

**FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE WORLD (1)**  
**MICHAEL'S CALL<sup>1</sup>**  
**Arie Boogert**

Our title has been taken from what even in The Christian Community we call "The Creed", although we don't use this specific word to introduce contents in which we would "believe" in the old-fashioned sense, the word "credo" ("I believe") lacking at the very beginning. What we find in this modern version of the Christian "Creed" outlines in nine sentences, as simple matters of fact, our human spiritual and physical setting in the world. After the crucial middle sentence which describes the Resurrection, there follows the description of Christ's activity in the world, ongoing since His resurrection, as "the Lord of the heavenly forces upon earth", now that He "lives as the fulfiller of the fatherly deeds of the ground of the world". The following sentence says that, "for the advancement of the world", in time He will unite "with those whom, through their bearing, He can wrest from the death of matter". Here we find the background for this Michaelmas talk.

In these words the future connection of Christ with human beings is being described. Such human beings for whom Christ has become an inner reality will, according to the beginning of the last sentence of the Creed, by virtue of their own present connection with Christ be able to do their part in preparing this future connection. This will happen in the setting of the one church "to which all belong who are aware of the health-bringing power of the Christ". It's this church in which communities may feel united whose members "feel the Christ within themselves". This inner connection with Christ constituting communities will be an expression of His "health-bringing power", and eventually will help to overcome the death within our material world. To this end, these human beings will be able to overcome "the sickness of sin" which defines their physical being; they will receive (we might even say "achieve", as their own activity plays a part herein) the "continuance" of their human being as well as "the preservation of their life, destined for eternity".

Between those sentences in the Creed, speaking of Christ's future connection with human beings, as well as of the future connection of human beings with Christ, we find a sentence which puts to rest a millennium-old problem in the church. This is the question whether the Spirit proceeds from the Father only (as the Eastern Churches say) or from Father and Son both (with the "and of the Son", the "filioque" of the Western Churches). The modern Creed here modifies its earlier use of "holy Spirit" when speaking of the birth of Jesus, and now speaks of the healing Spirit – the healing Spirit which is working through Christ.

This means that, when thinking about the "advancement of the world", we must think of human beings "wrested from the death of matter" by the Christ who himself rose from the dead. It's through Him, the Lord of the heavenly forces on earth, the "healing Spirit" can work. Human beings, aware of the health-bringing power of Christ, united in one church, will also be able to hope for and work towards the renewal of their whole being.

During the last festival of the Christian year, the festival of Michael, what is expressed in these central statements of the Creed comes together. Now Michael, the Archangel, calls on us to become ever more conscious of this life bringing, life sustaining deed of Christ: that more and more we make it of our life – divining it in a higher way. Responding to his call, we human beings turn to him with our heart, in order that the healing Spirit may work in us.

When the Creed speaks of "the world", what exactly does it mean? In this text, we find a direct connection between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> sentence. The 1<sup>st</sup> sentence speaks of an almighty divine being, spiritual-physical, as the ground of existence of the heavens and of the earth – going before His creatures like a Father. The 6<sup>th</sup> sentence speaks of "fatherly deeds of the ground of the world" – of this

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world, “the earthly world” into which the Christ in Jesus entered is a part. The world which is in need of “advancement” is the world in which Christ works as “the Lord of the heavenly forces upon earth”.

Not only will Christ, according to the Creed, try to wrest (“through their bearing”) human beings from the death of matter, as the 7<sup>th</sup> sentence says. The 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence has already set out our human task, which we can attain through Him, which is to re-enliven dying earth-existence. For this purpose, human beings are wrested from the death of matter, in order that the foundation of our existence on earth itself may be wrested from death – an activity in which we human beings will be able to participate.

The holy Spirit, in order to heal in a spiritual way the human condition, which is called “the sickness of sin within the bodily nature of mankind”, has been instrumental in helping Christ to incarnate (according to the 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence). Since His resurrection, through Him healing Spirit can work. Now all those who are feeling the Christ within themselves, who are aware of the health-bringing power of Christ, may hope for the overcoming of the sickness of sin (the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> sentence).

On the one hand, the words of the Creed evoke a mystery: the mystery of a dying earth-existence, which has its existence in a fatherly divine being, the ground of the world – a being whose deeds are in need of fulfillment by the Son, become Lord of the heavenly forces upon earth. They also make us aware of human beings who will find their earthly task, when wrested from the death of matter and carried by the health-bringing power of Christ. Such human beings will be working for the advancement of the world.

Our daily connection with the world around us is founded on a life-sustaining rhythm of breathing: breathing in, breathing out, breathing in ... and sometimes it takes a good slap on the back of the newly born child to get it going (and quite some pain to disappear at the end of life, for those whose bodies won't let them go). We also know a life- and soul-sustaining other rhythm, the rhythm of waking and sleeping, of going out from the world of the senses to a world beyond, once more returning here, and so on.

When we are awake, we move within a material world which to us is phenomenal, appearing in the many phenomena surrounding us. But in its essence, this material world can be compared to the rainbow and the way it appears in our world. Our material world of the senses is of the order of the rainbow, appearing to our senses, because behind it spiritual beings are living and working.<sup>2</sup> Sleeping, we move into this world, which as Rudolf Steiner says “squirts forth” the sensory world. This world “behind” the world of our senses is a centripetal world, tending towards its center; a cold, numbing, petrifying world. When we are awake, by the way, we are able to go “inside” ourselves, encountering impressions, memories, dreams – all, as it would seem, phenomena in a non-material way. That's why mystics like to go inside, looking for “God”, for “the divine spark”. But we should not kid ourselves: inside ourselves we find no spiritual processes, we find only material processes. Any “inner sparks” are simply products of material processes, in the way of will-o'-the-wisps, of that ignis fatuus, that mock-fire one finds in bogs as a product of organic material processes. That may be why the advice given to those who are going to pray: “Go inside your inner room and shut the door” (see Mt 6:6). Which means: go consciously inside your own spiritual being, keeping “outside” that phenomenal spiritual world which exists because of your bodily existence.

Our life- and soul-sustaining rhythm of waking and sleeping mirrors a life-building rhythm of living and being dead, of dying and then once more coming to life in a new incarnation: living on earth, living in a spiritual world. Dying, we move into the spiritual world which we left at birth, our spiritual home which “squirts forth” human beings. This is the world of the nine heavenly hierarchies, a centrifugal world, “flying the center”, dispersing; in fact, this world is kept together by the centripetal spiritual world.

When incarnated on earth, we move within the phenomenal world belonging to this centripetal spiritual world which is squirting forth this phenomenal, sensory world; after death we live within the centrifugal spiritual world of the hierarchies, which squirts forth human beings. And only through human

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<sup>2</sup> These thoughts have been taken from lectures held August 20, 28 and 29, 1920 by Rudolf Steiner in Dornach, lectures 6, 10 and 11 in a series published as *Spiritual Science as a Foundation for Social Forms* (CW 199).

beings do the hierarchies of the spiritual centrifugal world have contact with the spiritual centripetal world behind the sensory world (which by virtue of its material realities appears within the human being as a phenomenal spiritual world); in this way the hierarchies are able to keep their own world together. The human role in the world, “in between” those spiritual worlds, does indeed seem to be crucial.

In the festival time of Michael this human role comes out clearly. The words of the festival prayer of Michaelmas evoke an inner vision within our praying souls. Slowly, from the feet up, the figure of Michael takes shape, the figure of him who is Christ’s countenance, Himself “the healer of Man”. Under Michael’s feet, “free from the weight of earth”, he is seen to keep those powers in their place who would fetter the human spirit in chains of earthly slavery. From human hearts he is able to bring forth free power, power able to lift up what is earthly into heights of heaven, that it may become pure and spirit receptive. Thus, with Michael’s developing image, under his earnest countenance, we move from the sphere of the will through the heart upwards. Healing Spirit may work in us when we turn our hearts to Michael (as the words of the inserted prayer remind us), our hearts having been enkindled by true longing for salvation.

In the Transubstantiation part of the Service we have before us a comparable gesture, at that most silent, holy moment when the priest kneels down before the altar. Here, words are spoken with which Christ gave his body, his blood to his disciples. Rising, after having knelt down with bread and chalice, the priest makes three crosses over the bread and over the wine. The words following affirm that with Christ’s body and blood once more the divine has been given to human beings. Now in our thoughts the new confession, the new faith can live. Enacted within our own space, before our eyes the offering deed of Christ is literally elevated in such a way that, willingly, we may open our thinking to Christ’s suffering and death, to His resurrection, His revelation – in order that Christ’s transubstantiating power become part of our thinking.

When during divine service we make our personal three crosses, we pray that God the Father may be in us, that God the Son may create in us, that God the Spirit may enlighten us. With these three crosses, we want to unite ourselves with the three specific, different ways of the Godhead. Christ’s transubstantiating power having come alive in us, we human beings will be able to become part of the working of the Godhead in fulfilling the revelation, the ordering of the world in space and time. Here, the crucial importance of human beings in the world comes to light.

What the Creed has described in measured sentences comes alive as a dramatic struggle during the festival time of Michael. When Michael calls us, to reach out to the deed of life and death on Golgotha, with his beckoning hand he creates the free space in which human beings can turn to him with their heart. Standing before the God the Son, the God of Man, the God of human beings, he wants us to connect with the fount of healing.