

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford at Solemn Evensong
The Feast of Saint Michael and All Angel's
September 28, 2014

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Saint Michael's Day occupies a special category in the yearly cycle of church observances. It brings us face to face with skepticism towards the existence of the supernatural. All sorts of ingenuity is enlisted to produce clever explanations watering down the supernatural. These efforts are brought to you by people for whom Almighty God is more a *theory* than a Person. The liberal theological world is full of such people. They tell us we can have the "real message" in a way that de-fangs any dominion God's Son has over the order He created. Never mind this so-called "real message" is not what Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John proclaimed, but is that of the 21st century skeptic. There is no end to the efforts made to read the Bible without the supernatural. Our marvel is that these people draw a paycheck from the Church!

What the modern skeptics do with angels is a case in point. They dress angels up in our own human conceptions, making them a hybrid between a Greek goddess in gauzy see-through robes, and a medieval knight in a suit of armor, or a chubby and naked little baby boy. When angels are portrayed in these ridiculous ways it is easier to place belief in them in the category of Tinker Bell and the fairy godmother! And then we are soberly told there is no place for angels in a strictly scientific view.

The problem with this is that it is *not* the view of science! The true scientist knows by his own personal laboratory experience there are truths and realities beyond what is established in physics and chemistry. The true scientist is humbled by what he does not know. This is perhaps the reason why over the centuries so many outstanding scientists have been men and woman of deep and sincere faith. That is a story you will not find in the today's pages of *The New York Times*. But look back in the newspaper's files fifty years and you will find it there.

2000 years ago the Latin poet Lucretius described the blazing power of the atom. He did not have an accurate picture of neutrons, protons, and electrons. But Lucretius had *the truth of the matter*. It took science another 2000 years to demonstrate that truth. The truth of the matter about angels is that it is based on other than scientific grounds. True science has no problem with that.

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First of all, our belief in angels is based on an instinctive conviction common to all mankind that we are not alone in our universe and that there are other self-conscious spiritual beings who are mostly not visible to us. As Christians we find this universally-held belief very strongly present and consistently proclaimed in the sacred Scriptures. Finally, *and decisively*, God's Own Son does not ever question the existence of angels. His teaching builds upon general acceptance of angels as a given. *To reject belief in the angels is to reject the teaching of the Lord Jesus.*

Christ taught us about the presence of God and the unseen. He proclaimed Our Heavenly Father is not distant from the world, but in it. The miracles of Our Lord are not giant interferences in nature but the highest type of natural occurrences. They are as lawful as a sunset. That is to say, because God is Who He is, and *creation is His handiwork*, it is not a strange thing that God works in creation. If He sometimes works in ways that are unusual to us, it is precisely because *He is holy and we are not*. The *unusualness* of Christ, if we can put it that way, is the greatest way God worked in His creation. It is therefore perfectly consistent for Christ's human life to be attended and surrounded by the highest *super* natural phenomena. Blessed are those who see such things!

How exciting then is this world of ours! It is not, after all, analogous to a clock wound up by a landlord who then goes away for the duration. Creation belongs to a Person Who is Love, and Who, behind the veil of the good things He has created (and even the evil He has allowed) is yet not very far away from us, with an ear to hear and an outstretched hand mighty to save. Part of the providence of such a God, a part of which we are even sometimes conscious, is the angelic presence, sent forth to minister to those who are heirs of salvation.