future. To defeat this dragon means to stand in the service of Michael. That is the victory of Michael over the Dragon. It is the old picture, which for earlier times had another meaning, and which must now acquire the right meaning for our age. ...

SIX

Behind the Scenes of External Happenings: The Fall of the Spirits of Darkness

(From: Rudolf Steiner, *Behind the Scenes of External Happenings*, pp. 25-27, 38-54.)

I

Zurich, November 6, 1917

I have often indicated to circles of friends here and there that the year 1841 was a critical time, a year of decision and crisis. This, of course, is not discovered by looking merely at the events which happened in the physical world, but only by studying these events in connection with what was going on in the spiritual world. The year 1841 was, in truth, the critical year for the onset of the age of materialism, for at that time a very definite battle began in the spiritual worlds – a battle waged by certain Spirits, Spirits of Darkness we may call them, belonging to the hierarchical rank of the *Angeloi*. In the spiritual worlds they fought out this battle until the autumn of 1879. They were striving for many, distinct aims, only one of which will be mentioned today. Between 1841 and 1879, a decision was to be made as to whether a certain store of spiritual wisdom could be matured sufficiently to trickle gradually down to the earth from the last third of the nineteenth century onward, that is to say, to enter into human souls as a stimulus to the spiritual knowledge described today as Spiritual Science, which has been possible only since that time.

The aim of these *Angeloi*-Spirits between 1841 and 1879 was to prevent what was to flow down to the earth from coming to maturity in the spiritual world. But these Spirits of Darkness were defeated in the war they waged against the Spirits of Light during this period. In 1879, an event occurred that, on a smaller scale, was of a kind that has occurred several times in the course of evolution, and has always been pictured symbolically as the victory of Michael, or St. George, over the Dragon. This time, too, in 1879, the Dragon was overcome in a certain realm. This time the "Dragon" was the *Angeloi* – Spirits who were striving for, but could not achieve the aim I have indicated. In 1879, therefore, they were cast out of the spiritual world into the earthly-human world – and here, in this world, they wander among humanity. They are present here, sending their forces into human thoughts, feelings and impulses of will, egging them on to one undertaking or another. These Spirits were not able to prevent the onset of the age when the spiritual knowledge flows down – their defeat in the battle lies precisely in this. Indeed, the spiritual knowledge is here and will unfold increasingly; and human beings will be able to acquire the faculty of seeing into the spiritual world.

But having been cast down to the earth, these *Angeloi*-Spirits are intent upon doing harm with the downflowing knowledge; they seek to guide it into the wrong channels, to rob it of its power for good and lead it into paths of evil. In short, having been cast down since 1879, their aim is to achieve here on earth, with the help of human beings, what they were unable to achieve with the help of the Spirits in the other world. Their aim is to bring ruin to that part of the benevolent plan of cosmic evolution that consists in allowing knowledge of the control of masses – as well as knowledge of birth, illness, and death, among other things – to spread among humanity when the time is ripe. The Spirits of Darkness want to spread such knowledge too soon by means of premature spiritual births. ...

The only way to combat the influence of these Ahrimanic Beings is to realize that nothing avails against some of Ahriman's aims, except to see through him, to know that he is there. I have indicated this repeatedly in the *Mystery Plays*. Think only of the end of the last play. [Rudolf Steiner, *"The Soul's Awakening"* (see bibliography, *The Four Mystery Plays*)]. Human beings

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch must evolve to the stage where they can address the Ahrimanic Beings and Powers as Faust addresses Mephistopheles: *"In thy Nothingness I hope to find the all."* (See Goethe's Faust.) We must resolve to look into that realm where materialism sees "Nothingness" and see the spiritual world. ...



Zurich, November 13, 1917

The most beautiful and meaningful fruits of such concrete relationships with the spiritual world are prophetic utterances such as those of Daniel and the Apocalypse. Here people are not just told to trust in a God, to believe in a God. Instead, they are told in all concrete reality of the connection of the spiritual world with the physical, material world – of the first, the second, and the third heavenly kingdom. Humanity has lost all aptitude for speaking concretely of the relation of the spiritual to the physical. People would prefer everything to be painted the same color, as it were. Best of all, people like to devise theories by which all human beings throughout the world can find equal material happiness. The socialists today insist that certain ideas are right and proper for the human life – right for England, America, Russia, and Asia; they believe that if everyone arranged national affairs according to socialist principles, the happiness which is the dream of modern humanity would come to the earth by itself. But all these ideas are abstract, unreal. Ignorance of the fact that something quite specific arises in one region of the earth from a particular people, while something quite different arises in another region from another people – this inability to understand the great difference between West and East – this causes endless confusion and chaos. For only when people are able to build a bridge from the soul to objective realities can they cooperate fruitfully in shaping earthly existence.

But people are unwilling to build such a bridge. Inner reasons have lately caused me to speak to friends in many different places of a momentous event – momentous in its effect upon evolution – that took place in the last third of the nineteenth century. This is an event known to all occult schools although these are not always able to give accurate details of its actual course. I will speak of it briefly. Starting in 1841, in regions of the spiritual world, a battle was waged between certain Beings of the higher Hierarchies and other superior Beings. The Beings who rebelled and waged war between 1841 and 1879 had been used, before that time, in the service of the wise guidance of worlds. Even those Beings who rebel and hence become evil Beings of Darkness may, at other times, serve good and useful purposes. I am speaking, therefore, of Beings who up to the year 1841 had been used by higher spirits in the service of the wise guidance of worlds, but whose aims, from then on, ran counter to the aims of the Beings superior to them. These Beings of lower rank thus fought a great battle in the spiritual world – one of those battles which often take place, but at different levels, is portrayed in legend and symbolism as the battle of Michael with the Dragon. In the autumn of 1879, this battle ended with certain Spirits of Darkness being cast down from the spiritual world to the earth. Since that time, they have been working among human beings, creeping into their impulses of will, into their motives, into their ideas, indeed into all human affairs. And so, since the autumn of 1879, certain Spirits of Darkness have been among humanity and if human beings wish to understand earthly happenings, they must be drawn to the presence of these Beings.

It is absolutely correct to say that in the year 1879 these Beings were cast down to the earth. This made the heavens free of these Beings, but made the earth full of them. From then on, their habitation is no longer to be found in the heavens, but on earth.

To describe the aim pursued by these Beings in their war of rebellion from 1841 to 1879, I must say the following. They wanted to be able to prevent the spiritual wisdom, which will be revealed from the twentieth century onward, from flowing into human souls. Only by removing these hindering Spirits of Darkness from the spiritual realm could human minds and hearts be opened to receive, from the twentieth century onwards, the spiritual

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

knowledge destined for them – only thus was the flow of this spiritual knowledge possible. Wandering among us as they now do, these Spirits of Darkness make it their business to spread confusion. From their arena here on earth, they seek to prevent the establishment of the right attitude toward spiritual truths. They want to withhold from us the blessings which the spiritual truths are intended to bring.

Intimate and penetrating knowledge of these things is the only means whereby the aims of the Spirits of Darkness may be counteracted. Certain occult brotherhoods, however, make it their business to work in exactly the opposite sense. They want to retain the wisdom of the spiritual truths exclusively within their own narrow circles – in order to exploit it in connection with their lusts for power. We are living in the midst of this struggle. On the one side is the necessity for humanity to be led along the right paths by the assimilation of the spiritual truths. On the other side are closed occult brotherhoods of an evil kind, who desire to prevent these truths from finding their way to human beings, so that these remain dull and stupid as regards the spiritual world, and thus making it possible for those within the narrowly enclosed brotherhoods to carry on their intrigues.

Contemporary events bristle with such intrigues and machinations, and calamity looms if we fail to realize that these machinations are in full swing. You will immediately feel that light has been shed upon the real background of these things when I tell you of certain truths that have matured in our time – truths that must fall like ripened fruit as it were from the spiritual world into the human kingdom, but are prevented from spreading – truths against which, moreover, humans are instinctively prejudiced because they are afraid of them.

In this connection I must speak as concretely as possible. The fact that, in 1879, a number of Spirits of Darkness were cast into the human kingdom has profound and significant consequences. One of these is that since that time clear thinking has assumed a far, far greater importance than it ever had before. At no other period could it have been said, with regard to the inner necessities of evolution, that clarity of thinking is as essential as eating and drinking are to the maintenance of physical life. For if human thinking lacks clarity in the present age, in times to come we will be unable to see in the right light the ripened truths which are to fall from the spiritual world. Above all, we will fail to realize the vast and profound significance of the Mystery of Golgotha, of the Coming of Christ, for the whole of human evolution. Many people speak of Christ Jesus. Modern theology, however, would actually like to prevent anyone from speaking of the deep purpose imparted to earthly human evolution by the Mystery of Golgotha. Naturally, the fulfillment of what was to come to pass through the Mystery of Golgotha has been, and is, both slow and gradual. But in our present century, for the first time, this process becomes intensely evident.

Previous epochs still enjoyed a heritage from the days when spirituality pervaded the more atavistic inner life of human beings. Now, for the first time, we must actively *strive* for spirituality – if we desire it. And so, in our day – actually only from 1879 onward – very definite phenomena appear. Because external observation has become so crude, they are clearly to be perceived only when the eyes of the soul are directed to that realm which human beings enter when they pass through the Gate of Death. For souls born before the year 1879 and those born after it pass into the spiritual world in different ways. Truly, it is a momentous event of which we are speaking here.

One consequence of this event is that human beings in their souls more and more come to resemble their thought – to resemble what they regard as knowledge. This will seem a strange truth to the modern mind, but is so, nevertheless. To see certain things in their proper light, with clarity of thought, with thoughts saturated with reality is vitally important. It is good to see Darwinism in the proper light, as I tried to present it in yesterday's public lecture, (*November 12, 1917, "Anthroposophy and Natural Science" (GA 73), not translated.*) to regard Darwinism as the only valid conception of the world, to believe the only possible truth to be that human beings descend from animals – and repeating the thought: "*I descended from the animals; I descend entirely from forces which also produce the animals.*" Such thoughts, in our age, tend to make the soul resemble its own conception of itself. This is an important matter! When the body is left behind, the soul is confronted with the sorry fate of

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

having to perceive its resemblance to its own thought! People who live in the physical body, believing that animal forces alone were at work in their evolution, fashion a kind of consciousness for themselves in which they perceive their own likeness to animal nature.

For since the event of 1879, the character of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch has been such that human souls are transformed into the ideas human beings form of themselves. That is why I said that it is not necessary to be particularly biased in favor of anthroposophical Spiritual Science to be willing to advocate it. All that is necessary is compassion for our fellow human beings who need these thoughts and ideas because these thoughts are creative powers in the life of soul, because it is ordained that in the future what human beings consider themselves to be, that they will become. This development is part of the wise guidance of worlds, so that human beings may attain full and free consciousness of the Self. The Gods were bound to make it possible for human beings to become what they make of themselves. And Christ Jesus fulfilled the Mystery of Golgotha in order that we might imbue this self-created being with supersensible meaning, that we might be able to find in this self-created being something that gives us an eternal aim. When we understand Christ Jesus in the light of Spiritual Science, in the light of true thought, we find the way to Him: the way that leads from the animal to the Divine.

One truth stands out strongly when the eyes of the soul are able to look into the world entered by the human being after death. Those who were born before 1879 always carry with them a certain heritage that protects them from becoming purely what they have pictured themselves to be here on earth. And for a long time to come – these things are only gradually approaching – this protection will still be possible, but only through pain, only when humans can suffer, when, paradoxically, they can take on themselves the inner pain of knowing and feeling the shortcomings of their conception of the human being. Harmony with the Self, together with a knowledge which lets a human being after death be truly *human* – this will arise in the future only if we become aware, here, in the physical body, of our true connection with the spiritual world. Those who, because of their materialistic ideas, are afraid of concrete facts of spiritual knowledge will, of course, for a long time to come still be unwilling to acknowledge that any such change took place in the year 1879. Nevertheless, it will have to be acknowledged sooner or later. It is clear from all this that one thing above all is essential, and will become increasingly so in the future, namely, that all available spiritual knowledge be spread over the earth. therefore, in order to further their aims, the Spirits of Darkness will attach particular value to breeding of confusion among human beings so that they will fail to form in the right way the thoughts and ideas into which, after death, they will be transformed. What we think ourselves to be, that we are obliged to become.

This is a truth that was destined, after the great changes in the nineteenth century, to find its way to humanity. Human beings must be *voluntarily* anything that they can be really – they must be able to think about their own being if they are to be truly themselves in their soul lives. For even now the dead could announce as a ripened truth that the soul is what it thinks itself to be. But, at the time when it was evolutionarily necessary to spread the truth that *the soul is what it thinks itself to be*, exactly then the Spirits of Darkness inspired human beings to proclaim that "We are what we eat." And although this is not, in theory, widely acknowledged, the practical conduct of life amounts very nearly to being an acknowledgment of the principle that humanity is what it eats and nothing else. Indeed, this principle is increasingly applied and developed in external life. To a far greater extent than people believe, the grievous and tragic events of the present time are an outcome of the tenet "We are what we eat." In a much deeper sense than is supposed by the superficial modern mind, a terrible amount of the blood that is shed today is shed over unseemly issues.

That is why the spread of thoughts and ideas corresponding to the realities of the times is so necessary. Thought will gradually have to be known as a concretely real power of the soul, not merely as the miserable abstraction produced so proudly by the modern age. People living in earlier times were still linked, by an ancient heritage, with the spiritual world. Although for many centuries now, atavistic clairvoyance has almost entirely ebbed away, this

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

heritage still lives in the feeling and in the will. But the time has come when every thing that is conscious must become a real power. Hence the Spirits of Darkness strive to counter really effective thoughts by abstract thoughts in the form of all kinds of programs for the world. This connection must be realized and understood. Thoughts must be imbued with greater and greater reality.

There are still many people who say: "Oh, well, in good time we shall find out what happens after death; why bother about it now? Let us attend to the demands of life and then we reach the other world we shall soon discover what it is...." Well and good, but if it is true that in the other world a person becomes what he or she has pictured himself or herself to be, then something else is also true. Take an idea that is not at all uncommon nowadays. Somebody dies, leaving relatives behind. Although thought may not be entirely lacking in these relatives, they may be materialistically-minded, and then, quite inevitably, they will think either that the one who died is decaying in the grave or that what still exists of him is preserved in the urn. Only if thought is entirely absent can people be materialists and *not* hold this view. If materialism were to triumph, the conviction would still further increase that all that remains of the dead is disintegrating in the urn or in the grave. This though is, however, a real power. It is an untruth. When those left behind think that the dead no longer live, are no longer there, this is a false thought – but it is real and actual in the souls of those who form it. The dead themselves are aware of this thought-reality – they are aware of its significance. And it is by no means a matter of no consequence but, on the contrary, of fundamental importance, whether those left behind cherish in their souls the thought of those who have died living on in the spiritual world, or whether they succumb to the woeful idea that the dead, well, they are dead, there they lie, decaying in the grave. Far from being a matter of no importance, there is a very great and essential difference in these points of view.

Coming to Zürich nowadays one can hardly fail to be attentive to what is known here – and also elsewhere, but here it is pursued very actively – as Analytical Psychology or Psychoanalysis. Naturally, it is the case that the psychoanalysts have become alive to many things that have to do with the realm of soul-and-spirit. Indeed, they are beginning to think of the soul-and-spirit simply because it confronts them so insistently. Let me here say a word or two about one characteristic feature in this Psychoanalysis. (See also, for instance, Rudolf Steiner, *Psychoanalysis and Spiritual Psychology and Community Life, Inner Development, Sexuality, and the Spiritual Teacher.*)

A patient suffers from symptoms of hysteria. The forms taken by these manifestations of hysteria are very typical at the present time, and for this reason attract attention. Illnesses particularly common at any given period are always a matter of concern, and efforts are made to discover where the causes lie. Psychoanalysis has actually reached the point of stating that the causes of these frequent manifestations of hysteria lie in the life of soul. As it is quite impossible to look for them in the material domain, or in the field of physiological or biological processes as such, they must lie in the Psyche – in the life of soul. The present tendency is to seek in the subconscious life of soul for causes of the various forms of hysteria. The psychoanalysts say: *"Such and such a person shows signs of hysteria; the cause is that something is working in him or her below the threshold of consciousness, and is constantly surging upward like waves from subterranean, sub-psychic depths – and that is what we must look for."*

This is where the dangerous game begins. The psychoanalysts try to find all kinds of happenings which constitute an isolated, subterranean, hidden province of the Psyche, as they put it. For example, in a hysterical subject of age thirty, they look for "perversions" at the age, perhaps, of seven, which were not fully lived through or satisfied then, and which must be made conscious again, because this will cure the subject and so forth. It is a game with extremely dangerous weapons, my dear friends! Yonder on the physical battlefields, war is being waged with very dangerous weapons. Here, in many domains, with weapons of knowledge no less dangerous, a game is being played because people are unwilling to deepen their thought in the direction of Spiritual Science so as to acquire a true understanding of these phenomena. The problem is approached with inadequate means of

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

knowledge and it is a very dangerous game. It is, of course, perfectly true that the subconscious works in many people today, without ever rising into consciousness. But what the psychoanalysts believe they have unearthed is usually of the least significance of all and, for this reason, successes so far as cures are concerned are in most cases highly dubious. When hysteria in a woman of thirty is put down to some sexual perversion which occurred, say, at the age of fourteen and has gone on simmering in the subconscious – this is probably the most unimportant factor of all. In a few cases it may actually be correct and then, if its importance has been wrongly estimated, it will be all the more misleading. Nevertheless, it is absolutely true that countless factors lurk within human beings today, trouble them and give rise to the diseases of modern civilization.

Think of what I said before. The thought of the absent dead dwells in some way in the soul, although little attention is paid to it. This thought dwells in the soul because the soul is still heedless – and is rather susceptible to these heedless thoughts. According to an eternal law, those who have died are then forced to dwell with these thoughts; the dead haunt the souls of those who are still living. True contact, with those who have died can be established only by knowing: "*the Dead live!*" Human beings on the physical plane will be more and more prone to psychological illnesses as a consequence of the prevailing disbelief in the existence of those who have died. The causes of these hysterical manifestations are not, as a rule, early sexual troubles but *unbelieving thoughts*. For thoughts in our age are destined to become powers in more senses than one. They work as powers of thought as such, in that after death the soul takes on a stronger and stronger likeness to what, in the body, it pictures itself to be. And, in a higher sense still, thoughts become real powers in that they fetter beings – in this case, the Dead – in a wrongful way to the living. Only by sustaining the thought that the dead lives on, can one guard oneself, as well as others, against the link with the dead becoming a source of danger to those who have been left behind. Indeed, in a certain sense the same applies to the dead themselves, who under an eternal, wisdom-filled law are compelled to lurk in the survivors in such a way that this influence remains subconscious and manifests, ultimately, as illness.

Ask yourselves now, *What is the real remedy for many phenomena confronting psychoanalysts today?* The universal remedy, the universal therapy, is the spread of knowledge of the spiritual world – not these individual treatments.

Life demands that we abstain from the thought that here on earth we must devote ourselves exclusively to physical existence because the world of after-death existence will reveal itself to us in its own good time. We must abstain from this thought because it is also true that, just as our life here is important for the existence into which we pass between death and a new birth, so too the life of souls living between death and a new birth is important for the soul living here on earth.

What I have now said refers to *one* thought – namely, disbelief in the existence of the dead. But the dead are and should be connected by many links with the living. The link of which I have just spoken is improper, but there are many true links which must be tirade and which constitute the right connection with the spiritual world. Anthroposophical Spiritual Science strives to establish the true connection with the spiritual world, for earthly human life will only take its rightful course, if this true relationship is established with the spiritual world. Failing this, it will become increasingly possible for certain individuals to embark upon intrigues and machinations in order to gain power over others.

Let us be quite clear about one thing. We can understand the deeply symptomatic events now proceeding in Eastern Europe only when we have a clear, inner conception of the nature of these lands and people. Think of what we have been saying for many years about the qualities of the peoples there as a basis for the sixth post-Atlantean epoch. (See also Rudolf Steiner, *Preparing for the Sixth Epoch*.) Only then can light be shed on all the difficult events and confusing influences, stemming quite inevitably from these Eastern lands. Something altogether different, in fact, must evolve in the course of time from what is happening there. What is destined to evolve there is, however, not so easy for people of our time with their comfortable ways of thought, to understand. No wonder, therefore, they are

taken aback by what happens there from day to day. But the important point is to find the right way into all the streams and currents which are now arising and will arise in the future. And if Spiritual Science is our guide to knowing and understanding the spiritual world then we shall find the right way little by little. Thereby, too, we shall establish the right relationship with the spiritual world.

In my last lecture here I told you of an improper relationship to the spiritual world which certain quarters want to establish. I said that certain individuals are deprived of life here and sent into the spiritual world as the outcome of deliberate machinations; these individuals have not wholly lived out their life here and therefore are still able to turn certain forces to account in the world where they live between death and a new birth. Then certain brotherhoods working with dishonorable motives, desiring only to satisfy their own lust for power, can use mediums for the purposes of receiving from the dead the knowledge which the dead have thus been able to acquire.

Occult brotherhoods of this kind are also, as a rule, those who lead people astray with regard to the events of greatest importance in the spiritual world. If I tell you that, in 1879, in November, a momentous event took place, a battle of the *Powers of Darkness* against the *Powers of Light*, ending in the image of Michael overcoming the Dragon ... then the point is not simply to tell you that such and such an event took place. For you can read in many books – it is not an esoteric truth at all – that such an event is appointed for world evolution. What I really want to bring home is the significance of the event and the attitude which you should adopt towards it. Eliphas Lévi, Franz von Baader, Saint-Martin, [Louis Claude de St. Martin, 1743-1803, the "Unknown Philosopher," French Christian esotericist and theosopher, often mentioned by Rudolf Steiner. Franz von Baader 1765-1841, profound Catholic theosopher, philosopher, and metaphysician, "*nature-philosoph*" etc. Eliphas Lévi, 1810-1875, is the *nom de plume* of the French occultist, Alphonse Louis Constant. Lévi was a major figure in the nineteenth century occult revival. His sphere of influence – which included Madame Blavatsky – was enormous, both in his native France and in Britain (where his contacts were extensive).] all knew and spoke of such an event-there is nothing really esoteric in the fact itself. But in our time, attempts are afoot to spread confusion about such events – confusion that makes people regard them as mere superstition, although they have long been proclaimed by ancient learning. Here, again, is a reason why correct and true ideas about these things are so important.

Today a right and proper path of approach exists to the spiritual truths which, since 1879, have been filtering down from the spiritual to the physical world. It is the path indicated by Spiritual Science. And if in the stream of Spiritual Science there is no deviation from sincerity and purity of intention, Spiritual Science will lead to the establishment of the right relationship between the physical and the spiritual worlds. But what is attained thereby and must arise among human beings involves and demands strenuous effort. Laziness in all its many forms must be put away. Strenuous effort is essential. ...

SEVEN

Signs of the Times: Michael's War in Heaven and its Reflection on the Earth

(From: Rudolf Steiner, *The Mission of the Archangel Michael*, pp. 133-54.)

Munich, February 17, 1918

Today, it will be my task, on the basis of the spiritual way of seeing we have been developing here, to move on to a discussion of the spiritual processes that in a certain way lie immediately behind contemporary events now speaking so earnestly to our souls.

Certainly, as you know, we can observe in all vividness precisely what spiritually underlies

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

so difficult a time if we consider what we call in Spiritual Science our coexistence, our community, with forces that stream from the so-called dead into the realm where we ourselves are incarnated. But of course people nowadays seek very little to know the spiritual background of existence. In fact, this lack of seeking the spiritual background of existence is much more closely connected than one might think with the great catastrophe that has befallen humanity in the present age.

I have drawn your attention before to the fact that, when compared to earlier periods of history, extraordinary and sweeping changes affecting the whole of human evolution occurred in the period we may call the last third of the nineteenth century. In this connection, I have pointed repeatedly to the end of the 1870's. I pointed out that the end of the 1870s signified a decisive turning-point in human evolution. Yet very few people today seem to be aware of how fundamentally different spiritual life since the end of the 1870s is from what preceded it. Perhaps people have had too little distance from this moment and so cannot see the change. Indeed, as a rule, such an event becomes apparent only when one is no longer directly involved and has acquired a certain distance, and so can observe the differences. Today, then, if humanity is not to be confronted with still greater misery, we must gain the distance we need to experience these changes as soon as possible.

Viewed spiritually, our present age is governed by a very strange and truly startling contradiction. If I describe this contradiction to you, you will actually find it grotesque. The contradiction is that there has never been a time in human historical evolution that is as spiritual as the time we now live in—the time since the end of the 1870's. From a historical point of view, we live in the most spiritual of times. Still, it is undeniable that the way we live today is such that most people who consider themselves spiritually developed believe that our time is completely materialistic! As far as reality is concerned, however, our time is *not* materialistic; it is materialistic only as far as people's beliefs – and what results from their beliefs – are concerned. But what do I really mean when I say, "*Ours is a spiritual time*"?

Well, first of all we have our contemporary natural-scientific world view. Compared to our present natural-scientific world view, all that came before it in the way of natural science was materialistic! Today, we have a natural science that rises to the most subtle, the most spiritualized concepts. We will see this best if we consider the realm of existence that lies just beyond the realm of what is immediately physically present.

Most concepts that, with the best intentions, we use today with a spiritual meaning offer little to the so-called dead. Contemporary natural-scientific ideas, however, reflected upon without prejudice, have extraordinarily much to offer them. Indeed, it is interesting that so-called materialistic Darwinism is understood and used in a completely spiritual fashion in the realm of the dead. Things appear quite differently in reality than they do in the beliefs – the often very erroneous beliefs – produced by what people experience in the body.

But what do I really mean by pointing to the scientifically spiritual? Well, you see, in order to be able to form these scientific concepts, to rise up to such thoughts as are thought today with regard to evolution and so forth, we need a spirituality that did not exist in previous times. It is much easier to see ghosts and to take them for something spiritual than it is to form finely chiseled concepts for what seems to be only material. Consequently, we develop the most spiritualized concepts in our soul lives and then deny them, mistakenly believing that they relate only to material things. This materialistic interpretation of contemporary scientific ideas is nothing but a defamation of the true character of the world view of natural science. It springs from a general tendency to cowardice! We cannot bring ourselves to live with lively feelings in these spiritualized concepts. We are unable and unwilling to grasp this spirituality in the dilution needed to form clear-cut concepts about nature. We do not dare acknowledge that when we develop these rarified, spiritualized concepts we are living in a spiritual realm – in the spirit – and so we deceive ourselves by saying that these concepts relate merely to material things. But this is simply not true, it is mere self-deception.

The same is true of other spheres of life. I pointed out two days ago that many contemporary works of art demonstrate values that did not exist in the art of earlier epochs, also because of such a spiritualized, refined feeling. [Rudolf Steiner, *Das Sinnlich-Übersinnliche in seiner*

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

Verwirklichung durch die Kunst. (not translated.)] It is undeniable that many artistic developments appear in contemporary works of art that one would seek in vain in the works of Raphael or Michaelangelo.

These changes in human spiritual-cultural life were brought about by a quite definite spiritual event. Today, I would like to characterize this spiritual event from certain points of view.

When the middle of the nineteenth century had not yet quite been reached, in fact more or less at the beginning of the 1840's, a certain spiritual Being – names here are irrelevant, but in order to have a name, we can choose one taken from Christian theology, the Archangel Michael – prepared himself to evolve gradually from an Archangel to a Time Spirit, to undergo an evolution that would enable him to work into human life, not merely from the super-earthly point of view, but directly from the earthly standpoint. This Being had to prepare himself to descend to the earth itself, to emulate, as it were, the great process of the Christ Jesus, so as to take his starting point here on earth and to be active thereafter from the point of view of the earth. From the 1840s to the end of the 1870s this spiritual Being prepared himself for this task.

In other words, it may be observed that the period approximately between the 1840s and 1879 represents a significant battle in the supra-earthly sphere, specifically in the supra-earthly sphere that borders immediately on the earthly sphere. (See also pp. 63-66; and Steiner, *The Fall of the Spirits of Darkness*.) This spiritual Being, whom we call the Archangel Michael, had to fight a hard, difficult battle against certain opposing spirits. If, then, we wish to understand what actually occurred at this moment, we must look more closely at these opposing Spirits.

The spiritual Beings, who had to be fought by the Archangel Michael, who in turn became a Time Spirit, have always affected human life and evolution. During the millennia preceding the middle of the nineteenth century, their task in the spiritual world was to create differentiation among human beings. The spiritual Beings who are the direct followers of the Archangels strive in a certain sense to lead human beings back to the group soul: in a certain sense they seek to pour unity or homogeneity over the whole of humanity. This would not have worked in the right way, however, if they had been alone in affecting humanity. If they had been working alone, humanity would have become more or less blended into indistinguishableness – it would have represented merely a species, similar to an animal species, but on a somewhat higher level.

The spiritual Beings, whose task it was to light against the Michaelic principle, were the same ones whose task it was to bring differentiation into humanity, to split unified humanity into races and peoples, to bring about all those differences connected with the blood, with nerves, with temperament. This had to happen. We may call these spiritual beings who had to bring such differentiation into humanity "Ahrimanic" Beings. We may call them such, but we must realize that the Ahrimanic principle was a necessity in the whole course of human evolution.

Then the moment came, which was important for the evolution of humanity – the time arrived – when, beginning with the 1840's, the old differentiations had to vanish, and the divided human race had to be formed into a unity of humankind.

The cosmopolitan views (which admittedly sometimes turned into cosmopolitan slogans in the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries) are simply a reflection of what occurred in the spiritual world. The tendency already existed among human beings to wipe out the various differences fostered by blood, and the nervous temperament. The spiritual worlds have no tendency to differentiate humanity any further. On the contrary, their tendency is now to pour out a cosmopolitan element over humanity. Under the influence of our catastrophic times, people have little understanding of this. But we must own up to this truth. Indeed, this fact, mirrored in earthly events, when observed in its spiritual background, leads to a clairvoyant vision which shows how the Spirits of race, those Folk Spirits that produced the differences between peoples, were fought against from the 1840s onward by the spirit who was to become the Time Spirit of the modern age.

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

An event that has always been represented by a significant symbol took place during this time, although at a new, different stage. The symbol refers to other stages of evolution besides this one, for things repeat themselves again and again at various stages. Thus what I am telling you now is only a repetition at a certain stage of a spiritual event that took place at other stages also. This spiritual event is represented by the symbol of the Archangel Michael conquering the Dragon. This conquering of the Dragon by the Archangel Michael – which means that the counterstriving powers were cast out of the realm where the Archangel Michael rules – occurred in a certain sphere, beginning in the 1840s. Certain spiritual Beings whose task in the spiritual world was to differentiate humanity into races and peoples, were, if I may use the expression, cast out of heaven down to earth. These spiritual Beings, who up to the 1840s had created these differentiations among humankind, now no longer have any power in the region bordering the earthly world. They have been cast down among humanity on the earth with all that they could bring with them. It is this event, the pushing down upon the earth of certain Spirits resisting him, which took place at the end of the 1870s, that Spiritual Science designates as the victory of the Archangel Michael over the counterstriving Spirits.

Thus, since the end of the 1870s we have two things. On the one hand, since 1879, we have had on earth – for those who may be said to be of good will, if we understand this expression in a qualified sense – the dominion of the Time Spirit Michael, who enables us to acquire spiritualized concepts, a spiritualized intellectual life. We also now have on earth the counterstriving Spirits, who deceive us into denying the spirituality of the present time. If we fight against the materialism of our time, we should be constantly aware that we must not fight against what is good in our age but only against the lies of our age. For the Spirits that have been pushed from heaven down upon the earth are chiefly Spirits of falsehood, who, as Spirits of hindrance, prevent, us from looking for what is spiritual in our understanding of natural existence.

If we come to know those human beings who descended from the spiritual world into earthly incarnations after the year 1841 and who since died, we can indeed see how these things are considered from the other side, as it were. One can then correct much of what is very difficult, to comprehend here in the physical world.

When, at the beginning of the twentieth century, it gradually became clear how necessary it was to point once more to the most varied areas of spirit in life, those who drew attention to this fact were precisely those human beings who, following the year 1848 – actually, beginning already in 1840 – had themselves participated in the hard battle waged by the Archangel Michael in the spiritual world, of the counterstriving Spirits into the life of the earth, where they now are among human beings. Indeed, if one rises against these Spirits and tries to drive them from the field one is essentially fighting alongside the Archangel Michael. (See Rudolf Steiner, *Goethestudien und goetheanische Denkmethode* (not translated).)

Now, a certain law exists, my dear friends, which states that evolution may be traced backward as well as forward from every point. We may focus our attention on any given point in human historical development and say, here is a point in time, at this moment this or that happened. Then time goes on, and we observe events as they unfold. But the flow of time may also be observed backward. We may go back from 1879 to 1878, 1877, 1860, 1850, and so on. We may then observe how one can follow something backward in the spiritual world. We will see the following. We will see a repetition of what went before in the deeper structure of events as they unfold. Often, if one expresses something great in a simple way, it sounds trivial. Nevertheless, I shall speak simply.

If we consider the point in time that is 1879, we can either proceed forward to 1880, or we can go back to 1878. If we proceed forward to 1880, we will notice in the deeper spiritual structure that what occurred in 1878 is still in a certain way active in the events of 1880. The event of 1878 still stands as an active force behind the event of 1880. And behind the event of 1881, as an active force, stands the event of 1877. It is as if the line of time reverses itself the farther back we go, so that events belonging to a past time lie behind events that lie ahead of that time. If we grasp these things, we can understand much.

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

Now, please remember that I have been speaking about the year 1879 for many years, and not only since 1914, when it became reasonable to do so. This is important, dear friends. I ask you now to make a simple calculation with me. Count back with me from the year 1879 to the year which I have often designated as the other extreme. I have always stated that the battle of which I am now speaking started at the beginning of the eighteen forties, around 1840 or 1841. Count back then: 1879, 1869, 1859, 1849, and 8 or 9 years more, i.e., 38 or 39 years. Now count forward: 1879, 1889, 1899, 1909, 1914, and right up to today. You also have 38 or 39 years. Thus if you observed the year 1917, you would find a surprising result. You would realize the deep significance of the occultist's statement that, starting from an incisive historical event, you find the preceding spiritual event repeated in the subsequent one. Behind the present events of our time here on the earthly plane lie the spiritual events beginning in the 1840s that we designate as the Archangel Michael's battle against the counterstriving Spirits. These events are behind today's events. We have a repetition today of what took place in the early 1840's. You can imagine how differently one looks at the events of our time when one pays attention to this law. If one pays attention to this law, one develops a deeper understanding of events that now pass silently by human ears that do not penetrate our souls. We may say that today the battle of the Archangel Michael against the counterstriving powers has to a certain degree returned to its starting point. (See also Steiner, *The Fall of the Spirits of Darkness*, especially lectures 9-14.)

IN GENERAL, IT IS ALWAYS DIFFICULT NOWADAYS TO SPEAK TO HUMAN BEINGS CONCERNING SUCH DEEPER RELATIONSHIPS, BECAUSE PEOPLE TODAY ENERGETICALLY REJECT ANYTHING THAT WOULD HELP THEM UNDERSTAND THE PRESENT TIME CORRECTLY AND ENABLE THEM TO ACT IN THE PROPER MANNER. THE TIMES WE LIVE IN REQUIRE THAT WE RID OURSELVES OF OLD PREJUDICES. The times are such that we must understand and bring into consciousness the events that are now taking place. For things are now happening here on the physical plane that are much more spiritual in nature than events generally are. This has to do with the descent of the Archangel Michael into our earthly region. Many people are talking of this descent of the Archangel Michael into the region of the earth. But when it is a question of taking this as seriously as it really ought to be taken, in its true background, then people do not want to go along. Yet exactly this taking of the Michael event in all seriousness is what is required. A spiritual understanding of the most important impulses of our time must take hold in ever wider and wider circles. For this reason it was absolutely important during all the years of our branch meetings to draw attention to this Michael event – to ensure that we did not sleep away the stream of events, which in our time is so strongly influenced by the spirit.

TO SLEEP AWAY EVENTS IS PLAINLY A CHARACTERISTIC OF OUR TIME. We pass by events as if we were asleep. Indeed, the more incisive and significant an event entering the physical plane, the more human beings sleep through it.

To give you a concrete example: March 1917 was so powerful in character – and will produce results of such great importance as humanity cannot even dream of – that it is quite grotesque how little understanding exists today of the need for a complete revision of almost all judgments, a complete revision of everything people believed prior to 1914. [Outbreak of the Russian Revolution and abdication of the Czar (ed).]

Perhaps I may be permitted to point to the fact that in 1910 I delivered a number of lectures in Christiania [Oslo] on the European Folk Souls. In the first of these lectures you can read that human beings will soon be called upon to understand something about the relations of the European folk souls. (Rudolf Steiner, *The Mission of Folk Souls*, see this volume pp. 36-40.) In my lectures I have repeatedly mentioned that we must turn our gaze toward the immediate East – that what happens there is important for human evolution. How often have I said this! Anyone who has listened to me knows this is so. Likewise, in the spring of 1914, in my Vienna lecture cycle about the life between death and a new birth, (Rudolf Steiner, *The Inner Being of the Man and Life between Death and a New Birth*.) I dared to make the emphatic statement that the social life of our time may be compared in a very real sense with a special form of disease, namely, with a carcinoma. I dared say that a creeping cancerous disease is

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

running through our social life. Naturally, under our present conditions these things cannot be stated in any other way; but they must be understood.

We must not think of world events as following one another in a neat continuous progression. It is a fable told by historians that a later event always develops out of a preceding one and that this event, in turn, developed out of the one preceding it, and so forth. We may leave this prejudice to those who do not have the sense for reality that anthroposophically schooled thinkers ought to develop. We may leave this prejudice to the politicians of the old school, as well as to a great many of today. Reality deals with something quite different. We must think of the course of events as of a pair of scales in full motion: the scale-beam sinks first to the right, then to the left. From this point of view, the time since the beginning of the 1840s may be characterized as follows. Much would have been possible if an attempt had been made during the period 1840-1914 (the period divided in two by the year 1879) to prepare adequately for the ***SPIRITUALIZATION OF HUMANITY*** that is striven for through the Archangel Michael – that is, if the attempt had been made, on a large scale, to imbue human beings with spiritual concepts, spiritual ideas. If by free human volition—since modern humanity depends on freedom – this attempt is not made, then the scale-beam sinks to the other side. What could have been achieved in spiritual ways now occurs through the blood. The spiritualization occurs in an as it were super-physical manner. What we experience in our catastrophic times is such a balancing of the scales. ***HUMANITY, WHICH HAS REJECTED SPIRITUALIZATION, MUST BE FORCED INTO SPIRITUALIZATION. THIS CAN HAPPEN THROUGH A PHYSICAL CATASTROPHE.***

This idea can be verified if we firmly place ourselves upon the following foundation. We live here in the physical world; but, as I recently described, we are awake there only through our perceptions and our ideas – with our feelings we are dreaming and as far as our will impulses are concerned we are asleep. This is the way things are for human beings. But if, through imagination, inspiration, and intuition, we acquaint ourselves with the spiritual world, which is always around us like the air, and where the so-called dead exist together with us and where their impulses are active, then we perceive how life here in the physical world is connected with the life of the so-called dead. And these so-called “dead” are able to receive from the hearts of living human beings only spiritual thoughts.

Recall what I told you three days ago. If someone dies when young, in a spiritual sense he or she has not actually left the family. He or she remains there, in reality is still there. But for the one who is dead something else is connected with this other than just being here. I beg you to take this very seriously. ***FOR THE DEAD, IT IS A QUESTION OF BEING ABLE TO BEAR THIS EXISTENCE, TO COMPREHEND IT. IF THE PERSON WHO HAS DIED COMES FROM A MATERIALISTICALLY INCLINED FAMILY WHICH DOES NOT CULTIVATE SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS, HE OR SHE IS, TO BE SURE, STILL PRESENT IN THIS FAMILY, BUT PRESENT IN A WAY THAT IS CONSTANTLY OPPRESSIVE AND DISTRESSING. THE FAMILY BECOMES SOMETHING LIKE A NIGHTMARE, LIKE THE AIR WHICH WE TOO DEEPLY INHALE, THROUGH WHICH WE EXPERIENCE THE NIGHTMARE. ONLY SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS FROM THE REST OF THE FAMILY CAN RID THE DEPARTED ONE OF THIS NIGHTMARE AND MAKE LIFE BEARABLE AND POSSIBLE FOR THEM.***

I told you too that, when older people are torn from their families, they take their family's souls with them. They take them along, draw them to them. But again, if they are not permeated by spiritual thoughts, they constitute a nightmare.

Now let us consider the following. We can learn a great deal if we observe the sudden death of a human being by outer circumstances or abnormal inner conditions. Let us say that someone is slain or shot. In such an instance, death is brought about in a way which is very different from gradual, natural death by illness. Now imagine someone who is shot in the thirty-fifth year of life; his or her life is suddenly destroyed through outer circumstances. If the bullet had not struck (certainly, there are karmic connections, but what I am going to say nevertheless holds true), this person's constitution might have allowed another thirty-five years of life. Inwardly, this person still has as it were the constitution for another thirty-five years. This causes something quite special.

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

Those who die violently when their life forces are still very active experience something quite tremendous. Condensed into a single moment, they experience things that would have been spread over a long period of time. What they could have experienced during the next thirty-five years, what would have been spread over the next thirty-five years, is condensed in a single moment. For in the hour of death, the most important experience is that a human being comes to see his or her true physicalness from outside. A person sees the transition the physical body passes through as it moves from being under the control of the forces it possessed when the soul dwelt in the body to becoming a nature-being, given over to natural, external physical forces. The tremendously significant experience at the moment of death is that the human being then beholds the relinquishing of his or her organism to physical nature forces. Human beings who suffer a violent death are not only delivered over suddenly to the forces of nature, which are the normal ones, but in addition the organism is treated by the bullet as if it were an inorganic, lifeless body: it is completely relegated to the inorganic world. There is a great difference if a person dies a slow death through illness or suffers a sudden death by the intrusion of the universe from outside, be it in the form of a bullet or in another form. A sudden flaring up occurs, a sudden flashing forth of an infinite amount of spirituality. The flaming over of a spiritual aura takes place, and the one who has passed through the portal of death looks back upon this flaming up. This flaming up is very similar to what takes place when human beings devote themselves to spiritual concepts. These are values which are interchangeable. It is extremely interesting to see, when viewed from the other side, from the side of the dead, how similar the thought, the feeling thought that one has when one enjoys or creates an image, a painting, born of spiritual life, is to the sensation a person has – though he or she is of course unconscious of this – when he or she suffers an external injury, let us say, to his arm and pain arises from it. There is a profound relationship between the two events so that one may take the place of the other.

Now you will grasp the karmic connection that exists between the events of 1841 and 1917. Naturally, quite a few people knew the, let us say, "*Position of the stars*" when the 1840s approached. This is only a technical expression used by occultists when they wish to designate such an event as the battle of the Archangel Michael with the Dragon. They say: "This is the position of the stars." Of course, quite a number of people at that time knew that such a significant event was taking place. There were some who wanted to take certain precautions, but, we may say, the other side of the balance was too heavily weighted: people's materialistic sense was too strong. Thus the falsest measures possible were resorted to. People understood that spiritual life must enter humanity. This was quite obvious. Many people in the 1840s understood the signs of the time and were convinced that spiritual life must enter humankind. (Rudolf Steiner, *The Occult Movement in the Nineteenth Century*.) **HAD A NEW SPIRITUAL LIFE ENTERED HUMANITY BEGINNING WITH THE 1840S, HUMANITY WOULD HAVE BEEN SPARED MANY CATASTROPHES.** Certainly, what took place would have taken place anyway, but it would have taken place in a different form. **WHAT IS KARMICALLY NECESSARY HAPPENS, BUT IT MAY OCCUR IN DIFFERENT FORMS.** This must always be kept in mind.

I shall express myself more explicitly. When as human beings today we consider what should happen in the social sphere or in any other field, there are two ways of doing this.

We can construct a program, form programmatic concepts, and think out how the world should develop in a certain area. We can present this in beautiful sounding words. We can swear by these words and take them as dogmas – but nothing will result from them, nothing at all! We can have the most beautiful ideas about what ought to happen, but nothing will come of them. For ideas, however beautiful, need not result in anything. In fact, contrived programs are the most worthless things in life.

But there is another way of proceeding. We can do something in contrast to this programmatic approach, and many people achieve it without any special clairvoyance. **OUT OF A NAIVE INTUITIVE KNOWLEDGE OF THE CONDITION OF THE TIMES, CAN WE SIMPLY ASK OURSELVES WHAT IS BOUND TO HAPPEN IN THE NEXT TWENTY OR THIRTY YEARS?** What in our time wishes to become reality? **THEN, ONCE WE HAVE DISCOVERED WHAT WILL**

INEVITABLY HAPPEN, WE CAN SAY TO OURSELVES: "NOW WE MUST CHOOSE. WE CAN EITHER COME TO OUR SENSES AND GUIDE THE COURSE OF EVENTS IN THE DIRECTION THEY MUST INEVITABLY TAKE – IN WHICH CASE MATTERS WILL TURN OUT WELL; OR WE CAN FAIL TO DO THIS AND ALLOW MATTERS TO RUN THEIR COURSE – IN WHICH CASE WE ARE ASLEEP, SIMPLY NOT, AWAKE. AND THEN THE COURSE OF EVENTS WILL BE BROUGHT ABOUT BY "CATASTROPHES." IN THAT CASE, REVOLUTIONS, CATAclysms, AND SO FORTH WILL FOLLOW.

No statistics, no programs, however well thought out, are of any value. The only thing of value is observation of what the times engender. What the times engender must be taken up, must be penetrated: the intentions of the present must be governed by this.

Last century, in the 1840s, many different kinds of people, program-people, were victorious over the few who understood what I have just stated. Thereby all kinds of attempts to spiritualize humanity sprang up: for instance, spiritualism, which is only an attempt to spiritualize humanity with inadequate means. Spiritualism seeks to reform humanity in a materialistic way, to represent and reveal the spiritual worlds to human beings materialistically. It is easy to be quite materialistic in one's thinking. A person is being materialistic when he or she says: "Yes, *this or that particular group of human beings is right, why don't the spiritual powers intervene and help them assert their cause?*" How often do we hear people asking today, "Why don't the spiritual powers intervene?" Recently I answered this in a more abstract form: Humanity today must rely on its own freedom. Those who ask, "Why don't the spiritual powers intervene?" proceed on the assumption that ghosts should make politics instead of human beings. We could certainly progress if ghosts instead of human beings introduced the necessary reforms! They do not do this, of course, because human beings must rely on their freedom. Waiting for ghosts is what makes human beings most confused. It draws their attention away from what ought to happen. Thus, at precisely the same time as humanity, in its own life, was familiarizing itself with refined spiritual concepts – which clearly live in some people – it was also exposed to the starkest materialistic temptations. Human beings are quite unable to distinguish between refined spiritualized concepts and sensations on the one hand, and what approaches them as temptation on the other, working against the comprehension of what they have spiritualized in themselves – which really is something spiritual. Therefore, because people did not understand at the right moment how evolution ought to proceed, the present catastrophic age – our present, difficult times – became necessary. Without these present difficult times humanity would have sunk still deeper into doubt about itself. To be sure, it would have been even more capable of developing spirituality, but it would also have rejected it to a still greater degree.

This is part of the background of historical development. Naturally, on this basis, I should like to throw light on much that lies in the foreground, but this cannot be done today for reasons you will readily understand. It must be left for each individual to illuminate for himself or herself out of this background what lives in our immediate present.

The sleeping away of events, as I have characterized it, makes us overlook the sharp angles and contours of life. But when we overlook the sharp angles and contours of life, compromises arise. Now, there are times that are very suitable for compromises. The time that preceded the 1840's, for instance, was such a time; but this is not true of our time. Our time demands that we see things as they are, with all their angles and contours. But precisely because these sharp angles and contours are there the urge also arises in our souls to close our eyes sleepily to these things. What I have just stated may indeed be observed even in regard to the greatest, the most significant events in human evolution.

Human evolution has even brought about just such angles and contours in relation to the greatest event in world history, namely, the Mystery of Golgotha. We know all that the development of theology in the nineteenth century has to say about the Mystery of Golgotha – from the time of Lessing (Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, 1729-1781. German dramatist, literary critic, translator, and editor.) right up to the time of the theologian Drews, (Arthur Drews, 186,5-1935. German philosopher, professor at Karlsruhe, author of works on: German philosophy since Kant,

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

Nietzsche, Plotinus, the Christian Myth, and the psychology of the unconscious.) all kinds of things have been said. Indeed, it may well be said that the whole development of theology in the nineteenth century provides complete proof that people have entirely forgotten how to understand anything at all of the Mystery of Golgotha. And yet there are some very interesting publications concerning Christ Jesus. For instance, there is a Danish publication written entirely from the standpoint of a modern natural-scientific thinker. (Emil Rasmussen, *Jesus, A Comparative Psychopathological Study*.) The author states his point of view as follows: "I am a psychologist, a physiologist, a psychiatrist; I observe the Gospels from my point of view." What conclusion does this author reach? Absolutely factually, judging as a modern psychiatrist, he concludes that the picture which the Gospels sketch of Christ Jesus is pathological. From the point of view of psychiatry, one can only conceive of the Christ Jesus as suffering from insanity, epilepsy, morbid visions and similar conditions. All the symptoms of a serious mental illness are there.

If one reads aloud the most important passage of this book, as I have recently done, people are shocked. [See Rudolf Steiner, *Geistige Wesen und ihre Wirkungen* [Spiritual beings and their effects], vol. 4, lecture 1 (not translated).] This is understandable, for people are horrified when what they consider sacred is described in terms of pathological symptoms. But what is really happening here? What is happening is that among a great number of dishonest compromisers, one arose who is dedicated completely to the natural-scientific viewpoint and makes no compromises whatsoever, but states without equivocation: "I am totally a scientist; and therefore must speak as I do, for these are the facts. If others would place themselves honestly on the standpoint where natural science has placed itself, they would have to hold the same views." There are these sharp angles and contours, and one cannot do otherwise. They cannot do otherwise than either forsake the natural-scientific point of view and cross over to the spiritual-scientific point of view – in which case they remain honest – or they may choose to remain honest upon the natural-scientific point of view, in which case they must observe matters, without making compromises, in the manner of such a narrow-minded scientist, who, although honest in his field, is thoroughly limited in his views and does not try to conceal his narrow-mindedness. Such a scientist is narrow-minded, but consistent. This has to be understood. If people would see today what makes certain nuances necessary, when clearly examined, then they would begin to see life without compromise.

Someone recently handed me an interesting slip of paper. I already knew of the book mentioned on the paper, but since I do not have the book with me here, I can only read you what is written on this slip of paper. It was handed to me in order to show me what kinds of things are possible today.

Anyone who has ever attended high school will remember the unforgettable hours when in the study of Plato he or she could "enjoy" Socrates' conversations with his friends. Unforgettable, because of the fabulous boredom that flowed from these conversations. One will perhaps remember that these conversations of Socrates struck one as extremely stupid; but, of course, one did not dare utter this opinion, for after all, the human being in question was Socrates, "the greatest philosopher." Alexander Moszkowski's book *Socrates, the Idiot* completely does away with this unjustified overestimation of the good Athenian. In this small, entertainingly written book, the polymath Moszkowski undertakes nothing less than to divest Socrates thoroughly of his philosophical honors. The title *Socrates, the Idiot* is to be taken literally. One is not wrong in assuming that this book is based on scientific investigations.

Now, you may think it dreadful that such things are written. But I do not find it dreadful at all. I think it is self-evident and quite honest of Moszkowski. For, according to his concepts and sentiments, Moszkowski cannot do otherwise than to call Socrates an idiot, if he wishes to remain consistent. This is obvious. And by doing so he is more honest than many others who, in keeping with their views, would also have to call Socrates an idiot, but who prefer to make compromises instead. I need not tell you that no one should now spread the news through the porous walls of the Munich Branch that I have proclaimed myself in agreement with Moszkowski when he declares Socrates to have been an idiot.

However, I must also acknowledge that people arrive at certain judgments today because

RUDOLF STEINER – THE MISSION OF ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (PART 1)

they make dishonest compromises. One cannot think about mental illness as modern psychiatry does and not write a book such as the one written by the Danish author about Christ Jesus. That cannot be done. One is being dishonest if one does not either reject such concepts and replace them with spiritual ones, or take the point of view that Jesus was mentally ill. And if one is acquainted with Moszkowski's peculiar views on radiation theory, quantum theory, boundary concepts, and the whole structure of the world, then, if one is honest and consistent, one cannot help but consider Socrates and Plato idiots.

Hence, the impulse to reject compromises – to make no compromises, above all in one's soul life – belongs among the impulses that are especially essential to humanity. It is extraordinarily important that we consider this as a demand of our age. For precisely this rejection of compromise is one of the most significant of the impulses of Michael, the Spirit of the Age – namely, to pour clarity, absolute clarity, into human souls. If we wish to follow the Archangel Michael, then we must infuse human souls with clarity and overcome sleepiness. Such sleepiness, of course, arises in other spheres too, but above all it is absolutely necessary today to overcome sleepiness if we are to gain insight into the consequences of things. In previous ages this was different. During the centuries prior to the Michaelic age, when European humanity was governed essentially by the Archangel Gabriel, the compromises which human beings thought of were diminished by the influence of the spiritual world. Michael is the spirit who works in the most eminent sense with the freedom of humankind. Therefore Michael will always do the right thing. You must not believe that Michael fails to do the right thing – he does indeed do the right thing.

In the unconscious regions of the soul every contour and angle of spiritual life is today sharply outlined in every human being. It is there. Those who possess even the slightest ability – be it ever so small – of bringing to the surface what exists as latent visions in the depths of soul life know what lives as discrepancies and incongruities in the soul today. They know that in souls today modern materialistic psychiatry, which does not shrink from seeing an epileptic in Christ Jesus, even lives side by side with the actual acknowledgement of Christ Jesus. We know that this is so. If these things were only called just a little into consciousness, if we had only the minimal ability needed to call these things into consciousness, we would become aware of these facts. It would be interesting if a good painter who had a real understanding of our present time would paint "*Christ, seen from the point of view of a modern psychiatrist*," and would depict it expressionistically. It would be very interesting to see what the result would be if the painter had a real understanding of what takes place at the present time in the depths of human soul life.

You see, today we must plumb the depths if we wish to grasp what takes place on the surface of existence. But one can understand, on the other hand, that people are seized by a certain cowardice and discouragement if they are to approach what we have been talking about.

You see, it is especially necessary today to dig deeply if we wish to understand what is taking place on the surface of existence. On the other hand, we can also understand that human beings are overcome with a certain cowardice and timidity when they get too close to the things we are speaking of here. This, indeed, is the other quality necessary today: courage and even a certain audacity in perceiving, in thinking; an audacity that does not dull our concepts but rather perhaps makes them highly acute. I have said these things so that they may be observed by everyone, to the extent that they are spiritually accessible to everyone. You can observe them yourselves, if you really wish to observe spiritual life in the present.

Everything that has been said today can be found in external events. The spiritual researcher simply describes it more precisely because he sees it against its proper background. And if the researcher then describes this background, outer events will all the more corroborate what has, for example, been indicated today.

Many people ask what they should do. ***IT IS SO OBVIOUS WHAT ONE SHOULD DO! ONE SHOULD OPEN ONE'S EYES, ONE'S SPIRITUAL EYES, TO BE SURE! ONCE WE OPEN OUR EYES, OUR WILL FOLLOWS. OUR WILL DEPENDS UPON OUR LIFE SITUATION.*** It is not always

possible in our particular circumstances to do the right thing according to our karma; but we must try to open our eyes spiritually. Nowadays, however, it often happens that if one tries to impart verbally what is necessary for the present age, people quickly close their eyes and swiftly turn their minds away from it. This is the falling of the scales on the other side. When one speaks as I am doing here, it could very well be considered a criticism of our age. I have never intended such criticism. My purpose is to draw attention to the impulses that must enter human souls, human minds, from the spiritual world. As I have stated, it is not possible to enter into concrete details. Each of you can do that for yourselves.

PART II

The Mission of Michael, the Revelation of the Secrets of Man's Being

CONTENTS

- I. The power and mission of Michael, Necessity of the revaluation of many values
..... Dornach, Nov. 21, 1919
- II. The Michael revelation. The Word becomes flesh and the flesh becomes Spirit
..... Dornach, Nov. 22, 1919
- III. Michaelic thinking. The Knowledge of man as a supersensible being. The
Michael path and the deepest impulses of the social question
..... Dornach, Nov. 23, 1919
- IV. The culture of the Mysteries and the Michael impulse. Self-knowledge and its
permeation of the three strata of consciousness
..... Dornach, Nov. 28, 1919
- V. The Michael deed and the Michael influence as counter-pole of the Ahrimanic
influence
..... Dornach, Nov. 29, 1919
- VI. The ancient Yoga culture and the new Yoga will. The Michael culture of the
future
..... Dornach, Nov. 30, 1919

Signs of the Times, Michael's Battle and Its Reflection on Earth

Two lectures, Munich, February 14, 1918
Munich, February 17, 1918