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ARCHANGEL MICHAEL: THE FIERY THOUGHT KING HOW CAN WE KNOW HIM? Part I

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On the one hand we might think it presumptuous to recommend a conscious relationship with such an exalted being as an Archangel as the title suggests. But on the other hand our own thoughts are something with which we are intimately familiar and the fact that the being who has been called *The Fiery Thought King* weaves in and out of our thought-world might make it not quite so difficult to imagine. As is often the case, once we begin to explore something new and start to gather concepts or inner pictures connected to it, we discover facts with which we already have a certain familiarity, and are thus able to find a certain “foothold” on our new path of exploration. So the natural thing would be to investigate some of the facts that spiritual science presents us with concerning the being we usually call Archangel Michael in an effort to begin, or to further, our conscious connection with him. My intention in writing this article is not to be comprehensive, dealing in depth with the multitude of aspects that might be noted in connection with the being of Michael, (that would take many books) but to explore just a few salient points, each in a series of articles on the subject, in a lively manner that may stimulate us to a fresh awareness and further exploration. I expect much of this to be familiar to those who are students of spiritual science and offer it simply as a reflection aimed to stimulate and enliven our thinking.

Especially in our present world crisis it is essential to align ourselves with Michael/St. George¹ to enable us to overcome all that is of “the demon” or “the dragon” that would rear its head in our time. We *can* come to know Michael in truth and in reality by taking into our hearts what we have in our heads concerning him and tenderly nourishing those warm, wisdom-filled thoughts. If we do this we will soon see the light of his wisdom mount



¹ St. George is a legendary character that has aptly captured the spirit of Michael. He has been depicted countless times in Christian churches, and is venerated as a saint in many traditions including the Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican and Oriental Orthodox churches. In one of the most popular portrayals of St. George, he is mounted on a horse and holding a dragon at bay with a spear, often with a young virgin in the background.

into fiery flames of will that can allow us to fulfill the tasks that are incumbent upon us in concert with our friends and co-workers in the work of Michael/Christ at this crucial time when the Mystery of Evil unfolds together with the Reappearance of Christ in the Etheric. It is my fervent hope that these words may enkindle in us a renewed hope, an unshakeable faith and a sure strength, empowering us by the will of Michael-Sophia in the name of Christ to “stand fast in the liberty” that has been granted to us as our inalienable right and to share with the world the blessings of that freedom.

I often like to begin with names. There is much in a name that bears looking into. And the name Michael gives us a good point of departure to deepen our investigation beyond the pale of ordinary thoughts. Michael is a Hebrew name that essentially consists of three separate words that correspond to the three syllables of the name—Mi-cha-el. Not to get too technical, the Hebrew word *mi*, pronounced like ME, is the inquisitive particle meaning “who?” *Ke*, pronounced like KAY, is the common particle meaning “like” or “as.” And *El* is the abbreviated form of Elohim (pronounced simply as “L”) meaning God in the plural and referring to the Spirits of Form or the creator gods referred to in Genesis: “In the beginning God [Elohim] created heaven and earth...” Put these three word-syllables together and you get Mi-cha-el: “Who is like God?”

The first clue that may strike us here is in the “mi” that is an “inquisitive particle”—which means that it poses a question. We can reasonably assume, and it almost goes without saying, that there is something about our “Thought King” here concealed (or revealed) that gives us the opportunity to penetrate beyond everyday thinking in the posing of the question “Who is like God?” This question is not meant to be answered with a simple piece of information like: “Jesus” or “one of the prophets”—and into which we fail to inquire further. We could answer the question that way and we would be correct but we would miss the point. It is instructive to realize that we play this game with ourselves continually when we ask questions—the game of *question and answer*. If you think about it you realize that it is a childish game. You ask a question and you get an answer and then you go on to another question, etc., etc. We live in a time when this game is played all too often and where you would least hope it would be played—in education, science and in politics—where deeper answers which are sorely needed are not often countenanced, where superficialities pass as wisdom in the popular mind. “Jesus,” “Buddha” or “Elijah” may be “like God” but these are not the kind of answers that can lead us to a reasonable meaning of what the first syllable in the name Mi-cha-el denotes.

None of us is immune from this criticism. We have all been immersed in a climate of superficiality that stands quite securely before the student of spiritual science, as much as anyone—and that often goes quite unnoticed. We memorize spiritual scientific information, often without forming a real inner connection to it. We carry a great deal of information that we only possess by memory and we carry on a social life in connection to such memorized information. We ought to ask ourselves what part of that information we truly connect with spiritually—what part of our knowledge is “living?” And what part

do we truly possess as our own? Do we rely too often on quoting authorities? Or can we speak with authority as true “knowers” ourselves? Of such things we ought to be very clear because they point us to the only true foundation within that justifies thinking of ourselves as serious students of spiritual science.

So, to get back to the “inquisitive particle” subject, we could say that, technically, the name Michael should be written with a question mark after it—Michael? Although most of us would likely forego the somewhat odd written technicality of using the question mark, it would serve us well to remember that if we use the name correctly, it does in fact appear written there in invisible cosmic script whether we write it or not.

One of the most basic principles of spiritual science is found in the recognition of thinking in *its higher form*—what we often call “living thinking.” To arrive at living thinking, we might consider the question posed by the inquisitive particle “*mi?*,” which is translated as “*who?*,” (the first syllable of Mi-cha-el) as a prod to our ordinary thinking, to enliven it to a more attentive state. Right down into the construction of the name Michael, we are pointed away from what might become “a dead fact” to rather—a living activity. His name itself is a question and not an answer—not a thing but a deed. What if we applied this question to all of our knowledge as I began to suggest above in the quest to our becoming true “knowers?” What I mean by this is: *who?* or *what?* is it that lies behind the words, the factual representations that we gather in our studies and that we memorize in our search for knowledge? Or we might ask: Why do we seek at all? What is it that we seek in all of our questing for wisdom and knowledge? Essentially, it is “to know God,” or perhaps better stated—“to know the spiritual foundation of things.” This is not an oversimplification; it is a profound truth—an ideal. As spiritual seekers we should not be looking for answers in the ordinary sense—becoming satisfied with bits of fact. Facts are dead if they are not stepping-stones to more penetrating questions and further answers. So, we can reasonably imagine that if we apply this question in all of our thinking we will reach the understanding of God or the spiritual foundation of things. Such declarations will inevitably sound absurd from the perspective of everyday thinking, but they are true nevertheless. What I suggest is not so dissimilar to what Rudolf Steiner suggested with regard to thinking when he said: “Every idea we hold that does not become an ideal slays a power within us.” We can guess what power it slays: “The Michael Power.” When our thoughts rise to the ideal they have a force that is timeless and universal. And if they are living, they will be imbued with will and will burn with a fiery force within us that is indomitable. Here, perhaps, we can begin to see what thoughts rise up to God, what thoughts are Michaelic, what thoughts answer the question “Who is like God?”

With these ideas we can begin to have a sense of what to be looking for in terms of a relationship with Michael. When referring to Michael we are always referred to ways of thinking and perceiving that have this “inquisitive” character, that don’t stop at terms and facts but press on to essences and beings, the “ideals” of thinking that can be experienced only by living thinking.

Thus far, we have explored something of what is in the name Michael through a simple look at the Hebrew words that constitute his name, to draw out a spiritual meaning applicable to our way of knowing, and which, I hope, challenges us to better know ourselves. Another significant word that has been used in connection with Michael's mission in our present 5th cultural epoch, of which Michael is currently regent in his Archangelic function, following Archangel Gabriel who preceded him—is *Universality*. Michael is a proponent of universality. In his role as the ruler of Cosmic Intelligence, during the period immediately preceding the Mystery of Golgotha, Michael brought about an unprecedented fusion of cultures. He seeded Southern Europe, Asia Minor and North Africa with Aristotelianism, largely as a result of the conquests of Alexander the Great. And he subsequently facilitated the unification of the cultures of Rome, Greece and the Hebrews to provide a platform of receptivity for the monumental evolutionary events of the Mystery of Golgotha. This was done to prepare for the universal culture of the future that began with the Christ event and was to blossom in the far distant future with the so-called Philadelphia culture of “brotherly love” and finally with the New Jerusalem ideal community.

In the term *universality*, we have to get to the back of a great deal of abstraction. Yes, Michael could guide world events from his heavenly perspective to have the effect of uniting cultures so that the Christ might find fertile soil for body, soul and spirit amongst the Romans, Hebrews and Greeks respectively. But what does this tell us about our time? What does his activity mean, in everyday terms, for our lives? How might an Archangel, who is actually qualified for work as an Archai or Time Spirit, work with us and in us today? In other words, as my title puts it: How can we know him?

Universality in respect to the work of Michael in our time is sometimes referred to as “cosmopolitanism,” a term that has certain social connotations. According to the Free Dictionary that one can access online, cosmopolitan is defined as: *Pertinent or common to the whole world*. This is close to the Oxford English Dictionary definition: *Belonging to all parts of the world*. Wikipedia actually offers a good alternative: *Cosmopolitanism is the ideology that all kinds of human ethnic groups belong to a single community based on a shared morality*. These are good but I also like the simple idea of *the universal human being* with which we are familiar in Rudolf Steiner's writings and lectures and also in his, and Edith Marion's well-known sculpture, by that name—“The Universal Human Being,” also referred to as “The Representative of Humanity.” Michael, the ruler of cosmic intelligence, always relates to the universal human being. We could say that outside of this reference point there is no Michael intelligence. Every thought or activity that applies to humanity and relates only to individuals or groups or nations and nationalism is a sub-Michaelic. Philosophically this is a fairly palatable idea—we rise in love and understanding as “one world being” out of the many. Idealistically, we rise above nations and peoples and we “war no more” as the followers of Martin Luther King Jr. were wont to say in the 1960s. We embrace and forgive all peoples and nations seeing them as important, essential facets of our picture of humanity. That means Islamic nations as well as so-called “Christian” nations. It means dictatorships and socialist nations. It means the so-called third world and developing countries. But in this broad framework we are, of course, nevertheless, looking at individual human beings.

Interestingly enough, when a Michaelic perspective is being embraced and we are holding all nations and peoples in mind we discover the paradox of finding the universal not in terms of the great masses of humanity but in terms of individuals—of seeing every human being as an individual. We must embrace the whole to see the individual. Until we can embrace all, accept all, love all—as Christ loved us—we have not arrived at universal individualism, we have not got the universal in us. The scripture says that “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” When the pain of the world becomes our pain and when our pain is lifted up to the divine then we can begin to pray a Michaelic prayer. We can begin to think Michaelic thoughts. Our individual uniqueness, our God-given self is the gift to all of humanity; and humanity in all of its sufferings and successes is the gift to our unique selves. Our individuality is not for us alone but for the whole. What is universal goes completely beyond groups, beyond divisions to the One—to the “All as One” and to the “One within us.” The root of the word unique is “one.” The One that we are speaking of is the universal One. I capitalize “One” in this case because we have arrived at the “ideal” of the idea—the being behind the concept. Here we arrive at the center by taking in the outermost periphery, so to speak. Only by embracing all can we arrive at the center point in the individual “I.” Here we arrive at the universal individual—the “I” that embraces all. A capitol idea.

Now, we have a slightly less abstract picture—embracing the All to arrive at the One. I have mentioned love and pain but even these are abstract ideas. How do we arrive at the universal individual through love and pain? “Individual” has that word “divide” *in its midst* we might say. Our natural tendency is to think of individualism as self-interested egoism—a force that divides and separates into nations and peoples and groups of countless sorts. This being the case, how does the universal get inside of the individual? Michael can help us here. Christ could see the potential in every human being; he could see the budding, blossoming gift of God in us. He was and is able to see the spark of divinity that is our human birthright as children of God—inherent in us. Christ could see our spirit self that is incorruptible, in our nature; it is this within us that he came to redeem—to “cash in,” so to speak. While we live out our wayward nature in large part, “doing that which we would not” as St. Paul says, Christ is able to see us nevertheless. He is able to connect with our “unfallen” part. Our divine nature has to be redeemed since it has been “captured” within our earthly nature and remains imprisoned there—aside from his intervention. This divine spark is what we have in common with all of humanity: it is universal. Together we all are “one new man” in the consciousness of our divine humanity, as St. Paul reminded the Ephesians, by the “breaking down [of] the wall of partition between us,” which Christ accomplished on the cross.

Michael—as the “Who is like God?”—carries out this Christ initiated and enlivened “way of seeing” in us. As we recognize the divine spark in each individual and grasp it in our thinking, not just theoretically, but in actual daily life—acting on that knowledge—we participate in Michaelic activity and in thought that is imbued with will forces—God’s will forces. Michael is sometimes also called “the countenance of God.” His Christ-like countenance sees us—sees into us to the ideal, universal, individual in our deepest nature. The only way to see him is through his gaze upon us. Spiritual knowing is

like that: “We shall know him even as we are known by him...face to face...” as St. Paul told the Corinthians. We can only know him through his seeing us, through his knowing us; this is how we are initiated into the Michael school.

This brings us to the next, what we might call, *imperative* incumbent on everyone who is a student in the school of Michael. As students of the Michaelic intelligence we are called to “mirror the highest in the other.” To avoid again the inevitably abstract nature of such pronouncements let us consider for a moment the potential impact of “mirroring the highest in the other.” We all are so unique as individuals and as such there is a great deal of suffering we each endure just for being “who we are.” That might sound like a trite saying but it is actually a profound reality one that seldom gets the attention it deserves. There is, of course, much superficial talk these days in the realm of psychology in the social sciences and even in education about “self esteem” and such, which falls far short of doing justice to the profundity of the self-pain of the human individual who is a species unto him/herself. We might ask ourselves: Who has really recognized us? Who has seen us in our deepest nature? By whom have we been truly acknowledged?

Naturally speaking, we would expect our parents to be able to “mirror our highest self” but rare is the parent who is also the “spiritual parent” of his or her child and able to recognize the true spiritual self of their offspring—only a self-realized person of the Michael School can do this. In our age we are left quite alone to discover ourselves. Consider how difficult it is for us as individuals to “fit in” to modern society. As spiritual evolution progresses, increasingly, we will find individuals who don’t feel comfortable or perhaps I should say “at home” in the panorama of jobs, for instance, that is generally available in today’s “job market.” As we individuate, to use Jung’s term for incarnating the self, the job market looks less and less attractive and offers less and less what we might call “a sense of fulfillment” to the individual. Apart from a minority of individuals who choose careers in the arts pursuing a highly unique “vision,” or through special types of research grants are able to do pioneering work, we struggle to be creative in a marketplace that is not generally hospitable to our own unique form of creativity. A great deal of suffering is the lot of the individual in society. What is required in our time is for each individual to carve out his or her own niche in the market and in the world. Even self-employment is little consolation although it does offer more freedom to choose and express oneself as an individual but a business remains within the context of a largely unenlightened greater business world. The world does not offer “a home” for the soul of the individual seeking self-realization in the sense of birthing their unique gift to humanity out of themselves.

And what of the spiritual researcher? Anyone who has made any progress along the path of personal spiritual research knows that it is an arduous path and the loneliest of all paths. This is where the suffering and pain reaches the deepest levels within the human being, where the loneliness is not for lack of human soul contact but for spirit recognition or spirit acknowledgment. The spiritual researcher encounters the most arid desert and has to wait for years, or decades or even until another lifetime for acknowledgment—to see the just fruits of their efforts. This is true especially in an era like ours when the greatest souls are the least understood and what reigns in the public sphere is the most

banal and base “least common denominator”—what has the most appeal in the marketplace. Great souls like Rudolf Steiner, for instance, for all of their apparent outward success, inevitably have great misgivings about their effectiveness. Who can doubt that Rudolf Steiner would be greatly disappointed with the meager growth—to date—of the spiritual fruits he seeded in the world? Even given a certain outward success, it is little consolation to a discerning spiritual vision when inner spiritual fruits turn out so spare.

And let us not be elitist in terms of spiritual researchers—in a sense every seeking soul is to some extent a spiritual researcher and suffers as such. I know that I am stretching the meaning here but bear with me. Continuing in the “inquisitive” spirit, let us ask some more questions: Can you or I see the “spiritual researcher” in our neighbor? From a broad evolutionary perspective we understand that every soul is on the same path—this is what we come to understand in the school of Michael. Can you see and feel the cry of the spirit, the seeking soul within your family members, your classmates or co-workers? Can you see beyond the soul sicknesses in those around you to the hungry individual who is, in his or her more-or-less enlightened way, seeking for the fulfillment that only the spirit can bring? Can you have compassion for souls in diverse conditions of soul and spirit sickness? If you can then you are working with Michael, you are a co-worker with him and you know what it means to “mirror the highest in the other.”

To be “seen” by another, in the sense that I am seeking to express, is monumental in a human life. When we are recognized by another on the level of spirit we naturally awaken to our latent potential and connect more surely with our unique life-purposes. We all know if and when we have been “seen” by others. Perhaps there was one teacher who saw us, who believed in us when others did not. Perhaps there was a wise and quiet friend by whom we felt acknowledged in being ourselves and by whom we felt understood and affirmed? Or a lover who saw to the core of our being and revered what he or she discovered there and found some way of expressing it? Perhaps we have encountered a soul who has advanced further than we have along the path of spiritual development and who draws out of us untold treasures, through our contact with him or her, which caused us to light up with hope and faith in ourselves and to be fired up with enthusiasm. I am speaking now of the rare and monumental experiences of being acknowledged on a spiritual level.

Let us think now in smaller terms asking another question: Do you or I believe in our neighbor? Do we acknowledge the Buddha nature or the Christ within them? Or do we hold the individuals around us captive to their past? We have seen them fail perhaps countless times. Do we think of them as hopeless and never able to progress or change? By doing so we ally ourselves with the adversary of our soul’s progress and theirs. This is probably not the case with those whom we choose to associate with most. But, how about those who live in the other neighborhoods in our town or city that are not as affluent as ours? Or the ones that are living “up on the hill” who are more affluent than we can even imagine? Or how about those of different races that we meet? Do we unconsciously cast judgment on any of them? Is there a subtle condescension in us when we speak to them or *of them* to others? How about those who ascribe to a different social philosophy or

support a different political party—do we judge them as inferior for their beliefs and unworthy of our help or support? If we see the Buddha nature, what is sometimes called “the beginner” in our neighbors and friends and coworkers and in those who live across town or on the other side of the world, we will not lose hope for them—we will not hold them to their past “sins.” We will forgive them and be the person in their life that helps them to see the next step forward on their path. If you are able to do this, then you are working with Michael as a mirror to the divine nature within others.

What does it mean to us to be “seen” either in the monumental sense I first spoke of or in the everyday sense I outlined in the last paragraph? We shouldn’t be too quick to answer. It is hard to even think of hope or of a future for ourselves as individuals, or for our world as a whole without this essential activity of *The Fiery Thought King—Michael!* There would be very little spiritual progress in the world without this essential element to affirm us as individuals. Reflecting upon this, perhaps now we have a sense of the regal majesty of the being we have sought to discover expressed by this exalted moniker for Archangel Michael—*The Fiery Thought King of the Universe*— which otherwise in our time, might tend to elicit condescending smiles of skepticism and visions of an antiquated, naïve and sentimental culture laden with superstition. But not to those who know him.

So, we have explored a few characteristics of the working of Archangel Michael by which we might learn to know him—through profound questioning, through living thinking, through discovering the universal in the individual and through reflecting the highest in the other. In Part II of this article we will answer a new set of questions for those who are in the Michael School and who are devoted students of this sublime being. Why is it that Michael is taciturn? Why does the fact that he seldom speaks lead us to wordless thinking, to real meaning and to “iron” courage and confidence? In his last address, Rudolf Steiner spoke to those in the Michael Stream, of concerns about the “great crisis” that humankind would pass through after the end of the twentieth century. In this context, he spoke of the necessity that “the Michael Power and the Michael Will penetrate the whole of life” and that these “are none other than the Christ Power and the Christ Will.” We will explore how it is that humanity can, and must, in our time, through the Michael Power, transform the human predisposition to view all things in a materialistic way, as a result of its peculiar knowledge of space. How can Michael help us to spiritualize space and thus “penetrate the whole of life” to meet the challenges of our time?