



COMMUNITY VIEW – Michaelmas 2007

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND



EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

This edition features a previously unpublished transcript of an interview with Hartmut Borries on the subject: The Archangel Michael. Thanks to Megan

Collins of Melbourne for making this available as a contribution to our Michaelmas edition. Please note that the interview has been shortened in order to fit this publication.

You will also find two contributions sent in by Alma Denton of Sydney, (but not her work!). Also – an item submitted by Cheryl Nekvapil regarding Jeremy Gray's bequest to The Christian Community. This item will probably be of more interest to Australian readers.

The painting on the right is the work of Neeltje Prior-Bollen of Auckland.

Please consider submitting something for publication. If you aren't sure whether it's suitable, send it anyway – maybe we can make it suitable. All editorial contact to:

thechristiancommunity@paradise.net.nz

or by post to 72 Waima Crescent, Titirangi, Auckland 0604, N.Z.

With very best wishes,
Kevin Coffey

ANGEL OF ENLIGHTENMENT – A Prayer

Awaken the seed within us to transform our thoughts, word and deeds.
Guide us to be ever vigilant in our endeavours
That we may forge our way with Michaelic strength and courage
To open our hearts and minds to the rays of wisdom
As they stream forth from the Spiritual World.

We ask the Angel of our Community to listen to our prayers
May we aspire to create new community among fellow human beings
May we undertake our task lovingly and embrace the Christ's work
By overcoming the adversaries in their many hidden forms

Through the guidance and direction of the angelic kingdoms.

Help us to bring form to a new chapel on this land that will serve members and friends of the Community

May all involved in planning, design and structure bear fruit

By bringing balance and harmony through their dedication and work.

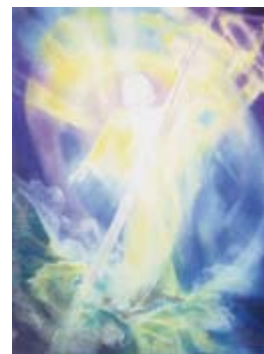
We offer our gifts and challenges so they may be blessed

And enfolded by the Light of the Spirit as it shines forth

May we gain 'self-mastery' in our thinking, 'self-awakening' in our feeling, and 'self-quickening' in our willing

We offer the golden chalice so it may bring healing to all humanity.

Theresa Carter (Sydney 2005)



MICHAEL IN THE 21ST CENTURY – Hartmut Borries (HB) is interviewed by Megan Collins (MC)

"And there was a war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. And the dragon fought in the

midst of his angels. But his strength failed and so there was no longer a place for them in the heavens. The great dragon was overthrown, - the primeval serpent who is of both diabolic and satanic nature, the Tempter of all mankind. Onto the earth he was thrown, and all his angels with him ...

Therefore rejoice you heavens and you Beings in the heavens. But woe to the earth and the sea: the Adversary has come down to you, and he seethes with raging fury, for he knows that his time is only short." (The Book of Revelation)

MC: Who is Michael?

HB: In the Christian tradition he is known as one of the archangels, but he is distinctive among them in that today he is rising to the level of the archai (traditionally the next level up in the hierarchy of spiritual beings) and becoming the leader of our time, or the time spirit.

MC: Michael's name means 'Who is like God?' This seems remarkable.

HB: Indeed, Michael's name is quite a wondrous thing. How can you have a name that is a question? Remember, how in the story of the Creation, Adam and Eve are not allowed to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because if they do, they will be like God. But as we know, they do eat, and as God sends them out of Paradise, he observes: "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil."

So Michael asks: "Who is like God?" – and we've just heard the answer in the Creation story: It is the human being, who knows good and evil, who can discern; so this power of discernment, this is what we need to develop, and this is where we come to the relevance of Michael in our time, because today most are very aware that there is an ongoing challenge and struggle through having the choice between good and evil. We are tempted. So there is no one today who is not challenged to make the choice again and again, and where we then are able to discern, there we use a Michaelic quality, this sword of discernment, being able to say: This is right and this is how far I go, and not a step further. So this is the quality expressed in his name: Who is like God? Someone who can discern, and who can then make decisions and carry them through into his or her deeds.

MC: What can you say about the dragon? So much of the standard iconography, so many pictures, show Michael battling and subduing a dragon. What is the dragon?

HB: The dragon is a being which I would find quite difficult to make friends with. It is a being you would easily be afraid of. It has scales, claws, teeth. It can spew fire, has this very hard exterior, and in legends we hear how it is a poisonous being – a being which brings death and which in battle is very hard to overcome. It is an image for the hardening forces that destroy life, that have this sclerotic, hardening tendency, and we can see how this is working strongly in our time. There are many illnesses that have this sclerotic tendency, and not just the illnesses. We can see how life with all the technology, and those media influences, how they can harden the human being. The same applies to how we use food, and what we eat. So there are many influences in our society that harden the human being. In the soul realm we have greed, competition, envy – all hardening tendencies.

Contemporary films are full of monsters, human beings in armour or with dragon-like skin. So it's something that can be experienced in many ways today.

Interestingly, when we see images of Michael fighting the dragon, most of the time he has

no armour whatsoever. Often he is wearing soft flowing garments, even softer than skin. So it is a picture of the exact opposite of the dragon nature. This suggests that to fight the dragon means being flexible, in movement, alive, creative – and being vulnerable, because Michael is clothed as though in veils, silk veils, really vulnerable. And his feet are bare most of the time, and with these naked feet he is standing on the dragon, and the dragon is full of barbs and poison. We see that Michael is not being hurt.

So the challenge of evil is that I want to fight evil with evil. I am attacked with an insult and I want to fight back with an insult. I am attacked with anger, and I want to fight back with anger. This is the impulsive reaction from my lower being and Michael challenges us to find our higher being, and the higher being can be vulnerable. The higher being will come from the spirit, and this is the spirit of discernment, of understanding, of love, of vulnerability. So that is how we overcome the dragon. It is not by killing the dragon. Michael will typically carry a sword or a lance – but we almost always see the dragon alive.

So spiritual beings are not overcome by killing them, but by allowing transformation, and that means that I need to do the transformation myself, within myself, because that is where the place of the battle is, and if I take myself on, then I'm not killing myself as my lower nature, but I am transforming these forces in service of the higher.

MC: Can you please say a bit about how one does this in practical terms?

HB: The path of transformation can be described in many different ways. One of the first stages would be that wherever I am in life, I try to find ways of looking up to the higher, of whatever I meet, whoever I meet, whether I meet an enemy or a friend, a child or a wise old person, an animal, flower, human being, angel, or even the rocks. Regardless of what I meet, I try to find a way of looking up. So, reverence, respect of the other, that is the beginning of this path of transformation.

MC: Presumably we can also try and look for the positive in ourselves?

HB: That's actually quite a difficult question I find, because where I focus upon myself there are also big dangers. On every spiritual path there is the temptation of trying to redeem myself, - trying to become a most wonderful person for my own sake, so that I'll be rewarded after death, or even get the rewards already in this life. But it's all about myself. Economic life to a great degree is based on this. What do I get out of this? How can I prosper? Greed and the forces of selfishness can be very strong forces of temptation, and evil works just through that. And this tempt-

ation is also in the spiritual life, although there it is dressed more beautifully. Of course, self-knowledge means also that I need to learn to look where I can develop further in a positive way, and what is working well already and where are my qualities? So therefore the simple answer is 'yes', but there is a great danger, - the danger of being self-absorbed, and of becoming selfish. The next step of transformation would be that I look to see where I can give something, and how can this giving become an offering. This is quite difficult, but this giving is a quality which helps our spiritual part, - the 'I am', to grow. The 'I am' grows through activity, - by doing, - by serving the higher.

MC: Here I feel you've been describing the influence of the Christ being, and I'm not so clear how Michael is involved ... ?

HB: First of all, spiritual beings work together by working through one another, because in the spirit there is no separation by matter or through matter, and therefore spiritual beings that are connected with one another work through one another.

So a third realm of transformation, where we particularly see Michael at work, is this: There is a Michaelic quality in our finding the courage to meet evil, where we need to find the clarity of discernment. Michael is someone who is responsible for a way of thinking that connects mind and heart. So where this becomes possible, our thinking becomes creative and imaginative, - warmed through by the heart forces. Another quality where we can say: This is really Michaelic, is where we become aware that our deeds, however small, have an effect, - where we become aware of the consequences of our deeds and that we affect the earth and people all over the world. Michael helps to bring about this world consciousness because he is leading us at this stage. There are many movements now that are nurturing these qualities:

Awareness of what is happening on the other side of the world, and human rights questions, or the environmental questions.

MC: Michael is often linked with the human possibility of freedom, or with our being free beings. Can you please speak a little about this aspect of this work?

HB: There is no freedom within the ability to become conscious and aware, and therefore we need to develop our thinking. Then this ability to think will lead to another awareness, and that is that there is no freedom unless we are also carrying responsibility, - and Michael is making us very aware of that part. Freedom without responsibility is not Michaelic. That is selfish, and that estranges us from the Earth and leads us into some illusionary realm which belongs to another spiritual being, which is very powerful as well, but which is not working together with Christ. So Michael is not doing

that, - he leads to a freedom which means that I can truly become myself. Michael doesn't make us do anything. Only we ourselves can choose to work together with him.

MC: What are we working for, if we work with Michael?

HB: One answer is that in the time that we celebrate Michaelmas in The Christian Community, we read the parable from Matthew 22 where Christ describes the Kingdom of God as being like a king who prepares the wedding for his son. This passage is all about Michaelmas, but the short answer to your question would be: We are working for the marriage, - that the marriage between the son and the bride can take place, and this is the marriage between heaven and earth, or between Christ and the human soul, or between God and the human being.

After Adam and Eve ate from the apple, they had to leave paradise and then arrive on earth, and they fell into matter, and this separation from our heavenly origin meant that we became more material than is really good for us, - so much so that we don't see angels every day, or see the elemental beings that work in the plant realm and in Nature. So we have become blind, and this is how far the separation has taken us. The marriage now has the task, or the aim, of overcoming this separation. Now, marriage is the very expression, in social life, in humanity, of overcoming the separation between male and female, - one of the greatest differences that there could be on this planet, and a good expression for this separation between heaven and earth.

In working with Michael we are developing a heavenly quality within our human-ness, to allow imaginations and inspirations that come out of the Michaelic realm to bring life and renewal into our realm, to unite the two realms, and that is the marriage.

REFLECTIONS ON JEREMY GRAY'S GIFT

At the recent Ascension Conference held in Melbourne, Peter Stewart gave a presentation on what becomes possible for an artist through "The Gift of Allowing", including when money is given freely for an artistic project. He showed photographs of himself designing and making coloured glass windows; through the power of gift beautiful windows were created and now exist in the world.

Those of us who are creative as social artists, sitting on committees locally and nationally for The Christian Community in our region, could identify strongly with Peter's message. In working in the area of management for congregations, we have a full gamut of experience of what is possible through gifts. It's really a very grounding and testing activity to have to bud-

get the running of an organization on gift, to budget positively on the unknown. The fastidiousness of the glass master is a similar gesture to that of our treasurers and book-keepers – it takes great skill not to break in the making, what the artist is so intent on creating.

Over the years, the Australia Council members have been ever searching how to relate to congregations on the subject of finances. The Council is not constituted to demand funds from the local centres. As recommended by David Bowden from Sydney and others, the Council strives in good faith to focus on letting the communities and members know what is needed to meet the stipends and living expenses for priests, and then trust in the response that comes. Adjustments may then have to be made one way or another.

In recent times, the Australia Council was given a great "Gift of Allowing". Jeremy Gray was a member of the Adelaide congregation and when he died on 22nd October 2003, he left his estate as a bequest to The Christian Community. The Committee there honoured an understanding that existed between local centres and the Australia Council, and gave 20% of the bequest to the national body so that Jeremy's gift could benefit the whole of Australia as well.

At the Australia Council Meeting in August 2004, in Melbourne, Adelaide formally presented \$60,000 to the Council. In the ensuing discussion, three main points were focussed on ...

A priest training fund would need at least \$30,000 to be effective and could be started with the help of Adelaide's gift;
There was a suggestion from Synod to invest more in human resources, even to the extent of drawing on income from capital investments for this purpose if we are to remain viable in this region;
A 'Next priest' fund could be seeded to prepare for the costs of the priest Sydney requested.

With Adelaide's agreement it was decided that the \$60,000 gift from the recent legacy in Adelaide would be used as follows:

\$ 15,000 would be put towards the priest training fund;

\$ 15,000 would be put towards the 'next priest' fund;

\$ 15,000 would be put towards the repayment of the Baden-Württemberg loan*, and ...

\$ 15,000 would be put towards the repayment of the Collin Street mortgage.

*These loans were taken to buy the priests' residences in Melbourne and Sydney respectively.

The benefits of being able to pay off capital on priests' residences were immediate as the mortgage payments could be reduced on those properties.

The benefits of the decision to "invest more in human resources" will be realized in September of this year when Sune Nielsen commences working as a priest in Sydney. Some financial assistance from the above funds of the Australia Council allowed Sune to return to Stuttgart to complete his studies and training for priesthood.

Ongoing national benefits from Jeremy's bequest have been further given in that the Adelaide Committee has committed itself to meet a higher level of annual contribution towards priests' stipend and living expenses. In recent years this has been possible only by drawing on the funds remaining from the bequest to augment annual community donations.

*Cheryl Nekvapil
For The Australia Council Members.*

Prayer of a Woman who died at Buchenwald Concentration Camp (found after the 1945 liberation).

Peace to all people of evil-will – and an end to all talk of punishment and revenge.

The atrocities committed are beyond anything the world has ever seen before.

They surpass the human ability to understand, and the martyrs cannot be counted.

Therefore oh God, do not weigh our suffering on the scales of your justice;

Do not call for a day of reckoning.

This time take a different view.

Allow our suffering to serve the assassins, the traitors, the spies and all people of ill-will.

Forgive them, oh Lord.

Forgive them for the sake of our suffering, for the sake of our courage and strength of soul.

Count all that is good. Count not the evil.

We do not want to live on as sacrificial victims in the memory of our enemies, nor as spectres of horrifying nightmares.

Rather we would help them to let go of their delusions. That is the only thing that shall be asked of them.

We ask that once this has all passed away, we may live as human beings among human beings.

We ask that peace may be with them also.