

BECOMING THE ARCHANGEL  
MICHAEL'S COMPANIONS

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FIRST of all want to say a few words of greeting this evening to express the feelings which your gathering has aroused in me. Your speaker described in a most sympathetic way the impulses that have brought you together here. Much of what I shall have to say in the coming days will inevitably be a kind of interpretation of what is more or less strongly present within you in the form of inner experiences that you want to bring to real soul clarity. I stress *soul* clarity in contrast to a merely conceptual understanding.

You have been brought together by what lives in the depths of your souls. It must be sought there. Forces have taken hold of these soul depths which, in the specific way they are working now, are quite recent. These forces—in the way they are working in you—are scarcely older than this century. They are forces which already today reveal themselves very clearly to anyone who can see them, but in the near future they will become ever more apparent. In the next few days we shall describe these forces in their most intimate nature, as well as the opposite tendencies that preceded them and had become “out-of-date” by the last third of the nineteenth century. But today, I shall speak about these forces in their more outer aspect.

I think you feel you can no longer find yourselves in accord with what the older generation has to say to the world today. You see, as early as the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s, people were pointing out, both in art and in philosophy, the deep gulf between the older and younger generations. But all that was said then by poets and others about this gulf, this abyss, is pale in comparison with what has to be considered

today. Today, the younger and the older generations speak entirely different languages of the soul. This is so to a far greater extent than is realized. It attaches no blame to the older generation as regards the younger. To speak of blame would be to use a form of thought belonging to the older generation—one of their philistine forms of thought. We shall not speak of blame, neither shall we accuse. But we shall consider how fundamentally souls have changed over the last two to three decades, precisely in Western development. In our present time, many things clash.

A little while ago I gave a series of lectures in England, at Oxford. Oxford, with its university education, occupies a unique position in the cultural life of the West. One feels in Oxford—a town very closely connected with spiritual evolution in the West—that a relic of the Middle Ages is surviving on into the present time. It is by no means an unpleasing relic. Quite the contrary, in many respects it is worthy of admiration. We were taken around by a friend who is a graduate of Oxford University, and it is the custom there that a graduate always wears a cap and gown. After we had gone around with him, I met him again in the street. The next morning I could not help describing to the English audience the impression I had when this friend appeared in cap and gown. It seemed to me thoroughly symptomatic. This, together with other experiences, induced me to form a picture and to say why a new social structure, reaching to the depths of modern spiritual life, is necessary. When this friend met me in the street, I said to myself that if I had to write a letter now, under the immediate impression of this meeting, I would not know what date to put on the letter. I would be tempted to date it about the twelfth or thirteenth century to remain in the style in which such a thing was possible.

Something that is not of the present has been preserved there. We find nothing like it in Central Europe. But what we find in the influential cultural life in Central Europe, in influential centers of culture, is nevertheless an evolutionary product of what I have just described.

Here, in Central Europe, the gown has practically been discarded, except on festive occasions, when directors and other officials are expected to wear it, often to their great annoyance.

Our friend, who was also a barrister, said to me: "If I were taking you round the Law Courts in London, I would, as a barrister, have to wear a wig, not a cap." There you see another survival of something that has become out-of-date, and yet was still alive in the last century. So there again we have the Middle Ages in the present. In Central Europe people have outgrown a custom that belonged to the former generation and has become old. First, they discarded the costume; then, with a sudden jump, they adopted a different way of thinking, which headed straight into materialism. These contrasts between Western and Central Europe are extraordinarily great. There is a very symptomatic phenomenon in this that I prefer to describe through facts rather than by abstract words.

In Central Europe we have forgotten Goethe<sup>†</sup> and accepted Darwin, although Goethe grasped the roots of the knowledge that Darwin only indicates superficially. Many similar things might be cited. Perhaps you will say that Goethe has not been forgotten, because there exists a Goethe Society, for example. I do not believe you will say that, so I will not pursue it further. Goethe himself and what he brought to light—the Central European spiritual impulse—were, in fact, forgotten in the second half of the nineteenth century. But these things are mere symptoms. The point is that along the path taken by Central Europe and its cultural life, the leading centers of culture emancipated themselves in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries from the spirit that still remained in the West. Since that time, Central Europe has not lost the spiritual element that storms and pulses through souls, but it has lost it from consciousness. That is why one could forget Goethe.

In Western Europe this element has been preserved in traditions and in outer forms. In Central Europe, especially in the German-speaking regions, it has been pushed down, as it were, into the depths of the life of soul, and consciousness has not been filled with it. This was particularly marked in the last third of the nineteenth century.

Close study of history will reveal something strange in the last third of the nineteenth century. If we study the literature and the writings that were read by those who played a part in shaping the cultural life, we find, during the last third of the nineteenth century, up to the middle of the eighties and nineties, in German-speaking districts,

quite a different style in the journals and even in the newspapers from the style that is current today. Thoughts were then finely chiseled and elaborated; importance was attached to sequence in the thoughts, and to beauty as well. In comparison with the style current in the last third of the nineteenth century, our modern style is raw and crude. We need only pick up writings—no matter what they may be—of people in the 1860s and 1870s, not deeply learned or scholarly people but people possessing an average degree of culture, and we shall find a great difference. The thought-forms have changed. Yet, what is raw and crude today arose precisely from what was often finely chiseled and brilliant, as was usual, in the scholarly culture during the last third of the nineteenth century. Those who are older chronologically, without growing old inwardly, in the sense of our contemporary world of thought, experienced that something entered quite dreadfully into every domain of thought and spiritual life at that time. I will characterize it symbolically as the “empty phrase,” or the “cliché.” That is the first point.

With the vogue of the cliché, the empty phrase, a lack of thought develops, a lack of principles, a lack of will. All of these are now on the increase. These characteristics were primarily the outcome of the empty phrase, the cliché, whose main development occurred during the last third of the nineteenth century. You can follow this externally. Things that crop up in a certain epoch need not necessarily appeal to you. Yet, even though you are not sympathetic to them, you can still study their significance for the whole of humanity.

Think of the rich tones of inner beauty that are to be found in German romanticism in the first third of the nineteenth century. Think of the words of a person like Jacob Grimm<sup>†</sup> when he touches on spiritual things, how his words seem to be full of the fresh, health-giving air of the woods, and you will notice that in those days the cliché did not yet dominate in Central Europe. The cliché did not make its way into Central Europe until the last third of the nineteenth century. Those who have a sense for such things are aware of how gradual the beginning of the time of the empty phrase was.

Where the empty phrase begins to dominate, the inner soul-experiencing of the truth dies away. And something else, too, goes hand-in-hand with the empty phrase. In social life, human beings cannot find

their fellow human beings any longer. My dear friends, when words sound forth without soul from the mouth, as they do in the empty phrase, then we pass by other human beings and cannot understand them. This too reached its culmination in the last third of the nineteenth century, not in the soul's depths but in consciousness. People became more and more alienated from one another. When at that time the call for social impulses and reform became ever louder, that was a symptom that people had become unsocial. Because they no longer had any feeling for what is truly social, they were pressed into crying out for social reform. A hungry animal does not howl for food because it has food in its stomach, but because it has none. Similarly, the soul that cries out for social life does not do so because it is permeated with social feeling, but because this feeling is lacking. And so the human being gradually became a being whose nature is not understood today. On the whole, human beings scarcely feel any longer the soul need to draw inwardly near to other human beings. Everyone passes the other by. One's greatest interest is only in oneself.

What then entered the twentieth century from the last third of the nineteenth as the customary social feeling between person and person? Nowadays, you continually hear, "That is my standpoint." Everyone has a standpoint. As if the standpoint itself really matters! The standpoint in spiritual life is just as fleeting as it is in the physical. Yesterday I stood in Dornach, today I am standing here. These are two different standpoints in physical life. What matters is that a person should have a sound will and a sound heart in order to look at the world *from every standpoint*. But people today do not want what they can glean from different standpoints. The egoistic assertions of their own particular standpoints are more important to them. Yet, they thus shut themselves off in the most rigorous way from others. If other people say something, they do not really enter into it, because they have their own standpoint. However, people do not get closer to each other by such means. We can only come closer to each other when we know how to place our different standpoints in a world that is common to all. This common world is simply not there today. Only in the spirit is there a world that is common to all—and the spirit is lacking. That is the second point.

The third point is this. In the course of the nineteenth century Central European humanity has really become very weak-willed—weak-willed in the sense that thought no longer unfolds the power to steel the will in such a way as to make human beings, who are thought-beings, capable of shaping the world out of their thoughts.

When it is said that thoughts have become “pale,” we must conclude from this that thoughts are not needed in order to live as human beings. It is just that thoughts must not be so feeble that they remain up in the head. They must be so strong that they stream down through the heart and through the whole human being, right down to the feet. Really it is better if, besides red and white blood corpuscles, thoughts, too, pulse through our blood. It is a good thing, certainly, when a person has a heart too, and not merely thoughts. But best of all is for thoughts to have a heart. And that has been lost altogether. We cannot cast off the thoughts that the last four or five centuries have brought, but these thoughts must receive a heart as well.

Now let me tell you, from an external point of view, what is living in your souls. You have grown up and have come to know the older generation. This older generation expressed itself in words; you could only hear clichés. An unsocial element presented itself to you in this older generation. People passed each other by. And in this older generation, another thing to present itself was the inability of thought to pulse through the will and the heart.

You see, people could live with the “cliché,” with antisocial conventionality, with mere routine instead of warm community of life, so long as the inheritance from earlier generations was still there. But this heritage was exhausted by the close of the nineteenth century. And so, what presented itself could not speak to your own souls. At the same time, precisely here in Central Europe, you felt that in the depths below, something stood in the direst need of being rediscovered, something that once lived beyond the empty phrase, beyond convention, beyond routine. You wanted again to have a living experience of truth, a living experience of human community, of stoutheartedness in cultural life. “Where is it then?” a voice asks within you.

Often, at the dawn of the twentieth century, even if it was not clearly expressed, you could see it: a young person standing beside an

old person and the old person saying, “That is my standpoint.” Ah! As the nineteenth century drew to its close, everyone gradually had their own particular standpoint. One was a materialist, the second an idealist, the third a realist, the fourth a sensualist, and so on. But gradually under the domination of empty phrase, convention, and routine, the standpoint became a crust of ice. The spiritual Ice-Age had dawned. The ice-crust was thin, but as people’s standpoints had lost the sense of their own weight, they did not break through it. Besides, because they were cold in heart, they did not thaw the ice. The younger people stood side by side with the old. The young had their warm hearts—not yet articulate, but warm. This warmth broke through the crust of ice. The younger person did not feel, “That is my standpoint,” but felt, “I am losing the ground from under my feet. The warmth of my heart is breaking this ice that has crystallized out of empty phrase, convention, and routine.” Although not clearly expressed—for today nothing is clearly expressed—this state had existed for a long time and still exists today.

It is hardest of all for those with a scholarly education who try to fit in with the times. They are confronted by thoughts that are void of heart-quality and are quite consciously striven for, precisely because of this. Now, in speaking out of the spirit it is often necessary to shape words differently from what is customary when telling people something highly logical, philosophical, or scientific. But this approach is sometimes quite improper in relation to the spiritual. For example, consider the following.

People say today that a person is not a true scientist who does not interpret an observation and experiment in a totally logical manner; who does not pass from thought to thought in strict conformity with the correct methods that have been developed. Whoever does not do this is not a genuine thinker. But what if reality happens to be an artist who scorns our elaborate dialectical and experimental methods? What if nature works according to artistic impulses? If it were so, human science, to accord with nature, would have to become an artist. Otherwise there would be no possibility of understanding nature. That, however, is certainly not the standpoint of the modern scientist. The scientists’ standpoint is: nature may be an artist or a dreamer; it

makes no difference to us, for we decree how science is to be cultivated. What does it matter to us if nature is an artist? It matters not at all, for that is not our standpoint!

At the outset I can only describe a few impressions to illustrate what was working in chaotic interplay with the approach of the twentieth century, the century that has placed you before such hard trials of the soul. What we have had to face in outer events, including the grim and terrible World War [WW I], are only the outward expression of what is reigning in the innermost soul in the modern civilized world. It is simply so, and we must become conscious of it. We must also become aware of the fact that, above all, we must seek something that—as your speaker truly said—the deepest soul of Germany is yearning for, but was denied precisely within Germany by human consciousness the nearer the modern age approached. We lost not only Goethe, but also a great deal of what was there in the Middle Ages and out of which Goethe grew. We must find it again. To the question of why you came here, I would answer: to find this. For you are really seeking something that is there. In his *Fairy Tale of the Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily*, Goethe answered the question, Which secret is of the highest value? His answer was: the one that is manifest. However, it can only be revealed, if one opens one's eyes to perceive it. What concerns you, if you understand yourselves rightly, are mainly longings of the inner life. Whether one becomes a teacher or adopts some other profession is not the point. What is important is that everything that those who want to become *whole* again are seeking today is to be found in the common center of true “human-ness.” That is why we find ourselves together here.

It was quite a different matter when in earlier centuries—to take a radical example—people burned a Giordano Bruno.<sup>†</sup> In those times that was the customary way of refuting truths. But now—to compare the case of Bruno with the following symptom drawn from the realm of science—consider the Swabian doctor Julius Robert Maier<sup>†</sup> who, while in southern Asia on a voyage around the world, made an observation of the blood that brought him to the conception of what is known as the heat equivalent, the conservation of energy. In 1844, he wrote a treatise on the subject, which was rejected as amateurish and

unsuitable by the most famous scientific periodical of the time, the *Poggendorf Annals*. And because Julius Robert Maier was so enthusiastic about his discovery—so much that whenever anyone met him in the street he began at once to talk about it—the contemporary experts decided that he was suffering from obsessions. As you know, he was declared insane and put into an asylum. Today you can go to Heilbronn and see the Robert Maier Memorial, where it is declared that the law of the conservation of energy is the most important law of physics that has been discovered in the modern age. Well, of course, such things happen! Naturally, people can make mistakes. The point I want to make is how much this can be judged out of mere phrases, out of mere convention or routine.

Think of the way this terrible tragedy, this terrible mockery, came about in the nineteenth century, and compare it with what is presented today. What has actually happened cannot be undone by abstract writings. Anyone who has a heart and reads the descriptions that are given of such a case feels as if robbed of all inner support, and a terrible impulse forms in the soul. Human beings must again become capable of feeling, not weakly, but strongly: beautiful-ugly, good-evil, true-false. They must become capable of feeling things, not weakly, but strongly, so that they live within them with their whole being, so that their very heart's blood flows into their words. Then the empty phrase will dissipate, and human beings will feel not only themselves but others within their own being; convention will dissipate, and the heart's blood will pulse through what they have in their heads; then sheer routine will dissipate, and life will become human once again.

Young people in the twentieth century feel these things. They have been seeking, but found only chaos. These things cannot be portrayed by writing up external history. At the end of the nineteenth century there was a crucial point in the inner development of humanity. Souls who were born shortly before or shortly after the turn of the century are of quite a different inner makeup from those who were born even during the last third of the nineteenth century. One can speak about this and make comparisons in a certain way if, in spite of the years piling up, one has not allowed oneself to get old.

We shall see tomorrow how the new generation has not linked up with the old, but is divided from it by an abyss. It is not a question of finding fault, but only of trying to understand. I do not want to find fault, even when I speak of the tragedy that befell Julius Robert Maier. The same kind of thing happened to many people. It is, therefore, not a matter of finding fault, but of understanding the matter. The most important thing is to understand what is deeply and inwardly experienced. For an unclear seeking cannot continue to reign for long. A certain light must come that will pour out over this unclear seeking without making it dry or cold. We must find this light, while preserving the heart's blood.

I do not wish to impose anything mystical upon you, but to point to the truth, the truth in the spirit. You know that among the many clichés which became current in the nineteenth century, it was said that the great pioneer of the nineteenth century closed his life by calling out to posterity, "More light!" As a matter of fact Goethe did not say "More light!" He lay on his couch breathing with difficulty and said, "Open the shutters!" That is the truth. The other is the cliché that has connected itself with it. The words Goethe really spoke are perhaps far more apt than the mere phrase, "More light." The state of things at the end of the nineteenth century does indeed arouse the feeling that our predecessors have closed the shutters. Then came the younger generation; they felt cramped; they felt that the shutters, which the older generation had closed so tightly, must be opened. Yes, my dear friends, I assure you that, although I am old, I shall tell you more of how we can now attempt to open the shutters again. We shall speak further about this tomorrow.