

What The Demons Hear

When the Israelites heard the Voice of God speaking to Moses from the top of Sinai, “they begged that no more should be said to them”. This certainly rings a bell with me. I have seen people who were being told truths they didn’t want to hear covering their ears and even running out of the room. It takes a lot of patience and humility to hear difficult truths; a lot of maturity. If we are to listen patiently, it must be because we are basically at peace with the truth, willing to accept it.

Demons

If God is ultimate truth, then demons aren’t at peace with the truth; they are fundamentally at war with it. This is a very sad state of affairs, because being at war with the truth is a lost cause, doomed to fail. In the end, the truth will be victorious; and whatever we hope to be, our hope must be truthful and realistic. To put it another way, there are no masks in heaven, and our encounter with God will be in total light, face to face, heart to heart. It will be so, finally, because God knows us and loves us for what we truly are, not for anything we might wish to be or pretend to be. Demons live in the dark, and demand an edited, shadowed world in which to project a partial, stunted truth which thus becomes all too real, doing real damage: but unlike the world illuminated by Christ, their world is closed against salvation, closed to divine life. It protests that it is “human”, and insofar as “human” means “falling short of God”, it’s true. But a humanity limited from becoming divine is, in the end, bound only for the tomb, and is a trap.

Hating The Light

One of the frightening symptoms of certain illnesses is a horror of light. It’s frightening because it resembles the demonic fear of truth and of wakefulness. Seeking the dark has a whiff of shameful about it which scares us. We love a humanity that is at peace with the truth and with itself: St Paul tells us to live as children of the light and of the day: John tells us that God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. Today’s Scripture

is about our fear of truth and about our chance of salvation from the demons. About our fear, God promises in Deuteronomy that he will address us, not in fearful thunder, but through the words of a prophet who is one of us, as Moses came down from God with human words for the people. We must not fear when God’s word comes to us; but we should not ask that it come without authority. People today are afraid of authority, as if it were a demonic force. Perhaps this is a sport of being afraid of the truth, and it is we who have about us a touch of the demon.

He Spoke With Authority

When Jesus taught in the synagogue, a man who was possessed by an unclean spirit went to war with him; or rather the demon within him did. In the harsh voice which he raises against Jesus we can hear all the terror which the Son of God strikes into the heart of darkness. *Have you come to destroy us?* asks the demon: and then, revealingly, he voices the source of his agony: *I know who you are: the Holy One of God!* The demon knows the holiness of Jesus, but he experiences it as the ultimate threat; because the demon depends on the darkened space within a possessed man for life, and Jesus displays a humanity in which there is no darkness, no room for demons to find shelter. *With authority* means that the demon knows something appalling: that Jesus has the power to communicate this holiness to others: by attraction, by example, by the sharing of joy, by the offer of healing, by the revelation of a truth so loveable that evil is positively vanquished, no longer feared or respected or desired at all.

Convulsions

When Jesus enters into the Paschal mystery the heavens will be shadowed, the earth will be convulsed. So it is with possessed humanity: the defeated demon departs, only after throwing his lost mansion into paroxysm. We mustn’t expect the departure of Satan to be undramatic. *We* may hear sweetness and light in Christ’s word. Our demons hear the crack of doom. *Fr Philip*