

# The Michaelmas Festival

RSArchive Blog

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Archai Michael, Source: Daniel Mirante

The Michaelmas Festival is celebrated each year on the autumnal equinox in the Northern Hemisphere. This time of year, we recognize the power of the spirit known as Michael and his victory over the forces that would drag us down. We invite you to explore Rudolf Steiner's teachings on the battle of Michael and the Dragon, the Michaelmas Festival, and the importance of the seasons in our soul development.

**There arose a revolt of divine spirits seeking free will prematurely before men came into human form.**

There are forces among us who do not belong to the earthly realm. They were banished by Michael from the heavens for revolting against Divine will.

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*[A]mong these spirits, whose real cosmic destiny was to remain identified with the will of the divine spirits, there arose a number of beings that wanted to disassociate their will, as it were, to emancipate it, from the divine will. In superhuman pride, certain beings revolted because they desired freedom of will before the time had come for their freedom to mature; and the most important one of these beings, their leader, was conceived of as the being taking shape in the Dragon that Michael combats — Michael, who remained above in the realm of those spirits that wanted to continue molding their will to the divine-spiritual will above them.*

*See MICHAELMAS AND THE SOUL-FORCES OF MAN, Lecture I*

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**The super-sensible Dragon—the Adversary, Ahriman—was banished to the earthly realm where he did not belong.**

He was not animal and not human. He did not fit any existing form, so he remained invisible and appears supersensibly as a Dragon.

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*[W]hen the soul's eye is directed to what physical nature embraces, it beholds this inherently contradictory form of the Adversary, of him who is like an animal and yet not like an animal, who dwells in the visible world, yet is himself invisible: it beholds the form of the Dragon. And in the whole genesis of the Dragon men of old saw the act of Michael, who remained in the realm of spirit in the form suitable to that realm.*

*Now the earth came into being, and with it, man; and it was intended that man should become, in a sense, a twofold being. With one part of his being, with his psycho-spiritual part, he was to reach up into what is called the heavenly, the super-sensible world; and with the other, with the physical-etheric part, he was to belong to that nature which came into being as earth-nature, as a new cosmic body — the cosmic body to which the apostate spirit, the Adversary, was relegated. This is where man had to come into being. He was the being who, according to the primordial decree that underlies all, belongs in this world. Man belonged on the earth. The Dragon did not belong on the earth, but he had been transferred thither. *Ibid.**

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**The battle with the Dragon moved from the outer cosmos into human nature.**

After being defeated by Michael and his army, the invisible Ahrimanic powers return to the earthly realm and reside there. When man took human form on earth, the dragon took up residence in man himself through our interaction with nature.

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*The Dragon, the Old Serpent, was cast out of heaven down to the earth, where he had no home; but then he erected his bulwark in the being of man, and now he is entrenched in human nature. [ . . . ] [B]y taking outer nature into himself through nourishment, breathing, and perception, man creates within himself a sphere of action for the Dragon. Ibid.*

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## **The Dragon and leagues of Ahrimanic beings repeatedly attack Michael and his army but are always defeated.**

In *The Fall of the Spirits of Darkness*, Steiner discusses a great war in the spiritual worlds that occurred from the 1840s until the autumn of 1879. Although tethered to the earth, the Ahrimanic spirits repeatedly rise up to wage war in the heavens. This has occurred many times, since before mankind took human form here on earth. Michael and his army always win and the Dragon and his followers are again relegated back again to the earthly realm. Each battle has a different impact on humanity. One result was human freedom. Other results were increased human materialism, which continues today.

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*See THE FALL OF THE SPIRITS OF DARKNESS, GA 177, Lecture IX. The Battle between Michael and 'The Dragon'*

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With the Dragon now entrenched in human nature, mankind must fight those inner forces that would hinder our spiritual development. We do this through what in German is known as our *Gemüt* or in simple English translation—our “mind.” But *Gemüt* is more than just thinking; it is more akin to feeling or heartfelt thinking.

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*In our soul life we distinguish, as you know, thinking, feeling, and willing from one another; and especially in connection with feeling we speak of the human Gemüt. Our thinking appears to us cold, dry, colorless—as though spirituality emaciating us—when our thoughts take an abstract form, when we are unable to imbue them with the warmth and enthusiasm of feeling. We can call a man gemütvoll only when something of the inner warmth of his Gemüt streams forth to us when he utters his thoughts. And we can really make close contact with a man only if his behavior toward ourself and the world is not merely correct and in line with duty, but if his actions manifest enthusiasm, a warm heart, a love of nature, love for every being. This human Gemüt, then, dwells in the very center of the soul life, as it were.*

See *MICHAELMAS AND THE SOUL-FORCES OF MAN, Lecture II*

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Thus, applying our *Gemüt* to Michaelmas, our struggle against the Dragon involves our alliance with the forces of Michael.

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*So the content of the human Gemüt can be this: The power of the Dragon is working within me, trying to drag me down. I do not see it — I feel it as something that would drag me down below myself. But in the spirit I see the luminous Angel whose cosmic task has always been the vanquishing of the Dragon. I concentrate my Gemüt upon this glowing figure, I let its light stream into my Gemüt, and thus my illumined and warmed Gemüt will bear within it the strength of Michael. And out of a free resolution I shall be able, through my alliance with Michael, to conquer the Dragon's might in my own lower nature.*

See *MICHAELMAS AND THE SOUL-FORCES OF MAN, Lecture I*

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### **Michaelmas is the profound continuation of Easter within Man's own Soul.**

Steiner discusses how we do not randomly add festivals to the calendar because one group or another think they would be nice to celebrate on this or that date. The festivals have deep spiritual meaning. Christmas needed the birth of the Christ; Easter, His death and resurrection. For Michaelmas, mankind carries on the Easter thought into his own soul. While Easter represents the death and resurrection of Christ; Michaelmas represents the reverse in mankind: *the resurrection of Man's own soul* and then physical death.

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*What does Easter represent in the year's festivals? It is a festival of resurrection. It commemorates the Resurrection realized in the Mystery of Golgotha through the descent of Christ, the Sun-Spirit, into a human body. First death, then resurrection: that is the outer aspect of the Mystery of Golgotha. One who understands the Mystery of Golgotha in this sense sees death and resurrection in this way of redemption; and perhaps he will feel in his soul that he must unite in his Gemüt with Christ, the victor over death, in order to find resurrection in death. But Christianity does not end with the traditions associated with the Mystery of Golgotha: it must advance. The human Gemüt turns inward and deepens more and more as time goes on; and in addition to this festival that brings alive the Death and Resurrection of Christ, man needs that other one which reveals the course of the year as having its counterpart within him, so that he can find in the round of the seasons first of all the resurrection of the soul — in fact, the necessity for achieving this resurrection — in order that the soul may then pass through the portal of death in a worthy way. Easter: death, then resurrection; Michaelmas: resurrection of the soul, then death.*

*This makes of the Michael Festival a reversed Easter Festival. Easter commemorates for us the Resurrection of Christ from death; but in the Michael Festival we must feel with all the intensity of our soul: In order not to sleep in a half-dead state that will dim my self-consciousness between death and a new birth, but rather, to be able to pass through the portal of death in full alertness, I must rouse my soul through my inner forces before I die. First, resurrection of the soul — then death, so that in death that resurrection can be achieved which man celebrates within himself.*

*See MICHAELMAS AND THE SOUL-FORCES OF MAN, Lecture IV*

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Indeed, we are "born again" by taking the risen Christ into our soul while living. The Michael thought, "the resurrection of Man's own soul" continues the Easter thought of the death and resurrection of Christ. With these two thoughts, we find the force to die in Christ and be born again.

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*It would become the whole disposition of the human soul to permeate the cosmos, to unite itself with cosmic worlds, if once the Michael thought could awaken as a festival thought in such a way that we were to place a Michael festival in the second half of September alongside the Easter festival; if to the thought of the resurrection of the God after death could be added the thought, produced by the Michael force, of the resurrection of man from death, so that man through the Resurrection of Christ would find the force to die in Christ. This means, taking the risen Christ into one's soul during earthly life, so as to be able to die in Him — that is, to be able to die, not at death but when one is living.*

*Then that which we need will be present in life. For these are one, and they will once again weave religion, science, and art into oneness, because people will understand how to conceive the trinity. Such a thing could actually become an impulse which singly and alone would be able, in the present condition of humanity, to replace the descending forces with ascending ones.*

*See THE CYCLE OF THE YEAR, GA 223, Lecture III*

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**For Michaelmas to have meaning, our thoughts about spirit must be as powerful as our thoughts of the material world.**

Through alliance with Michael, we can overcome the Dragon, the world and even death. For this, we need thoughts of spirit to grip us as powerfully as the material world.

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*This ability to rise to the point at which thoughts about spirit can grip us as powerfully as can anything in the physical world, this is Michael power. It is confidence in the ideas of spirit — given the capacity for receiving them at all — leading to the conviction: I have received a spiritual impulse, I give myself up to it, I become the instrument for its execution. [...]*

*If you will imagine this thought developed in the human Gemüt as great confidence in spirit, if you will consider that man can cling firm as a rock to something he has seen to be spiritually victorious, something he refuses to relinquish in spite of all outer opposition, then you will have a conception of what the Michael power, the Michael being, really demands of us; for only then will you comprehend the nature of the great confidence in spirit.*

*See MICHAELMAS AND THE SOUL-FORCES OF MAN, Lecture II*

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Thus, we celebrate the joy of the Michaelmas Festival as a remembrance of our ability to align with the forces of Michael through our will together with our heartfelt thinking—our *Gemüt*. We can thereby overcome the world just as Christ did. In doing so, we will no longer remain chained to the material realm like Ahriman but be confident in our death that we will continue to evolve spiritually as intended.

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## **Michaëlmás – the Festival of Fearlessness**

From the Anthroppper (Jeremy Smith)

Source: <https://anthropopper.com/2022/09/26/michaelmas-the-festival-of-fearlessness/>

Living thoughts are those which fire you up to do something or understand something, and which require you to exercise your will to bring them about. But responsibility for this living thinking, this divinely inspired thought content, gradually fell away from Michael over many centuries and came over to us human beings. This process of the descent of intelligence from the Sun to the Earth was largely completed, so Steiner tells us, between the 9th and 14th centuries AD. From that time on, people began to develop their own intelligence, and intelligence took up residence in the souls of human beings – so instead of us having the sense that the Gods had imparted their living thoughts to us, we began to feel that these thoughts were created out of our own selves. It's not so, of course – it is a materialist illusion that we originate living thinking out of ourselves. What actually happens is that through our human thinking we bring into our consciousness the thoughts which are already part of the world because the spiritual hierarchies have already thought them into existence.

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...in the Old Mysteries, the phrase "As Above, So Below" was operational, meaning that the hierarchies directed their intentions to human beings on Earth. But now, he said, in the New Mysteries mankind is in the driving seat and the phrase has become "As Below, So Above". If we pray and act for peace, if we direct our will with the intention of seeing a planet of peace and harmony, then the hierarchies are constrained to respond positively and meet us halfway. What then emerges upwards from the earth is destined to become a wholly positive reality. This is a kind of new spiritual power that can be implemented by each of us as individuals and within groups.

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*"Human beings must learn to celebrate the Michaelmas festival by making it a festival of fearlessness, a festival of inner initiative and inner strength (...) and selfless self-awareness. Experience how in this autumn Michaelmas festival all that is to grow in you which is to develop against comfort, against timidity, but towards inner initiative, towards the free, strong, brave will in the human being, (...), a festival which renews the whole inner human being. That is what the Michael Festival must become if it is to be worthily used." (RS)*

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We are of course in a Michael Age, which runs from 1879 to around 2300 AD. The special significance of the Michael Age for us is that Michael is ascending from the Archangelic rank to the rank of Archai, a so-called Zeitgeist or Spirit of the Age who can thereby stimulate a spiritual deepening of all humanity that transcends all peoples and will help in that quest to renew the whole inner human being. Steiner tells us that each of the most highly evolved archangels or Time Spirits has a regency or developmental period lasting from about 300 to 350 years' duration. The previous age up until 1879 was that of Gabriel and the one after the present age of Michael will be that of Oraphiel. Oraphiel is also called by Rudolf Steiner the Angel of Wrath, who purifies humanity with a strong hand. He was the leading Archangel at the time of the Mystery of Golgotha and he will again be the leading Archangel after the Michael-time has completed.

Steiner says, and no doubt he is speaking here of anthroposophists and other people of goodwill: "Whoever today, under Michael's rule, feels the urge to participate in the spiritual life, is called to serve the Archangel Michael and to learn under him, so that he may one day be mature enough to serve the terrible Oraphiel in the right way. (...) In four to six hundred years, the small group of people who are being prepared today will serve God Oraphiel, so that humanity may be saved."

Almost one hundred years ago, on September 28th 1924 Rudolf Steiner had to end his lecturing activity because of his increasing physical illness and exhaustion. He concluded the final lecture of his life, with a verse dedicated to the archangel Michael, the guardian spirit of anthroposophy. Here is the last stanza of that verse, which is addressed to all anthroposophists:

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*"You, the pupils of spirit knowledge,  
Take up Michael's wise direction,  
Take up the word of love of the will of worlds  
Actively into your souls' high aims."*

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This was a direct instruction to us. "Take up the word of love of the will of worlds Actively into your soul's high aims." Steiner then spent part of the remaining six months of his life revealing astonishingly profound and diverse insights about anthroposophy and Michael. Despite his illness, Steiner wrote down these insights, in a series of weekly essays which he continued without interruption until his death, and which we can read today in the book 'Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts'. For those of you who are members of the First Class of the School of Spiritual Science, you will know that Steiner's death prevented him from bringing the content of the Second and Third Classes. My sense is that the content of the Second Class and maybe some of the Third Class, can be found in these Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts.

Steiner described and here he is obviously referring to himself, "Those persons who can see the supersensible world bordering next upon the visible world, perceive Michael and those belonging to him engaged in what they would like to do for humanity. Such persons see how — through the picture of Michael in Ahriman's sphere — man is to be led in freedom away from Ahriman to Christ." Perhaps the most significant phrase in that sentence are the two words "in freedom". It is the free choice of each one of us to decide which path to follow.

When my courage falters, and I am overwhelmed by the state of the world, I try to remember those words, which are surely a solemn promise to all of us: Man is to be led in freedom away from Ahriman to Christ.

Source: <https://rsarchive.org/blog/Michaelmas.html>



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