

Heaven and Hell

I listened to a pair of homilies posted by Fr. Andrew Dickinson, one on [hell](#) and one on [heaven](#).

Now, I've thought about heaven and hell a lot, and I know they are spiritual rewards and sufferings more than material. I've heard the many cliché definitions, and I've tried to make sense of phrases like "one with God" and "total separation from God" and honestly they are no more useful than the words "heaven" and "hell". One can imagine this or that about them, but distilling it down to something the mind can grasp has traditionally been, for me at least, elusive.

Fr. Andrew's homilies gave me a couple of words, though, one for each, that I could use like peg hooks, to hang everything upon in a way my mind can wrangle with it all. I thought I'd share.

Heaven, the one homily asserts is "peace." The kind of peace we all long for: where we want the right things and we want them for the right reasons, and we want to feel them in the right way. It is the peace of perfect relationship with all that is. It is the state of being refined into the perfect manifestations of who we are and being accepted and appreciated unconditionally for it, and doing likewise for all else, which also is refined into the perfect manifestation of what it is. It is the peace of harmony.

Hell, the other homily asserts is "hate". The homily puts it "saturation with hate". I thought, after I had listened, "can it be that simple?" I thought about demons. It is their past time, among others, to foment hate. Hate destroys, and out of their envy of God and man, demons seek to destroy. Envy is the longing to deprive the other of something we desire which another possesses and we do not. Whether the envious one obtains it, or even could, is not important – someone who

envies only wants that the other should not have the it that is the subject of the longing. Envy requires hatred. It requires that the thing longed for be so consuming that depriving the other of it, even by destroying it, is deemed better than the other having it. And so Satan, in his envy of God, seeks to destroy what God has made.

But demons have a power to manipulate thoughts and feelings in humans. Deprived of any protection from God, they could fill a person, mind and soul, with hatred. They can inspire feelings associated with hatred, such as envy and anger and pride. They can taint thoughts with hatred, consuming even pleasant memories with negativity to the point of making them unpleasant. Freed from the restraints of God's hand, demons can pit human souls against one another with the bitterest, cruelest, most utterly hateful malice of which humans are capable, which is, as history has demonstrated, unfathomable. Demons could, if not held at bay, douse a human soul with hatred to the point that it is entirely and totally saturated with hate.

And this, where all beings and all things are saturated with hate and the malice that results, is hell.

In the Lord's Prayer, aka "the Our Father ...", there is this line "Thy Kingdom come." The Kingdom of God is, in the words of St. Paul, "righteousness and peace and joy". But what if one's desire is not the Kingdom of God, if it is in fact to reject the Kingdom of God? The absence of the Kingdom of God is none other than the utter absence of God. There is only one such place: hell.

Also in the Lord's Prayer, is the line, "Thy Will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven." The Will of God is the Kingdom of God, Heaven, the Kingdom of Peace, throughout the universe. "Thy Will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven" is the petition to God that that which is in Heaven be made present here and now on Earth. One who refuses to pray for God's will

on Earth desires a Kingdom without Peace, and a total rejection of God and God's Will is a total rejection of that Kingdom. The only such place is hell, and those who refuse, desire hell on Earth – an Earth filled not with peace, but with hate.

As I thought about it, I could not help think of the brouhaha that has arisen through this past election cycle, and especially after Donald Trump was elected. Many people, on both "sides" are fomenting hate. Clinton supporters are calling names, burning effigies, destroying property, assaulting people. Trump supporters are calling names, gloating vindictively, ridiculing, and (intentionally or not) egging anti-Trump sentiment along. Clinton supporters are envious of Trump supporters, with all the hate that accompanies envy. Trump supporters are vengeful, with all the hatefulness that accompanies vengeance. I am deeply saddened by what is happening. The demons are ecstatic, in whatever way demons feel ecstasy. People are not looking toward peace at all. They are even planning how to act in hatefulness for years to come, acts that fall squarely in the realms of envy and vengeance. All that remains for the Deceiver and Prince of Lies, Satan, to do is fear-monger people into thinking their behavior is good and justified, and he is doing it quite effectively in the guise of "rights" and "policy" and "what-if's". But there is nothing good in hate. Hate is never just.

I'm not going to try to analyze it all and say this is why or that is why. I do not take sides in this battle of hate against hate. Both "sides" have offered their prayer: "My kingdom and not Thine come. My will and not Thine be done on Earth." God is Love. Rejecting God's Kingdom and God's Will for mankind results only in the antithesis of love: hate. And a world filled only with hate, saturated with hate, is hell.