

AT THE DAWN OF THE MICHAEL AGE

Before and until the ninth century after the Mystery of Golgotha, the human being stood in a different relation to his thoughts from that which he has had in later times. He did not have the feeling that he himself brought forth the thoughts that lived in his soul. He regarded them as inspirations from a spiritual world. And when he had thoughts about what he perceived with his senses, even these thoughts were to him revelations of the Divine that spoke to him from the things of the senses.

Whoever has spiritual vision will understand this experience. For when something that is real in the spiritual sense communicates itself to the soul, one never has the feeling: 'There is the spiritual perception, and I myself am developing the thought with which to understand it.' But one *sees* the thought which the perception contains, and which is given with it, no less objectively than the perception itself

(When dates are given in this connection, they are to be taken only as a rough indication of the period; the transition takes place quite gradually.) Speaking, in this sense, we may say that the ninth century saw the lighting-up, in the souls of men, of the individual personal intelligence.

Man began to have the feeling: '*I myself form my thoughts.*' And this forming of thoughts came to be the thing of first importance in the soul's life, so that man saw in the intellectual experience the very essence and being of his soul. In earlier times men had had an imaginative conception of the soul. To them the essential thing about the soul was not that it formed thoughts, but that it partook of the spiritual content of the Universe. It was the supersensible, spiritual Beings whom they conceived to be thinking, and — extending their influence into the human being — thinking into him as well. That which lives in the human being of the supersensible, spiritual world — this they felt as the soul.

As soon as we penetrate with higher vision into the spiritual world, we meet with real and concrete spiritual Beings, spiritual Powers. In old teachings the Power from whom the thoughts in things proceed was designated by the name *Michael*. This name we may still apply, for it is true that human beings, once upon a time, received the thoughts of Michael. Michael held sway over the Cosmic Intelligence. But from the ninth century onwards men no longer felt that Michael was inspiring the thoughts into them. The thoughts had fallen away from his dominion — fallen out of the spiritual world into the individualised souls of men.

Henceforth it was within mankind that the life of thought was evolved. To begin with, men were uncertain as to what it was they had in their thoughts. This uncertainty found very real expression in the scholastic teachings. The Schoolmen were divided into Nominalists and Realists. The Realists, led by St. Thomas Aquinas and those who stood near to him, still felt the old closeness and kinship between thought and thing. Hence they saw in the thoughts a reality living in the things. They regarded the thoughts of man as reality which flows over from the things into the human soul.

The Nominalists felt very strongly the fact that the soul forms its thoughts. They felt that the thoughts were merely something that existed subjectively in the soul and had nothing to do with the objects. They were of the opinion that thoughts are only names man forms for things. (They did not speak of 'thoughts' but of 'universals,' but that does not come into consideration for the principle of the theory, as thoughts always contain something universal as compared with the individual objects.)

We may say that the Realists wished to remain faithful to Michael; even though the thoughts had fallen from his sphere into that of man, they wished, as thinkers, to serve Michael as the Ruler of the intelligence of the Cosmos. The Nominalists deserted Michael, with respect to the unconscious part of their soul. They did not consider Michael as the owner of the thoughts, but man.

Nominalism spread abroad and increased in influence up to the last third of the nineteenth century. Then at this period those persons who were able to perceive the spiritual events in the Universe felt that Michael had followed the stream of intellectual life. He is seeking a new metamorphosis of his cosmic task. Formerly he allowed the thoughts to stream from the spiritual outer world into the souls of men; since the last third of the nineteenth century he wishes to live in the human souls in which the thoughts are formed. In earlier times the human beings related to Michael saw him develop his activity in the spiritual sphere; they now know that they ought to let Michael dwell in their hearts; they now dedicate to him their spiritual life which is based upon thought; they now, in their free and individual life of thought, allow themselves to be instructed by Michael as to which are the right paths of the soul.

When those who in their former Earth-life received their thoughts by inspiration, i.e., who were servants of Michael, had returned to earthly life at the close of the nineteenth century, they felt urged towards a voluntary Michael community of this description. They now looked upon the one who had formerly inspired them with thoughts as their guide in forming higher thoughts.

One who understands how to observe such things knows what a great change took place in the last third of the nineteenth century with respect to the life of human thought. Before that time man could only feel how thoughts formed themselves in his own being; from the time indicated he is able to raise himself above his own being; he can turn his mind to the Spiritual; he there meets Michael, who proves his ancient kinship with everything connected with thought. He liberates thought from the sphere of the head; he clears the way for it to the heart; he enkindles enthusiasm in the feelings, so that the human mind can be filled with devotion for all that can be experienced in the *light of thought*.

The Age of Michael has dawned. Hearts are beginning to have thoughts; spiritual fervour is now proceeding, not merely from mystical obscurity, but from souls clarified by thought. To understand this means to receive Michael into the heart. Thoughts which at the present time strive to grasp the Spiritual must originate in hearts which beat for Michael as the fiery Prince of Thought in the Universe.