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

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*The Stars once Spoke to Humanity.
It is World Destiny that they are Silent now.
To be aware of this Silence
Can become Pain for Earthly Humanity.
But in the Deepening Silence
There Grows and Ripens
What Humanity Speaks to the Stars...
Rudolf Steiner, Christmas 1923*

In a previous article, Part I of *Archangel Michael: How Can We Know Him*, we examined various aspects of the being sometimes called *The Fiery Thought King*, in an attempt to grasp his nature and know him ourselves. Our discussions were aimed at bringing abstract definitions and descriptions down to earth showing how we might recognize the working of this lofty being in everyday life. In Part II we will continue our investigation with the question: why is it in our time that Archangel Michael remains silent? We will be inquiring into what we might call the *word-less* aspect of the activity of the being of Michael. Contrary to what we might think, addressing the word-less requires a rather convoluted path of words since we must overcome what is ordinary in our language, a language that is best suited to the sense world around us, to arrive at a *spiritual* understanding. Although a more direct path can be taken through Art—such as what is expressed so succinctly in the poem above, in taking a scientific approach to what typically defies definition one must deal with the convolutions of the human thinking process, in order to become aware of and by-pass the many obstacles that lie on the path to spiritual knowledge, so that we may reach our goal.

The object of our inquiry here in these articles, to learn to *know* Archangel Michael, does not refer to *knowing him* in the ordinary sense. Our aim is to develop not just a *knowing-thought* connection with him but also a *knowing-feeling* and a *knowing-will* connection. In so doing we can move from a youthful and imitative connection, to a fully collaborative and mature relationship with him. To do so we must enter *fully* into his gestures so that we feel ourselves to be part of him and he part of us. Nevertheless, what we know of him, purely from the standpoint of thought, is, not surprisingly, the perfect place to start.

We have already mentioned that Michael is taciturn. There is perhaps nothing more important to “knowing him” than to understand this key fact. I mentioned in the previous article that “the only way to see him is through his gaze upon us.” Saying this intimated that we must follow his

gestures, in this case the gesture of his “eyes,” his seeing. If we are to find our way into Michael’s silent nature, we may follow his movements, not imitatively—as if alongside him—but participating in his very being. Developing this thought, let us think about what uniquely occurs in language and in speech. To do so it will be helpful if we first think of what can be known *without* the benefit of speech, *without* the advantage of communication that comes through conversation, for instance. If we imagine carefully observing a person walking to work, for several days or even weeks, without talking to them, much can be learned or surmised about them. But, when once we speak to them, we will discover information about which we could never have known or inferred from our careful observation.

With this in mind let us consider the Archangel Michael as if he were a person with whom we could converse at length. Imagine what limitless knowledge he could grant us? What might we *not* be able to learn from him if he would speak to us? This most noble and resolute Sun Archangel, a leader among the Sun beings—who bears Christ in his bosom, a being whose capacity for knowledge and speech is present to the highest degree, this ruler of the Cosmic Intelligence—how is it that he surrenders his capacity for speech? How is it that the Fiery Thought King does not speak his fiery thoughts? Why is it that Archangel Michael denies us his knowledge through speech?

Firstly, he knows that human beings have reached adequate inner strength, in terms of spirit self-awareness, and that to continue to disseminate the cosmic intelligence would no longer benefit us. Humanity has depended on inspiration (divine speech) from the spiritual world since primeval times when thoughts streamed through us instinctively without our having to exercise our thinking capacity. Since the Golden Age of Greece, reflective thinking, as we experience it today, began to replace inspiration from the spiritual worlds. This is the reason materialistic thinking is as natural to human beings today as the spirituality evident in mythology was natural to humanity the further one looks into the past.

Since the regency of Archangel Michael began in 1879 (and it will last about 350 years)¹, it is no longer necessary to spoon feed humanity with cosmic wisdom. Humanity has come of age to be able to transform what was *cosmic* intelligence, and was formerly given to humanity as divine inspiration, into *human* intelligence. What occurred in the spiritual world immediately bordering our sense world, having been accomplished by Michael in 1879, made it possible for the greater part of humanity to work with the “Grail Knowledge” of the stream of Parzival, which was initiated in the 9th century for a select group of individuals who were prepared to receive it at that time. Modern spiritual science in all of its forms is a direct continuation of the Parzival stream or what Rudolf Steiner called the *New Grail Mysteries*. What exactly occurred in 1879 and what makes the New Grail Mysteries available to a greater portion of humanity?

Rudolf Steiner has indicated the fact that in 1879 Michael succeeded in casting Ahriman (the being often called Satan), down from heaven, after a long battle in the spiritual world that began after the middle of the 19th century. What does this mean? It means that since that time humanity has become free of the influence of Ahrimanic spiritual beings on their thinking. If we understand this event we see that from that time forward the influence of these beings was restricted to the earthly realm; their unconscious (hidden) sway in the spiritual world of *thought* was ended. The Ahrimanic beings could no longer inspire and corrupt the thoughts of those who would rise to pure thinking.

¹ According to esoteric teaching and verified by the spiritual research of Rudolf Steiner.

This fact would not be so significant except that correspondingly, the cosmic intelligence, which was also being disseminated by inspiration from the spiritual world up to that point—was also restricted to the earthly realm. With this momentous event the last remnants of direct spiritual guidance for humanity were expurgated leaving humanity completely free from the influence of spiritual beings. This means that Michael simultaneously cleared ALL spiritual influences, both good and evil, that were formerly available to humanity from the spiritual world of human thinking. Both Ahrimanic and Michaelic inspirations virtually ceased. This is another way of saying that at this point in human spiritual evolution, Michael, in order to fulfill a special need in humanity—became taciturn. From then on, we might say he refused to speak his cosmic thoughts directly to us. Why?

We have begun to answer this question, so far in a rather abstract way; let us continue to ask it until we can grasp it more concretely.

One reason why he denies us his knowledge is because Michael knows his limitations. Although the intelligence he possesses encompasses the whole of the mystery wisdom of all ages and thereby authorizes him to be the *Guardian* or *Ruler of the Cosmic Intelligence*, he knows that human beings must reclaim their cosmic connection, and to do so they themselves must *resurrect* the cosmic intelligence,² of their own free will; he cannot do it for them. The divine plan is that human beings would become creators like their original divine creator. Mystery wisdom must live in each one of us in a unique way. We are all highly individual beings, each a unique “fingerprint” of the creator. We each are a gift to the world because we bring something no other can bring; the cosmic wisdom must express itself through each one of us *distinctively*. What is needed in our world is for each one of us to rise up with the inner strength that we alone possess—bearing the unique cosmic wisdom of the creative being *that we are*, as an offspring of the Creator. This, Michael cannot do for us.

Having begun to explore the idea that cosmic intelligence must be transformed into human intelligence and having introduced the idea that this process was initiated in the ninth century by Parzival, who became “king of the Grail”—with Parzival as our guide, let us attempt to further unveil the difference between what we call *cosmic intelligence* and *human intelligence*. It is not enough to have vague ideas about what this means; we must be clear about it to adequately understand the work of Archangel Michael in our time. The story of Parzival by Wolfram von Eschenbach has been written, essentially, to clarify this difficult question. As we proceed, let us bear in mind the fact that Rudolf Steiner has said on many occasions that the character represented by Parzival was an initiate of very high standing having an importance even exceeding that of Christian Rosenkreuz, for instance, and whose part in world evolution will only be realized in the distant future.

The Parzival story is, of course, open to interpretation. But, even modern scholars who are not versed in mystery wisdom recognize in these stories a very modern point of view. Nevertheless, only if we approach this story with the right questions and persevere with them will it yield the answers relative to the New Grail Mysteries that we are looking for. Concretely speaking, the question remains: what is the difference between “human intelligence” and “cosmic intelligence?” We know from what we have discussed so far that the one comes from the other. How are they the same and how are they different?

² For the resurrection of cosmic intelligence consider the third panel of the Foundation Stone Meditation, which contains the Rosicrucian saying: Per Spiritum Sanctum Reviviscimus, (Through the spirit we come back to life.)

It is quite clear from the very beginning of the story of Parzival that the destiny of this individual was a peculiar one. We can see that his path would differ dramatically from his contemporaries; he was, we might say, piloting a paradigm shift. He entered uniquely into the world of knighthood, the world that surrounded the Knights of King Arthur as it existed in the ninth century. If I might remind our readers, many of whom will be familiar with this story, that from his earliest youth any knowledge of Knighthood or of the outer world, for that matter, except for the natural world of his simple home, and the woods that surrounded it, was withheld from Parzival. His mother protected him from knowledge, which she feared would lead to his death as had befallen his father. Those of us who have some familiarity with this epic poem, universally regarded as among the greatest works of literature of its time, know that there is wonderful significance in every word and that the symbolism is rich with meaning. Early in the story, the young Parzival does become attracted to the world of Knighthood, as his mother feared, when he first meets a small band of knights passing down a path on a mountain slope near his home. He mistakes the knights in their shining armor, for gods. Before she knows it, Parzival is ready to leave her protection to meet King Arthur, and join the community of knights.

A most significant fact in the telling of this story is that Parzival does not follow the prescribed method; he does not go through the usual training to become a knight. He did not enter into Knighthood like his contemporaries, but was initiated through his LIFE experiences. He was, most ignorant of the simplest facts and rules not only of Knighthood but of human relations in general. This detail becomes even more pointed when we realize that the code of ethics of knighthood, which was the code of conduct of the times, was very well developed, complex and rigid. It consisted of rules of behavior that developed over several generations in connection with the cosmic wisdom (whose guardian was Archangel Michael), observed by those who sat at the round table of King Arthur.

“Not in earthly script but in the script of the stars is written the original book from which Wolfram von Eschenbach draws the tradition [of the Parzival story] which he uses,” says, Walter Johannes Stein.³ Stein is referring to Flegetanis, whom a certain Kyot uses as his source which he then passed on to Wolfram. Flegetanis was well versed in the wisdom of the stars and is said to have read the name of the Grail in the constellations. We see here an early development of Michaelic, cosmic intelligence. Rudolf Steiner tells us that the round table of King Arthur itself is a picture of the twelve-fold wisdom of the Zodiacal round. This *cosmic wisdom*, as they knew it, determined the education and life of the Knights. Everything they did was a reflection of their connection to this wisdom, which was a form of Cosmic Christianity peculiar to the Celtic British Isles where Christ was recognized as the Lord of the Elements. In keeping with the exceptional spiritual character of pre-Christian Britain, the wisdom of the Knights of King Arthur developed into a combination of the message of Jesus, intricately interwoven with the wisdom of the cosmic Christ—a transformed nature-wisdom—for which the island people had a special affinity. This stood in contrast to Roman Christianity that clung to the person of Jesus often to the exclusion of the being of the Cosmic Christ. The stream of Cosmic Christianity that was taken up by the Arthurian knights emphasized the resurrection, in contrast to Rome which stressed the death of Jesus. In any case, an elaborate code of ethics developed in relation to this cosmic wisdom that served as an outer rule of law by which the knights lived and ruled in their lands. Much can be said in favor of this development, which had a powerful effect on European culture serving a vital purpose for its time and far into the future.

The ignorance or we might say the innocence with which Parzival entered into Knighthood is illustrated by the fact that when he sets off from his secluded home to enter the world of

³ *The Ninth Century and the Holy Grail*, Walter Johannes Stein, Temple Lodge, London, 2001, p. 137

Knighthood, as Wolfram tells us, he was dressed like a fool in rough sack-cloth and ungainly boots. The allusion here is especially significant as we compare his clothing to the bright and refined armor of the knights he had met and was planning to join. Clothing often refers to the astral body, but even from an everyday perspective, the contrast between the different sorts of clothing speaks volumes. The knights were outfitted to serve the Cosmic Christ in so much bright, gleaming, impressive, stiff, *outer* furnishing; while what Parzival brought, though unimpressive in outward form, was the essential warmth and brilliance of his *inner* life, which shone forth in his profound enthusiasm and stunning acts of bravery. The rough clothing of a fool that Parzival wore cannot appear in greater contrast to the bright, shining armor of the knights. Despite Parzival's natural good looks, for it was said of him that "he was a garland of all the flowers of manly beauty," his lack of manners and his rough outer garments show him to be seriously at odds with the "outer world" of knighthood with its polished exterior and refined code of ethics.

On the other hand, the inner aspect presented by the knights, who to Parzival appeared outwardly "as gods," does not inspire any more confidence than Parzival's outward looks and manner. The first four knights he meets (described as a "rich prince" with his three vassals) were on a mission to intercept two other knights who had passed by earlier and who were in the process of perpetrating rape in the abduction a maiden—grievously breaking the knightly code of honor. How can we not see in this picture that Wolfram is painting for us in such vivid strokes: *Parzival*, a "diamond in the rough" at the untamed beginning of ego development, *over against Knighthood*, refined and pure of manner on the outside but terribly flawed in its inner life. Parzival represents the New Grail Mysteries in its infancy meeting the age-old order of chivalry in decline.

The more we look into this story the more we realize how meaningful it is. This long tale hardly leaves any stone unturned, as they say. In it Wolfram illustrates for us all the pitfalls one encounters on the path of the consciousness soul towards spirit self, with its inevitable injuries and remedies. Much can be learned from it, only a few points of which we have time to go into here.

Let us reiterate the broadest gestures indicated so far that fall naturally into a polarity as seen in the contrast between the *old* order that sparkles with refinement on the outside, but is inwardly corrupt; and the *new* order that *appears* chaotic, but turns out to be diamantine within. We shall see here, as we progress, the order of Cosmic Intelligence being superseded by Human Intelligence. Parzival's trials show us the path of inner development, in which the "diamond in the rough" ego forces within the human being are cut and polished, on a path that presages our own paths—inevitably strewn with blunders—highlighting our need to hone and shine our inner impulses and make them conscious intentions that reflect the many-faceted brilliance that might shine through our connection with higher worlds.

Let us go a step further in applying the symbolism of von Eschenbach's story to our own lives in an effort to further flesh out the difference between cosmic and human intelligence.

Let me explain, first, that Parzival soon acquires his own armor, and through a long series of adventures, in which one blunder follows the next he eventually learns steadfastness and eventually comes to stand favorably in relation to the Holy Grail, having earned its blessing. Each person he meets, each situation he encounters is significant. He gets bad advice; meets good and bad people; he learns the ways of knighthood; he denounces God and then 4½ years later he surrenders himself to the will of God; in the process, and through much suffering, he

discovers that the initially inhospitable greater world is richly peopled with his own relatives and that it becomes his home as he discovers his unique place in it.

On the path of ego development we each confront the “world of Knighthood” as Parzival did. From a spiritual perspective the story is accurate. We cannot come to our own “world of knighthood” other than “as fools.” It is allowable to have enthusiasm for the path of spiritual development but it is not acceptable to be knowledgeable or wise. This means that we cannot carry over our worldly wisdom into spiritual affairs. We must be what we truly are as spiritual seekers on the early stages of the path—children and novices. To be eager “to wear the armor of the knight” as Parzival was, is permissible if one’s intentions are pure. Rudolf Steiner once said, in defense of the so-called “unwise” young people in the Anthroposophical Society, in whom he held great hope: “If you are honest in what you want to do the spiritual world accepts your enthusiasm for wisdom.” It is a mistake to think that by mastering spiritual teachings or practices that we are wise and spiritual. That all can be done without enthusiasm. But lacking inner warmth it is of no avail—in fact, it often becomes the worst hindrance.

As the story richly demonstrates, it was not primarily the armor, the weapons or the instructions he received that benefited Parzival. So also it is with us. Ultimately, it is not *demonstration* of correct teaching, spiritual practices, mastering exercises, and our ability to win others to our ideas that ensures our success; but the *inner warmth* of our ego forces. It is the *quality* of who we are and what we do.

In the story we observe Parzival defeating the Red Knight to acquire his armor without any of the outward equipment of knighthood—he used his javelot (a small hunting spear, many of which could be put into a quiver) instead of the courtly lance, and dressed like a fool and not with protective armor. Although he soon adopted the paraphernalia of knighthood it is apparent throughout the tale, that he is not a man made by the knightly calling, but a man who redefines knighthood, and so earns the right to the Holy Grail and the Kingship that attends it—that which his contemporaries failed to achieve.

The lesson Parzival would teach us is that we must learn to approach all of our “knightly tasks” not in an outward way—the norm of the institutions of our materialistic society—but as a work of profound egoic inwardness. Our spiritual work must become a matter of developing our delicate organ of human conscience—not memorization, analysis and cataloging; not knowing, dissemination and promotion of what we believe is right. Although these things must remain, they *need to be purged of outwardness*, of materialistic interpretation and handling. When Parzival finally adopted the outward aspects of knighthood, he transformed it by “piercing through to the heart”⁴ of each matter he encountered, by learning to be responsible by allowing his own heart to be “pierced through” first. The question for us is: can we stand alone and remain steadfast on our journey of unfolding our higher ego-forces in the midst of a cynical one-sided intellectual culture that remains present in ourselves and our companions on our spiritual journey—and by which we will wound and be wounded continually?

Parzival blazed a unique path through trial and error, a path that is a picture of what each human soul will encounter in the development of its unique ego forces. The path that Parzival opened for us is not as much a path as it is an *anti-path*; it begs us to follow the solitary path each of us is called to blaze by the unique nature of our individuality, which is required for personal development in the consciousness-soul age in which we live. This will never be achieved by adhering to outer authorities, no matter how enlightened they may be. Parzival had

⁴ This is one possible translation of the name Parzival: “Pierce through the middle.”

no models to speak of. The point of the story is to tear down the paradigm of personal development via hierarchical authority, through gurus or teachers that are placed above us. This does not mean that he could not learn to live in a world with outer authorities; it means that he discovered his own inner authority and lived according to *its* dictates.

Let us get back to the central question. What does this have to do with Archangel Michael and the transforming of cosmic intelligence into human intelligence?

Today, Cosmic Intelligence is the wisdom of the mysteries that has been “cast down to the earth,” along with the Ahrimanic inspirations. Up until 1879 the mystery wisdom was kept from the general population; now, much of this wisdom is available. There are profound treasures of wisdom that have been revealed. It has all become “earthly;” the angelic world that used to uphold it has withdrawn. What is written, what has been spoken, even by the greatest initiates, once it has been transmitted—is earthly. What we have in our books, what we have received in lectures—is earthly. Archangel Michael intended for it to be transmitted to humanity on earth. He does not raise it up again. He does not speak it again to us. He waits for *us* to raise it up. And we can *only* raise it up if we are willing to go into battle with it as “pure fools,” turning outer knowledge into inner experience.

So the cosmic intelligence is with us—but it is earthly. Now, we may ask: Can we further clarify what human intelligence is? Cosmic intelligence is conceptual; it is universal and abstract and lends itself readily to being taught. It takes the form of laws and rules that have descended from an abstract higher intelligence, like the Ten Commandments, the Torah or any spiritual text when taken at face value without full understanding. Any written or spoken wisdom that can be applied mechanically is cosmic intelligence. Human intelligence, on the other hand, is cosmic intelligence illuminated by human experience and is generally not utilized as an outer law but as an inner guiding principle.

It is not possible to *teach* Human Intelligence; we can only point out an indistinct route, for each path varies in infinite ways. If we adhere to cosmic intelligence without heart we will become moral automatons—correct outwardly but inwardly we will not be free. Human intelligence, on the contrary, can observe the abstract, universal principles of cosmic intelligence in operation but is not a slave to them outwardly, not constrained by its outer (lawful) nature, but alive to the forces and the beings that inform it. Untransformed Cosmic intelligence tends to make us priggish, pedantic, doctrinaire, moralizing and authoritarian or simply spiritual dilettantes with superficial knowledge. Cosmic intelligence can easily be misused becoming the cause of countless conflicts of interest. This is how it has become earthly.

We win through to human intelligence when we fulfill the dictates of Cosmic Intelligence, not slavishly as an outer law; but questioningly, as an inner path of knowledge, acutely conscious of our thoughts, feelings and will impulses, as they relate to cosmic truth. Free from its compelling authority, from its outer influence, free in our unique soul response to it. This is how we come to its unique resonance within us, how we unite our hearts with wisdom inwardly making it our own. We must ask ourselves if we have *truly* won our knowledge—is it *our own*? Do we know what we know? Possessing *human intelligence* is knowing what we know.

Human intelligence is written through and through with compassion, mercy, and with understanding. Human intelligence has a beauty and full-orbed quality that is as familiar with human passion as it is with sublime transcendental truths. Human intelligence is flexible, illuminated and warmed with grace. It holds cosmic intelligence within itself like an oyster holds an irritating bit of sand that it turns into a pearl. Christ Jesus enlightened the whole of the

hierarchical spiritual world by choosing to enter into the human experience of suffering and death. The spiritual cosmos was ignorant of the majestic nature of the human drama, apart from the example of Christ. He elevated our sufferings; he made a prayer of them; and made death not an end, but the ultimate victory, the essential beginning. The spiritual world waits for humanity to complete the task that Jesus Christ began—uplifting the cosmic intelligence that must remain in the world until it has been transformed, making it human.

In the prologue to the Gospel in his name, St. John said: “For the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (Jn. 1:17) For John, “the law” was the cosmic intelligence and a great distinction was being made here, a monumental distinction: “...but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Certainly truth was contained in the law. But *grace*—that was added to it. It was added to the cosmic intelligence—by Jesus Christ—*the human being*—who was also God. St. Paul, who was clear about this distinction, said that “the law was a schoolmaster *to lead us to Christ*.” (Gal. 3:24) If we are to learn “how to know Michael” and understand why he does not speak to us, we must learn to know the satisfaction he takes *in leading us to Christ*.

This is his gesture. Every movement he makes is towards Christ—leading us to Christ. Coming to Christ we learn to know “the one in me who is more me than I myself,” to quote St. Augustine. We come to the cosmic ego which is the parent of our individual ego and are reborn in the process—and become free. In his silence, Michael leads us to the Christ within, to the Word that is being born in the silence within us. He leads us to the one in us from and with whom we unfold our I being, the only one who can accompany us on the path that is an anti-path, and who, through the various challenges of our unique “pure fool” journey, leads us to a knowledge of his *grace* so that the words of the poem with which we began this article become a reality for us...

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To be aware of this Silence
Can become Pain for Earthly Humanity.
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...so that it will not only be Christ Jesus who will apprise the spiritual world of the majesty of human beings living heroically for a higher purpose. We ourselves, as we face the experience of suffering and death that is concurrent with human life, will be able to tell our story with *our own* fiery living thoughts — “*to the stars*.”